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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

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## 87<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

### COMMUNICATION FROM THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (WOAH)

The following communication, received on 30 October 2023, is being circulated at the request of the WOAH.

The World Organisation for Animal Health is pleased to provide this report for the information of WTO Members attending the 87<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SPS Committee.

The report summarises key activities from WOAH's standard-setting work programme, along with updates on relevant WOAH capacity building activities.

#### 1 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WOAH STANDARDS FOR TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC ANIMALS

1.1. The four WOAH Specialist Commissions met virtually during September 2023 to continue work to review existing and develop new WOAH 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.

1.2. Reports of these four meetings, including new and revised standards circulated for comments, will be available on the WOAH website during November 2023. The links to these reports, once available, are provided below:

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

1.3. WOAH would like to highlight to the Committee the following work undertaken during these meetings.

#### 1.2 Terrestrial Animal Health Code

1.4. The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) circulated 28 texts (including glossary definitions and new and revised chapters) for comments. Twenty of these texts will be proposed for adoption at the 91<sup>st</sup> General Session in May 2024.

1.5. Revised chapters that will be proposed for adoption at the 91<sup>st</sup> General Session include, among others, a revised Chapter 4.6. General hygiene in semen collection and processing centres, a revised Chapter 6.10. Responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine, a revised Chapter 7.5. Slaughter of animals, a revised Chapter 8.8. Infection with foot and mouth disease virus, and a new Chapter 8.Z. Infection with *Trypanosoma evansi* (surra).

1.6. New chapters circulated for comment include a new Chapter 4.X. Biosecurity, a new Chapter 5.4. Measures and procedures applicable in the exportation of commodities and a new Chapter 5.6. Measures and procedures applicable in the importation of commodities.

### 1.3 Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals

1.7. The Biological Standards Commission circulated 15 chapters for first-round comments, including among others, an updated or new section on vaccines for the chapters on lumpy skin disease and African swine fever, respectively.

### 1.4 Aquatic Animal Health Code

1.8. The Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Animals Commission) continued its work to review the susceptible species for WOH listed aquatic animal diseases by applying the criteria for susceptibility in accordance with Chapter 1.5. of the *Aquatic Code*. The Aquatic Animals Commission reviewed the assessments for susceptible species to infection with *Perkinsus marinus*, infection with tilapia lake virus and infection with decapod iridescent virus 1 and circulated the revised Articles X.X.2 for comments.

1.9. The Aquatic Animals Commission developed four new chapters: Chapter 4.X. Emergency disease preparedness, Chapter 4.Y. Disease outbreak management, Chapter 4.Z. Control of pathogenic agents in traded milt and fertilised eggs of fish and Chapter 5.X. Movement of ornamental aquatic animals and circulated the draft chapters for comments.

1.10. The Aquatic Animals Commission agreed to the revision of Chapter 4.3. Application of Compartmentalisation and circulated a discussion paper to engage members on issues relevant to the revision of this.

### 1.5 Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals

1.11. The Aquatic Animals Commission continued its update and reformatting of the disease-specific chapters of the *Aquatic Manual* to ensure the most current guidance is provided to members. The Aquatic Animals Commission circulated three revised (Chapter 2.2.2. Infection with *Aphanomyces astaci* [crayfish plague]; Chapter 2.2.6. Infection with *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* nodavirus [white tail disease]; Chapter 2.2.9. Infection with yellow head virus genotype 1) and one new (Chapter 2.2.X. Infection with decapod iridescent virus 1 [DIV1]) crustacean disease-specific chapters, and two revised mollusc disease-specific chapters (Chapter 2.4.1. Infection with abalone herpesvirus; Chapter 2.4.4. Infection with *Marteilia refringens*) for comment. In addition, it circulated for comment a mollusc chapter with amended sections regarding susceptible species (Section 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. of Chapter 2.4.5. Infection with *Perkinsus marinus*).

1.12. All Specialist Commissions also progressed discussions of other work items and updated its work programme considering the progress of work and new requests.

