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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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77TH MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

COMMUNICATION FROM THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE)

The following communication, received on 12 June 2020, is being circulated at the request of the OIE.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is pleased to provide this report for the information of WTO Members attending the 77th meeting of the SPS Committee.

1 COVID ACTIVITIES – WHAT IS THE OIE DOING?

1.1. The OIE is in contact with its Regional Representations and Sub Regional Representations, OIE delegates of member countries, the [OIE Wildlife Working Group](#), as well as the FAO and WHO, to gather and share the latest available information on COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2. The OIE is closely liaising with its network of experts involved in current investigations on the source of the disease. Rumours and unofficial information are also being monitored daily.

1.2. The OIE has mobilised several technical working groups (*ad hoc* Groups) to provide scientific advice on research priorities, on-going research, and other implications of COVID-19 for animal health and veterinary public health, including risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. The OIE has also developed high level guidance for veterinary laboratories working with public health services to support testing of human samples for SARS-CoV-2.

1.3. The OIE has put in place an Incident Coordination System to coordinate these activities.

1.4. Given the similarities between COVID-19 and the emergence of other zoonotic diseases at the human animal interface, the OIE is working with its Wildlife Working Group and other partners to develop a longer term work programme which aims to better understand the dynamics and risks around wildlife trade and consumption, with a view to developing strategies to reduce the risk of future disease spillover events.

1.5. Since February 2020 the OIE has been publishing the latest information on all of its activities including notifications from countries on the OIE website at:

<https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/>

1.6. A special edition of the OIE *Bulletin* on COVID-19 was also published in May 2020 and is available at: <https://mailchi.mp/oie.int/the-oies-role-in-global-efforts-to-combat-covid-19>

1.7. A summary of OIE activities in response to the COVID pandemic is provided in Annex 1.

2 88TH OIE GENERAL SESSION

2.1. The current COVID-19 pandemic forced the OIE Council, in coordination with the Director General, to cancel the 88th General Session of the World Assembly of OIE Delegates initially scheduled from 24 to 29 May 2020 until May 2021.

2.2. However, considering that some decisions could not be postponed until 2021, the Council decided to submit to the consideration of the 182 OIE delegates an adapted procedure allowing the approbation of some key resolutions through electronic means.

2.3. All relevant information, including resolutions adopted by the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, summary reports and video presentations are available on the OIE website at <https://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/oie-activities-2020/>

2.1 OIE Standard setting activities

2.4. As a consequence of the postponement of the 88th General Session, no new or amended chapters in the Aquatic Animal Health Code, the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals or the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals were proposed for adoption in 2020.

2.5. In lieu of the 2020 General Session reports delivered by the Presidents of each Specialist Commission, each President recorded a video presentation to advise members of progress made by its respective Commission since the 87th General Session in 2019, and to highlight some significant items in its work program over the coming year. These videos as well as a summary of the presentation are available on the OIE website at: <https://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/oie-activities-2020/>.

2.2 Official OIE recognition of disease status and control programmes of Members

2.6. OIE members can apply to be included in the list of members having a zone with an officially recognised status for the following six priority diseases: African horse sickness (AHS), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), classical swine fever (CSF), foot and mouth disease (FMD) and peste des petits ruminants (PPR). In addition, members can apply for the endorsement of their official control programmes for CBPP, FMD and PPR.

2.7. In accordance with the 2020 Adapted Procedure, several new members or zones of members obtained official recognition of their status, and one member obtained an endorsement for an official control programme:

- Croatia, Kazakhstan and Malta were officially recognised as being 'free from CSF'.
- Bolivia and Russia were officially recognised as being 'free from CBPP'.
- Lesotho and Russia were officially recognised as being 'free from PPR'.
- Bolivia, as well as a zone in the United Kingdom consisting of Jersey, were officially recognised as having a 'negligible BSE risk'.
- A zone in Chinese Taipei was officially recognised as 'free from FMD without vaccination', a zone in Brazil consisting of two merged zones, as well as four separated zones in Colombia were officially recognised as 'free from FMD with vaccination'. Kyrgyzstan was officially recognised as having an official control programme for FMD endorsed by the OIE.

2.8. In addition, the procedure for the official recognition by the OIE was expanded to include the endorsement of official control programmes for dog-mediated rabies. A questionnaire is available on the OIE website for OIE members to use as a model for their dossier when applying for the endorsement of their official control programmes for dog-mediated rabies.

2.9. The [full list of countries and their recognised disease status for AHS, BSE, CBPP, CSF, FMD, and PPR can be accessed online](#) the OIE web site.

2.3 Global animal health situation

2.10. In lieu of the 2020 General Session an analysis of events and trends that occurred in 2019 through to the beginning of 2020 was presented as a video recording by the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department based on reports submitted by member countries and territories. Particular attention was paid to the global situation analysis regarding four diseases and infections of major interest, for which epizootic situations were observed in 2019 and early 2020, namely infection with African swine fever virus, infection with koi herpesvirus, infection with infectious hypodermal and haematopoietic necrosis virus and infection with highly pathogenic avian influenza virus. The report also described the global situation regarding two diseases and infections with global control or eradication strategies, namely infection with foot and mouth disease virus and infection with peste des petits ruminants virus. In addition, an evaluation of global compliance of members reporting obligations and quality of reports was also presented.

