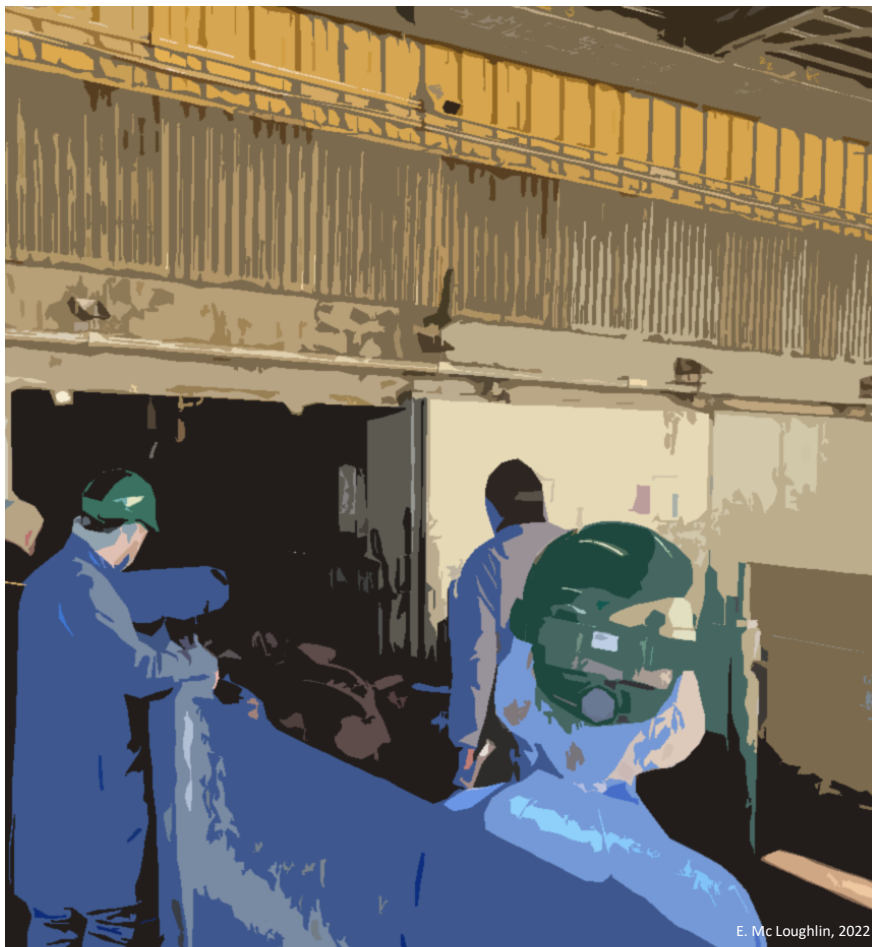


A practical guide to paired inspection

Eimear Mc Loughlin



info.pigs@eurcaw.eu



www.eurcaw-pigs.eu

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Eimear Mc Loughlin

Aarhus University, Denmark

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info.pigs@eurcaw.eu



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1 Summary

Communication has frequently been identified as a challenging aspect of the inspection process (Mc Loughlin, 2022). Inspectors must communicate with economic operators¹ on compliance and non-compliance in accordance with legislation but they are also tasked with explaining the underpinning rationale and background of legislative requirements. Based on a 'Review on Responsive Approaches to Inspection Processes' (Anneberg & Rousing, 2017), EURCAW-Pigs has produced materials to assist inspectors with this central part of their role, such as videos to complement inspector training. As part of these activities, we previously suggested conducting inspection in pairs during training and/or everyday inspection (Anneberg & Rousing, 2017, p. 3). Therefore, this paper examines the benefits, challenges, and practicalities of conducting inspection in pairs, with a specific focus on farm inspection. However, many of the benefits, challenges, and practical recommendations are applicable to inspection at slaughter and transport.

