



85TH MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

COMMUNICATION FROM THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (WOAH)

The following communication, received on 28 February 2023, is being circulated at the request of the WOAH.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH founded as OIE) is pleased to provide this report for the information of WTO Members attending the 85th meeting of the SPS Committee.

The report summarises key activities in WOA's standard-setting work programme, animal health information, capacity building activities and other relevant topics.

1 90TH GENERAL SESSION

1.1. The 90th Annual General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the World Organisation for Animal Health will take place from Sunday 21 to Thursday 25 May 2023 in Paris, and will include the adoption of administrative and technical resolutions as well as elections for vacancies in some of the governing bodies of the Organisation. The provisional programme will be available on the WOA's website in March 2023. With exception of the administrative session reserved to elections, all daily sessions of the General Session will be webcasted live via the WOA's website.

1.2. The 90th General Session will include an Animal Health Forum focused on avian influenza. This innovative Forum will provide a unique opportunity for Delegates and partners of the Organisation present at the General Session to discuss in depth this disease which has seriously impacted many members.

1.3. In addition, side events and exhibition stands will take place before and after the daily plenary sessions. These activities will allow delegations to interact with experts on a number of specific initiatives relevant to WOA and its missions.

1.4. As has been done in recent years, Pre-General Session Information Webinars will be held in virtual mode to provide an opportunity for the Presidents of the four Specialist Commissions to share information with members on the standards to be presented for adoption at the 90th General Session. They will take place on 18 April 2023 for the Biological Standards Commission, the 19 April 2023 for the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) with support of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) and the 20 April 2023 for the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Animals Commission). Each webinar will be conducted with simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish and will be recorded and uploaded on the WOA's website.

2 WOA INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC ANIMALS

2.1. The four Specialist Commissions met virtually during February 2023 to continue work to review existing, and develop new, WOA international standards in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, the Aquatic Animal Health Code, the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals and the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals, along with other activities relevant to each Commission's terms of reference.

2.2. Starting from February 2023, the distribution of the meeting reports of the Code Commission, the Aquatic Animals Commission and the Biological Standards Commission will return to a single report that provides information about the new and revised texts that will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session and information about other topics discussed at Commissions' February 2023 meetings including texts circulated for comment and other information. The report of the Scientific Commission will be published as one report which is unchanged from past years.

2.3. In addition, starting from March 2023, the reports of these four Commission meetings will only be published as an official report which will be uploaded onto the Delegates only website and the WOAHP public website simultaneously for each language (English, French and Spanish) once finalised.

2.4. The links to the February 2023 reports, once available, are provided below:

- [Biological Standards Commission](#), February 2023 meeting report
- [Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases](#), February 2023 meeting report
- [Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission](#), February 2023 meeting report
- [Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission](#), February 2023 meeting report

2.5. The WOAHP would like to highlight to the Committee the following work undertaken during the February meetings:

- **Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).** The Code Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific Commission, together with the recommendations from several WOAHP ad hoc Groups, has undertaken an in-depth review of Chapter 11.4. Bovine spongiform encephalopathy of the Terrestrial Code. Amendments include updated provisions on the categorisation of official BSE risk status as well as revised provisions on BSE risk assessment and surveillance. The revised chapter was circulated for comments in the Code Commission September 2022 report and will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
- **Foot and mouth disease.** The Code Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific Commission, progressed the revision of Chapter 8.8. Infection with foot and mouth disease virus of the Terrestrial Code. The revised chapter addresses several long-standing issues and was circulated for comments in the Code Commission September 2022 report. The revised chapter will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
- **Rabies.** The Code Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific Commission, revised Chapter 8.14. Infection with rabies virus of the Terrestrial Code, to address recommendations for the provisions for vaccination, testing and the shipment of animals. The proposed amendments were circulated for comments in the Code Commission's September 2022 report and will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023. The corresponding Chapter 3.1.18. Rabies (infection with rabies virus and other lyssaviruses) of the Terrestrial Manual was also circulated for comments in the Biological Standards Commission September 2022 report and will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
- **Rift Valley fever.** The Code Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific Commission, revised Chapter 8.15. Infection with Rift Valley fever virus of the Terrestrial Code to clarify the obligations of members to notify when there is an epidemic of the disease in an endemic country or zone and addresses some other issues. The revised chapter was circulated for member comments in the Code Commission September 2022 report and will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023. The corresponding Chapter 3.1.19. Rift Valley fever (infection with Rift Valley fever virus) of the Terrestrial Manual was also circulated for comments in the Biological Standards Commission September 2022 report and will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
- **Equine diseases.** The Code Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific Commission and the Biological Standards Commission, revised Chapters 12.2. Contagious equine metritis, 12.6. Infection with equine influenza virus and 12.7. Equine piroplasmiasis of the Terrestrial Code. The revised chapters were circulated for comments in the Code Commission September 2022 report and will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
- **Responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine.** The Code Commission considered comments received on the revised Chapter 6.10 Responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials agents in veterinary medicine circulated in its