2.11. The video and a summary of the presentation is available on the OIE website at: <https://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/oie-activities-2020/>.

2.4 Technical Item on required competencies of Veterinary Services in the context of international trade

2.12. Despite the postponement of the 88th General Session until 2021, it was decided to publish the report of the Technical Item on "Required competencies of Veterinary Services in the context of international trade: opportunities and challenges" in 2020 in the OIE News without a dedicated resolution. Dr Thanawat Tiensin, Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security at the FAO, the rapporteur, will record a video that will be uploaded on the OIE website to highlight the strategic importance of trade in sanitary and economic terms and how it links to the achievements of the UN Strategic Development Goals.

2.13. The published report will address: the International Regulatory Framework; the role of Veterinary Services in trade negotiations and in maintaining trade; challenges faced by the Veterinary Services in a trade context; and the required competences of Veterinary Services for trade and how to build them to facilitate and secure international trade.

2.14. In the absence of a resolution that usually provides direction for OIE work to support the topic in the coming years, OIE members and stakeholders will be given the opportunity to share their views on the report via an online forum associated to the OIE News.

2.5 OIE scientific network

2.15. The OIE has access to leading knowledge and skills thanks to its global network of Reference Centres composed of Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres. Sharing of information among these various institutes has proved vital to our achievements in animal health and disease control throughout the world. In 2020, the number of official OIE Centres of scientific excellence is 326, located in 46 countries across the five OIE regions.

2.16. The updated lists of Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres are at: <http://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/reference-laboratories/list-of-laboratories/> and <http://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/collaborating-centres/list-of-centres/> respectively.

3 MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF OIE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS – THE OBSERVATORY PROJECT

3.1. While the development of sanitary standards is a central mission of the OIE, the OIE has determined that it must also look at how they are implemented.

3.2. In May 2018, the World Assembly of OIE Delegates adopted [Resolution No. 36](#) recommending the establishment of an Observatory on the implementation of OIE standards by member countries. Through the Observatory, the OIE will be better able to determine the effectiveness and practicability of its standards in order to propose solutions to member countries. The expected outcomes would be more effective implementation of OIE standards and to assist the OIE to develop a more strategic focus to its capacity building activities.

3.3. To explore the potential solutions for the design of the Observatory, in July 2018, the OIE entered into a specific collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), that provided an analysis of key features of implementation of OIE standards and, as well as a review of the existing mechanisms supporting the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of OIE standards. The final report of the OECD study was published in February 2020 and is available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/oecd-study-on-the-world-organisation-for-animal-health-oie-observatory-c88edbcd-en.htm>.

3.4. The OIE has considered the OECD recommendations for the development of the next phase of the project, which is the preparation of a roadmap to make the OIE Observatory operational. The deployment of the roadmap was started in 2020 with the launch of a pilot phase, including the preparation of the Technical item presented above.

3.5. For more information, refer to the OIE website at: <https://www.oie.int/en/standard-setting/overview/oie-observatory/>.

Annex 1

OIE ACTIVITIES SINCE JANUARY 2020 IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID PANDEMIC

1. January 2020 – mobilised OIE's informal expert Group to advise on novel Coronavirus priorities for R&D to investigate animal source and to develop longer term risk mitigation strategies around emergence of pandemic viruses.
2. February 2020 – OIE's informal expert group contributed to the WHO's Novel Coronavirus R&D roadmap workstream on animal and environmental research on the virus origin, and management measures at the human-animal interface.
3. February 2020 – OIE started to publish results of members surveillance and investigations around SARS-CoV-2 and animals.
4. February 2020 – OIE commended publishing its Q&A including up-to-date information on notifications from countries.
5. March 2020 – OIE initiated development of a project concept note 'Biodiversity and wildlife health management framework' with the objective of mitigating and reducing risk of spillover events between wildlife, animals, and humans.
6. March 2020 – OIE developed its "[Guidance on Veterinary Laboratory Support to the Public Health Response for COVID-19](#)" in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.
7. April 2020 – the OIE Wildlife Working Group issued a statement on wildlife trade and emerging zoonotic diseases.
8. May 2020 – OIE published "[Considerations for sampling, testing, and reporting of SARS-CoV-2 in animals](#)".
9. May 2020 – OIE worked with WHO on the development of the guidance document 'Food safety and COVID-19 – A One Health Issue: Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals for food in traditional food markets'.
10. May 2020 – OIE published "[Considerations on the application of sanitary measures for international trade related to COVID-19](#)".
11. May 2020 – OIE published the [OIE Technical Factsheet on Infection with SARS-CoV-2 in Animals](#).

All of these documents are available on the OIE website at: https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/COV-19/A_Q%26A_COVID-19.pdf.
