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Single Market Programme (SMP Food)

SMP-FOOD-2023-EURL-EURC-AG-IBA Activities of the EU reference laboratories and EU reference centres in 2023-2024

SUBMISSION FORM: DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION
(Annex 1 – Description of the action (part B))

SMP-FOOD-2023-EURL-EURC-AG-IBA

**Activities of the EU reference laboratories
and EU reference centres in 2023-2024**

Applicant shall provide information on each question contained in the Form. The information filled in the Form, shall be clear, concise, consistent and complete.

For questions on the information requested in this Form, please contact: please contact: HADEA-EURL@ec.europa.eu.

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Topic	
Implementation period	1/1/2023 – 31/12/2024

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CONTENT

1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND KEY WORDS.....	5
2. INTRODUCTION	6
3. ACTIVITIES.....	12
3.1 WORK PACKAGE 1 - COORDINATED ASSISTANCE	12
3.2 WORK PACKAGE 2 - ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS.....	15
3.3 WORK PACKAGE 3 - SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STUDIES	18
3.4 WORK PACKAGE 4 - TRAINING COURSES.....	21
3.5 WORK PACKAGE 5 - DISSEMINATING RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INNOVATIONS.....	26
REMARKS.....	27

1. List of abbreviations and key words

BOKU	University of Natural Resources and Life Science
BTSF	Better Training for Safer Food
CA	Competent Authority (including official inspectors and policy workers)
CoP	Community of Practice
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
Dossier	A central source of scientific and technical information and documents on a particular welfare topic, on the EURCAW-Pigs website. A dossier contains the scientific review of a welfare topic, thematic factsheet, welfare Indicator factsheets, inspiring examples (demonstrators), and resources on training.
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
ELGO-VRI	Ellinikos Georgikos Organismos-Dimitra/Veterinary Research Institute
EURCAW-Pigs	European Reference Centre for Animal Welfare - Pigs
EURCAW-Ruminants& Equines	European Reference Centre for Animal Welfare – Ruminants and Equines
EURCAW-Poultry&SFA	European Reference Centre for Animal Welfare - Poultry and other small farmed animals
Indicator	An indicator is a quantitative, measurable parameter (potentially) indicating an animal welfare aspect which is dealt with in the legislation.
INRAE	French National Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment
IZSAM	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale"
MS	Member States of the EU
MT	Management Team
NCP	National Contact Points (Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, Art 20 (2) on welfare at slaughter) and Regulation (EC) 1/2005, Art 24 (2) (on welfare during transport).
NRC	A National Reference Centre for animal welfare, officially designated by a Member State.
Official inspector	Representative of the Competent Authority carrying out official controls related to animal welfare issues
Open norm	Requirement in the EU legislation which does not unambiguously translate into qualitative or quantitative criteria that can be used to check/verify compliance.
Policy worker	Representative of the Competent Authority working on policies related to animal welfare issues.

2. Introduction

1. General

This is the second work programme of the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare-Ruminants & Equines which covers the period 01/01/2023 – 31/12/2024.

In this document we will refer to the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare for Ruminants and Equines as 'EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines'.

To use possible synergies and to avoid duplication of efforts, the work programme will be carried out in collaboration with the EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare for Pigs, and Poultry and other small-farmed animals (SFA).

2. Activity area and role

The role of Reference Centres for Animal Welfare is closely connected with the enforcement of EU animal welfare rules by developing and disseminating knowledge and tools to assist National Competent Authorities (CAs) in performing better official controls. The main target groups are therefore CAs, Official Inspectors and Policy Workers and their 'support bodies' (SBs). The Centres also help stakeholders understand the rules, how to comply with these rules as well as the possible control methods used by CAs. Thus, the Centres' role is strategic and longer term, and they are not acting as an 'emergency service'.

The activities of EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines consider the welfare of ruminants and equines and concerns the following animals:

- Ruminants, meaning
 - domestic animals of the family Bovidae such as bovine (including Bubalus and Bison species), ovine and caprine,
 - other farmed ruminant species such as deer (e.g. Cervus elaphus); and
- Equines, meaning domestic species of the Equidae family such as horses (Equus caballus), donkeys (Equus asinus) and their crossings.

The Centre's activities may also cover domestic camelids such as Llamas and Alpacas.

The Centre's focus is on production animals as well as animals kept for scientific purposes and for leisure. The Centre addresses the entire life cycle including housing and management, transport, slaughter and killing (e.g. for disease control purposes).

The general requirements for the welfare of all farmed animals, whatever the species, are covered by Directive (EC) N° 98/58 concerning the protection of animals kept on farms, Council Regulations (EC) N° 1/2005 and N° 1099/2009 concerning their protection during transport and at slaughter, and Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. For animals that are covered by EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines specific legislation to ensure adequate farming conditions was only established for calves (Council Directive 2008/119/EC).

3. The consortium

EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines is a collaboration between partners from six Member States: Sweden, Italy, France, Austria, Ireland and Greece. The work is carried out by the scientific and technical staff of the following institutions:

- Sweden, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) including the Swedish Centre for Animal Welfare (SCAW)
- Italy, Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale" (IZSAM)
- France, French National Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment (INRAE)

- Austria, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU)
- Ireland, University College Dublin (UCD)
- Greece, Ellinikos Georgikos Organismos-Dimitra/Veterinary Research Institute (ELGO-VRI)

The consortium is coordinated by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) including the Swedish Centre for Animal Welfare (SCAW). The partners have complementary expertise in animal welfare of ruminants and equines with a focus on knowledge creation and dissemination, expert advice and training.

Partners are involved in international collaborative efforts and have extensive European and global networks in the area of animal welfare. They are/were for instance involved in many research projects financed from European framework programmes (e.g. LayWel, Welfare Quality, EconWelfare, EUWelNet, AWARE, HENNOVATION, PATHWAYS, BROILERNET, Re-LIVESTOCK) and grants funded by DG SANTE such as High-Quality Control Posts, Animal Transport Certification, Animal Transport Guides and Care4Dairy. Two of the partners (IZSAM and SLU) are members of the WOAHC Collaborating Centre Consortium for Animal Welfare, and individual experts are members of high-level advisory bodies (e.g. EFSA and committees advising national governments).

The differences between partner countries as well as the extensive international networks allows the partnership to build on broad and complementary experience with relevance for policy and practice on animal welfare within the EU.

4. Way of working

EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines covers a number of species (cattle, other ruminants, and equines) and various husbandry systems and types of animals (e.g. meat, milk, leisure).

