

**Information document accompanying the EFSA Questionnaire on the main welfare problems for sheep for wool, meat and milk production**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This document aims at providing information and at supporting you to complete the on-line Questionnaire on the main welfare problems for sheep for wool, meat and milk production launched by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

This questionnaire was prepared to support the work of EFSA in preparing a Scientific Opinion on the main risk factors and welfare problems related to the farming of sheep for wool, meat and milk production, as requested by the European Commission.

In order to develop this opinion, EFSA has identified main categories of management systems (shepherding, intensive, semi-intensive, semi-extensive, extensive, very extensive and mixed systems) for which is currently assessing the main welfare problems and related risk factors.

EFSA is now seeking for the opinion of field experts on sheep welfare and sheep production, from a broad range of stakeholders and researchers, who could provide valuable contributions to its ongoing work.

More in detail, EFSA would like to have your expert opinion to score by their importance the main welfare problems in sheep, depending on the management system in which they are raised and of which you are experienced.

Once the main welfare problems have been characterized with this exercise, then EFSA will seek for further expert advice to identify the main risk factors in relation to those problems.

## **2. INSTRUCTIONS**

The questionnaire on sheep welfare is an on-line survey limited to the farming of sheep and it does not cover either transport or slaughter.

In the questionnaire you will be asked to:

1. Indicate whether you are willing to be contacted after completing the questionnaire, for further information related to your knowledge of the systems that you have indicated in the survey (Question 1 (Q1) in the questionnaire) and, if so, to provide at least your name or personal identifier (Q2) (voluntary);
2. identify your personal technical expertise ( Q3);
3. select, among the management systems identified by EFSA and described in Section 3 of this document, those for which you have experience (Q4);
4. complete two tasks for 17 specific welfare problems grouped in 4 main welfare principles, described in Section 4 of this document, for each of the management system for which you indicated that you have experience (Q9, Q10 and Q11);
5. before completing these tasks, and in the dedicated page of each management system that you have selected, you'll also be asked to indicate what is the main production purpose of that

system (meat, milk or wool) (Q6), which sheep breeds you have seen in the management system (Q7) and what is the most typical flock size for that system (Q8).

## **2.1 Technical aspects**

The on-line questionnaire is accessible at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6QJCYRP> from 7 till 28 May 2014.

You can complete each questionnaire for a maximum of 2 management systems. If you are experienced with more than 2 management systems and you wish to complete additional questionnaires, you can repeat the exercise for those systems accessing the same on-line link but **from a different computer or from the same computer connected to a different network (different IP address)**.

Once you have accessed and started a questionnaire, there is the possibility to save what you have done and come back later to complete it before submission, **provided that you are using the same computer on the same network (same IP address)**. If you go back to the survey using the same link but from a different computer or network, **you will start a new questionnaire from scratch.**

The replies given are automatically saved each time you press the next page button and the whole survey is saved when pressing the final “done” button.

After submission if you wish to check or change the replies you have given, you can still have access to the survey using the same link, **provided that you are using the same computer on the same network (same IP address)**. Please complete as many questionnaires as you can, considering that the time needed to complete a questionnaire for each system may take about 20 minutes.

Once the on-line questionnaire has been closed and if you have provided us with your contact details, the outcome of questionnaire’s analysis will be shared with you. EFSA will analyse the results of the questionnaires, which will be used for the risk assessment process and to inform a follow-up meeting with a limited number of experts selected on the basis of their expertise.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The following classification of the management system aims at setting up the scenarios for the risk assessment and it is not intended to be comprehensive of all possible sub-systems and sub-typologies.

Please also note that the descriptions below are, at this stage, **draft descriptions** not yet adopted by the EFSA Animal Health and Welfare Panel. The final descriptions of these systems will be indeed an outcome of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on the main welfare risks related to the farming of sheep for wool, meat and milk production.

#### 1. *Shepherding*

*The main characteristic of the **shepherding** is that stockperson(s) and dogs (if used) are constantly with the sheep while they are grazing. The role of the stockperson is to guide the animals to pastures, provide protection and perform necessary husbandry tasks. This system requires movements of the managed groups, during the day or for a period of time, away from the farm where animals sometimes may return at night for shelter.*

#### 2. *Intensive systems*

***Intensive systems** are management systems where the stockperson is not constantly with the sheep, which are kept in permanent housing with no access to pasture, and are fed with roughage, silage and concentrate. The role of the stockperson is to provide food and carry out husbandry tasks.*

#### 3. *Semi-intensive systems*

***Semi-intensive systems** are management systems where animals are kept intensively during night and some part of the day and are moved to fenced or unfenced owned or rented pastures during some period of the day. The role of the shepherd is to provide food and carry out husbandry tasks, and to move the animals daily to the pasture. The shepherd and the dogs (if used) may stay with the sheep at pasture.*

#### 4. *Semi-extensive systems*

***Semi-extensive systems** are management systems where the stockperson and dogs (if used) are not continuously with the sheep. The role of the stockperson is to manage pasture availability and carry out husbandry tasks. Sheep are moved to fenced pastures where they stay continuously for several days/weeks. They can be moved between different fenced pastures (including rotational grazing) or they may be housed during lambing.*

