

Final report CoVetLab joint research

Maximum 4 pages;

Title (no more than 100 characters) Expert Knowledge Elicitation: Development of a quick and robust method for assessing data gaps in risk assessment	
Participating partners: • Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), UK, • University of Copenhagen (UCPH), DK, • Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (WBVR), NL and • Swedish Veterinary Agency (SVA), SE Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) participated with own funding	
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Proposal Summary (no more than 100 words): Lack of data in risk assessment can be addressed through expert knowledge elicitation (EKE). EFSA describes a ‘gold standard’ EKE approach (EFSA, 2014). However, this method is time-consuming and requires specific training, highlighting the need for a ‘lighter’ approach. In this project a guidance document for a ‘light’ EKE approach has been developed based on literature, experiences from partner institutes, and a case study conducted within the project. The light EKE approaches described will support the user in choosing an appropriate light EKE approach based on time constraints, availability of experts and the topic under assessment.	
Date started:	1 st October 2024
Length of project	15 months
End of project:	31 st December 2025

Project Team		
Names	Institute	Role in project
Robin Denley Bowers	APHA	Contributing to development of light EKE
Laura Gonzalez Villeta	APHA	Contributing to development of light EKE, performing case study
Helen Roberts	DEFRA	Contributing to development of light EKE
Robin Simons	APHA	Contributing to development of light EKE
Helene Ane Jensen	UCPH	Contributing to development of light EKE
Abbey Olsen	UCPH	Contributing to development of light EKE
Søren Saxmose Nielsen	UCPH	Contributing to development of light EKE, performing case study, arranging project meeting
Michel Counotte	WBVR	Contributing to development of light EKE, performing case study
Manon Swanenburg	WBVR	Contributing to development of light EKE, performing case study
Clazien de Vos	WBVR	Contributing to development of light EKE, performing case study
Josefine Elving	SVA	Contributing to development of light EKE
Cecilia Hultén	SVA	Contributing to development of light EKE, arranging project meeting, project lead
Beth Young	SVA	Contributing to development of light EKE, performing case study

Research Questions		
- Which <i>ad hoc</i> EKE methods are used at present in situations where the formal EKE methodology cannot be used due to time constraints and lack of resources? - How could a ‘light’ EKE method for use in animal health risk assessment be designed to fulfil requirements on robustness and quality but using less time and resources to perform? - When would it be appropriate to use a ‘light’ EKE method over the formal EKE methodology?		
Key Objectives:		
- to review the current EKE methodologies in use - to conduct a case study using a streamlined EKE approach to inform the development of a light EKE methodology - to develop a ‘light’ EKE approach suitable for implementation in time- or resource-constrained situations.		
Brief workplan, including key milestones		
Task 1. Review of the current EKE methodologies and approaches in the literature. Task 2. Inventory of the current approaches for EKE used by the partner institutes and detail the different situations in which expert opinion is needed. Also unpublished <i>ad hoc</i> EKE approaches used among the partner institutes were described and experiences were shared between the institutes. Task 3. Development of a ‘light’ EKE methodology that is quick to perform in time- and resource-limited situations, but robust enough to provide quality estimates for rapid and effective risk assessment. Task 4. Use of the ‘light’ EKE methodology in a real-world case study. A case study on illegal trade in meat products into EU and UK was performed by the partner institutes with experts from the respective countries. The case study is linked to the subtask on illegal trade in the EU Partnership for Animal Health and Welfare, Set of Actions 10 (Rapid Risk Assessment and Epidemic Intelligence). Task 5. Description and evaluation of the results of the case study performed using the ‘light’ EKE method.		
Milestone No	Milestone title	Month
1	Review of current EKE methodologies	Feb-25
2	Inventory of approaches used at partner institutes	Feb-25
3	Project meeting at SVA	Feb-25
4	Perform case study on illegal trade in meat products	Oct-25
5	Project meeting at UCPH	Nov-25
6	Describe light EKE methodology	Dec-25

Planned output. (<i>deliverables, to include possible publications and IP issues</i>)

Deliverable No	Deliverable title	Month
1	Inventory of EKE methodologies/approaches	Feb-25
2	Results of case study	Nov-25
3	Description and protocol for use of proposed light EKE method(ologies)	Dec-25

Results (maximum 1,5 page)

MS1: The review of published papers within the field was focused on specific papers of value for the project, also including papers with co-authors from the partner institutes. The resulting list of papers was added to the guidance document.

