



Report from EURCAWs meeting with NRCs/SBs 13 September 2022

General

The three EURCAWs (EURCAW *Ruminants & Equines*, EURCAW *Pigs*, and EURCAW *Poultry-SFA*) hosted the second workshop with National Reference Centres for Animal Welfare and the Competent Authorities' Supporting Bodies on 13 September 2022. In total **89 participants** from **22 Member States** participated, including 24 members from the three EURCAWs, and three delegates from DG SANTE of the European Commission.

The aims of the meeting were to increase collaboration, facilitate knowledge exchange and to get input to the next work programmes for the three EURCAWs.

Agenda:

(12:45-13:00)	SB PPT slide show during connecting	
	General session	
13:00 -13:20	Short presentation of the 3 EURCAWs	Harry Blokhuis
13:20-13:25	Animal transport guide	Evangelia Sossidou, Greece AW Centre
13:25-13:30	The new Finnish Animal Welfare Act	Satu Raussi, Finnish AW Centre
13:30-13:35	Knowledge hub online or the last scientific opinion	Agnes Tiret, French AW Centre
13:35-13:40	Classy Farm system labelling & control	Loris Alborali, Italian AW Centre
13:40-13:45	DISA Animal Welfare at slaughter	Johan Lindsjö, Swedish AW Centre
13:45-14:00	Questions & Answers	Harry Blokhuis
14:00-14:20	During Break – Poll about translation of EURCAW factsheets	Elina Åsbjer
	Workshops	
14:20-14:25	Short technical introduction to workshops	Elina Åsbjer
14:25-15:10	Workshop 1 per species (husbandry and transport/slaughter in parallel)	6 sub-groups
15:10-15:25	Break	
15:25-16:10	Workshop 2 per species (husbandry and transport/slaughter in parallel)	6 sub-groups
16:10-16:30	Break 20 min	
16:30-17:00	Wrap up discussion	Alison Hanlon



Programme

Professor Harry Blokhuis, the director of the EURCAW *Ruminants & Equines* welcomed the participants and explained the role of the EURCAWs; to assist the CAs in performing better official controls and enforce EU animal welfare legislation. The National Reference Centres and the Competent Authorities' Supporting Bodies were the target groups, but also Competent Authorities and the European Commission were invited. Professor Blokhuis presented:

- **EURCAW Pigs**, a consortium since October 2018 between Wageningen Livestock Research (The Netherlands), Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (Germany), and Aarhus University (Denmark)
- **EURCAW Poultry & other Small Farmed Animals**, a consortium since February 2020 between ANSES (France), IRTA (Spain), ANIS (Denmark), and IZSLER (Italy)
- **EURCAW Ruminants & Equines**, a consortium since June 2021 between the Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences (SLU, Sweden), French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment (INRAE, France), University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU, Austria), Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "Giuseppe Caporale" (IZSAM, Italy), Hellenic Agricultural Organization-Dimitra, Veterinary Research Institute (ELGO-DIMITRA, Greece), University College Dublin (UCD, Ireland).

Professor Blokhuis further explained the main role of the EURCAWs; to provide scientific information on on-farm welfare, animal transport, and protection of animals at the time of killing in order to assist the Competent Authorities in performing better official controls and enforce EU animal welfare regulations. Clarifications were also made that the EURCAWs cannot respond to questions from farmers, NGO's or other stakeholders in the livestock production chain.

The five main activities of EURCAWs are coordinated assistance including Questions to EURCAW (Q2E) and network development, animal welfare indicators, scientific and technical studies, training courses and dissemination.

EURCAW Pigs has produced more than 60 animal welfare indicator fact sheets, which are currently translated into German, Spanish, French, Dutch, and additional languages to follow.

EURCAW Poultry-SFA has five priority areas: 1. Assessment of welfare of broilers on farm, 2. Assessment of welfare of laying hens in alternative systems, 3. Assessment of the state of consciousness after stunning for broilers and turkeys, 4. Assessment of welfare of rabbits on farm with a special focus on alternative systems, 5. Assessment of welfare of turkeys.

EURCAW Ruminants & Equines are producing animal welfare indicators, methods for assessment and improvement regarding the need for contact between individually housed calves and the feeding of rearing calves, addressing two areas in the EU directive to protect calves (Council Directive 2008/119/EC). EURCAW *Ruminants & Equines* are also producing scientific reviews about enrichment, and Training Need Analysis and audience profiling.



