
Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**CHAPTER 1.3.5.
ZONING AND COMPARTMENTALISATION**

Communication from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)

The following communication, dated 17 June 2005, is being circulated at the request of the OIE.

Article 1.3.5.1.

Introduction

For the purposes of this *Terrestrial Code*, 'zoning' and 'regionalisation' have the same meaning.

Given the difficulty of establishing and maintaining a disease free status for an entire country, especially for diseases the entry of which is difficult to control through measures at national boundaries, there may be benefits to Member Countries in establishing and maintaining a *subpopulation* with a different animal health status within national boundaries. *Subpopulations* may be separated by natural or artificial geographical barriers, or in certain animal industries, by the application of appropriate management systems, including biosecurity management.

Zoning and compartmentalisation are procedures implemented by a country under the provisions of this Chapter with a view to defining *subpopulations* of different *animal health status* within its territory for the purpose of disease control and/or *international trade*. Compartmentalisation applies to a *subpopulation* when management systems related to biosecurity are applied, while zoning applies when a *subpopulation* is defined on a geographical basis.

This chapter is to assist OIE Member Countries to establish and maintain different *subpopulations* within their national boundaries using the procedures of compartmentalisation and zoning. It also outlines a process for trading partners to follow in achieving recognition of such *subpopulation*. These procedures are best implemented by trading partners through establishing parameters and gaining agreement on the necessary measures prior to *disease outbreaks*.

Separate requirements will be developed for each disease for which the application of zoning or compartmentalisation is considered appropriate.

Article 1.3.5.2.

General considerations

Before trade in *animals* or their products may occur, an *importing country* needs to be satisfied that its animal health status will be appropriately protected. In most cases, the import regulations developed will rely in part on judgements made about the effectiveness of sanitary procedures undertaken by the *exporting country*, both at its boundaries and within its territory.

The benefits of zoning and compartmentalisation may include a contribution to disease control or eradication within Member Countries, and to the safety of *international trade*. Zoning may encourage the more efficient use of resources within certain parts of a country to allow trade in certain *commodities* from that *zone* in accordance with this *Terrestrial Code*. Compartmentalisation may allow safe trade due to the functional separation of a *sub-population* from other domestic or wild animals through biosecurity measures, which a *zone* (through geographical separation alone) would not achieve. Following a *disease outbreak*, compartmentalisation may be able to take advantage of epidemiological linkages despite diverse geographical locations, to facilitate disease control.

The *Veterinary Services* of an *exporting country* which is establishing a *zone* or *compartment* within its territory for *international trade* purposes should clearly define the *subpopulation* in accordance with the measures stipulated in the relevant Chapters in this *Terrestrial Code* and should be able to explain to the *Veterinary Services* of an *importing country* the basis for its claim of a distinct animal health status for the *zone* or *compartment* in such terms.

The procedures used to establish and maintain the distinct health status of a *zone* or *compartment* should be appropriate to the particular circumstances, and will depend on the epidemiology of the disease, environmental factors, applicable biosecurity measures (including movement controls, use of natural and artificial boundaries, commercial management and husbandry practices), and surveillance and monitoring. The *exporting country* should be able to demonstrate, through detailed documentation published through official channels, that it has implemented the measures stipulated in this *Terrestrial Code* for establishing and maintaining such a *zone* or *compartment*.

An *importing country* should recognise the existence of this *zone* or *compartment* when the appropriate measures recommended in this *Terrestrial Code* are applied.

Article 1.3.5.3.

Prerequisite considerations in defining a zone or compartment

The *exporting country* should conduct a practical assessment of the resources needed and available to establish and maintain a *zone* or *compartment* for *international trade* purposes. These include the human and financial resources, and the technical capability of the *Veterinary Services* (and of the relevant industry, in the case of a *compartment*).

Article 1.3.5.4.

Principles for defining a zone or compartment

In conjunction with the above considerations, defining a *zone* or *compartment* should be based on the application of the following principles:

(1) The extent of a *zone* and its limits should be established by the *Veterinary Administration* on the basis of natural, artificial or legal boundaries, and made public through official channels.

(2) The requirements regarding a *compartment* should be established by the *Veterinary Administration* on the basis of relevant criteria such as biosecurity management and husbandry practices, and made public through official channels.

(3) Animals and herds belonging to *subpopulations* need to be clearly recognizable as such. The *Veterinary Administration* must document in detail the measures taken to ensure the identification of the *subpopulation* and the recognition and maintenance of its health status.