In order to meaningfully detail the benefits, challenges, and practical recommendations, this paper draws on a wide range of literature but crucially gained insights from inspectors through an online survey that was distributed through my own and the associated EURCAW-Pigs network. The survey included 15 questions and was distributed to 40 inspectors. 18 completed the survey, a further 4 started but did not complete. The aim of the survey is to gather insights from their experiences, the success of pair inspection, and any challenges they have experienced. It is not designed to be a representative sample of European inspectors as this was not possible within the timeframe, but an information-gathering exercise to identify advantages, disadvantages, and unforeseen aspects of paired inspection that may be possibly lacking from the literature on paired inspection.

2 Introduction

Paired inspection typically occurs during training of new staff or on large operations where a number of inspectors are involved in inspection across various sectors of the farm (Anneberg & Rousing, 2017). However, this paper provides insight into paired inspection when it is carried out by fully trained inspectors conducting an inspection on farm, taking an inspection of a farm that has undergone a major change as an example. A major change could be a situation where a farmer has made changes as part of the tail-biting risk assessment programme or changed the operation following welfare issues. Through the example of a major change, this paper sidesteps the main barriers of economics and coordination of schedules, as it is expected that the inspection is high priority and may be further complicated by communication issues as a result of prior inspections. Therefore, whilst it may not be routinized for such a situation, it is expected that paired inspection is a realistic possibility for such an occasion. However, it is hoped that the insights from this guide support the *routinization* of paired inspection for these occasions and also, that paired inspection is reframed

¹ Economic operators refers to those individuals or groups that inspectors engage with and typically include farmers, slaughterhouse staff, transporters, etc.

as a way to empower inspectors in the inspection process, as cooperation and communication is central between the inspectors as well as with the economic operators.

The emphasis on paired inspection is not without reason. A recent study amongst Finnish official veterinarians examined their job satisfaction and found that 73 of the 98 questionnaire respondents reported work-related stress or fatigue. Furthermore, working alone was perceived as the most challenging aspect of their work, whereby 3 out of 4 inspectors worked alone. Such insights were recently supported by EURCAW-Pigs fieldwork with inspectors across four European countries, where I joined inspectors on farm and at slaughter in Denmark, Ireland, France, and Poland to understand the main challenges faced by the work of inspection. Inspectors described how certain elements of their work led to feelings of frustration and disillusionment, one of which was the challenging communication with economic operators and the demands of working alone for long periods of time. Additionally, inspectors shared how feeling unsafe at work when working alone and especially when economic operators became aggressive, impacted on their personal lives. Inspectors also shared how their evaluations can be challenged by departmental and even governmental decisions where, in some cases their work was overruled by others. It is not accurate or wise to argue that paired inspection will resolve these issues, because paired inspection also has limitations that are more complex than simply the economics of labour power or the logistics of organizing two inspectors. Indeed, as I found (2022), many inspectors found the autonomy of their role, their ability to decide on and organize their own schedule, and their freedom to do inspection in their own way were very important high points that contributed to job satisfaction. However, what this guide proposes is that it is not an either/or. Paired inspection is proposed by EURCAW-Pigs as, in certain occasions, a more strategic approach to inspection when issues of communication and case-specific complexity outweigh economic barriers and scheduling challenges. Furthermore, EURCAW-Pigs illustrates how paired inspection has the potential to be much more beneficial in routine inspections also through the ways it can empower inspectors, be used as a tool of professional development and ongoing training and contribute to collegial relations and therefore job satisfaction.

This guide is intended to support such strategic paired inspection by highlighting the benefits, the challenges, and noting some useful ways to ensure that the benefits outweigh the challenges. Whilst Väärikkälä et al (2020) recommend further study into the impact of paired inspection on the efficacy of welfare control, there is wider literature in the related field of industrial inspection that shows that a single inspection by a pair can be as effective as two inspections carried out by individuals but crucially, a paired inspection required less time (Stanislaw, 1995). Väärikkälä et al (2020) note that there is a possibility that instructions may be more successful when provided by two inspectors rather than one, which has clear benefits to pig welfare. This guide does not examine whether paired inspection may positively or negatively impact on the efficacy of inspection but focuses rather on paired inspection in practice – the benefits, challenges, and outlines practical recommendations for implementation.

