



Report from EURCAWs meeting with National Reference Centres and Supporting Bodies, 2024

General

On 17 September 2024, the four EURCAWs hosted an online meeting with National Reference Centres (NRCs) for Animal Welfare and the National Supporting Bodies (SBs) of Competent Authorities. Over 50 people attended the meeting. When excluding EURCAW members, 40 participants participated, representing 15 EU Member States.

The meeting aimed to increase collaboration and knowledge exchange, allowing NRCs and SBs to present how they support their Member States (MSs) and find ways to further collaborate with the EURCAWs.

Agenda

12:45-13:00	Connecting
13:00-13:05	Opening and welcome (Hans Spolder - EURCAW-Pigs)
13:05-13:30	Short presentations of the 4 EURCAWs
13:30-14:00	Three presentations of National Reference Centres & National Supporting Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teagasc, Ireland (Supporting body), Laura Boyle - Slovenian Centre for Animal Welfare, Ožbalt Podpečan - National Centre Group for Animal Welfare (NCGAW), Agnes Tiret
14:00-14:30	Interactive session: Ways to collaborate together: by NRCs & NSBs with CAs, by NRCs & NSBs with EURCAWs
14:30-14:40	Break
14:40-15:10	Workshop on EURCAWs theme: "Approval/assessment of stunning equipment (at slaughter)" (facilitated by Virginie Michel, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA)
15:10-15:45	EURCAW-specific workshops: Parallel sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing larger litter sizes (EURCAW-Pigs) - Good practices (farm/transport/slaughter) (EURCAW-Poultry-SFA) - Emergency killing (EURCAW-Ruminants & Equines)
15:45-16:00	Wrap up discussion + closure (by rapporteurs of the workshops and Hans Spolder)

Programme

The meeting started with [presentations](#) from the EURCAWs, including an introduction to EURCAW Aqua (designated in January 2024).

As the first of **three presentations of National Reference Centres & National Supporting Bodies**, Laura Boyle presented the role of [Teagasc](#) as a Supporting Body. Teagasc is an Irish state agency providing research, advisory and education in agriculture, horticulture, food and rural development in Ireland. Then, Ožbalt Podpečan presented the National Centre for Animal Welfare ([NCAW](#)) in



Slovenia. The NCAW is involved in projects such as animal welfare measures under the rural development programme and performs animal health visits for cattle welfare purposes. The National Centre Group for Animal Welfare ([NCGAW](#)) was (re)presented by Agnes Turet. Current members are Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Sweden and Spain. For each of the members ongoing and new projects and activities were presented to support their respective Member States.

For the **interactive session at 14:00h**, the objective was to find out current priorities of NRCs and SBs and how these priorities are established e.g., does the CA request welfare topics? Do NRCs and SBs provide training for the CAs? This session further outlined training initiatives of the EURCAWs (slides 86-98 of the general presentation).

The **first workshop session** considered a theme relevant to all EURCAWs: *“Approval and assessment of stunning equipment”* and was presented by Dr Virginie Michel. The aim of the workshop was to have a better understanding about the needs of MSs and the type of work that the EURCAWs can provide on this topic.

Council Regulation No. 1099/2009 states that *“Products marketed or advertised as restraining or stunning equipment shall only be sold when accompanied by appropriate instructions concerning their use in a manner which ensures optimal conditions for the welfare of animals. Those instructions shall also be made publicly available by the manufacturers via the Internet”*.

However, some Member States have raised issues about new equipment being installed, for which proof of efficiency has not been made available. Polling tools were used to request feedback from NRCs and SBs and inform the workshop discussion. Wrap up and highlights of the workshop:



Approval/assessment of stunning equipment

European Union Reference Centre
for Animal Welfare *Poultry SFA*

- Guidance at European/national level to homogenize is needed and wanted
- Simplified checks for stunning systems should be provided
- Checking of correct translation of instructions is also needed for international products
- Previous assessment of the equipment before putting it in the market should be required
- Detailed instructions shall be available at the internet, but they are not

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17 September 2024 www.eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu 1

After a short break, attendees were divided into three **EURCAW- specific workshops**. The themes were:

EURCAW-Pigs: Managing larger litter sizes: Topics that were addressed and discussed:

- The average no. of total born piglets per litter in respective Member States.
- The avg. percentage of mortality out of total born during suckling in respective Member States.
- National guidelines to handle large litters.
- Mitigation strategies being used in Member States: in birth surveillance and assistance, split suckling, cross fostering, nurse sows strategies, supplemental milk, rescue decks.
- Gaps in knowledge/practices that should be addressed.

EURCAW Poultry-SFA: Good practices (farm/transport/slaughter): Since 2021, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA searched for and identified farms and slaughterhouses showing good practices related to the Centre's 5 priority areas on the welfare of poultry and rabbits:

- Broiler chickens on farm.
- Laying hens in alternative housing systems.
- Stunning and killing.
- Rabbits on farm, with a focus on alternative housing systems.
- Turkeys on farm and during transport.



EU Member States may use the *Good Practices Factsheets* for various purposes. E.g., for the preparation/updating of national guidelines, and as support during animal welfare inspections. They are distributed to animal welfare inspectors, stakeholders (e.g., the Egg and Broiler Associations), and farmers (usually after inspections to show examples of good practices). The factsheets are also introduced at training sessions. EURCAW Poultry-SFA invites vet inspectors to contact the Centre when willing to assist with identifying good practices.

EURCAW Ruminants & Equines: Emergency killing. Topics that were addressed and discussed:

- National guidelines on emergency killing of ruminants and/or equines.
- Published outputs on emergency killing of ruminants and or equines.
- Best practices at national level regarding emergency killing.
- Certificate of competence required to perform emergency killing.
- Gaps in training and competencies that should be addressed.

The meeting **finished** with a wrap-up session, including a summary of key points from the EURCAW-specific workshops. The 4 EURCAWs coordinators thanked the participants and the experts for attending the meeting. Participants were invited to fill in a brief satisfaction survey by email.

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

www.eurcaw-aqua.eu/ info@eurcaw-aqua.eu

Satisfaction survey

What worked well? (A selection of answers):

- Having 3 presentations from NRCs/NSBs is great for knowledge exchange.
- Well prepared, timing was perfect.
- Interactive session in the 1st workshop (all EURCAWs) worked well, as there was a larger number of participants.
- Receiving the questions in advance, as for the stunning methods workshop, is appreciated.

What should be changed? (A selection of answers):

- More Member States should participate, as we now had participants from 'only' 15 Members States.



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- There should be more room for discussion – we learned a lot from the speakers and less from the delegates.
 - We should have more time for the workshop discussions.
 - Physical meetings are much better for interaction.
 - The NRC and NSB presenters were asked to prepare questions for the audience: this a good opportunity, but didn't work well because of insufficient time.

Are there new ideas that should be considered for future meetings? (A selection of answers):

- We should focus more on “scientific” collaboration, and less on working in parallel.
- Training and dissemination could be presented together for all EURCAWs, highlighting the commonalities across Centres and the specificities (which often are pilot activities that the other EURCAWs may take on board later on).
- Less focus on the different Centres, and more focus on activities.