National Reference Centres

Evangelia Sossidou, [Greek Animal Welfare Centre](#) presented the *Animal Transport Guides*.

Satu Raussi, [Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare](#) presented the new *Finnish Animal Welfare Act*.

Agnes Tiret, [French Reference Centre for Animal Welfare](#) (FRCAW) showed the *Knowledge hub online and the last scientific opinion*.

Loris Alborali, [Italian Reference Centre for Animal Welfare](#) Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna (IZSLER) presented the *Italian Classy Farm system labelling & control*.

Johan Lindsjö, [Swedish Centre for Animal Welfare](#) showed the *online DISA material about animal welfare at slaughter*.

Translations

During the break, the participants were asked if their organisation are willing to help with translations and/or proof-reading of translations for factsheets and other materials produced by the EURCAWs into their language. Out of 47 answering participants, 37 were willing to either both translate and proofread (24 participants) or just proofread (13 participants) into Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.

Discussion Group Exercise for NRC & SB Workshop

The aims of the workshops were to identify examples of good practices related to animal welfare topics (specified by each EURCAW), and barriers and solutions for transition to good practice.

EURCAW Pigs Workshop

The **EURCAW Pigs'** four themes at the workshop were: *Tail biting and tail docking, Free farrowing – loose housing sows, Heat stress during transport, and Mass killing on farm – depopulation*.

Before the meeting, the participants were asked to reflect on:

- Why is this topic important for your future work?
- What situation would be the ideal implementation by the CA with regard to this topic?
- What are the main issues in your country in the transition to support animal welfare?
- What types of questions have you received from your CA on this topic?
- What are the current barriers to achieve the final goal of the CA's?
- What are the knowledge gaps in preventing the final goal?
- What good practices/solutions are you aware of?
- Specifically for mass-killing: How are your current manuals and preparations for mass killing situations? Are there any known lacks in these manuals?
- How can EURCAW Pigs help you (in terms of technical and scientific support)?

Future EURCAW work programme:

- What do you consider to be a priority for the next work programme?



The participants made the following suggestions during the pig workshops:

Tail biting and tail docking

- Paid vet to come to the farm and help with the risk assessment
- International inventory for risk assessment systems available
- Technical information alone is not enough, CA's also need soft skills
- Incentives for long tails are probably needed

Free farrowing – loose housing sows

- Higher price is main incentive
- Legislation should be clear so farmers can prepare for future demands (m², deadline, fixation)
- Subsidies for conversion to free farrowing
- Stockmanship is key factor (quantity/quality of labour)

Heat stress during transport

- Good suggestion/practice 1: National heat stress plan related to the ambient temperatures
- Good suggestion 2: No transport of pregnant pigs
- Good suggestion 3: Training tools on assessing heat stress via animal-based measures (ABMs)
- Good suggestion 4: Shift transports to the morning or evening/night
- Good suggestion 5: We need a good definition: "The animal experiences stress and/or negative affective states such as discomfort and/or distress when exposed to high effective temperature." (EFSA, 2022)

Mass killing on farm – depopulation

- Most common: Electric stunning + bleeding
- CO₂/ equipment availability
- Question: Can the animals walk to the killing device?
- Future outlook: Gas-filled foam, Future outlook: Heating of CO₂

EURCAW Poultry-SFA Workshop

The subjects discussed were farm husbandry and transport and slaughter.

Workshop 1: Farm and husbandry

Topics discussed by participants during the workshop:

- Keel bone damages in laying hens (origin, prevalence in different housing systems and prevention).
- Covered veranda in layers, broiler chicken and turkeys (dimension, furnishment and management).
- Stocking density in turkeys
- Identification of best practice in poultry housing and management.



The following issues were raised on the poultry workshops:

Covered veranda, Requirements for pullets, Caudal keel bone disease (KBD), Enrichment methods in broilers and layers, Heat stress, Stocking density in turkeys

Workshop 2: Transport and slaughter

Topics discussed by participants during the workshop

- Assessment of fitness for transport in poultry
- Methods for individual killing in poultry and rabbits
- Depopulation methods in case of Avian Influenza for different species, flocks sizes and physiological stages.
- Backup method for stunning poultry and rabbits at slaughter.