The work is carried in close collaboration with EURCAW-Pigs and EURCAW-Poultry-SFA and with the existing National Reference Centres (NRCs). The management teams of the three EURCAWs have regular meetings to exchange information on ongoing work and progress and align activities.

The Centre's coordinator is Harry Blokhuis from SLU, Sweden, assisted by Birgitta Staaf Larsson (SCAW, Sweden). The deputy coordinator is Silvia D'Albenzio from IZSAM, Italy. They are senior scientists with complementary experience in research and advising/training CAs in the domain of animal welfare. They - together - speak five European languages, having one in common. As Project Coordinator, Harry Blokhuis is the interface with the European Commission services and is responsible for monitoring the scientific activities, for maintaining the communication flow within the Consortium as well as with specific partners identified through Europe and for managing financial and legal issues. He chairs management team meetings. In executing administrative, legal and financial tasks, he will be assisted by SLU/SCAW competent officers. The deputy coordinator, Silvia D'Albenzio, is involved in all main decisions and is able to replace the coordinator at any time, when needed. She is aware about the whole EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines functioning and able to liaise with the Commission at any time on request. This organisation will guarantee that the Commission always has a link to the Centre able to take decisions and make recommendations on request.

The consortium partners in the different Members States are represented in the Management Team (MT) that is responsible for the overall management of the Centre. The main task of the MT is to manage and coordinate the Centre to ensure quality of deliverables within the constraints of timeframe and budget.

The MT has monthly meetings, generally via conference call (ZOOM meetings), to discuss progress of key activities (planned versus actual) and output, timing, resources and performance and takes corrective action if required. The members of the MT are:

- Sweden: Prof. Harry Blokhuis (coordinator), SLU and Birgitta Staaf Larsson, SCAW
- Italy: Dr. Silvia D'Albenzio, IZSAM

- France: Dr. Isabelle Veissier, INRAE
- Austria: Prof. Christoph Winckler, BOKU
- Ireland: Prof. Alison Hanlon, UCD
- Greece: Dr. Evangelia Sossidou, ELGO-VRI

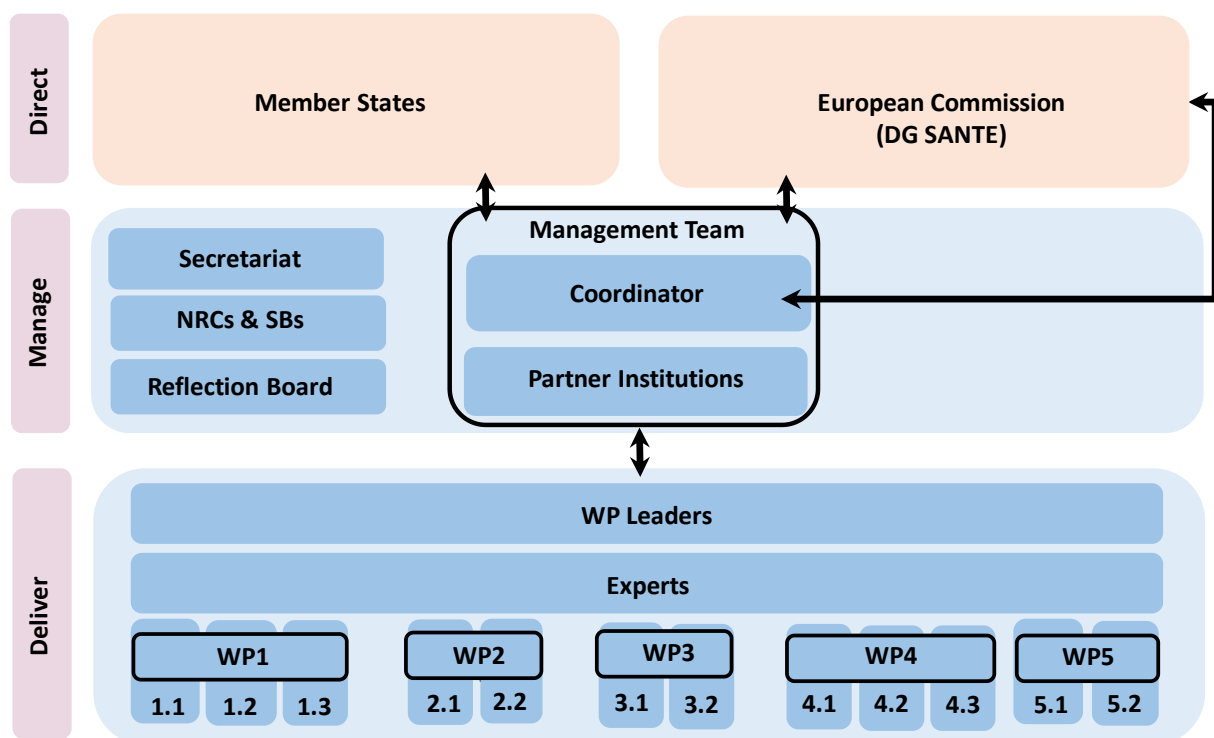
The MT has regular meetings with the European Commission (DG SANTE).

The activities of the centre are organized in five activity categories (WPs) defining the work program. Each WP is coordinated by an MT member:

1. Coordinated assistance
2. Animal welfare indicators, methods for assessment and improvement
3. Scientific and technical studies
4. Training courses
5. Dissemination research findings and innovations

The Sub-activities are also coordinated by MT members. MT members are responsible for ensuring that the (Sub-)activities are of suitable academic rigor and that deliverables are produced in a timely manner.

The figure below shows the organizational structure of EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines.



5. Preparation of this workplan

In 2022 EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines made an inventory (WP 1) of the views of National Competent Authorities (CAs) and Support Bodies (SBs) regarding the most pressing welfare issues. The Management Team then made a first prioritisation of issues based on 1) this inventory, 2) an analysis of ongoing projects to prevent doubling of effort, 3) how general an issue occurs (on farms and in countries) and 4) the relevance for different species and types of animal within the remit of the Centre,

where issues with relevance for different species and types of animal were prioritised. Obviously, available capacity and budget were also taken into account.

Input to the Work Programme was also received from DG SANTE, National Competent Authorities (CAs), National Reference Centres (NRCs) and Supporting Bodies (SBs) and the Centre's Reflection Board.

The Farm to Fork Strategy, adopted by the Commission on 20 May 2020 announced that the Commission will, by the end of 2023, revise the animal welfare legislation to align it with the latest scientific evidence. In addition, the revision will broaden its scope, make its enforcement easier and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare. The Commission plans to revise the following pieces of legislation: the Directive on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, four Directives laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens, broilers, pigs and calves; and the Regulations on the protection of animals during transport and at the time of killing.

