Terms of Reference

FELASA-AALAS Working Group on Health Monitoring for Fish in Research

Background

Fish, particularly Zebrafish (Danio rerio), are a growing animal model for research and have been used to answer pertinent scientific questions in a variety of biomedical research fields including developmental biology, toxicology, neuroscience, oncology and many others. The health status in fish, like other research models, can be highly impactful on the research outcomes. Therefore, development of a harmonized health monitoring program would be helpful to researchers and veterinarians at animal facilities in the US, Europe and worldwide.

Tasks, proposed line of work

The working group will:

- Review existing recommendations and practices in fish health monitoring.
- Review the prevalence of pathogens in different geographical areas.
- Propose the information on the agents tested for, frequency, dates (historical results), method, sample size, and laboratory performing the results that should be provided as a minimum.
- Propose the way information on pathology is to be included.
- Describe practical solutions for colonies with a high number of microbiological units, e.g. Tanks
- Propose a common report form to be used internationally that maintains and does not give up the flexibility and the necessity to adapt approaches to local needs.
- Propose a common health monitoring program for global use
- In the case of potential transfer of fish between institutions, recommend interpretation and measures to be taken by recipient institutions under different common scenarios, depending on the results shown in the reports and the characteristics of the institution (agents present in the animals vs health status and research characteristics of the institution).
- Elucidate and determine the risk-based impact of potential zoonotic pathogens and highlight ways to mitigate human risk when working with fish impacted by these pathogens.
Composition of the working group

The WG will have 6 members plus one convenor, 3 nominated by each organization (AALAS and FELASA). Preference should be given to professionals with experience in different areas of health monitoring, and especially to individuals with a positive experience in international (US-Europe) collaborations. There will be 2 liaisons officers, one from each organization.

Budget

A total 4000 Euro for telephone conferences and 1 face-to-face meeting, that should be scheduled during any international event (e.g.: AALAS, FELASA) where some members may attend at their own expenses.

Deadline:

Two years after starting. The final report will have to be approved by both organizations before being submitted for publication.