
Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE SPS COMMITTEE DISCUSSED BY THE OIE
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE AT THE 70TH GENERAL SESSION**

Communication from the Office International des Épizooties (OIE)

1. The 70th General Session of the International Committee of the OIE, the world organization for animal health, was held at the OIE headquarters (Paris, France) from 26-31 May 2002.
2. Of the OIE membership of 162 Member Countries, 133 countries or territories were represented by their delegates, and 26 international organizations and institutions also participated.
3. Issues relevant to the work of the SPS Committee discussed by the OIE International Committee during the General Session were as follows:

Work programme for 2003 implementing the recommendations of the OIE Third Strategic Plan

4. The work programme for 2003 prepared by the Director-General, aimed at continuing the implementation of the OIE Third Strategic Plan, was adopted under Resolution No VIII of the OIE International Committee.
5. Implementation of the OIE Third Strategic Plan to date includes reorganization of OIE Headquarters to separate the work on animal health information collection and dissemination (now done by the Animal Health Information Department) from the development of health standards for terrestrial animals (the responsibility of the International Trade Department). A new policy regarding animal health information is in place - OIE now actively searches for informal information and, where appropriate, publishes the information after validation by the OIE Delegates of the Member Countries concerned. OIE has also created a new Regional Activities Department to support the work of the OIE Regional Commissions and disease control operations in the field. The OIE Web site has been improved to better communicate the OIE's work to Member Countries and the general public.

Agreements between the OIE and other organizations

6. The OIE International Committee approved agreements between the OIE and the Organization for African Unity / Inter-African Bureau of Animal Resources (OAU/IBAR), the World Veterinary Association (WVA), the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), and the International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH).
7. The OIE International Committee was advised that revised versions of the long-standing Agreements with the FAO and the WHO were currently being discussed and that a draft agreement with the European Commission was also under discussion.

8. The OIE International Committee was also advised that the Directors General of the OIE, the WTO, the FAO and the WHO and the President of the World Bank, had signed a declaration at the WTO Ministerial Conference held in Doha (Qatar), committing their organizations to improving the capacity of developing countries to participate in the development of international sanitary standards.

9. The OIE International Committee was also advised that the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the Director-General of the OIE had met on several occasions and had drafted an informal document identifying specific areas of mutual interest as well as committees where each organization would invite representatives from the other to ensure a seamless interface between the two standard-setting organizations. This document has been shared with both organizations and with the WTO SPS Committee and the two leaders have addressed meetings of their counterpart organizations on the importance of collaboration.

Food safety mandate of the OIE

10. Among the new areas identified in the OIE Third Strategic Plan to be given special attention was food safety.

11. The large majority of OIE Member Countries favour co-ordination and integration of the food safety activities of the OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), and their cooperation in capacity building activities. As a result, an OIE Ad hoc Group on Food Safety was formed, met on 18 and 19 April 2002 and drafted recommendations for the consideration of the International Committee concerning the scope of OIE involvement, priorities for the OIE and a modus operandi, and on ways the OIE could work more effectively with the CAC.

12. In Resolution XV (see Appendix 1), the International Committee recommended that OIE's goal regarding animal production food safety be to reduce food-borne risks to human health due to hazards arising from animals, and that the OIE collaborate with relevant international agencies, particularly FAO and WHO and their subsidiary bodies (including CAC) and relevant expert groups, in this regard. It asked the Director-General to establish a permanent Working Group on Food Safety to coordinate and advise on the OIE's food safety activities, covering animal production food safety prior to primary processing. The Working Group will have a multidisciplinary membership and balanced regional representation, and with special consideration given to the needs of developing countries.

Animal welfare mandate of the OIE

13. Animal welfare had also been identified as a priority in the OIE Third Strategic Plan. An OIE Ad hoc Group on Animal Welfare met from 2 to 4 April 2002 and drafted recommendations concerning the scope of OIE involvement in the area of animal welfare, priorities for the OIE and a modus operandi.

14. This Ad hoc Group noted the OIE's 75-year history of achievement as the international reference organization for animal health and, recognising the essential link between animal health and animal welfare, believed that the OIE was well placed to provide international leadership on animal welfare.