This Work Programme also aims to contribute to this revision by reviewing knowledge on specific welfare issues and providing scientific and technical expertise for the development and application of animal welfare indicators in relation to these issues.

To prevent doubling of effort, recent reports and ongoing projects/working groups, covering welfare issues relevant in the context of this Work Programme were considered, such as:

Reports

- Fitness for transport of end of production dairy cows (in Dutch). Report by the office for risk assessment & research of the Dutch Food and Consumer Safety Authority (NVWA). 2022, 84pp.
- EFSA AHAW Panel (EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare), Nielsen SS, Alvarez J, Bicout DJ, Calistri P, Canali E, Drewe JA, Garin-Bastuji B, Gonzales Rojas JL, GortazarSchmidt C, Michel V, Miranda Chueca MA, Padalino B, Pasquali P, Roberts HC, Spoolder H, Stahl K, Velarde A, Viltrop A, Winckler C, Earley B, Edwards S, Faucitano L, Marti S, Miranda de La Lama GC, Nanni Costa L, Thomsen PT, Ashe S, Mur L, Van der Stede Y and Herskin M, 2022. Scientific Opinion on the welfare of equidae during transport. EFSA Journal 2022, 20(9):7444, 113 pp. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7444>.
- EFSA AHAW Panel (EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare), Nielsen SS, Alvarez J, Bicout DJ, Calistri P, Canali E, Drewe JA, Garin-Bastuji B, Gonzales Rojas JL, GortazarSchmidt C, Michel V, Miranda Chueca MA, Padalino B, Pasquali P, Roberts HC, Spoolder H, Stahl K, Velarde A, Viltrop A, Winckler C, Earley B, Edwards S, Faucitano L, Marti S, de La Lama GCM, CostaLN, Thomsen PT, Ashe S, Mur L, Van der Stede Y and Herskin M, 2022. Welfare of cattle during transport. EFSA Journal 2022;20(9):7442, 121 pp. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7442>.
- EFSA AHAW Panel (EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare), Nielsen SS, Alvarez J, Bicout DJ, Calistri P, Canali E, Drewe JA, Garin-Bastuji B, Gonzales Rojas JL, Gortazar Schmidt C, Michel V, Miranda Chueca MA, Padalino B, Pasquali P, Roberts HC, Spoolder H, Stahl K, Velarde A, Viltrop A, Winckler C, Earley B, Edwards S, Faucitano L, Marti S, Miranda de La Lama GC, Nanni Costa L, Thomsen PT, Ashe S, Mur L, Van der Stede Y and Herskin M, 2022. Scientific Opinion on the welfare of small ruminants during transport. EFSA Journal 2022;20(9):7404, 101 pp. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7404>.

Ongoing research projects

- Best practices for the welfare of dairy calves and cows (CARE4DAIRY)
CARE4DAIRY aims to identify and disseminate best practices to increase the welfare of dairy calves, heifers and cows and end-of-career animals. The project adopts a farmer-centred approach with strong involvement of other stakeholders.
The consortium consists of five partners from an animal welfare science background, who are involved in EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines, and two partners specialised in applied research and bridging sciences with practices on animal welfare.
The main deliverables of CARE4DAIRY are four best practice guidelines (for dairy calves, heifers and cows, and end-of-career animals) together with a report addressing the dissemination strategy pillars for success.

- Facilitating Innovations for Resilient Livestock Farming Systems (Re-Livestock)

The overall objective of Re-Livestock is to evaluate and mobilize the adoption of innovative practices applied cross-scale (animal, herd, farm, sector and region) to reduce GHG emissions from livestock farming systems and increase their capacity to dealing with potential climate change impacts. To reach that aim, Re-Livestock has brought together the excellence scientific expertise in Europe and Australia and across disciplines, including co-innovation, animal feeding, breeding, welfare, farm management, environmental and socio-economic assessment and policy analysis, to develop novel and scientifically supported integrated approaches specific for different dairy, beef and pig systems and geographic regions in the context of climate change. Strong collaboration with industry stakeholders to identify the innovations and to co-design the validation will ensure relevance and maximise the adoption of best practices. National groups of farmers (case studies) and ‘stakeholder forums’ together with a ‘European multi-actor platform’ will allow for an engaged co-design of transition pathways whilst ‘learning from innovation networks’ will allow for the testing and sharing of latest innovative solutions. A ‘community of practice’ will extend the multi-actor approach to a broad range of stakeholders.

- Pathways for transitions to sustainability in livestock husbandry and food systems (PATHWAYS)

PATHWAYS is about identifying and increasing sustainable practices along the supply and production chains of the European livestock sector and aims to reduce environmental impacts while addressing societal demands for safe, nutritious and affordable meat and dairy products. Coordinated by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and comprising 28 partners from 12 countries, this 5-year (2021-2026) € 9-million Horizon 2020 project contributes to the EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy which is at the heart of the EU Green Deal. PATHWAYS will be implemented through four key stages. First PATHWAYS will define visions for the development of the livestock sector, and current drivers and barriers for sustainability and human nutrition within Europe. In the second stage these visions will be translated into scenarios and a holistic evaluation of current/future systems will be developed. In the third stage scenarios and innovations will be assessed while in the fourth and final stage the project will identify solutions and development pathways for a holistic re-design across agri-food chains.

- Integrating innovative TECHNOLOGIES along the value Chain to improve small ruminant welfare management (TechCare)

This project is funded under H2020 and aims to develop appropriate business models using innovative technologies to improve welfare management for all EU small ruminant (SR) systems, to enable stakeholders to choose animal welfare- friendly products. SRs play a key socio-economic role in Europe, especially in harsh environments where innovative technology is not much implanted. SRs are often managed as a flock/herd, allowing only average welfare states to be considered. Innovative technologies are a unique opportunity to monitor and improve SR welfare management at the individual or flock/herd level, along the value chain. Based on SR welfare state-of-the-art, TechCare undertakes a multi-actor approach to eCAPsulate stakeholders’ expectations in terms of welfare and innovative technologies, and provide them with adapted solutions, in a co-design approach. TechCare will cover all stages of SR production and build novel welfare approaches to develop and validate tools, early warning systems, algorithms and indicators for efficient identification of welfare issues, including positive welfare, to include them in welfare management models. The innovative technologies identified in TechCare will pass different stages of validation, from prototyping to large scale studies. TechCare identified solutions will therefore be replicable and adapted to different SR systems, production purposes, and value chains, for improvement of SR welfare management EU-wide. Business models will be constructed and validated with stakeholders. Dissemination, communication and exploitation materials will be produced and widely shared for easy use of TechCare solutions, ensuring their uptake and relevance to all sectors and stakeholders. TechCare will offer a durable improvement of SR welfare management using innovative technologies along the whole value chain and across the EU, and will act as an example in terms of approach and solutions for other species and production systems