MS2/D1: In the inventory of methods used by the partner institutes, 20 different EKE approaches/methods were listed with descriptions of design, if and how they aligned to the EFSA guidelines, pros and cons of the approach and an assessment of if and how the approach could have influenced the results compared to using the EFSA method. The results of the inventory were used in developing the light EKE approaches and the guidance document. (Annex 1: Inventory of EKE approaches used by the partner institutes).

MS3/MS4/D2: A case study was designed to fit the needs of the subtask on illegal trade in the EU Partnership for Animal Health and Welfare, Set of Actions 10 (Rapid Risk Assessment and Epidemic Intelligence). The aim of the study was to give input on volumes of illegal meat products entering the EU via different transport routes. A questionnaire was developed to give the basis for quantitative input to the model developed for the subtask of EUP AHW SOA 10 and experts were recruited among border officials knowledgeable at different levels about trade and seizures at border posts in the partner institute countries. The original plan was to perform a case study of similar design in all partner institute countries but it was difficult to attract experts within the field due to time constraints of the experts and difficulty to get access to and contact with the right type of experts. The outline of the study therefore had to deviate from the preplanned design and the case study was performed differently in all partner institutes. The questionnaire was used by all partners, but the setting used was either sending the questionnaire by mail, individual interviews filling the questionnaire or an online meeting with all experts at the same time. In the end this turned out to be an asset in the development of the light EKE approach by giving practical insight in possible constraints and how to overcome these.

Experiences from the case studies performed per partner institute have thus been used to develop the procedure for deciding on if and how a light EKE could be used and also as a basis for the description of a proposed method (see appendix to this report).

The actual results from the case studies have not been used in this project but will be used as input in the subtask on illegal trade in the EU Partnership for Animal Health and Welfare, Set of Actions 10 (Rapid Risk Assessment and Epidemic Intelligence).

MS5/MS6/D3:

The papers identified in the review, the inventory of methods used among partners and experiences from planning and performing the case study were used as a basis and as input for describing different light EKE approaches depending on the needs and limitations in different practical situations. Limitations could be caused by time, resources, few available experts or the type of data needed. Using a decision tree and the EFSA guidelines as a basis, possible light EKE approaches were suggested and described for each step of the EKE given the different situations identified. This compilation of stepwise approaches to a light EKE will make it possible for the user to put together an approach that is lighter than the formal process but still is transparent and gives acceptable results from a quality point of view. The suggested approaches are described in a guidance document together with descriptions of the different steps of an EKE (Annex 2: Guidance document for the use of “light” EKE approaches).

Problems experienced	
As foreseen, it was difficult for the partner institutes to attract experts to the case study due to time constraints and difficulty to get in contact with the right type of experts. The outline of the study therefore had to deviate from the preplanned design to fit with the needs at each institute. However, this also gave valuable input to the design of the 'light' EKE method by exemplifying the type of obstacles that can hamper an EKE in practice. These experiences have been included when developing the method.	
Value of cooperation for CoVetLab institutes	
The knowledge exchange has been valuable since the level of experience with EKE was very different among the partners. Also, the partner institutes cooperate in other projects and tasks where this project gives valuable input. The EUP SOA 10 task has already been mentioned and the partners also cooperate in an EFSA task (L'ORA) where EKE methodologies are used, often with very limited time to perform the EKE.	
Any other information	
The project group has been contacted by EFSA staff since they are interested in the outcome of the project. The project was briefly presented at a UK Civil Service risk assessment conference in March 2026.	
Evaluation	
Deliverables met?	
Start of project	
Cooperation	
Advice towards new calls / new projects	