#### 5. *Extensive systems*

***Extensive systems** are systems where sheep are constantly kept on unfenced pastures or ranges (continuous grazing), with no housing. The role of the stockperson (and dogs if used) is to move the sheep to suitable areas of the range and to carry out necessary husbandry tasks, usually following gathering. Sheep can have access to some improved and unimproved pastures, where they may also be provided with supplementation. Visual contacts between the stockperson and sheep usually take place at group level, and physical contact only if necessary.*

#### 6. *Very extensive systems*

***Very extensive systems** are systems where sheep are kept in unfenced pastures or ranges on unimproved natural grazing, with no housing. They never have access to improved pastures, and they are not provided with routine supplementation. The role of the stockperson is to carry out necessary*

husbandry tasks, normally following gathering. Usually no physical contact between the stockperson and sheep is necessary, visual contacts are minimal and at group level.

## **7. Mixed systems**

*Mixed systems* are various combinations of the above 6.

The following are examples of mixed systems, which might involve daily or seasonal combinations of systems:

- a. *Seasonal mix of very extensive (during summer) and intensive (during winter)*
- b. *Seasonal mix of semi-extensive and extensive/very extensive production*

## **4. DESCRIPTION OF THE WELFARE PROBLEMS IN RELATION TO THE MAIN WELFARE PRINCIPLES**

Please note that the descriptions below are, at this stage, **draft descriptions** not yet adopted by the EFSA Animal Health and Welfare Panel. The final descriptions of these welfare problems will be indeed an outcome of the EFSA Scientific Opinion on the main welfare risks related to the farming of sheep for wool, meat and milk production.

### **FEEDING:**

1. **Prolonged hunger:** *the animal has been unable to get enough food to meet its maintenance requirements for energy, proteins or specific nutrients. This has resulted in failure to grow, loss of body condition such that, palpating the lumbar spine, the bones are prominent and easy to feel (condition score 2 or below), or impaired bodily functions (micro-nutrient deficiency).*
2. **Prolonged thirst:** *the animal has been unable to get enough water to satisfy its daily needs, resulting in dehydration.*

### **HOUSING/ENVIRONMENT:**

3. **Resting problem:** *the animal is unable to lie comfortably because of insufficient amount of space or space of inadequate quality in terms of surface texture, dryness and hygiene. This has resulted in reduced lying time, callus or coat soiling.*
4. **Thermal stress:** *the animal is unable to maintain constant body temperature by behavioural adaptation alone. This has resulted in panting, bunching or shivering.*
5. **Restriction of movement:** *the animal is unable to move freely due to physical restraint or lack of space resulting in impeded movements, or is unable to walk comfortably because of inappropriate flooring resulting in slipping and falling.*

### **HEALTH:**

6. **Lameness:** *the animal has impaired gait seen as uneven posture, reduced weight bearing on one or more limbs, visible nodding of the head when walking.*
7. **Injuries:** *the animal has physical damage to the bones, muscles or organs, or open wounds of the skin.*

8. **Skin disorders (including infections, allergens, ectoparasites):** abnormal condition of the skin, fleece, or coat seen as excessive rubbing and scratching, fleece loss, inflamed scabs or exuding skin.
9. **Respiratory disorders:** the animal has impaired function of the lungs or airways seen as laboured breathing, chronic coughing, sneezing or nasal discharge.
10. **Enteric disorders (including infections, endoparasites or toxins):** the animal has impaired function of the gastro-intestinal tract resulting in inappetence, abnormal faeces consistency, tucked posture or bloated rumen, or rectal prolapse.
11. **Metabolic disorders (e.g. acidosis and ketosis):** the animal has disturbed metabolism resulting in inappetence, weakness, recumbency or altered bodily functions.
12. **Reproductive disorders (including dystocia and metritis):** the animal has a disorder of the reproductive tract resulting from physical injury or infection, seen as lambing difficulties, uterine discharge, prolapsed uterus.
13. **Mastitis:** the animal has inflammation of the udder, indicated by altered colour, temperature and consistency, and reluctance to allow contact to the udder.
14. **Neonatal disorders (including starvation/mis-mothering/exposure complex):** the newborn lamb shows compromised functions, seen as weakness, which results in death or would lead to death without intervention.
15. **Pain (including due to management procedures such as castration, tail docking and shearing):** the animal shows altered posture, vocalization, or specific pain related behaviour such as teeth grinding, foot stamping, head shaking, restlessness or apathy.

## **BEHAVIOUR:**

16. **Occurrence of abnormal behaviours (e.g. inter-sucking, wool pulling, biting or chewing non-food items):** the animal shows non functional behaviours not normally exhibited by healthy animals in unrestricted environment. These can include sucking, biting or chewing non-food items and stereotypic behaviours such as pacing.
17. **Chronic fear (fearfulness due to e.g. predation, poor handling, disturbed social behaviour):** the animal shows exaggerated signs of anxiety such as escape attempts, increased vigilance, excitability, flightiness. This results in difficulties in handling and approaching sheep and easily stimulated panic.