Reports and ongoing work of Thematic Sub-groups of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare

- Sub-group on the welfare of calves and dairy cows
- Sub-group on animal transport
- Sub-group on animal welfare at the time of killing
- Sub-group on animal welfare labelling

EFSA Working groups

- AHAW Working Group on welfare of calves
- AHAW Working Group on welfare of dairy cows

WOAH (formerly OIE) Platform on Animal Welfare

In 2022, EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines laid the foundations of a synergy with the Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) which provides a sustainable collaboration mechanism for regional activities to support and empower Veterinary Services to take action on animal welfare. The Platform is governed by a Steering Group, under the supervision of the Regional Commission for Europe. Both SCAW/SLU and IZSAM participate in the Steering Group and support the activities of the Platform. Recently, SCAW/SLU and IZSAM (together forming a WOAH Collaborating Centre for Animal Welfare), carried out a survey on the priority item identified by the WOAH Regional Commission for Europe: “Long distance transport of live animals: OIE standards and best practices including societal perception and communication aspects”. The outcomes will be presented at the 30th Conference of the WOAH Regional Commission for Europe scheduled for October 2022 in Catania, Italy. The main outcomes relevant for the activities of the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines will be shared within the Consortium to address relevant activities. A meeting to present in detail the outcomes of the activity of the centre in the first two-year period and the 2023 – 2024 Work Programme is also in the pipeline.

After the two years of this workplan, an auto-evaluation of the Centre will be performed, describing the achievements and fulfilment of the objectives. The results of this evaluation will be sent to the European Commission before 31st January 2025.

3. Activities

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 - Article 96:

The European Union reference centre for animal welfare shall be responsible for the following supporting tasks insofar as they are included in the reference centres' annual or multiannual work programmes that have been established in conformity with the objectives and priorities of the relevant work programmes adopted by the Commission in accordance with Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/690:

3.1 Work Package 1 - Coordinated assistance

Article 96 (a): Providing scientific and technical expertise within the scope of their mission including, where appropriate in the form of coordinated assistance, to relevant national support networks and bodies in the area governed by the rules on the welfare requirements for animals.

Sub-activity 1.1 Maintaining a central contact point for technical information requested by Competent Authorities (CAs) and coordination of the Centre's work

Introduction:

EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines provides scientific and technical expertise and answers to technical and scientific requests from the CAs and their supporting bodies. The work in this Sub-activity focuses on maintaining efficient response routines and the coordination of the work of the Centre. This Sub-activity provides the basis for the functioning of the Centre and requires significant resource inputs.

Objective:

To provide CAs with scientific and technical information on their request
To maintain a systematic and easily accessible repository of questions and responses
To coordinate the work of the Centre

Lead Partner: SLU

Achievements so far:

The MT have had monthly digital meetings via conference call (ZOOM meetings). During these meetings, the progress of key activities has been discussed, as well as other emerging issues. Due to delays creating the EURCAW website, all functions are not yet in place, although the official EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines email address info@eurcaw-ruminants-equines.eu is in place and used. Procedure documents have been discussed and determined in collaboration with the other EURCAWs to have a common outline between the Centres

Description:

This Sub-activity aims to give CAs access to scientific and technical information necessary for the correct application of EU animal welfare legislation. The combined knowledge and expertise of the Centre's partners and their scientific and technical networks assures that updated, reliable and consistent technical data, research findings, new techniques and expertise are available. These are made accessible for CAs, Policy Workers and their 'support bodies' through species-specific e-mail addresses (e.g. info@eurcaw-ruminants-equines.eu) to which requests for technical and scientific advice on animal welfare, which are referred to as 'Questions to EURCAW' or Q2E, can be directed. EURCAW will answer to a requestor within three working days to acknowledge receipt of the question. If necessary, the question will be clarified between the requestor and EURCAW. A team of EURCAW ad hoc experts is then created in relation to the Q2Es (i.e. the authors), and a First author is identified to

write a draft reply that is reviewed by one or more members of the Core Team with regard to scientific, technical, and legal issues. In parallel, the Scientific Coordinator will submit the draft reply to the relevant contact person for DG SANTE for information. The First author will be asked to consider the suggestions from the reviewer(s) of the Core Team, and produce the final draft of the answer to Q2E. All suggestions from the reviewers of the Core Team, regarding the document, as well as changes made to the draft documents must be written and stored to ensure transparency. If the Core Team agrees to this Final draft, the authors prepare the Final document for publication on the EURCAW website. This includes e.g. an English language check, picture credits, correct reference list, acknowledgements and making sure the right template is used for publication.

In line with the Quality Assurance process, EURCAW will agree with the requester on the time the answer will be finalized and this will depend on the extent of the question.

If the final answer is expected to require more than 15 working days, the Core Team may contact the requestor and provide a revised indication of the publication date.

The final answer will be sent to the requestor and DG SANTE and published on the website. Responses are made available for use by all members of the target groups through a repository at the Centre's website. Since questions may have a generic character (not linked to a specific species), similar questions may be addressed to EURCAW-Pigs and EURCAW-PSA and a collaborative approach will be developed.

In cases where issues related to slaughter and killing are involved, the Centre contacts the national scientific support functions (often referred to as National Contact Points, NCPs) in possession of relevant knowledge and information, in the countries with well-known expertise in relation to the nature of the question. It will also be possible for the Centre to discuss various slaughter-related questions with the entire NCP 1099/2009 network, which is currently organised by EFSA, to complement activities already taking place in that constellation.

The Swedish Centre for Animal Welfare (SCAW within SLU) acts in a similar way at a national level in Sweden and is also the National Contact Point for slaughter (Article 20 of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing). SCAW also builds on international coordinating experience as a leading partner in NordCAW, a Nordic collaboration of national centres for animal welfare (technical support bodies on animal welfare).

Expected output:

- Coordination of Centre activities
- Maintenance of effective procedures for coordinated assistance (and dissemination of updates)
- Maintenance of database of experts
- Maintenance of repository of expert responses to requests for scientific and technical information

Duration:

This Sub-activity will run continuously.