## 2 WOH STANDARDS ONLINE NAVIGATION TOOL

2.1. WOH has launched a project aimed at improving how WOH Standards are displayed and made available to members and other users. The project will enhance the display of the *Aquatic Code*, *Terrestrial Code*, *Aquatic Manual*, and *Terrestrial Manual* on the WOH website. The project will also include a specific tool aimed at providing specific search functions for the visualisation of sanitary measures recommended for the international trade of commodities.

2.2. The project is aligned with WOH's 7th Strategic Plan and will provide significant benefits for WOH members, including enhanced accessibility to WOH Standards and efficiency in information retrieval, supporting the implementation of WOH Standards. The project will also bring benefits to the Organisation itself, by improving the efficiency of internal processes and the interoperability across various datasets related to WOH Standards.

### 3 ANIMAL HEALTH FORUM ON AVIAN INFLUENZA

3.1. In light of the ongoing global avian influenza crisis WOAHA convened an Animal Health Forum (AHF) at the 90<sup>th</sup> WOAHA General Session in May 2023 focused on avian influenza. The AHF served as a platform for international experts, the private sector and government representatives to engage in meaningful discussions about the current challenges and perspectives for combatting avian influenza. WOAHA members adopted [Resolution No.28 Strategic challenges in the global control of high pathogenicity avian influenza](#) that will serve as a basis for shaping future avian influenza control activities, while protecting wildlife, supporting the poultry industry and the continuity of trade. The Resolution notably underscores the importance of members respecting and implementing WOAHA international standards to effectively combat avian influenza.

3.2. In accordance with the adopted Resolution, the Biological Standards Commission initiated the process to review the current Terrestrial Manual chapter on avian influenza for important amendments as needed on an immediate basis to ensure the information is up to date with the latest science and fit for purpose. The amended chapter will go for one review round and be annexed to the February 2024 report for member comments with the aim of proposing it for adoption in May 2024.

3.3. A two-year implementation framework (June 2023 – May 2025) was drafted in consultation with key WOAHA stakeholders to define the activities, outputs and expected outcomes to implement the recommendations of the adopted resolution No. 28 and ensure alignment with the future GF-TAD avian influenza global strategy. The implementation and monitoring of the framework will be responsibility of a cross-departments and inter-regional coordination group that is being overseen by DDG, International Standards and Science.

3.4. An OFFLU avian influenza matching (AIM) initiative is underway to provide information on antigenic characteristics of circulating avian influenza viruses to facilitate selection of appropriate vaccines for poultry and update of poultry vaccine antigens in places where vaccines are being used.

3.5. A new GF-TAD Global strategy on avian influenza is being drafted by a dedicated taskforce supported by a group of consultants. The strategy will serve as a guide and coordination framework to support regional and national programmes dedicated to the prevention and control of HPAI.

### 4 PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE TO WOAHA AND ITS MEMBERS

4.1. 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 considered by the relevant Specialist Commissions and validated.

4.2. This information is available on the WOAHA website at: [ad hoc Groups information](#).

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

5.1. WOAHA members can apply to be included in the list of countries with an officially recognised status for the following six priority diseases: bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), foot and mouth disease (FMD), contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), African horse sickness, peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and classical swine fever (CSF).

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

### 6 SELF-DECLARED DISEASE STATUS

6.1. 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 a 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*. The WOAAH screens any applications and considers them for publication in accordance with its [Standard Operating Procedure](#).

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

## **7 MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF WOAAH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS – WOAAH OBSERVATORY**

7.1. In addition to the [first edition](#) of the Observatory Annual Report published in early 2023, the Observatory conducts thematic studies focused on priority topics for WOAAH members, such as a particular disease, standard or topic of interest. The thematic studies collect and use new and existing data to provide a detailed understanding of the level of implementation of one or more standards and challenges WOAAH members may face when implementing them. This allows WOAAH to identify the specific needs of members and propose targeted recommendations to meet these.

