

The EU Reference Centre of Animal Welfare (EURCAW) was established in 2018 by DG SANTE to support EU Member States on issues related to the pig welfare legislation. As part of its activities, EURCAW-Pigs organises annual meetings with a Reflection Board, including representatives of the pig supply chain, related professional organisations and civil society organisations. The Reflection Board is informed about the activities of EURCAW-Pigs and is asked to reflect on them and to support the Centre with technical information.

This third Reflection Board meeting was organized online (MS Teams) on 12th of June 2023, and the Board was represented by 8 delegates. The meeting was opened at 13:00h and closed at 15:30h.

Welcome

The participants were welcomed by Hans Spoolder, director and coordinator of EURCAW-Pigs. He gave an update of EURCAW-Pigs activities, and reminded of 'Chatham House Rule' for the discussions during the Board meeting. This implies that "participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the connection of the speaker(s) nor that of another participant may be changed or revealed". In addition, every participant shortly introduces themselves.

EURCAW-Pigs' achievements & plans

During the previous Reflection Board meeting the Centre's achievements and plans were presented in each of the five activity areas required by law (Art 96 of 'The Official Controls Regulation'), as part of the Work Programme (WP) 2021-2022. During this Reflection Board meeting some of the planned activities for the WP 2023-2024 were presented and discussed. The new WP has not been shared yet, as it still needs to be approved. Therefore the participants are reminded of not sharing any content further.

Activity 1: Coordinated Assistance

Hans Spoolder continued with presenting the sub activities as part of activity 1 'Coordinated Assistance'. These include an intensified collaboration between the three EURCAWs (which will soon include a fish reference centre) and talks about the few Questions to EURCAW (Q2E) that we received. Hans also talked about the upcoming MS officials meeting, which will be held online in September. Hans explains about the planned Roadshows, which will be held in our own countries (Germany, Denmark and The Netherlands) first. Next year, Roadshows will be held in Romania, Spain and Poland.

Lars continues about their Roadshow that has already taken place. The inspectors were asked before the meeting which topics they would like to discuss, the usefulness of EURCAW's output and Q2E's was discussed. Q2E's and the upcoming podcasts were the most useful to them, and they enjoyed coming together as a group, as they usually do not meet.

Jan continues with the experiences from their Roadshow in Denmark. They asked their inspectors also for topics of interest before the meeting. The focus point became the pig itself: What animal is a pig? This topic became a big discussion, as they tend to forget the animal itself during their work. The inspectors were very interested in our work, but were not familiar with EURCAW yet.

Hans tells about the upcoming Roadshow in The Netherland, which will be focussed on tail biting and tail docking. There will be guest speakers from abroad and also a farmer with his view on the topic.

Points of discussion:

- ✓ The roadshow are really inspiring and hopefully the Roadshows next year will be equally successful. Inspectors will appreciate the Roadshows, as they work alone and will probably want to stay in touch.
- ✓ Roadshows are a very good idea. Also include the farmers to see each other's point of view.
- ✓ It was asked how EURCAW found the inspectors, which was answered by Lars, Jan and Hans that we asked ministries, CA's and contact persons for emails from welfare inspectors.

Activities 2 & 3: Indicators & Science

Lars Schrader coordinates these activities and presented the reviews that were already made during the current WP. He continued with the planned indicator factsheets, some examples of fact sheets and the different knowledge sections and reviews to be made. The fact sheets include QR codes know, which will show a video about the subject. This WP will also include an Iceberg Indicator study, where indicators that will help identify multiple welfare consequences will be identified. It will start by analysing existing scoring sheets for suitability for inspectors. Then, a design study will be developed to test inter-observer reliability of the assessment tools, investigate the practicality of these methods and develop an assessment scheme that could be used.

Points of discussion:

- ✓ Pre-transport fasting is a required that we get from clients, which is 12 hours before the transport starts. A factsheet about this would be very useful.
- ✓ For the iceberg indicators sheets about welfare it is important to find a system, which will be used most in all slaughterhouses. It has happened that some slaughterhouses came in the media with 'bad pigs', which did not register as 'bad pigs' when analysed with the fact sheets.
- ✓ More is needed about mortalities, where farmers can look for bad welfare with the use of predictors instead of indicators. Every indicator needs multiple predictors, so a farmer can prevent bad welfare. However, for some indicators it might be difficult to find remedies for.
- ✓ It occurs that during transport something happens during the drive that will impact animal welfare. For example, the driver get stuck at a border and temperature in the truck will rise. The driver will need to know what to do or be able to ask for help. This problem could be addressed in a review and awareness needs to be created.

Activity 4: Training

Jan Tind Sørensen coordinates this activity and presented about evaluating of training activities, developing course standard and materials, and how to change perceptions and attitudes. He continued by presenting three sub-activities:

1. Writing a report on road transport checklists and an ethnographic study with inspectors from different countries. It will include the challenges and needs of animal welfare inspectors on farm and at slaughter.

2. A workshop for the national training bodies, which has been done before. New training guides and short videos between inspectors and drivers will be made. 13 guides have already been developed and new guides will be developed during this WP.
3. A guide to exploit pairwise inspection for training and calibration will be made. We try mainly to make inspections more efficient.

Points of discussion:

- ✓ Checklists for animal transport deviate in many member states from EU standard. How do you deal with this, with differences in interpretation. Some may have higher standards. Jan commented that they will see how exactly they differ. There is an ongoing discussion how we will tailor our advice to each member state. There is a difficult balance, as some think it is too general what EURCAW does, but it needs to be on EU level as well.

Activity 5: Dissemination and communication

Marko Ruis coordinates this activity and presented the contact with inspectors via a Community of Practice, where an online platform will be created so inspectors can discuss different topics. Podcasts will be made, in which different subjects will be discussed by experts and inspectors at work. Inspectors can listen to these while they are in their car during work. During this WP factsheets will be translated into new languages: Danish, Polish and Romanian.

Points of discussion:

- ✓ There is currently a lot on the website, which is often about bad animal welfare. It would be nice to also have different examples of positive welfare on there. For example, different housing systems. Also, a short video about EURCAW-Pigs would be nice and informative.
- ✓ The hamburger menu looks better than it did before. However, when you go to the website the title of news items are not always visible. The reader can therefore not always see if it might be interesting for them.

Closing

Hans Spoolder thanked the Board for their feedback and suggestions, and closed the meeting at 15:30h. All participants will receive the notes of the meeting and have the opportunity to improve them prior to publication.

EURCAW-Pigs, August 2023

Annex 1. List of participants

EURCAW-Pigs Reflection Board (RB)

European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB)

COGECA

European Federation of Animal Health Services (FESASS)

EAPHM – European Association Porcine Health Management

Eurogroup for Animals

VIER PFOTEN International

Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)

European Livestock and Meat Trade Union (UECBV)

EURCAW-Pigs

Hans Spoolder

Lars Schrader

Jan Tind Sørensen

Marko Ruis

Marith Booijen