Sub-activity 1.2 Effective networking across CAs, supporting bodies and policy workers

Introduction:

Effective networks across CAs, SBs and policy workers are essential to share and harmonise scientific and technical expertise among these actors. Such networks are also relevant to align the Centre's activities with the main concerns and expectations of the target groups and to inform its work planning.

Objective:

To maintain effective interactive networks across CAs, SBs and policy workers.

Lead Partner: BOKU

Achievements so far:

An up-to-date inventory of contact persons in the Member States regarding CAs, SBs and NRCs. Presentations of EURCAW- Ruminants&Equines at national level, e.g. workshop with NCAs in Greece (June 2022), annual meeting of the Italian National Reference Centre (June 2022), national stakeholder meeting in Austria (September 2021).

The second common EURCAW meeting for the National Reference Centres and the Supporting Bodies to the National Competent Authorities (September 2022) were organized, led by EURCAW-Ruminants &Equines in collaboration with EURCAW-Pigs and EURCAW-Poultry-SFA. There were 70 participants from 20 Member States, in addition to representatives from DG SANTE.

Description:

The inventory of the persons involved in CAs, SBs, and policy making for the various species in the Member States as well as their structural relations is regularly updated. This also includes existing networks involving these actors, for example NordCAW, a well-established communication platform between animal welfare centres in the Nordic region, the network of contact points for Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (stunning and killing) and thematic sub-groups established within the EU Platform on Animal Welfare (e.g. on animal transport). The possibilities and effectiveness of participation of the Centre in such networks is evaluated in the light of the Centre's remit.

A yearly meeting is organised with national representatives of the CAs to evaluate the ongoing work and identify the main concerns and expectations of the target groups. Once in three years, this meeting is a physical meeting. The other two years the meeting is web-based. A similar practice is followed in the other two reference centres, resulting in one physical meeting per year for these target groups. A physical meeting is scheduled for 2023 for EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines.

Web-based meetings with NRCs and SBs are organised each year together with the other centres. This meeting may be combined with the first meeting described in Sub-activity 1.3 to identify the main concerns and expectations of the target groups.

Expected output:

- Up-to-date map of persons and structures involved in CAs, SBs, and policy making for the various species in the Member States
- A yearly meeting with CAs
- A yearly meeting with NRCs and SBs
- Effective interactive networks across NCAs, SBs and policy workers

Duration: Months 1-24

Sub-activity 1.3 Identification of concerns of target groups

Introduction:

Identification of concerns of target groups is essential to align the Centre's activities with the main expectations of the target groups and to inform its work planning.

Objective:

To identify and prioritise the main concerns and expectations of the target groups.

Lead Partner: SLU

Achievements so far:

A questionnaire was sent to Competent Authorities during spring 2022, to explore the future expectations from EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines. In total, NCAs from 25 out of 27 Member States responded to the questionnaire. The outcome was discussed with DG SANTE.

A reflection board was set up consisting of well-respected representatives of civil society and business and professional organisations whose collective interests cover most facets of the EURCAW.

Description:

An inventory of the main concerns and expectations of the NCAs, policy workers and their SBs will be organised in the second year of the Work Programme 2023-2024. Further discussions in meetings with the target groups (as described in 1.2), the NRCs and the SBs, and DG SANTE will be organised.

In this context also physical meetings with the Reflection Board are scheduled once a year. This Board does not represent the main target group of the EURCAW but consists of well-respected representatives of civil society and business or professional organisations whose collective interests cover most facets of the EURCAW.

The Board is established to reflect on technical aspects of EURCAW's activities and provide strategic guidance and support to the Management Team in such issues.

Expected output:

An overview of the target groups' main concerns and expectations

Duration:

This Sub-activity starts in M11 and ends in M 17

List of Indicators WP1:

- Number of technical and scientific feedback provided by the EURC based on Commission enquires
- Number of enquires requested from national support networks and bodies and competent authorities. Number and quality of replies provided by the EURC

3.2 Work Package 2 - Animal welfare indicators

Article 96 (b): Providing scientific and technical expertise for the development and application of the animal welfare indicators referred to in point (e) of Article 21(8);

The Article 21 (8) (e) refers to possible rules on the cases and conditions where official controls to verify compliance with animal welfare requirements may include the use of specific animal welfare indicators based on measurable performance criteria, and the design of such indicators on the basis of scientific and technical evidence.

Article 96 (c): Developing or coordinating the development of methods for the assessment of the level of welfare of animals and of methods for the improvement of the welfare of animals.

Sub-activity 2.1 Identification of suitable welfare indicators in the context of EU welfare regulations

Introduction:

There is specific EU legislation to safeguard animal welfare regarding husbandry of calves (Council Directive 2008/119/EC), transport (1/2005) and slaughter (1099/2009) of farmed animals. For the husbandry of other species and animal categories covered in EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines such as dairy cows, beef cattle or horses, the general rules laid down in Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes apply. Furthermore, the Council of Europe

Convention on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes and its recommendations have to be taken into account.

The compliance with legislation can be checked using resource-based or management-based indicators directly referring to the minimum requirements provided in the specific regulations, but also using animal-based measures or welfare performance criteria. In addition, qualitative terms in the legislation (open norms such as ‘appropriate bedding’) require suitable indicators to evaluate compliance. Animal-based measures may provide a valid tool to identify welfare problems and have already been developed for use on farm for the major species, in the course of animal transport as well as at the slaughterhouse (e.g. WQ, AWIN, EFSA), while for some species that are kept in low numbers (such as buffaloes, bison, farmed deer, camelids) less information on welfare indicators is available. However, a harmonised approach is needed to ensure a reliable implementation within as well as between Member States.

Objectives:

To identify indicators that can help official inspectors identify welfare issues in ruminants and equines
To identify methods for assessment tailored for official inspections

Lead Partner: BOKU

Achievements so far:

To date EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines has produced two thematic factsheets on open norms which had been identified for calves which are each accompanied by an indicator factsheet (Design of partitions for individually kept calves allowing direct visual and tactile contact; Provision of adequate feed and feeding frequency).

Description:

Under this workplan we will address two areas that are of high priority across different species:

- Indicators to assess fitness for transport, i.e. measures and criteria for distinguishing animals fit/unfit for transport
- Indicators to assess the outcomes of painful and stressful procedures such as disbudding, dehorning, tail docking and handling

Identification of indicators will be based on scientific publications, as well as on existing guidelines and indicator schemes already in use in MS. Preference will be given to animal-based indicators and emphasis will be put on validity, reliability and feasibility for use by official inspectors. Also, the use of existing databases (e.g. health records) or of sensor data generated from precision livestock farming approaches (e.g. activity measurements) will be scrutinized

Furthermore, EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines will continue to identify and describe other relevant indicators for newly identified welfare topics for which welfare indicators are needed.