(4) The requirements necessary to preserve the distinct health status of a *zone* or *compartment* must be appropriate to the particular *disease* and will depend on the epidemiology of the *disease*, environmental factors, biosecurity management, animal husbandry practices, control measures and surveillance.

(5) Thus defined, the *zones* and *compartments* constitute the relevant *subpopulations* for the application of the recommendations in Part 2 of this *Terrestrial Code*.

Article 1.3.5.5.

Sequence of steps to be taken in defining a zone/compartment

There is no single sequence of steps which must be followed in defining a *zone* or a *compartment*. The steps that the veterinary services of importing and exporting countries choose and implement will generally depend on the circumstances existing within a country and at its borders. The recommended steps are:

1. For zoning

- (a) The *exporting country* identifies a geographical area within its territory which it considers to contain an animal *subpopulation* with a distinct health status with respect to a specific *disease/specific diseases*, based on surveillance and monitoring.
- (b) The *exporting country* identifies the procedures which are being, or could be, employed to distinguish such an area epidemiologically from other parts of its territory, in accordance with the measures stipulated in this *Terrestrial Code*.
- (c) The *exporting country* provides the information above to the *importing country*, and explains that the area can be treated as an epidemiologically separated zone for *international trade* purposes.
- (d) The *importing country* determines whether it may accept such an area as a *zone* for the importation of *animals* and animal products, taking into account:
 - (i) an evaluation of the *exporting country's Veterinary Services*;
 - (ii) the result of a *risk assessment* based on the information provided by the *exporting country* and its own research;
 - (iii) its own animal health situation with respect to the *disease(s)* concerned; and
 - (iv) other relevant OIE standards.

- (e) The *importing country* notifies the *exporting country* of the result of its determination and the underlying reasons, within a reasonable period of time, being either:
 - (i) recognition of the *zone*;
 - (ii) request for further information; or
 - (iii) rejection of the area as a *zone* for *international trade* purposes.
- (f) An attempt should be made to resolve any differences of opinion over the definition of the *zone*, either in the interim or finally, by using an agreed mechanism to reach consensus (such as the OIE dispute settlement mechanism).
- (g) The *importing country* and the *exporting country* may enter into a formal agreement defining the *zone*.

(2) For compartmentalisation

- (a) Based on discussions with the relevant enterprise/industry, the *exporting country* identifies within its territory one or more *establishments* or other premises owned by an enterprise(s) which operates under a common biosecurity management system, and which it considers contains an identifiable animal *subpopulation* with a distinct health status with respect to a specific *disease/specific diseases*; and that this status is maintained through a partnership between the relevant enterprise/industry and the *Veterinary Services* of the *exporting country*.
- (b) The *exporting country* examines the 'biosecurity management manual' produced by the enterprise/industry for such *establishment(s)*, and confirms through an audit that:
 - (i) such *establishment(s)* is(are) epidemiologically closed throughout its routine operating procedures as a result of effective implementation of its 'biosecurity management manual' and;
 - (ii) the surveillance and monitoring programme in place is appropriate to verify the free status of such *establishment(s)* with respect to such *disease(s)*.
- (c) The *exporting country* identifies such an enterprise to be a *free compartment*, in accordance with the measures stipulated in this *Terrestrial Code*.
- (d) The *exporting country* provides the information above to the *importing country*, and explains that such an enterprise can be treated as an epidemiologically separated *compartment* for *international trade* purposes.
- (e) The *importing country* determines whether it may accept such an enterprise as a *compartment* taking into account:
 - (i) an evaluation of the *exporting country's Veterinary Services*;
 - (ii) the result of a *risk assessment* based on the information provided by the *exporting country* and its own research;
 - (iii) its own animal health situation with respect to the *disease(s)* concerned; and

- (iv) other relevant OIE standards.
 - (f) The *importing country* notifies the *exporting country* of the result of its examination and the underlying reasons, within a reasonable period of time, being either:
 - (i) recognition of the *compartment*;
 - (ii) request for further information; or
 - (iii) rejection of such an enterprise as a *compartment* for *international trade* purposes.
 - (g) An attempt should be made to resolve any differences of opinion over the definition of the *compartment*, either in the interim or finally, by using an agreed mechanism to reach consensus (such as the OIE dispute settlement mechanism).
 - (h) The *importing country* and the *exporting country* may enter into a formal agreement defining the *compartment*.
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