3 Paired Inspection

3.1 Insights from Inspectors

I developed a short survey (15 questions) on SurveyXact to gather insights from inspectors regarding their experience with paired inspection. This survey was not designed to be scientifically representative of the population of inspectors in Europe, as this would require a longer collection period and a better network. It was rather an attempt to gather experiences, deepen understanding, and highlight any shortcomings of paired inspection. The survey was distributed amongst my own network of inspectors as developed through my previous research with EURCAW-Pigs (Mc Loughlin, 2022). Additionally, following contact with inspectors through the Danish EURCAW-Pigs Roadshow in June 2023 and the more recent EURCAW-Pigs Training Workshop in October 2023, the survey reached a total of 6 European countries with a total of 20 participants. Almost all respondents were working as veterinary inspectors with almost 70% of them typically carrying out their inspections alone. Despite this, 15 of the respondents had experience with conducting inspections in pairs.

Most respondents described how paired inspection was typically a possibility when there are expected challenges associated with the farm, but this was by no means standardized across the countries. A challenging case ranges from inspecting large farms, visiting farms where there has been a history of aggressive encounters, or returning to farms following welfare issues. The respondents who also included some administrative staff responsible for training inspectors noted how paired inspection was also utilised to assess current and new modes of inspection, train new employees, and to calibrate where there is notable variation in an area or amongst a group of inspectors. I will now go on to describe the benefits, challenges, and practical recommendations.

3.2 Benefits

- Assists with Evaluation
- Assists with Communication
- Aids the Identification of Issues
- Practical assistance
- Increases the (Likelihood of the) Farmer's Assistance
- Speeds up Inspection Process
- Knowledge Sharing
- Enhances Workplace Safety
- Training
- Calibration
- Quality Assurance
- Moral Support
- Witness to Legally Binding Verbal Warnings as well as Defence Against False Allegations
- Identification of Training Needs
- Verification of Inspection System Reliability

- Opportunity to Test New Systems

Paired inspection can assist with evaluation of difficult welfare issues, aid in the identification of issues, and reduce the workload through the delegation of tasks. This means that the many tasks of inspection can be shared, from examining animals to taking notes, from taking photographs to communicating with the farmer. Therefore, a second veterinary inspector can assist with practical assessments as well as communication. Furthermore, paired inspection can also communicate to the farmer the gravity of the situation, especially if it is a risk-based inspection. This was noted by inspectors as important, as farmers were more likely to follow up on recommendations.

Furthermore, reflections from administrative staff highlight that they often accompany local inspectors with a view to identifying training needs and as a mode of verification to ensure that overall objectives are achieved. Overall, as the benefits illustrate, paired inspection offers much-needed practical and moral support to inspectors in the field. As identified in my previous research, working alone can negatively impact on job satisfaction so increased opportunities to work with colleagues can both reduce feelings of isolation whilst enhancing the quality, speed, and efficiency of inspection. Whilst many follow-up inspections where a major welfare issue has been identified will be carried out in pairs, this is not standardized across the member states. As major welfare issues may be quite challenging to evaluate for a wide range of reasons, from farmer temperament to the complexity of the farm, paired inspection in such instances would be a highly beneficial way of reducing the inspector's workload and providing support in difficult situations. Within such a supported environment, cooperation and collaboration with colleagues contributes to increased feelings of worth and value.

3.3 Challenges

- Labour Costs
- Personality differences
- Power differential
- Loss of or Reduced Decision-Making Autonomy
- Decreased Flexibility
- Increased Communication Demands
- Role Shifts and Confusion Regarding How to Share the Workload
- Feelings of Insecurity Due to Varying Experience Levels
- Different Philosophies Related to Professional Practice