The outcomes will be discussed with CAs, policy makers and supporting bodies identified in Sub-activity 1.2 and eventually provided for training activities in WP4 and dissemination in WP5.

Expected output:

Indicator factsheets

- Indicators to assess fitness for transport, i.e. measures and criteria for distinguishing animals fit/unfit for transport.
- Indicators to assess the outcomes of painful and stressful procedures such as disbudding, dehorning, tail docking and handling.

At least 6 indicator factsheets will be produced.

Duration: Months 1 to 2

Sub-activity 2.2 Documentation on targeted welfare improvements

Introduction:

Once welfare problems have been detected, good and best practices are required to mitigate the problems and to prevent them in the long term. There is a substantial body of evidence regarding welfare hazards, but it requires a thorough review in terms of effectiveness and feasibility before interventions can be recommended and disseminated.

Objective:

To produce quick and easy overviews on welfare improvements

Lead Partner: INRAE

Achievements so far:

To date EURAW-Ruminants&Equines produced two thematic fact sheets for calves: one on the design of partitions between calves and one on the frequency and quantity of feeding. The thematic and indicator fact sheets produced in Sub-activity 2.1 contain practical approaches on how to check the items addressed.

Description:

CAs and inspectors need to engage in a dialogue with stakeholders to help them improve animal welfare and by thus adhere to legislative requirements. This task addresses welfare problems that need particular attention in farming, transport and/or slaughter and for which enough knowledge exists to propose remedial solutions. We will produce thematic factsheets on ways to solve (or at least reduce) targeted welfare problems. The knowledge summarised in the fact sheets will derive from reviews prepared in WP3 of the centre or reviews from other sources such as the CARE4DAIRY project on best practices for the dairy sector.

The thematic fact sheets will be used to prepare training materials (WP4). They will be included in dossiers to be disseminated (WP5).

Expected output:

Thematic fact sheets

- Fact sheets on the enrichment of animals' living environment: an introductory fact sheet and fact sheets per species with at least one fact sheet for cattle, one for small ruminants and one for equines
- Fact sheets for dairy cattle, in connection with CARE4DAIRY, especially on: improvement of welfare during painful or stressful procedures such as castration, hoof care to reduce leg and hoof disorders and colostrum provision to calves
- A fact sheet on confinement and restriction of movement and social contact in horses.

At least 8 thematic fact sheets will be produced

Duration: Months 1 to 24

3.3 Work Package 3 - Scientific and technical studies

Article 96 (d): Carrying out scientific and technical studies on the welfare of animals used for commercial or scientific purposes;

Sub-activity 3.1 Identification of knowledge available and gaps regarding high priority farm animal welfare issues

Introduction:

CAs and especially their inspectors are expected to have a good understanding of farming, transport and slaughterhouse practices and a good knowledge of the biology and needs of the various species. Inspectors can be supported by scientific knowledge on animal welfare, including the physiological and behavioural needs of animals, and the impacts of living conditions or practices. Such science-based information will help them in dialogue with farmers, drivers and slaughterhouse staff, especially to explain the scientific background of legislation and to provide guidance on how to meet legislative requirements or, in more general terms, how to improve animal welfare. This is particularly important when dealing with 'open norms' in the legislation. Reviews will be prepared on topics for which there is large scope for improvements from the actual practices. They will be based on the most recent advances in science and will take into account present practices and how they can be improved.

Objectives:

- To review the legislation in relation to prioritised issues and the knowledge available to propose remedial solutions to them
- To identify gaps in knowledge preventing sustainable remedial solutions

Lead Partner: INRAE

Achievements so far:

To date EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines worked on the enrichment of the environment.

It produced several reviews:

- An introductory review explaining what is enrichment, the different types of enrichment, and how to check that the effects of an enrichment
- A review on physical, occupational, and cognitive enrichment
- A review on sensorial and nutritional enrichment
- A review on relational enrichment, covering social enrichment, maternal enrichment, enrichment by the company of animals from other species, and human enrichment

The reviews are organised across species, highlighting common aspects and mechanisms

Description:

Following up from discussions with CAs and DG-SANTE we will, in 2023-24, focus on the following topics:

- Thermal comfort, which is now a pressing issue in all European countries due to climate change
- Quality/quantity of stockman ship
- Restriction to or inadequate pasture and grazing access
- Working equids (e.g. training for races, shows, working in riding schools, draught animals, etc.)

For each issue a group of experts from the centre will be put in place. The existing International, European or national legislation or recommendations regarding the welfare issues will be reviewed from the information available on the web. At the same time, the available scientific knowledge will be searched from Web of Science and PubMed. The technical knowledge will be looked for by consultation of experts and browsing on the web. From these reviews, the bottlenecks in legislation, the gaps in knowledge or the barriers in implementation will be identified.

Each review will first provide background information describing the biological relevance of the topic as well as legislative requirements (if any). Reviews will be short (about 10 pp). They will highlight the most important issues, possibly visualising them with illustrations (figures, tables, pictures, infographics, etc.).

The content of reviews will be used to develop inspector targeted documents which will describe areas for verification of compliance (indicator fact sheet in Sub-activity 2.1) or provide help to identify room for improvement (thematic fact sheets in Sub-activity 2.2). The reviews are not directed primarily to inspectors, although they will be available in dossiers for those who look for additional information.

Expected output:

Scientific reviews on prioritised topics (at least 4)

Duration: Months 1 to 18

Sub-activity 3.2 Design of scientific and technical studies to fill in gaps in knowledge

Introduction:

Gaps in knowledge and needs for further studies will be identified and communicated, forming the basis of potential research programs.

Objectives:

To set up an agenda for the realisation of scientific and technical studies to address gaps in knowledge identified in Sub-activity 3.1 or WP2

- To identify individual experts or groups able to carry studies to fill in gaps in knowledge to overcome pressing welfare issues
- To identify funding resources that can be used to conduct these studies

Lead Partner: SLU

Achievements so far:

To date, EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines prepared scientific reviews on the enrichment of the animals' environment (see above). Needs for further studies were identified. A call was circulated among experts that worked on these reviews. Proposals for further studies were collected.

Description:

As for Sub-activity 3.1, a subgroup of experts from EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines will work on each issue for which a need for scientific or technical studies has been identified in Sub-activity 3.1. These working groups may be the same as in Sub-activity 3.1. These groups will refine the scientific or technical questions so that studies can be appropriately designed and lead to a proposal for remedial solutions to a given welfare issue. Such studies may include the use of databases to monitor progress that may be obtained when a remedial solution identified by EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines is implemented by European MS.