15. In Resolution XIV (see Appendix 2), the International Committee noted that animal welfare is a complex, multi-faceted public policy issue that includes important scientific, ethical, economic and political dimensions, and recommended that the OIE develop a detailed vision and strategy to incorporate, balance and take account of these dimensions. The International Committee also recommended that the OIE establish a permanent Working Group on Animal Welfare to coordinate

and manage animal welfare activities, including consultation with non-governmental organizations having a broad international representation to ensure all available expertise and resources are utilised.

Adoption of new provisions in the *International Animal Health Code*

16. By Resolution No. XIII of the OIE International Committee, additions or amendments were made to the *International Animal Health Code* on the following subjects:

1. certification procedures
2. evaluation of veterinary services
3. zoning and regionalisation
4. foot and mouth disease (FMD)
5. bluetongue
6. classical swine fever
7. scrapie
8. BSE and
9. bovine semen.

17. There was significant debate on the revised chapter on FMD as it included for the first time the concept of FMD virus *infection* in countries and zones. The proposals were adopted and a detailed work program has been drawn up to further address issues such as the risks presented by infected animals not displaying clinical signs, and requirements for the regaining of free status by a country or zone after an outbreak, including alternative pathways not requiring the slaughter of healthy animals under certain conditions. Work will continue on surveillance guidelines for FMD.

18. A draft text on traceability is being prepared and further Member Country input is being sought on the guidelines for the judgement of equivalence.

19. The Animal Health Code Commission and the Fish Diseases Commission continued their coordinated work on harmonisation of the two *Codes* and criteria for the notification of animal diseases.

20. The President of the Animal Health Code Commission advised the International Committee that priorities for the work programme for the year (in addition to the new responsibilities for animal welfare and food safety, and the work already indicated above for FMD) included surveillance and monitoring guidelines for BSE, avian influenza, infectious bursal disease, bee diseases, compartmentalization (using Newcastle disease as an example) and finalizing the electronic version of the *Code* to allow for the retrieval of standards and recommendations on a commodity basis.

Adoption of new provisions in the *International Aquatic Animal Health Code*

21. By Resolution No. XIX of the OIE International Committee, additions or amendments were made to the *International Aquatic Animal Health Code* on the following subjects:

1. epizootic haematopoietic necrosis
2. yellow head virus – gill associated virus and related agents
3. baculovirus
4. mollusc diseases

5. consistency between *Code* chapters and model certificates.

Recognition of the status of member countries in regard to rinderpest and FMD

22. The OIE Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Other Epizootics Commission revised the lists of countries that it considers to be entirely free or to contain zones free from rinderpest infection or from FMD, in accordance with the relevant sections of the *International Animal Health Code*. These proposals were sent to the Delegates of Member Countries, who had a period of 60 days in which to respond.

23. In Resolutions No. XVI and XVII, the OIE International Committee asked the Director-General of the OIE to publish the list of member countries recognized as free from rinderpest infection (see Appendix 3) and the list of member countries recognized as FMD free (see Appendix 4).

24. The OIE Ad hoc Group on BSE status will commence work in September 2002 by examining submissions from Member Countries.

Report of the OIE Standards Commission

25. The International Committee accepted the report from the Standards Commission on new tests for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The Commission reported that none of the immunoassays had been fully validated, nevertheless some methods had performed well for confirmation of clinical or late preclinical cases and are being increasingly used by Member Countries for surveillance purposes. The gold standard (immunohistochemistry) is recommended as the confirmatory test for samples that test positive by immunoassay.

26. The International Committee also accepted the Standards Commission report on the use of the nonstructural protein (NSP) assays for foot and mouth disease (FMD). NSP assays can differentiate between vaccinated animals without antibodies to NSP and infected animals producing antibodies specific for NSP. However, it was recommended that the test not be relied on for individual animal certification, but should only be applied on a herd or group basis. Also, more information is needed on species other than cattle.

