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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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88TH MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

COMMUNICATION FROM THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (WOAH)

The following communication, received on 27 February 2024, is being circulated at the request of the WOAH.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is pleased to provide this report for the information of WTO Members attending the 88th meeting of the SPS Committee.

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

World Organisation for Animal Health turns 100 years.

2024 is a significant year for WOAH as the Organisation proudly commemorates 100 years of unwavering commitment and achievements in advancing animal health and welfare worldwide. The journey leading up to WOAH becoming the global authority on animal health is marked by a long history of pivotal moments. To read more about WOAH and highlights since its founding on 25 January 1924 please go to the [WOAH website](#).

1 WOAH GENERAL SESSION

1.1. The 91st Annual General Session of the WOAH World Assembly of Delegates will take place from 26 to 30 May 2024 in Paris. This General Session will include the adoption of administrative and technical resolutions as well as electing the WOAH Director General, the members of the governing bodies of the WOAH (members of the Council and of the Bureaux of the Regional Commissions), and the members of the Specialist Commissions.

1.2. The provisional programme will be available on the WOAH website in March 2024. With exception of the administrative session reserved to elections, all daily sessions of the General Session will be webcasted live via the WOAH website.

1.3. The General Session will include a Forum focused on "Future-ready governance for a resilient WOAH". At the Forum, the results of a commissioned review of WOAH's institutional texts along with foresight scenarios depicting possible futures that the Organisation may face will be explored to address the needs and gaps within WOAH's current governance structure.

1.4. Side events and kiosk 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 WOAH and its missions.

1.5. 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 General Session. They will take place on 16 April 2024 for the Biological Standards Commission, the 17 April 2024 for the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) with support of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) and the 18 April 2024 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 WOAHP website.

2 WOAHP INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC ANIMALS

2.1. The four Specialist Commissions met during February 2024 to continue work to review existing, and develop new, WOAHP 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. The meeting reports of the Code Commission, the Aquatic Animals Commission and the Biological Standards Commission provide information about the new and revised texts that will be proposed for adoption at the 2024 General Session as well as information about other topics discussed during these meetings including texts circulated for comment and other information. The report of the Scientific Commission provides information about the evaluation of dossiers for official status.

2.3. The official reports of these four Commission meetings will be uploaded onto the Delegates website and the WOAHP public website simultaneously for each language (English, French and Spanish) once finalized.

2.4. From March 2024 WOAHP will start to implement a step-wise process for the publication on the Delegate's website of comments submitted on new and revised texts circulated for comments. This process will eventually include the publication of comments and Commission responses on both the Delegate's and WOAHP websites.

2.5. The links to the February 2024 reports, once available, are provided below:

- [Biological Standards Commission](#): February 2024 meeting report
- [Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases](#): February 2024 meeting report
- [Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission](#): February 2024 meeting report
- [Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission](#): February 2024 meeting report

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

2.1 *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*

2.7. The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission continued its ongoing work to update and revise the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission reviewed draft standards and considered comments received, considered the progress of different ongoing projects, and discussed upcoming work.

2.8. The Commission agreed to propose 16 texts for adoption at the 91st General Session in May 2024 (including glossary definitions and new and revised chapters). Revised chapters that will be proposed for adoption at the 91st 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).

2.9. The Commission also agreed to circulate some revised draft chapters for comments and requested experts to continue with the ongoing development of a new Chapter 4.X. Biosecurity and the revision of Chapters 5.4., 5.5., 5.6. and 5.7. related to the measures and procedures applicable in the exportation, importation and transit of commodities. The Commission, in close collaboration with the Scientific Commission, agreed to start work to review the chapter on scrapie, five chapters related to horse encephalitides, and start work on the development of a new chapter on the implementation of zoning.

2.2 Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals

2.10. The Biological Standards Commission continued its ongoing work to ensure that chapters in the *Terrestrial Manual* are up-to-date and are relevant in the face of important outbreaks of terrestrial animal diseases worldwide. The Commission circulated 13 updated disease chapters in its February 2024 report that will be proposed for adoption at the 91st General Session in May 2024, including updated or new vaccine sections for the chapters on lumpy skin disease and African swine fever, respectively.