The groups will then identify the needs to carry out such studies: expertise on a given species and topic (e.g. farming, transport, and slaughter), disciplines (e.g. animal behaviour, health, social sciences including economics), premises (e.g. experimental farms with adequate monitoring of the animals, availability of animals of the species of interest). Then the best experts to conduct the studies will be selected from EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines, taking into account their scientific expertise and also their access to technical support and infrastructures. Additional funding from external sources (e.g. national funding from research councils or charities, or funding from EU framework programmes) will be sought to further support these studies.

Only then a precise agenda for the realisation of scientific and technical studies can be made, specifying the questions to be addressed, the type of work planned, who is responsible of the work, and the timing and funding for this work.

From the work undertaken in 2022 and the responses to the call we circulated, it is likely that studies will be carried out in 2023-2024 on the perception of enrichments by stakeholders and on the impact of enrichment on small ruminants. The precise program will be set up early 2023.

Expected output:

- Agenda for scientific and technical studies to be carried out in order to provide appropriate answers to the welfare issues to be addressed by the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines.
- Complementary studies carried out on environmental enrichment

Duration: Months 1 to 24

List of Indicators WP3:

- Number and quality of technical and scientific studies and materials developed and/or updated by the EURC AW

3.4 Work Package 4 - Training courses

Article 96 (e): conducting training courses for staff of the national scientific support networks or bodies, for staff of the competent authorities and for experts from third countries;

Article 96 (e): conducting training courses for staff of the national scientific support networks or bodies, for staff of the competent authorities and for experts from third countries;

Sub-activity 4.1 Keep record of relevant training initiatives in MSs

Introduction:

Under the training domain, the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines intends to continue the approach adopted in the first work programme that was characterised by the development of two complementary components aimed at providing the Centre with effective tools to constantly analyse high priority issues and – at the same time – promote, support and facilitate training in MSs concerning the outcomes of WP2 and WP3 to spread new knowledge and build specific capacities to increase the welfare of the concerned animals in the EU.

A very common weakness of structured and complex training systems (whatever theme they cover) is the impact assessment and subsequent implementation of follow-up actions to reach the expected training goals, established during the training planning phase to determine necessary/urgent changes in a specific sector. This is the consequence of a limited or partial evaluation of the training itself and makes it difficult to design subsequent training initiatives addressed to the same or related training scope.



Training Management Cycle

All the consortium partners will be involved in WP4 with a balanced and complementary ratio that will draw value from the specific skills of individual entities.

Objectives:

To set the state of the art of the training concerning the welfare of ruminants and equines in the EU, provide recommendations for improvements and stimulate collaboration between MSs as concerns high-quality training initiatives in the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines domain.

Lead Partner: IZSAM

Achievements so far:

Resulting from the first work programme, a permanent and dynamic web-based platform for training need assessment (TraNAP) is under development. It represents the first component of a permanent training observatory that the Centre intends to develop progressively to define its training strategy to address and support relevant training activities in Member States.

Description:

A web-based repository of training initiatives focusing on the welfare of ruminants and equines in the EU will be created. With the support of the CAs, the NRCs and SBs, this tool will be fed at country level. The data collected will provide the basis for a quantitative and qualitative analysis of relevant training organised in MSs in the last five years based on some key-variables (topic, duration, target group(s), provider, methodologies, materials, tutors' profile etc.). Specific information useful for a SWOT analysis will also be included. Finally, the identification of high- quality training initiatives will be included. To assure a dynamic continuity of the monitoring of the training trends in the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines areas of competence, bi-yearly, in conjunction with the following EURCAW's work programme, the survey will be re-launched and the report updated. Finally, a digital library concerning scalable high-quality training initiatives in MSs will be created and published into the training section of the EURCAW website. This will be refreshed every two years. The coordination and dissemination activities of this work programme will promote cross-cutting between MSs as concerns high-quality training initiatives in the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines domain.

Expected output:

- EURCAW-Ruminants & Equines web-based repository for relevant training in the EU.
- Report concerning the state of the art of the training on the welfare of ruminants and equines in the EU
- Digital library concerning scalable high-quality training initiatives

Duration: Months 1 to 18

Sub-activity 4.2 Evaluation of targeted training initiatives to increase the quality of the training offer in the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines domain

Introduction:

The numerous training initiatives concerning animal welfare organised in MSs by various providers (CAs, local competent authorities, universities, research institutes, umbrella organisations of business operators, professional veterinary societies, NGOs etc.) are not centrally registered nor monitored and assessed as concerns the impact they generate.

This work programme intends to lay the foundations of a permanent European system aimed at assessing the impact of the training projects/activities organised in MSs in regard to the welfare of ruminants and equines. It could pioneer an approach easily scalable to the other EURCAWs to complete the overview with other species.

Objective:

To establish a standard model for the training evaluation in the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines domain and scale it to relevant training providers in MSs

Lead Partner: IZSAM

Achievements so far:

A permanent and dynamic web-based platform for the training need assessment (TraNAP) is under development. It represents the first component of a permanent training observatory that the Centre intends to develop progressively to define its training strategy and address and support the relevant training activities in Member States.

Description:

As graphically described in the figure above, the training management cycle can be divided into three major phases: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. The results of the training Evaluation are reflected in the next phase of the training Planning to improve future training programmes.

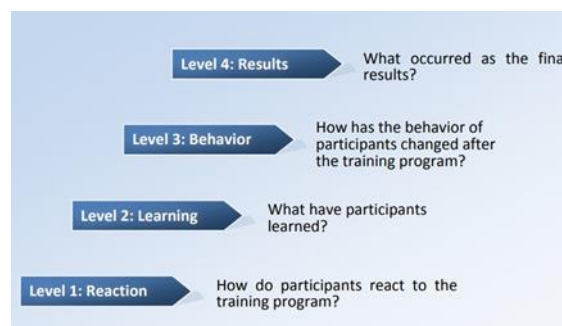
The processes of training evaluation can be divided into five steps:



The following can be identified as the purposes of evaluating training programmes:

- A) to determine whether the objectives of the training were achieved;
- B) to see how the knowledge and skills learned in the training are put into practice;
- C) to assess whether the training programmes were properly implemented;
- D) to assess the results and impacts of the training programmes;
- E) to assess the effectiveness of the training programmes;
- F) To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the training programmes;
- G) To assess whether the training programmes were suitable in terms of the training contents, timing, participants and other aspects;
- H) To find problems of the training programmes and solutions for improvement.