OIE Reference Laboratories and developing countries

27. The OIE International Committee took note of the additions and amendments recommended by the OIE Standards Commission regarding Reference Laboratories and disease experts. The International Committee was also informed of the progress achieved on international standardisation of diagnostic tests applicable to a number of animal diseases.

28. In Resolution XXI, the International Committee noted that, together with FAO and three Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutes, the OIE and the World Bank had developed a research proposal on 'Reducing Poverty by Removing Market Barriers caused by Animal Diseases', and that a list of important diseases (foot and mouth disease, peste des petits ruminants, contagious bovine pleropneumonia, Newcastle disease, haemorrhagic septicaemia, African swine fever and Rift valley fever) had been identified as a priority for research, as well as capacity building in line with the Doha declaration.

29. The OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres were encouraged to enter into partnerships as advanced research institutes with developing countries, through sharing scientific knowledge and skills with laboratories in developing countries and providing relevant training in the development and implementation of rapid, robust and inexpensive diagnostic tests so that disease control programmes can be improved. They were also encouraged to provide training to developing countries in the development of basic surveillance structures and programmes that will allow them to create and maintain disease free zones.

RESOLUTION No. XV

Food Safety Mandate of the OIE

CONSIDERING THAT

At the 68th General Session in May 2000 the International Committee examined and approved the OIE Third Strategic Plan,

At the 69th General Session in May 2001 the International Committee adopted the Director-General's Work Programme to implement the recommendations of the Third Strategic Plan for the period 2001–2005. The Work Programme indicated that new areas identified in the Third Strategic Plan would be given special attention,

The large majority of OIE Member countries favour co-ordination and integration of the food safety activities of the OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), and their cooperation in capacity building activities. Many Member countries are strengthening both institutional structures and regulatory frameworks, and incorporating 'shared responsibility' for food safety that leads to a much greater co-ordination within national authorities,

An OIE Ad hoc Group on Food Safety met from 18 to 19 April 2002 and drafted recommendations for the consideration of the International Committee concerning the scope of OIE involvement, priorities for the OIE and a modus operandi, and on ways the OIE could work more effectively with the CAC,

The Ad hoc Group believed that a clear definition of the OIE's role in food safety, and the coordination and integration of the food safety activities of the OIE and the CAC would enhance the scope and scientific quality of international standards, guidelines and related texts, facilitate risk-based approaches, and genuinely address the 'production-to-consumption' exposure pathway for food-borne hazards,

THE COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDS THAT

1. The OIE's goal regarding animal production food safety be to reduce food-borne risks to human health due to hazards (a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or a condition of, food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect) arising from animals, in collaboration with appropriate international agencies.
2. The OIE establish and/or strengthen both formal and informal relationships with relevant international agencies, particularly FAO and WHO and their subsidiary bodies (including CAC) and relevant expert groups, regarding animal production food safety.
3. The OIE's strategy to achieve this goal include:
 - developing appropriate infrastructure (including a permanent Working Group on Food Safety) and providing resources,
 - establishing criteria for work priorities,

Appendix 1

- ensuring pre-slaughter animal production food safety considerations are appropriately addressed in OIE activities,
 - reviewing, developing and/or contributing to international food safety standards and guidelines incorporating good animal production practice (including veterinary aspects) as it relates to food safety and taking into account a risk-based 'production-to-consumption' approach,
 - coordinating activities on horizontal issues (such as equivalence and risk analysis) with relevant international agencies and ensuring consistency in approaches and outcomes,
 - providing technical assistance and capacity building to developing countries, in collaboration with relevant international agencies,
 - harmonising, as appropriate, animal and relevant public health diagnostic and analytical methods,
 - ensuring transparency and appropriate consultation,
 - exploring and establishing to the extent possible the shared use of animal and public health information systems for food safety hazards, particularly by making use of data from ante- and post-mortem inspection at abattoirs.
4. The Director-General of the OIE establish a permanent Working Group on Food Safety to coordinate and advise on OIE pre-slaughter animal production food safety activities, with multidisciplinary membership and balanced regional representation, and with special consideration given to the needs of developing countries.
5. The terms of reference for the Working Group include:
- consideration of all food-borne hazards arising from animals before slaughter,
 - a primary focus on food safety measures applicable at the farm level,
 - consideration of food safety measures applicable elsewhere, for example during animal transport and harvesting of wild animals for food,
 - work criteria and priorities that take into account global food safety priorities and current work programmes of relevant international organizations, especially the CAC,
 - the taking into account of the food safety standards developed and under development by relevant international organizations, especially the CAC,
 - support for the work of the OIE Specialist Commissions on pre-slaughter animal production food safety,
 - advising the Director-General of the OIE on the implementation of the OIE strategy regarding:
 - establishing Ad hoc Groups to address specific tasks,
 - linking at the working level with the CAC, FAO and WHO,