- September 2022 report and agreed to request the Working Group on AMR to review these comments and amend the draft text, as appropriate.
- **Section 5 Trade measures, import/export procedures and veterinary certification.** The Code Commission had agreed to revise Chapters 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 of the Terrestrial Code to update recommendations to address the key steps in the process of international trade, including measures at origin, in transit, and on arrival, given that these chapters have not updated for many years. At its February 2023 meeting, the Commission considered the report of the ad hoc Group that had been convened to commence this work and requested that it be reconvened to continue its work and report back to the Commission at its September 2023 meeting.
 - **New chapter on biosecurity.** The Code Commission had agreed to develop a new chapter on biosecurity for Section 4 of the Terrestrial Code and requested that an ad hoc Group be convened to draft a new chapter. At its February 2023 meeting, the Commission considered the report of the ad hoc Group that had been convened to commence this work and requested that it be reconvened to continue its work and report back to the Commission at its September 2023 meeting.
 - **Assessment of susceptible species to infection with a WOAHA listed aquatic animal disease.** The Aquatic Animals Commission continued its work to review the susceptible species for WOAHA listed aquatic animal diseases by applying the criteria for susceptibility in accordance with Chapter 1.5. of the Aquatic Code. The Commission will propose a revised list of susceptible species for Article 11.4.2 Infection with *Marteilia refringens* for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
 - **Safe Commodity assessments for WOAHA listed aquatic animal diseases.** The Aquatic Animals Commission continued its work to update Articles X.X.3. of disease-specific chapters in the Aquatic Code regarding inactivation time/temperatures. The Commission reviewed the updated assessments and circulated the revised Articles X.X.3. for Sections 8, 9, 10 and 11 that had to be revised to reflect new thermal stability evidence.
 - **Aquatic Animals Commission work plan.** The Aquatic Animals Commission continued to work on the development of four new chapters for the Aquatic Code: Chapter 4.X. Emergency disease preparedness, Chapter 4.Y. Disease outbreak management, Chapter 5.X. Trade in ornamental aquatic animals and 5.Y. Trade in genetic materials; as well as the revision of Chapter 4.3. Application of Compartmentalisation.
 - **Aquatic Manual.** The Aquatic Animals Commission continued its work to update and reformat the disease-specific chapters of the Aquatic Manual to ensure the most current guidance is provided to members. The Commission circulated ten revised crustacean disease-specific chapters and two revised fish disease-specific chapters in its February 2023 report that will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023.
 - **Terrestrial Manual.** The Biological Standards Commission continued its work to ensure that the Terrestrial Manual is as up-to-date and relevant as possible in the face of important outbreaks of terrestrial animal diseases worldwide. The Commission circulated 15 updated disease chapters in its February 2023 report that will be proposed for adoption at the 90th General Session in May 2023, including the following that included significant amendments to Chapter 1.1.6. Principles and methods of validation of diagnostic assays for infectious diseases, Chapter 3.2.1. European foulbrood of honey bees (infection of honey bees with *Melissococcus plutonius*) and Chapter 3.9.7 Influenza A virus of swine.

