



RESOLUTIONS OF THE 17TH WORKSHOP OF NRLS FOR MONITORING BACTERIOLOGICAL AND VIRAL CONTAMINATION OF BIVALVE MOLLUSCS, 16– 18TH MAY 2018, SOUTHAMPTON, UNITED KINGDOM

Future of the EURL networks

1. The EURL thanked the NRLs network for their contributions to the advancement of scientific and technical knowledge with respect to bivalve molluscs over the last 17 years. Particular improvements were noted in the development and standardisation of analytical methods, improved laboratory performance and elaboration of best practice in relation to the classification and monitoring of shellfish harvesting areas. The EURL further noted the concomitant benefits to human health over the period.
2. The workshop thanked Mr Paolo Caricato (DG Sante) for his support for the EURL and NRLs network for monitoring bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs over the last seventeen years and acknowledged the stated aim of DG Sante to maintain the expertise in all aspects in the field of bivalve molluscs beyond December 31st, 2018.
3. The NRLs thanked the EURL for its organisation, support and leadership of the network and recognises the advances that have been made during their tenure.

Official Controls and Comparative testing

4. The workshop noted the publication on April 7th, 2017 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on Official Controls. Regulation 882/2004 Articles 32 and 33 covering the role of European Union (formerly Community) and National Reference Laboratories were replaced by Articles 95 and 101 of the new regulation respectively. NRLs were advised to familiarise themselves with these Articles which define an expanded scope for Reference Laboratories and which came into force on April 29th, 2018.
5. The workshop acknowledged the amendment prepared by the EURL to include provision of additional requirements for sample preparation of gastropods within the procedures for sampling bivalve molluscs, echinoderms and tunicates placed on the market in ISO 6887-3. This amendment will be progressed through a proposal the ISO CEN plenary meeting in June 2018.
6. The workshop noted the importance of bivalve shellfish matrix proficiency testing for bacterial and viral determinands and expressed strong concern that the future frequency of such PT within the new EURLs framework may be insufficient, particularly in respect of the expectations of national accreditation bodies.

7. The workshop noted the following provision in Regulation (EU) 2017/625 Article 100 Clause 1:-

“Member States may designate a national reference laboratory also in the cases where there is no corresponding European Union reference laboratory.”

8. The workshop noted and welcomed the stated plans of Cefas (the current EURL) to continue provision of shellfish matrix-based PT schemes on a cost-recovery basis beyond the end of the current EURL framework.

9. The EURL requested that NRLs review the draft amendments to section 7.3.10 of the Good Practice Guide and section 7.3.1 and Annex 1 of the Community Principles Guide with regard to the proposals for changes to seasonal classifications, and requested comments by June 4th, 2018.

Marine Vibrios

10. The workshop noted that in order to extend the ECDC FWD-NET surveillance system to *V. parahaemolyticus* and *V. vulnificus*, requests to ECDC via the national focal points and agreement at the Member State level would be required. The workshop noted the lack of progress in this area and reconfirmed the resolution from the 16th Workshop in 2017 (Resolution 15) regarding this point.

11. Further to the above, the workshop noted the detection of *V. cholerae* non-01 non-0139 in some EU MS and the need for increased awareness of this issue across the EU, and the need for further research to investigate this potentially pathogenic bacteria in the environment and shellfish.

12. Recent developments regarding *Vibrio* control measures in the USA were outlined by the EURL and contrasted with the current absence of control measures in Europe. A range of potential future control options for the EU was outlined and discussed.

13. Further to the above, the workshop identified concerns with the lack of an EURL covering the issue of *Vibrio* in bivalve shellfish from 2019 onwards.

14. The EURL presented data regarding the use of whole genome sequencing for investigating *Vibrio*-related foodborne outbreaks. The advantages of these newer molecular methods for shellfish-associated pathogens were outlined compared to traditional subtyping techniques. These include greater resolution and the ability to determine key aspects related to the source of infections, potential transmission routes and the evolution of strains.

15. The workshop noted the recent work of TAG15 with regards to methodological approaches in relation to vibrios in shellfish. The need for the sharing of methods, in particular primer and probe sequences between members of TAG15 was reiterated. In addition, the need for strains that could challenge current PCR-based approaches was outlined.

16. The workshop noted recent method development efforts regarding vibrios carried out through CEN/TC275/WG6/TAG15 and ISO/TC34/SC9/WG27. The workshop agreed that future standardisation activities for vibrios should be carried out at the ISO level given the international importance of vibrios in seafood.

17. The workshop noted the data presented by Dr Andy Turner (Cefas) and Dr Ana Gago (EURL Marine Biotoxins) on tetrodotoxin and the potential linkages between this toxin and marine bacteria including *Vibrio* spp. The workshop recognised the need to further consider this emerging risk and supported further research in this area.

Viruses

18. The workshop noted the continued and well-established use of protocols describing norovirus outbreak-based closing and reopening criteria operated by France and Ireland and recommended that consideration should be given to development of protocols in European countries with bivalve production to help with the management of outbreaks.

19. The EURL clarified the responsibilities with respect to viruses in bivalve molluscs at EURL level. This will remain part of the competencies of the EURL for monitoring bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs until December 31st, 2018. Thereafter the competency will transfer to the EURL for foodborne viruses.

20. The Workshop acknowledged the encouraging progress with the EFSA baseline survey for norovirus in oysters and noted that this study represented the culmination of the work on virus method standardisation and harmonisation carried out within the NRLs network over its lifetime.

21. The workshop noted the presentations detailing the occurrence of hepatitis E virus (HEV) in some bivalve shellfish and environmental waters. The potential increasing emergence of HEV in association with bivalve shellfish was acknowledged and the public health risks from this zoonotic pathogen were noted. Further, the workshop noted the requirement for more research in this area, in addition to development of standardised methods.