EURCAW Ruminants & Equines Workshop

Four themes were covered during the workshop: Precision livestock farming, Castration and disbudding of calves, Fitness for transport and Methods for farm emergency slaughter

The workshop discussion adopted a simple structure of visioning and grounding:

Visioning – Is characterised by the question: *Where do we want to be?* Visioning considered future possibilities and in the context of EURCAW the purpose was to identify examples of good practice, where successful transitions have been made to support animal welfare.

Grounding – Is characterised by the question: *How do we get from here to there (i.e. good practice)?* It considered the current situation and the challenges to achieving good practice.

During the workshops, participants discussed the following:

Precision livestock farming (PLF)

- PLF should measure welfare indicators (to improve AW)
- EURCAW to produce an opinion on why PLF is not developing that fast to help ensuring animal welfare (incl. data sharing)
- Animal welfare must not be restricted to production and health
- Design / promote studies so that PLF addresses AW

Castration and disbudding of calves

- We would like to ban, but castration is sometimes necessary (e.g. bulls at pasture)
- Checking of barn design can avoid to dehorn
- Some good practices are known
- Achieving consensus on best practices and disseminating them (incl. raising awareness and training)

Fitness for transport

- Uniform set of criteria for all species



- Harmonised guidelines & training for farmers, vets, transporters etc.
- Indicators predicting that an animal's condition may deteriorate during transit
- Indicators to be collected at abattoir (AM or PM)

Methods for farm emergency slaughter

- Some MS have defined the term accident
- Data collection by Official Vets on-farm emergency slaughter
- Produce guidelines on how to handle these animals
- Mobile abattoirs – effective solution?

Wrap up discussion

A concluding discussion, led by Professor Alison Hanlon summed up the key points from workshop discussions.

Websites and email addresses:

www.eurcaw-pigs.eu info.pigs@eurcaw.eu

www.eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu info@eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu

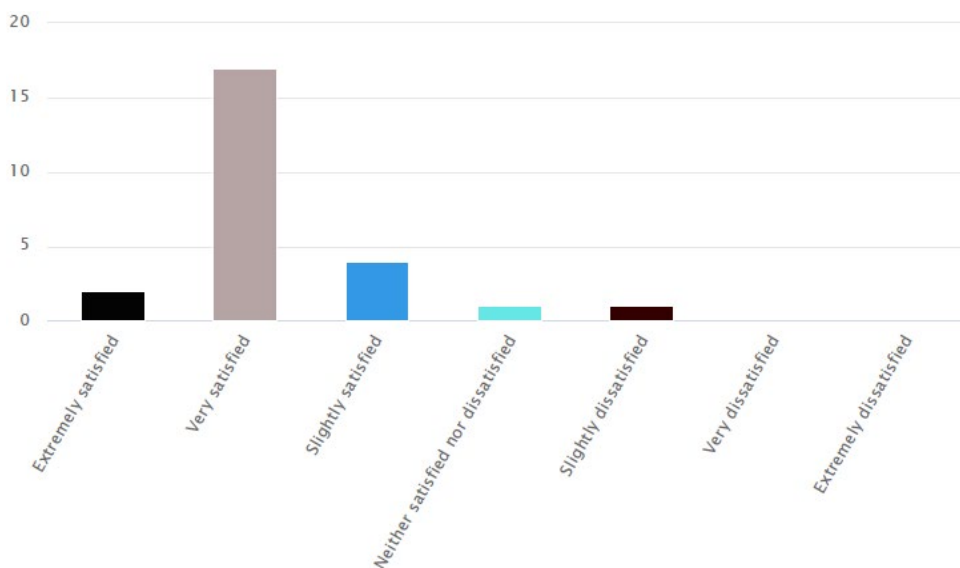
www.eurcaw-ruminants-equines.eu info@eurcaw-ruminants-equines.eu

Annex I. Results of the survey

There were 27 participants conducting the questionnaire. Of the answering participants, **4** (15%) came from a National Reference Centre (NRC) for animal welfare, **2** (7%) from a Supporting Body (SB), **12** (44%) from a Competent Authority (CA), **4** (15%) from EURCAW and 6 (22%) 'Other', specified as **3** participants from the European Commission, **1** from the Ministry of Agriculture, **1** from the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture - Animal Welfare Division, and **1** PhD student. One participant from the State Veterinary Administration clarified under comments that they participated, since they do not have a designated NRC.