Appendix 1

- ensuring pre-slaughter animal production food safety is integrated in Specialist Commissions' and Ad hoc Groups' activities,
- providing technical input into the review of OIE disease notification criteria,
- enhancing communications, information sharing and consultation.

(Adopted by the International Committee of the OIE on 30 May 2002)

Appendix 2

RESOLUTION No. XIV

Animal Welfare Mandate of the OIE

CONSIDERING THAT

At the 68th General Session in May 2000 the International Committee examined and approved the OIE Third Strategic Plan,

At the 69th General Session in May 2001 the International Committee adopted the Director-General's Work Programme to implement the recommendations of the Third Strategic Plan for the period 2001–2005. The Work Programme indicated that new areas identified in the Third Strategic Plan would be given special attention,

An OIE Ad hoc Group on Animal Welfare met from 2 to 4 April 2002 and drafted recommendations for the consideration of the International Committee concerning the scope of OIE involvement in the area of animal welfare, priorities for the OIE and a modus operandi,

This Ad hoc Group noted the OIE's 75-year history of achievement as the international reference organization for animal health with an established infrastructure and international recognition. Recognising the essential link between animal health and animal welfare, the Ad hoc Group believed that the OIE was well placed to provide international leadership on animal welfare,

THE COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDS THAT

1. As animal welfare is a complex, multi-faceted public policy issue that includes important scientific, ethical, economic and political dimensions, the OIE develop a detailed vision and strategy to incorporate, balance and take account of these dimensions.
2. The OIE then develop policies and guiding principles to provide a sound foundation from which to elaborate specific recommendations and standards.
3. The OIE establish a Working Group on Animal Welfare to coordinate and manage animal welfare activities in accordance with the tasks listed below, and the Working Group advise on specific tasks to be carried out by Ad hoc Groups.
4. In consultation with the OIE, the Working Group develop a detailed operational plan for the initial 12 months, addressing the priority issues identified.
5. The Working Group and its Ad hoc Groups consult with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) having a broad international representation and make use of all available expertise and resources, including those from academia, the research community, industry and other relevant stakeholders.

Appendix 2

6. The scope of OIE involvement in animal welfare issues be grouped into the following:
 - animals used in agriculture and aquaculture for production, breeding and/or working purposes,
 - companion animals including ‘exotic’ (wild-caught and ‘non-traditional’) species,
 - animals used for research, testing and/or teaching purposes,
 - free-living wildlife, including the issues of their slaughter and trapping,
 - animals used for sport, recreation and entertainment, including in circuses and zoos,and that, for each group, in addition to essential animal health considerations, the topics of housing, management, transportation and killing (including humane slaughter, euthanasia and killing for disease control) be addressed.
7. The OIE give priority to animal welfare issues regarding animals used in agriculture and aquaculture and, regarding the other groups identified, the OIE establish relative priorities to be dealt with as resources permit.
8. Within the agriculture and aquaculture group, the OIE firstly address transportation, humane slaughter, and killing for disease control, and, later, housing and management. The OIE also consider the animal welfare aspects as issues arise in the areas of genetic modification and cloning, genetic selection for production and fashion, and veterinary practices.
9. When addressing zoonoses, the OIE give priority to addressing the animal welfare aspects of animal population reduction and control policies (including stray dogs and cats).
10. The OIE incorporate within its communication strategy key animal welfare stakeholders, including industry and NGOs.
11. The OIE incorporate animal welfare considerations within its major functions and assume the following specific roles and functions:
 - development of standards and guidelines leading to good animal welfare practice,
 - provision of expert advice on specific animal welfare issues to OIE stakeholder groups, including Member Countries, other international organizations and industry/consumers,
 - maintenance of international databases on animal welfare information, including different national legislations and policies, internationally recognized animal welfare experts, and relevant examples of good animal welfare practice,
 - identification of the essential elements of an effective national infrastructure for animal welfare, including legislation/legal tools and the development of a self-assessment check list,