3 PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE TO THE WOAHA AND ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES

3.1. The Director General establishes ad hoc Groups to provide specific technical and scientific advice required to support the work of the WOAHA and the WOAHA Specialist Commissions. WOAHA publishes information on its website providing the dates and terms of reference of proposed ad hoc Groups as well as reports once these have been validated and considered by the relevant Specialist Commissions. This information is available on the WOAHA website at: [ad hoc Groups information](#).

3.2. Two permanent WOAHA Working Groups, Wildlife and AMR, also provide specific technical and scientific advice required to support the work of WOAHA and the WOAHA Specialist Commissions. Information and report of these Working Groups is available on the WOAHA website at: [Working Groups & Reports: WOAHA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#).

4 SELF-DECLARED DISEASE STATUS

4.1. In accordance with the provisions of the Terrestrial Code or the Aquatic Code, WOAHA members may wish to self-declare the freedom of their country, zone or compartment from an WOAHA listed disease. A member wishing to publish its self-declaration for disease-freedom, should provide the relevant documented evidence of compliance with the provisions of the relevant chapters of the Codes. WOAHA screens any applications and considers them for publication in accordance with its [Standard Operating Procedure](#).

4.2. All published self-declarations are available on the WOAHA website at: [Self-declared Disease Status - WOAHA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#).

5 OFFICIAL WOAHA RECOGNITION OF ANIMAL HEALTH STATUS AND CONTROL PROGRAMMES OF MEMBERS

5.1. WOAHA members can apply to be granted official recognition of animal health status for foot and mouth disease (FMD), African horse sickness (AHS), classical swine fever (CSF), contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk status as well as the endorsement of official control programmes for CBPP, FMD, PPR and dog-mediated rabies.

5.2. The [full list of countries and their recognised status for AHS, BSE, CBPP, CSF, FMD, and PPR can be accessed](#) on the WOAHA website.

6 GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE GLOBAL CONTROL OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

6.1. WOAHA, in collaboration with FAO under the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) launched a joint initiative for the Global Control of African Swine Fever (ASF GI) aimed at bringing stakeholders from multiple sectors together to improve coordination and galvanise the sustained effort and political will needed for the global control of ASF. WOAHA is also in the process of implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the progress of the ASF GI.

6.2. Important activities under the ASF GI include ongoing meetings of the regional Standing Group of Experts (SGE) in [Africa](#), [Europe](#) and [the Americas](#) to enhance regional coordination of ASF control activities. WOAHA is also working with its partners to facilitate the development of international guidelines for the development and manufacture of safe and effective ASF vaccines, and to support the establishment of a genomic platform to share information on the genetics of circulating epidemic strains of ASFv.

7 ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

7.1. The eighth round of data collection for [ANIMUSE](#), the WOAHA database on antimicrobials intended for use in animals, closed in January 2023. Data analysis is ongoing, in parallel to the preparation of the seventh annual report on the use of antimicrobials intended for use in animals, expected to be published by April 2023.

7.2. Two new ad hoc Groups have been established to work on the development of the Technical Reference Documents listing antimicrobials of veterinary importance for bovine animals, and cats and dogs. The species-specific technical reference documents – together with the recently created technical reference documents for poultry, swine and aquatic animals- will help to inform the upcoming revision of WOAHA's List of Antimicrobials of Veterinary Importance. The WOAHA List should be used to inform the development and update of national responsible use guidelines, and support risk assessment and risk management to minimize and contain AMR.

7.3. A second pilot phase for the establishment of a global alert system on substandard and falsified veterinary products started in January 2023. It is intended to collect data from 40 countries, which will be used to determine the requirements for an online customised system that can be deployed at the global level.

8 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

8.1. WOAAH has been working jointly with INTERPOL and FAO to build national, regional, and international capacity in emergency management against all hazards. Initial findings have found that many countries do not have access to adequate resources to implement emergency response plans; in many countries, cross government emergency management mechanisms do not include Veterinary Services; what is considered an emergency varies between countries depending on its level of development, livestock industry structure and if any export markets. The next phase of this project will include the development of an incident management system for WOAAH members. WOAAH will also be launching a targeted initiative to support countries in Africa to build capacity for emergency management.