The main obstacles to paired inspection are related to economic costs, logistical challenges, and interpersonal relationships. Clearly, if an inspection can be conducted by one inspector, it is more economical than sending two inspectors as labour costs are doubled. However, I would argue that the numerous benefits of paired inspection demand a closer assessment of this obstacle. If paired inspection offers better evaluation, improved communication, and potentially better compliance with recommendations, whilst having additional benefits for the workplace environment, the initial economic cost may potentially be a worthwhile investment. Many survey respondents noted the clear challenge of coordinating the busy schedules of inspectors, but this did not mean they were not in favour of paired inspection. Whilst logistical challenges like calendar scheduling may delay the performance of inspections, it was not viewed as

impossible to overcome. However, there is another challenge which is potentially more difficult to negotiate, which are interpersonal relations between inspectors. From different communication styles to potentially an unfamiliar philosophy on how regulation should be carried out, personality differences and contrasting professional styles can hinder cooperation and collaboration. This was also noted in my fieldwork with inspectors, where some inspectors tried to encourage the farmer to ‘buy into’ the benefits of good welfare, whereas others believed that this was not their responsibility (Mc Loughlin, 2022). This can lead to diverse styles of communication with farmers which may not align easily with one another. When working with colleagues, there is a reduction in flexibility and decision-making autonomy as decisions require discussion and agreement. This in turn contributes to greater communication demands and, if there is not sufficient planning, feelings of insecurity and confusion can arise.

These challenges are significant but as the following practical recommendations illustrate, most of these challenges can be prevented or resolved through ongoing dialogue, preparation, and cooperation.

3.4 Practical Recommendations

Taking the example of an inspection of a farm where a major change has been implemented, the following is recommended as a possible routine to incorporate into the standard procedures for preparing, conducting, and concluding inspections. The steps are designed to place an emphasis on cooperation and collaboration to facilitate good communication between inspectors and boost the benefits to professional development and wellbeing. Where possible, the procedure for planning, conducting, and debriefing should be led by the inspectors involved with a view to empowering them to develop their own resources for paired inspection.

Before: Planning

Identifying Shared Objectives

The following is a list of questions that should be discussed by the inspection pair. These will provoke discussion on their inspection approach and style, so as to cultivate a cooperative and collaborative learning and working environment.

How do you want to assess? - It could be beneficial to discuss specific points of assessment to gain an understanding of each other’s evaluative style. Rather than a calibration exercise, this is an opportunity to discuss your prior experience and what you focus on during inspection – specific welfare issues, communication strategies, or effective documentation for example.

How do you want to communicate? – Your communication style has emerged through your personal and educational background and your professional experience. However, it should not be taken for granted as the best way, nor is anyone’s communication style perfect. Therefore, a discussion on how you communicate with the farmer can be beneficial to discuss, especially in response to the specific case. It can be useful to ask each other about your style; are you normally strict or do you emphasize flexibility?

What are your expectations? - This is related to the specific case (see *Paired Planning* below) and your prior experience and background.

How do you organise your files? - A discussion of how inspectors typically organise themselves before, during, and after can help prevent problems in coordination that may arise later. It is also an opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other.

What are your strengths? – This question is designed to build trust and understanding between the pair. It need not be an abstract question. The strength could be related to specific skills around assessment, communication, record-keeping, case management, or it may draw on their personal skills that make a difference in the role.

What skill would you like to develop/improve/experiment with? – Each inspector should identify an area, skill, or task they want to improve, or possibly a style or approach they would like to try. This may be through observing how the other inspector performs the activity, or through taking responsibility for the task and taking feedback on it. It could also be an opportunity to try a different communication style, for example motivational interviewing (Anneberg & Rousing, 2017; Overstreet & Anneberg, 2020). In this case, their colleague can offer them feedback. This means that paired inspection is beneficial in more ways than simply in terms of efficiency. Paired inspection can be a meaningful mode of ongoing peer-to-peer development that encourages shared learning and cooperation, which has added benefits of better collegial relations.

Role clarity

Whilst this may be clearer in training situations, the general sense amongst participants and in the literature is that there should be a lead inspector and a supporting inspector. However, this is just the beginning. Together, the pair must identify how the key tasks will be shared, from notetaking, inspection of issues, photography, communication, and evaluation. This is a critical point of contact for both inspectors, and as collegial relations was noted by many participants as a potential challenge, this dialogue is pivotal to successful paired inspection. It is also worthwhile to alternate the roles, so that the power is balanced between the pair.