Appendix 2

- preparation and circulation of educational material to enhance awareness among OIE stakeholders,
- promotion of the inclusion of animal welfare in undergraduate and post-graduate veterinary curricula,
- identification of animal welfare research needs and encouragement of collaboration among centres of research.

(Adopted by the International Committee of the OIE on 29 May 2002)

RESOLUTION No. XVI

Recognition of Member Countries Free from Rinderpest Infection and Rinderpest Disease

CONSIDERING THAT

1. During the 63rd General Session, the International Committee adopted Resolution XIV 'Establishment of a list of countries that are free of rinderpest',
2. During the 68th General Session, the International Committee adopted Resolution XIII designating a baseline list of Member Countries that were free from rinderpest infection. The countries included in the list certified that they meet the requirements specified in Chapter 2.1.4. of the *International Animal Health Code* (the *Code*),
3. The FMD and Other Epizootics Commission proposed that an updated list of countries and zones previously recognized as free from rinderpest infection and those newly proposed to the Commission in consultation with Member Countries be annually adopted by resolution,
4. The Commission also proposed that the OIE develop a list of countries that are considered to be free from rinderpest disease in accordance with Chapter 2.1.4. of the *Code*,
5. The Commission proposed that Member Countries so recognized reconfirm annually that their rinderpest status remains unchanged and that this annual reconfirmation would be a requirement to maintaining OIE recognition,
6. Information published by the OIE is derived from declarations made by the official Veterinary Services of Member Countries. The OIE is not responsible for inaccurate publication of country disease status based on inaccurate information or changes in epidemiological status or other significant events that were not promptly reported to the Central Bureau subsequent to the time of declaration of freedom,

THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVES THAT

1. The Director General publish in the *Bulletin* the following list of Member Countries recognized as free from rinderpest infection, according to the provisions of Chapter 2.1.4. of the *Code*:

Appendix 3

Albania	Denmark	Latvia	Portugal
Algeria	Ecuador	Lesotho	Romania
Andorra	El Salvador	Lithuania	Singapore
Angola	Estonia	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Argentina	Finland	Malaysia	Slovenia
Australia	Former Yug. Rep. of	Malta	South Africa
Austria	Macedonia	Mauritius	Spain
Barbados	France	Mexico	Swaziland
Belgium	Germany	Moldavia	Sweden
Bolivia	Greece	Morocco	Switzerland
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Guatemala	<i>Namibia</i>	Taipei China
Botswana	Guyana	Nepal	Trinidad and Tobago
Brazil	Honduras	Netherlands	Tunisia
Bulgaria	Hungary	New Caledonia	Ukraine
Canada	Iceland	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Chile	Indonesia	Norway	United States of America
Colombia	Ireland	Panama	Uruguay
Costa Rica	Italy	Paraguay	Vanuatu
Croatia	Jamaica	Peru	Venezuela
Cuba	Japan	Philippines	Vietnam
Cyprus	Korea (Rep. of)	Poland	Zimbabwe
Czech Rep.	Laos		

AND

That the Director General publish in the *Bulletin* the following Member Countries or zones as being free from rinderpest disease according to the provisions of Chapter 2.1.4 of the *Code*:

India¹, Myanmar, Thailand;

AND

That the Delegates of Member Countries whose countries or zones within their national territories are recognized as rinderpest infection or rinderpest disease free, annually reconfirm by letter in November of each year that both their status and the criteria by which their status was recognized remain unchanged. It is understood that they will immediately notify the Central Bureau if rinderpest infection or disease should occur in these countries or zones.