Question: *Were you satisfied with the seminar in terms of organization?*

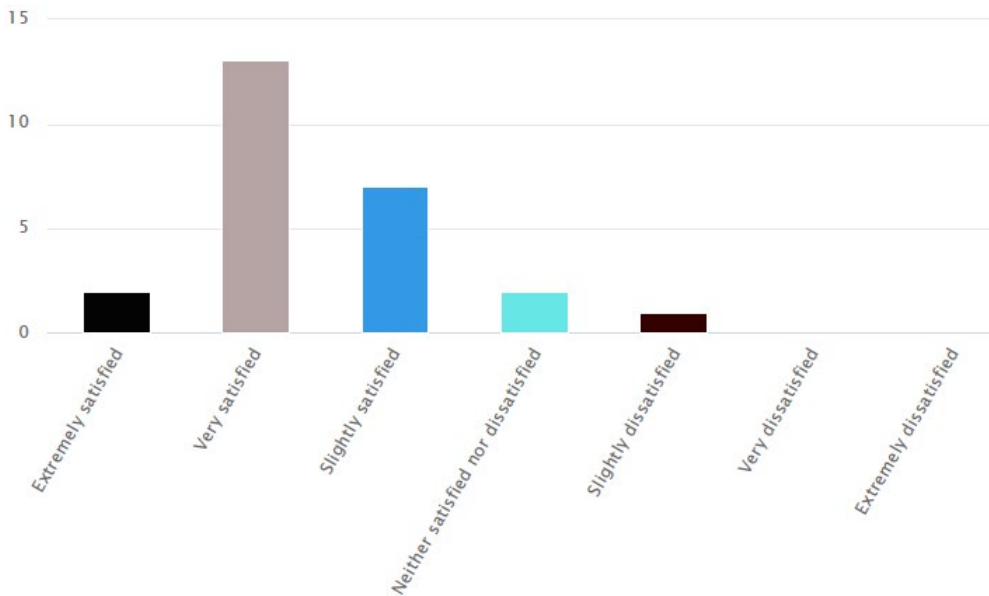
Most (92%) of the respondents were satisfied: 2 (8%) extremely satisfied, 17 (68%) very satisfied, 4 (16%) slightly satisfied. One respondent indicated slight dissatisfaction and another selected a neutral response.



Additional comments: "much needed summary type of information from the experts; Contradictory communication on whether seminar is for competent authorities; agenda did not show topics of the 3 x 2 working groups".

Question: *Were you satisfied with the seminar in terms of content?*

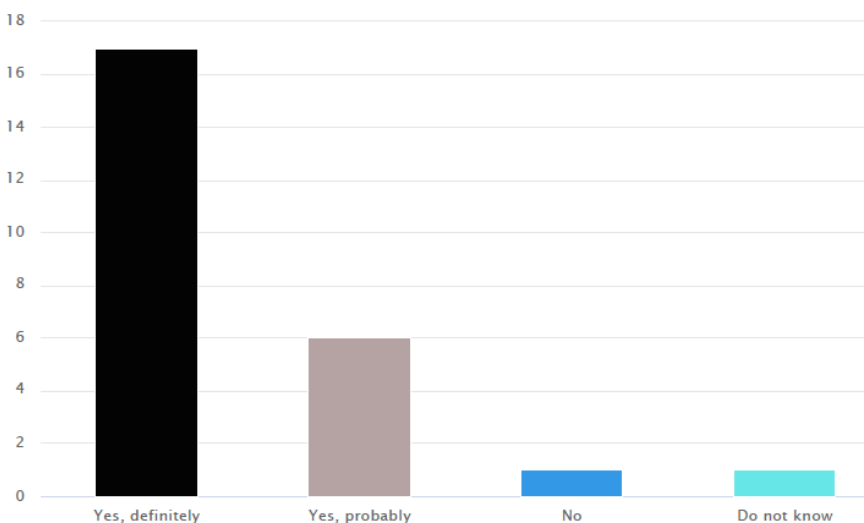
Most (88%) of the respondents were satisfied: 2 (8%) extremely satisfied, 13 (52%) very satisfied, 7 (28%) slightly satisfied. One respondent was slightly dissatisfied, and two selected the neutral category (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).