In Sub-activity 4.2 the Consortium will create ad hoc electronic tools based on the Kirkpatrick “four levels of evaluation” method in which capacity building is achieved in four sequential steps (see figure below).



Four levels of evaluation

These will be tested within the three EURCAWs and consequently adopted. Furthermore, they will be presented to the CAs during one of the joint annual meetings and disseminated to the relevant training providers in MSs.

Expected output:

Four electronic forms for training evaluation to investigate one by one the levels proposed by the Kirkpatrick method.

Duration: Months 10 to 20

Sub-activity 4.3 Creation and validation of course blueprints for effective training

Introduction:

In parallel, similarly to what was already foreseen in the first work programme, training blueprints concerning the outcomes of Activities 2 and 3 will be produced and tested during thematic train the trainers' sessions that will involve delegates from each EU country. The blueprints edited as Training Toolkits will be further disseminated via the official EUCAW-Ruminants&Equines website and social network within Activity 5.

Objective:

To create and validate a Course Blueprint for effective training concerning the outcomes of Activity 2

Lead Partner: IZSAM

Achievements so far: During the 2021 – 2022 work programme the strategy to create a scalable toolkit for effective training in MSs has been set, and the methodology defined. The first Toolkit, under development, concerns feeding of calves and individual calf housing. The blueprint on environmental enrichment could not be realistically produced because the reviews, that form the basis of the blueprint, were planned for end of 2022.

Description:

This Sub-activity will provide the European Commission and the EU Member States with a systematic approach to training in this field.

Different multidisciplinary working groups will be devoted to achieving the mentioned goals. They will involve both scientific and technical experts in order to balance the necessary expertise and also to represent different perspectives and backgrounds.

Starting from the outcomes of Activity 2, different course blueprints will be created:

- A. Course Blueprint on the enrichment of animals' living environment
- B. Course Blueprint on improvement of welfare during painful or stressful procedures
- C. Course Blueprint on confinement and restriction of movement and social contact in horses

They can be considered as toolkits to be used by EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines to assist national scientific support networks or bodies and CAs to understand the rules, how to comply with these rules, as well as the possible control methods to be used by the authorities for the welfare of ruminants and equines. Each blueprint will detail:

- Essential intent
- Specific learning objectives
- Learning activities (including course syllabus and training methods)
- Tutors' profiles
- Learner support strategy (e.g. self-assessment, appropriate and timely feedback on the assignments, help-lines etc.)
- Learners' assessment (strategy, plan, methods and tools)
- Final certification of the acquired knowledge



The toolkits will be tested and validated with the support of a selected group of potential beneficiaries (national scientific support networks or bodies and CAs) during three pilot training courses to be implemented adopting the Webinar format.

The three final releases will be disseminated through the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines' website.

Expected output:

- Course blueprints on 1) the enrichment of animals' living environment, 2) improvement of welfare during painful or stressful procedures and 3) confinement and restriction of movement and social contact in horses
- Three pilot half-day webinars to test the course blueprints

Duration: Months 1 to 24

List of Indicators WP4:

- Number of training and collaboration activities with national support networks and bodies and competent authorities
- Number of technical requests provided by EURC to societies, third parties and competent authorities

3.5 Work Package 5 - Disseminating research findings and innovations

Article 96(d): disseminating research findings and technical innovations and collaborating with Union research bodies in the fields within the scope of their mission.

Sub-activity 5.1 Developing a Community of Practice

Introduction:

The aim of this activity is to disseminate and communicate research findings and technical innovations to CAs to support policy and practice in the implementation of legislation. In the 2023-2024 work programme, WP5 will comprise of two new Sub-activities in addition to ongoing evaluation and updating of the website and other dissemination and communication platforms. The first new Sub-activity will develop and launch a Community of Practice on the website, to enable knowledge exchange between Official Inspectors and EURCAW. The second Sub-activity will create a series of new outputs 'inspector@work' following the example of EURCAW-Pigs.

Continued consultation with the dissemination teams at EURCAW-Pigs and EURCAW-Poultry-SFA will ensure a cost-effective and consistent approach to dissemination and communication. The information provided on the website and other dissemination activities will be tailored to the needs of CAs, policy-makers and supporting bodies.

Objectives:

- Ongoing evaluation and updating of the website and social media
- To create an online Community of Practice for Competent Authorities

Lead Partner: UCD

Achievements so far:

To date we have set up the twitter account @eurcaw_re and commenced communications via this platform. A dissemination strategy and plan has been prepared, and the inaugural newsletter and tweets published.

The website (<https://www.eurcaw-ruminants-equines.eu/>) has been designed, based on the new EURCAW-Pigs website, for launch in October 2022.

Description:

Dissemination and communication of EURCAW and other relevant information will continue on the Centre's website and social media. Analytical tools e.g. on google and twitter will be used to evaluate engagement with the website and twitter.

Working in synergy with WP1, to utilise the established networks across NCAs, we will create a Community of Practice (CoP) for Competent Authorities on the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines website. Only NCAs will be permitted to register for the CoP and it will be password protected to enable the exchange of knowledge and experience by Competent Authorities relating to ruminant and equine welfare. The CoP will enable further engagement with Competent Authorities, for example, surveys to capture feedback on the Centre's activities.

Expected output:

- Production of quarterly newsletters
- Creation of a password-protected portal on the Centre's website
- Evaluation of Community of Practice
- Social media engagement report

Duration: Months 3 to 24

Sub-activity 5.2 Implementation of the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines dissemination strategy

Introduction:

The website is a key portal for the dissemination of the latest research findings and technical innovations in animal welfare indicators and assessment methods (WP2) for ruminants and equines and related training opportunities (WP4). Developing new modes of communication will add value to the website.

Objectives:

- Conducting interviews with Official Inspectors on topics relevant to the Centre's activities
- To design and prepare the 'inspector@work' series

Lead Partner: UCD

Achievements so far:

A dissemination strategy and plan has been prepared, and the inaugural newsletter and tweets published.

Description:

Following the lead of EURCAW- Pigs, a series of case studies, 'Inspector@work', based on the experience of Official Inspectors will be created. Consultation with the Dissemination team at EURCAW-Pigs and EURCAW-Poultry-SFA will take place at the beginning of the design phase.

Expected output:

- Inspector@work series published on the EURCAW-Ruminants&Equines website
- Evaluation of Inspector@work series

Duration: Months 1 to 22

Remarks

NA