2.3 Aquatic Animal Health Code

2.11. The Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission continued its work to progress items on its work programme. The Commission will propose for adoption at the 91st General Session in May 2024, thirty-five revised texts of the *Aquatic Code*, notably the revision of Article X.X.3. of all amphibian, fish and mollusc disease-specific chapters and most crustacean disease-specific chapters, and the revision of Article X.X.2., susceptible species, for three disease-specific chapters, as well as the listing of infection with infectious spleen and kidney necrosis virus species.

2.12. The Commission also progressed work on new and revised chapters that will be circulated for comments in its February 2024 report, including a discussion paper on the revision of Chapter 4.3. Application of compartmentalisation and 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 fertilized eggs of fish; and Chapter 5.X. Movement of ornamental aquatic animals.

2.4 Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals

2.13. The Aquatic Animals Commission continued its work to update and reformat the disease-specific chapters of the *Aquatic Manual* to ensure they provide current guidance. The Commission will propose five comprehensively revised chapters (Chapter 2.2.2. Infection with *Aphanomyces astaci*; Chapter 2.2.6. Infection with *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* nodavirus; Chapter 2.2.9. Infection with yellow head virus genotype 1; Chapter 2.4.1. Infection with abalone herpesvirus; Chapter 2.4.4. Infection with *Marteilia refringens*) for adoption in May 2024. One new Chapter 2.2.X. Infection with decapod iridescent virus 1 [DIV1] will also be proposed for adoption.

3 WOAHS STANDARDS ONLINE NAVIGATION TOOL

3.1. WOAHS has launched a project aimed at improving how WOAHS 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 WOAHS 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.

3.2. The project is aligned with WOAHS's 7th Strategic Plan and will provide significant benefits for WOAHS members, including enhanced accessibility to WOAHS Standards and efficiency in information retrieval, supporting the implementation of WOAHS 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 WOAHS Standards. The project is expected to be completed by July 2024.

4 PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE TO THE WOAHS 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 WOAHS and the WOAHS Specialist Commissions. WOAHS 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 WOAHS website at: [ad hoc Groups information](#).

4.2. Two permanent WOAHS Working Groups, Wildlife and AMR, also provide specific technical and scientific advice required to support the work of WOAHS and the WOAHS Specialist Commissions.

Information and report of these Working Groups is available on the WOAHP website at: [Working Groups & Reports: OIE - World Organisation for Animal Health](#).

5 SELF-DECLARED DISEASE STATUS

5.1. In accordance with the provisions of the *Terrestrial Code* or the *Aquatic Code*, WOAHP members may wish to self-declare the freedom of their country, zone or compartment from an OMSA 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*. WOAHP screens any applications and considers them for publication in accordance with its [Standard Operating Procedure](#).

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

6 OFFICIAL WOAHP RECOGNITION OF ANIMAL HEALTH STATUS AND CONTROL PROGRAMMES OF MEMBERS

6.1. WOAHP 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.

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

7 MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF WOAHP INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS – WOAHP OBSERVATORY

7.1. The WOAHP Observatory is delighted to announce that its first [thematic study on zoning](#) (regionalization) was published in January 2024. Following a survey answered by 65% of its members, this document shares a descriptive analysis of the use, challenges and impact of zoning for three priority diseases: avian influenza, African swine fever and foot and mouth disease. The [report](#) is accompanied by a [one-page executive summary](#). More in-depth analysis is ongoing to further explore the factors influencing the acceptance of zones by trade partners; it should be published later in 2024.

7.2. The Observatory 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 WOAHP members may face when implementing them. This allows WOAHP to identify the specific needs of members and propose targeted recommendations to meet these. Two other topics are currently under study: the use, challenge and impact of compartmentalisation, and animal welfare during transport by land and by sea.

7.3. These thematic studies complete a regular monitoring report which provides a global perspective of members' implementation of standards. The [first report](#) was published in early January 2023. The second edition is expected early 2025 and will then be published every five years, coinciding with the preparation of WOAHP's five-year Strategic Plan.

8 GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF HPAI

8.1. WOAHP in collaboration with FAO through the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) mechanism established a HPAI Task Force to initiate a revision of the Global strategy for prevention and control of HPAI, which was last updated in October 2008. The draft HPAI Global strategy (2024 to 2033) is currently undergoing a consultation and commenting process with WOAHP members and stakeholders. Once finalized, communication and launch options will be agreed and implemented by WOAHP and FAO.

9 GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE GLOBAL CONTROL OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

9.1. In January 2020, 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 implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the progress of the ASF GI.