8.2. WOAAH has launched a project 'Fortifying institutional resilience against biological threats' that will include the development of an Incident Management System for WOAAH to improve its ability to respond to emergencies. This project has been developed in response to recommendations of the WOAAH After Action Reviews carried out in its response to the pandemic.

8.3. WOAAH, together with INTERPOL and FAO are convening a Global Conference on Emergency Management from 3-5 April 2023, in Paris, France. All information is available at <https://www.woah.org/en/event/global-conference-on-emergency-management/>.

9 MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF WOAAH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS – WOAAH OBSERVATORY

9.1. The WOAAH Observatory is delighted to announce that the first [Annual report of the WOAAH Observatory](#) was published in January 2023.

9.2. The report provides insights into the implementation of a range of WOAAH standards and includes more than 100 indicators grouped into twelve sections. Each section focuses on a different topic and area of interest. One section is dedicated to WTO notifications, disputes and regionalisation relevant to WOAAH standards.

9.3. Findings presented in the report outline for the first time a global perspective of members' implementation of standards. The report raises awareness of some of the current gaps in their implementation and suggests how they could be filled by improving practices at the national level. Attention is also raised regarding the importance of submitting quality data and information.

9.4. In addition to the main report, each section of the WOAAH Observatory Annual Report is accompanied by:

- a. Interactive dashboards that provide an array of options for dynamic information analysis for a desired region, disease, group of diseases or time period. The figures presented in the body of the report are static snapshots of these dashboards that use examples to illustrate specific ideas or indicators. Therefore, it is recommended to use the dashboards to access all available information; and
- b. Executive summaries for each section/topic that presents infographics of the main findings.

9.5. The 2023 Annual Report will build on the work carried out in the 2022 report as well as feedback and lessons learned from the first report. It is expected to be published in January 2024.

9.6. The Observatory is also working on the development of at least one thematic study in the course of 2023. As opposed to the annual report, where a broad overview of the implementation of WOAAH standards is carried out, the thematic studies will dwell on a specific subject. The Observatory has already identified and prioritised topics for which deep and focused analysis will be conducted this year. This will start with the implementation of the standards related to regionalisation (Zoning and compartmentalisation) and their recognition by international trade partners.

10 THE PERFORMANCE OF VETERINARY SERVICES PATHWAY (PVS PATHWAY) FOR THE SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL VETERINARY SERVICES

10.1. WOHAI continued the development of the technical specifications for the [PVS Pathway Information System](#), and created a PVS Pathway portal that includes: a document repository, a search tool, and a login-interface for various accessibility levels. Data dashboards and insight on the PVS Pathway Programme are under development and will be published to the WOHAI website in 2023.

10.2. WOHAI continues to implement missions at the request of WOHAI members including:

- PVS Evaluation Follow-up missions;
- PVS Targeted Support missions, including WHO IHR-PVS National Bridging Workshops; Veterinary Legislation Support Programme missions; PVS Sustainable Laboratories Missions; Veterinary Workforce Development Workshops, and Public-Private Partnerships workshops.

11 WOHAI TRAINING PLATFORM: VETERINARY SERVICES COMPETENCIES FOR TRADE

11.1. As part of the WOHAI [Competency-based Training Framework](#), a call for tender was launched in December 2022 for the development of 11 modules in the specific trade areas of national and international regulatory framework, animal health status and regionalisation, export and import measures and control and import risk analysis. Once completed, they will be available on the WOHAI Training Portal and accessible for free and members will be invited to include them in their national workforce training plans. These modules will also represent a resource to fill the competency gaps identified by the PVS evaluation missions.

11.2. In parallel with the implementation of the Training Framework, WOHAI is also developing the basis of its training system, including learning needs' assessment methods, which will include in-depth analysis of the data and information produced by the Organisation and its members, and elaborated by the Observatory and the PVS Information System (under development). The learning needs' analyses and the eLearning modules will also complement regional training programmes on trade.