Paired Planning

Once schedules have been aligned, the inspectors should take time to familiarize themselves with the specific inspection alone but also together, especially where a major compliance issue was previously identified, where there has been a major change to the farm, or where prior inspections have involved challenging communication with the farmer. This presents a further opportunity to discuss how they plan to approach the farmer, what they will target during the inspection, and what they will be expecting.

During: Conducting the Inspection

Support through Ongoing Dialogue

Whilst the steps taken regarding role clarity and paired planning establish a strong foundation for a successful inspection, the task of a farm visit will no doubt present some challenges and

surprises. Thus, ongoing dialogue is essential. Whilst this can be carried out in the car after the visit, it is much better if any questions, doubts, or ambiguities can be cleared up as and when they arise. However, this must be carried out in a way that it does not isolate or aggravate the farmer which could challenge communication. A united front is essential but open and ongoing dialogue with the farmer is crucial to maintaining good rapport. There may also be a risk of a *good cop-bad cop* dynamic which is not advised, as this suggests that the inspectors are viewing or assessing issues differently.

After: Debriefing and Further Steps

The Debrief

Whilst travelling together facilitates a shared reflection on the inspection, this may not always be possible. It is however beneficial to organise a follow-up meeting within the following two days. This will ensure that any uncertainty can be discussed based on the inspection itself, drawing on immediate reflections, the agreed assessment, and the shared experience. Whilst the evaluation has been agreed with the farmer prior to leaving the farm, this follow-up dialogue is essential to consolidate the broader advantages of paired inspection. The broader benefits include the combining of expertise, the ability to watch and learn from one another, and the development of skills. This is where the benefits of paired inspection extend beyond the specific farm or case and add to employee training and development, worker wellbeing, and the working environment. This debrief should include a discussion of what went well and how certain aspects of the entire process, from planning to conducting and debriefing, could be improved.

4 Concluding Recommendations

EURCAW-Pigs facilitate training by offering suggestions and models for continuing educational courses for inspectors, see the different possibilities in the training page of [EURCAW-Pigs' website](#). This practical guide adds to our ongoing work to support inspectors in their working life. Whilst this is not an exhaustive account of the practical implementation of paired inspection, EURCAW-Pigs illustrates how adequate steps in Planning, Organising, Conducting, and Debriefing can offer inspectors a more efficient and rewarding inspection experience. Paired inspection also benefits collegial relations and can contribute to ongoing professional development and training. By centring cooperation, collaboration, and inspector-led implementation, paired inspection is an exciting opportunity to combine expertise, facilitate peer-to-peer evaluation, and has the potential to improve compliance with inspection.

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About EURCAW-Pigs

EURCAW-Pigs is the first European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare. It focuses on pig welfare and legislation, and covers the entire life cycle of pigs from birth to the end of life. EURCAW-Pigs' main objective is a harmonised compliance with EU legislation regarding welfare in EU Member States. This includes:

- for pig husbandry: Directives 98/58/EC and 2008/120/EC;
- for pig transport: Regulation (EC) No 1/2005;
- for slaughter and killing of pigs: Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009.

EURCAW-Pigs supports:

- inspectors of Competent Authorities (CA's);
- pig welfare policy workers;
- bodies supporting CA's with science, training, and communication.

Website and contact

EURCAW-Pigs' website www.eurcaw-pigs.eu offers relevant and actual information to support enforcement of pig welfare legislation.

Are you an inspector or pig welfare policy worker, or otherwise dealing with advice or support for official controls of pig welfare? Your question is our challenge! Please, send us an email with your question and details and we'll get you in touch with the right expert.



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- **Legal aspects**
European pig welfare legislation that has to be complied with and enforced by EU Member States;
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- **Training**
Training activities and training materials for inspectors, including bringing forward knowledge about ambivalence in relation to change;
- **Good practices**
Good and best practice documents visualising the required outcomes of EU legislation;
- **Demonstrators**
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EURCAW-Pigs receives its funding from DG SANTE of the European Commission, as well as the national governments of the three partners that form the Centre:

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- Aarhus University, Denmark
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