Comments: • Always interesting to compare the situation about main AW issues in different MS; nice to have an overview of the main topics that are being/will be covered in the 3 EURCAWs. I have the feeling that the work carried out during the seminar led to real issues to be taken up by EURCAWs, hence the feeling of having been useful. • Topics seemed a bit random, purpose of the whole event unclear. • I could not participate in group discussions since I were in charge over the technical parts. • Participants from MS did not really engage in discussions during Workshops.

Question: *Would you like to attend the next event?*

The majority of respondents indicated that they either definitely (68%) or probably (24%) would like to attend the next event.





Question: For future Work Programmes of the EURCAWs please list the 3 topics that you consider to be a priority for:

EURCAW Pigs

- How can we really and concretely stop tail docking?
- How can we get farmers to support animal welfare labelling for pork?
- How to promote positive welfare on pig farms? I have the impression that this sector is lagging behind others. We are still trying to stop mutilations and the density of animals is not questioned.
 - Free farrowing, tail biting, space availability, fitness for transport
 - Prevention of tail biting in weaners
 - I myself am always highly interested in welfare at killing/culling and slaughter. I was happy that it received the attention that it did this event.
 - Tail biting
 - CO₂/ electrical stunning
 - Animal-based Indicators (ABI) of welfare of sows and piglets in free farrowing systems, Breeding of pigs with intact tails, ABI to predict tail biting outbreak
 - Tail docking, sow farrowing crates, transport condition
- Stunning of pigs with high concentrations of CO₂. Currently, the Commission is carrying out a review of the EU animal welfare legislation and one of the proposals is the possible ban of the carbon dioxide at high concentration as stunning methods for pigs. We would like to know if there is any progress on this matter and if the Reference Centre is planning to carry out any evaluation or work on this issue, for example data collection on alternatives stunning methods.
- Guide to assess fractures at slaughterhouse and thus be able to determine the moment of fracture: before loading, during transport..
 - Tail docking
 - Tails
 - Fit for transport, abnormal behaviour, noise/light
 - Automation of recording animal welfare indicators at slaughter
 - Castration, farrowing crates
 - The consequences of "End the cage age", what housing systems will be allowed in the farrowing unit.

EURCAW Poultry & Small Farmed Animals

- Is it possible to stop cage farming, and if so, under what conditions (2 questions in 1)
- What is the future for slow-growing breeds?
- What is the feedback from in ovo sexing in countries where it has become/will become mandatory?
- Keel bone fractures in laying hens.



- Use of sensor technologies to assess welfare of poultry.
- I myself am always highly interested in welfare at killing/culling and slaughter. I was happy that it received the attention that it did this event.
- Catching injuries
- Is caudal keelbone fracture a welfare problem, is caudal keelbone fracture connected to genetics?
- End of "cage age".
- Transport; Fit for transport, noise/light, parent flocks/hatcheries.
- Rabbits welfare.
- Depopulation issues, male chickens.

EURCAW Ruminants & Equines

- Tied animals, veal calves, surplus buffalo calves
- What is the scientific evidence of the welfare benefits and drawbacks of grazing (there are controversies about this in my country, based more on opinion than fact)
- What is the feedback on alternatives to calf separation?
- For horses, I don't know at all the situation in the different MS (legislation, hot topics, etc)
- Space allowances for dairy cattle
- I myself am always highly interested in welfare at killing/culling and slaughter. I was happy that it received the attention that it did this event.
- Pregnant slaughter
- Iceberg ABI of welfare in equidae
- Transport of unweaned animals
- Data collection on simple electrical stunning methods for ruminants
- Guide to assess fractures.
- Long transports of cattle to third countries
- Spent cows
- Fit for transport, working loads for working equines, small ruminants farming
- Animal welfare indicators
- Tie stalls, lameness
- Equines - housing systems and space requirements from the welfare point of view

Additional comments made by respondents:

- In the workshops I attended, the questions asked during the seminar were somewhat different from those sent by e-mail. This is a pity because I was not sufficiently aware of the technical points that were raised and could not be very precise in my answers. Otherwise, a big congratulations to all the organisers, I really enjoyed this seminar!
- On-line meetings better than physical presence