9.2. Important activities under the ASF GI include ongoing meetings of the regional Standing Group of Experts (SGE) in [Africa](#), [Europe](#) and [Asia-Pacific](#) to enhance regional coordination of ASF control activities. To facilitate cooperation and dialogue across the SGE-ASF, the Global Coordination Committee for ASF was launched at the margins of the 90th General Session where priority areas were identified to guide future activities.

9.3. Noting the interest and use by countries of candidate vaccines for ASF, WOAHA has drafted an international standard for the development and manufacture of safe and effective ASF vaccines which was circulated for comments in the Biological Standards Commission's September 2023 report. WOAHA advocates for 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 WOAHA international standards.

10 ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

10.1. As a complement to the eighth WOAHA annual report on [antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals](#), published in May 2023, WOAHA carried out a survey among the 20% of WOAHA members still using antimicrobials as growth promoters. Results suggest that 76% of them did not carry out any preliminary risk analysis, despite this type of analysis being indicated in the [Global Plan of Action on AMR](#), and the recommendations of [WOAHA's list of Antimicrobials of Veterinary Importance](#). Of concern was that 11% of WOAHA members still use as growth promoters at least one of the highest priority critically important antimicrobials for human medicine, such as colistin. Given these findings and the commitments made by WOAHA members in 2016, WOAHA released a [statement](#) during the World AMR Awareness Week in November 2023, calling on its members to restrict the use of antimicrobials solely to veterinary medical use, and to actively engage in dialogue with the concerned parties to achieve a total ban on the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters, starting with those that are critically important for human health.

10.2. WOAHA has released the publication [WOAHA/FAO regional guidelines for monitoring Antimicrobial Use](#) at the farm level for the Asia and the Pacific Region. WOAHA has also launched work to develop guidelines on monitoring antimicrobial use in aquaculture at field level, in line with WOAHA standards with the final version expected to be published later in 2024.

11 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

11.1. WOAHA 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.

11.2. WOAHA is currently working on the development of an incident management system (IMS) to support WOAHA HQ and regional/sub-regional representations with consistent, coherent, and optimal response to international emergencies that impact animal health. Once the IMS is developed WOAHA will develop guidance for WOAHA members for the design and implementation of an IMS at national level.

11.3. WOAHA continues to work on tools to support members with specific elements on biological threat reduction and guidance on how to manage misinformation and disinformation.

11.4. WOAHA will be hosting a Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction in November 2025.

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

12.1 PVS Information System

12.1. WOAHA has launched the innovation PVS Information System (PVS IS) which will provide easy access to historical data and insights contained in PVS reports. For the first time WOAHA is using natural language processing and machine learning, and a key result of this novel approach is insight into the most common recommendations, strengths, and weaknesses of the Veterinary Services across the globe.

12.2. WOAHA has migrated all essential information from more than 210 PVS Evaluation and Follow-up Reports to its secure transactional database that allows for a systematic analysis of PVS trends.

12.3. From May 2024, all WOAHA Delegates will have access to the newly developed PVS IS.

12.2 PVS Pathway Impact Evaluation Survey

12.4. WOAHA developed an evaluation survey to assess the performance of the PVS Pathway Programme. Preliminary results show that 93% of Delegates surveyed were satisfied with the recommendations made in PVS Reports. Preliminary results can be accessed at [PVS Pathway Recommendations Impact Evaluation](#).

12.3 PVS Pathway during 2023

12.5. During 2023, the PVS Pathway Programme undertook 64 PVS activities, including a successful pilot of a newly developed methodology for specific ASF content; an increase in PVS Aquatic Evaluations or Follow-Up missions; Targeted Support programmes for Workforce Development; Public-Private-Partnerships; Veterinary Paraprofessional curricula analysis missions and IHR-PVS National Bridging Workshops; and one rabies focused NBW was conducted.

12.6. More details can be found on the WOAHA website at [PVS Pathway](#).

13 WOAHA TRAINING PLATFORM: VETERINARY SERVICES COMPETENCIES FOR TRADE

13.1. In the ongoing development of the WOAHA Competency-based Training Framework, progress has been made with the completion of the first of ten e-learning modules on the International Trade Regulatory Framework.

13.2. WOAHA is also in the process of developing a framework for assessing the educational requirements of the global veterinary workforce to ensure that WOAHA trainings align with current needs and the strategic objectives of WOAHA members that facilitate a systematic approach to enhance the capabilities of Veterinary Services worldwide.