7.2. Given the importance of zoning and compartmentalisation, both for disease control and trade purposes, the first thematic study undertaken by the WOAAH Observatory is focused on zoning and compartmentalisation. The Observatory conducted a survey in early 2023 to assess the use of zoning for three important animal diseases (avian influenza, African swine fever and foot and mouth disease) and the associated benefits or challenges for the Veterinary Services of WOAAH members. The data collected is currently being analysed and a report will be published early 2024. A second thematic study will be conducted in 2023 and will focus on compartmentalisation for avian influenza.

## **8 GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE GLOBAL CONTROL OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER**

8.1. WOAAH, 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. WOAAH is also in the process of implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the progress of the ASF GI.

8.2. 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.

8.3. Noting the interest and use by countries of candidate vaccines for ASF, under a consultancy project, the WOAAH has drafted international standards for the development and manufacture of safe and effective ASF vaccines which was circulated in the September 2023 meeting report of the Biological Standards Commission for comments. WOAAH stresses the importance of using only high-quality vaccines with proven efficacy and safety, which have been subject to regulatory evaluation and approval in accordance with WOAAH international standards.

## **9 ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)**

9.1. The eighth annual report on antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals was sent to WOAAH delegates, Focal Points for Veterinary Products and certain experts in May 2023; the message sent to these stakeholders also contained the access to the [first interactive report](#) of the ANIMUSE data. Led by the Communication Department, a targeted communication campaign around the 8<sup>th</sup> annual report and its interactive report took place in September 2023 where ten thousand users accessed ANIMUSE public portal.

9.2. On 6 September 2023, the 9<sup>th</sup> round of the AMU data collection was opened with a deadline for December 2023. In parallel the preparation of the eighth annual report on the use of antimicrobials intended for use in animals is ongoing and expected to be published by April 2024 with a collaborative work with the publications unit.

9.3. In October 2023 the Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance continue with the revision of Chapter 6.10 of the *Terrestrial Code*, two technical documents were published for the list of antimicrobial agents for veterinary importance for swine and aquatics; the working documents for the list of antimicrobial agents for veterinary importance for bovine, canines and felines are ongoing.

9.4. A second pilot phase for the establishment of a global information and alert system on substandard & falsified veterinary products started in January 2023. To date, WOH has received data concerning the management of the quality of veterinary products from 42 member participants from all geographical regions. Participants have submitted 24 incidents affecting 54 veterinary medicinal products that are assigned as substandard, falsified or unregistered products. Almost half of the substandard and falsified veterinary products reported were antimicrobials or antiparasitics. Four alerts were validated by the members reporting the incident and they consent to make these alerts available for the rest of participants.

9.5. Current data, experience and feedback collected from members enrolled in the pilot phase will be used to determine the requirements for an online fit-for-purpose system that can be deployed at the global level. In the mid-time, the rest of the members will be invited to join the system from January 2024.

## **10 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

10.1. WOH 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 WOH members.

10.2. The project culminated with a Global Conference on Emergency Management held in April 2023. This conference brought together a diverse group of participants including WOH delegates, emergency management experts, Law Enforcement, WOH Collaborating Centres and partner organisations. The Conference successfully raised awareness of the diverse spectrum of hazards and threats facing the animal health sector and global community. These encompassed agro-terrorism, agro-crime, cyberthreats, pandemics and natural disasters as well highlighting good practices to apply in emergency management. Conference participants collectively formulated strategic calls for action which was presented by WOH's Director General at the 90<sup>th</sup> General Session in May 2023. WOH is leveraging the Conference's outcomes to guide its future programming in emergency management including initiatives related to biological threat reduction. This includes activities such as horizon scanning, addressing cyberthreats, providing simulation exercise training and advocacy for animal health to be integrated into broader emergency management frameworks. The conference outcomes and recording can be found at: <https://www.woah.org/en/event/global-conference-on-emergency-management/>.

10.3. The next phase of WOH's emergency management programme includes the development of an incident management system to support the technical response of WOH to regional and international emergencies enabling it to provide better support to its members. In addition, targeted activities are being delivered to support members in Africa to build and strengthen capacity for emergency management. This includes training on biosafety/biosecurity, epidemic intelligence, and emergency management as well as support to improve veterinary legislation for biological threats.

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