(Adopted by the International Committee of the OIE on 28 May 2002)

¹ Zones designated by the Delegate of India in documents addressed to the Director General on 11 July 2001.

RESOLUTION No. XVII

Recognition of the Foot and Mouth Disease Status of Member Countries

CONSIDERING THAT

1. During the 63rd General Session, the International Committee adopted Resolutions XI and XII, 'Establishment of a list of foot and mouth disease (FMD) free countries where vaccination is not practised', and 'Procedure for the recognition of the foot and mouth disease status of Member Countries', respectively,
2. During the 64th General Session, the International Committee adopted Resolution XII, which asks that the Director General publish in the *Bulletin* a list of the countries or zones within national territories that fulfil the criteria of one of the FMD free categories described in Chapter 2.1.1. of the *International Animal Health Code* (the *Code*),
3. The Foot and Mouth Disease and Other Epizootics Commission has continued to apply the procedure approved by the International Committee, and has supported the recognition of the FMD free status of additional countries and zones within national territories for annual adoption of the list by the International Committee,
4. During the 65th General Session, the International Committee adopted Resolution XII, which stated that the Delegates of Member Countries where countries or zones within their national territories are recognized as FMD free annually confirm by letter each November both their status and that the criteria by which their status was recognized remain unchanged,
5. During the 65th General Session, the International Committee adopted Resolution XVII delegating to the Foot and Mouth Disease and Other Epizootics Commission the authority to recognize, without further International Committee consultation, that a Member Country or zone within its territory has regained its previously recognized FMD free status following outbreaks that are eradicated in accordance with the relevant provisions of Chapter 2.1.1. of the *Code*,
6. Information published by the OIE is derived from declarations made by the official Veterinary Services of Member Countries. The OIE is not responsible for inaccurate publication of country disease status based on inaccurate information or changes in epidemiological status or other significant events that were not promptly reported to the Central Bureau subsequent to the time of declaration of freedom,

Appendix 4

THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVES

That the Director General publish in the *Bulletin* the following list of Member Countries recognized as FMD free countries where vaccination is not practised, according to the provisions of Chapter 2.1.1 of the *Code*²:

Albania	El Salvador	New Zealand	Mexico
Australia	Estonia	Netherlands	New Caledonia
Austria	Finland	Norway	Romania
Belgium	Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia	Panama	Singapore
Bosnia and Herzegovina	France	Poland	Slovakia
Bulgaria	Germany	Portugal	Slovenia
Canada	Guatemala	Italy	Spain
Chile	Guyana	Korea (Rep. of)*	Sweden
Costa Rica	Greece	Japan	Switzerland
Croatia	Honduras	Latvia	Ukraine
Cuba	Hungary	Lithuania	United Kingdom
Cyprus	Iceland	Luxembourg	United States of America
Czech Rep.	Indonesia	Malta	Vanuatu
Denmark	Ireland	Mauritius	

AND

That the Director General publish in the *Bulletin* the following Member Countries as having an FMD free zone where vaccination is not practised, according to the provisions of Chapter 2.1.1. of the *Code*:

Argentina: zone situated south of the 42° parallel South;

Colombia: Northwest region of Choco Department;

*Korea (Rep. of): Island of Cheju; the FMD free status of the reminder of the country is suspended;

Namibia: zone designated by the Delegate of Namibia in a document addressed to the Director General on 6 February 1997;

Philippines: Mindanao, Visayas, Palawan and Masbate;

AND

That the Director General publish in the *Bulletin* the following Member Countries as having FMD free zones where vaccination is practised, according to the provisions of Chapter 2.1.1. of the *Code*

² For information on the status of non-contiguous territories of Member Countries recognised as FMD free, please address enquiries to that country's Delegate or to the Director General

Brazil: States of Bahia, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Sergipe, Tocantins and the Federal District;

Colombia: zone designated by the Delegate of Colombia in documents addressed to the Director General on 7 December 2000;

AND

That the Director General publish in the *Bulletin* the following Member Country as being an FMD free country where vaccination is practised, according to the provisions of Chapter 2.1.1. of the *Code*

Paraguay

(Adopted by the International Committee of the OIE on 28 May 2002)
