Meetings

4th FAO-APHCA/OIE/DLD regional workshop on brucellosis diagnosis and control in Asia and the Pacific
Proficiency test and ways forward for the region

Chiang Mai, Thailand, 18–21 March 2014

The OIE Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific has been organising livestock health management activities with FAO-APHCA\(^1\) since the 1990s.

Both organisations have identified brucellosis as a priority issue that needs attention to improve animal health and production as well as to reduce human health risks. A series of joint workshops began in 2006, with the support of Dr Bruno Garin-Bastuji of the French National Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety (ANSES), the OIE Reference Laboratory for Brucellosis in France, and Dr Monaya Ekgatat of the Thai National Institute of Animal Health (NIAH) as a partner laboratory in the region. The OIE laboratory twinning project between NIAH and ANSES, which was completed in 2013, was the result of one of these collaborations.

Proficiency testing, which has been carried out by each participating Member Country in the region since 2013, led to the focus of this workshop, the Fourth FAO-APHCA/OIE/DLD\(^2\) Regional Workshop on Brucellosis Diagnosis and Control. It was attended by many of those involved in brucellosis diagnosis from 14 countries; namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. In addition, there were three overseas observers, from Australia (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation – CSIRO), the People’s Republic of China (Harbin Veterinary Research Institute – HVRI) and Fiji, as well as 12 observers from the Thai NIAH. Dr Preecha Wongwicharn, Director of NIAH, and Dr Wimolporn Thitisak, Deputy Director General of the DLD, both attended the opening ceremony.

The technical programme started with a review and update of the brucellosis situation by Dr Garin-Bastuji. Noting that only the People’s Republic of China, Iran and Iraq have reported substantial numbers of human cases to the OIE, and referring to a study conducted by ILRI\(^3\) in 2011, Dr Garin-Bastuji expressed his concern that brucellosis was being significantly underreported. Referring again to the ILRI study, he highlighted the importance of brucellosis, which is ranked even more highly than avian influenza as a zoonosis. Since the control strategy to be adopted should reflect the situation of each individual country, he reminded participants that the epidemiological situation and available diagnostic techniques are key considerations in any brucellosis control programme.

Following a presentation on ‘quality management in veterinary testing

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\(^1\) FAO-APHCA: Animal Production and Health Commission for Asia and the Pacific of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

\(^2\) DLD: Department of Livestock Development, Thailand

\(^3\) ILRI: International Livestock Research Institute
laboratories’, which used brucellosis diagnosis as example, and a session on the ‘international shipment of biological and potentially infectious materials’, Dr Monaya Ekgatat presented the results of proficiency testing carried out by each participating Member Country in the region since the summer of 2013, using serum panels prepared by NIAH with the support of ANSES. The overall result was considered positive. Each Member received detailed feedback comments separately.

All participating Members prepared country reports to share their brucellosis situation, including their national surveillance and control programme, if any, and laboratory diagnosis. They agreed to conduct a second proficiency test to increase confidence in their country’s diagnostic capability. It was agreed that Members should share information on the disease situation and laboratory diagnostic data to strengthen regional networking and collaboration. A series of periodical updates by each participating laboratory will also be considered.

The OIE Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific greatly appreciates the hard work that NIAH has invested into this regional collaboration. The Representation would also like to thank Dr Garin-Bastuji’s team for their continued support over the years.

Developments of the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy

The developments of the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy (RAWS) for Asia, the Far East and Oceania were discussed during the meeting of the Regional Commission for this region on 26 May 2014 in Paris. The discussions highlighted the progress made on the recommendations of the last RAWS Coordination Group Meetings, held in August 2013 (Seoul, Republic of Korea) and March 2014 (Bangkok, Thailand), as well as those of the Conference of the Regional Commission, held in Cebu, the Philippines, in October 2013.

It has been concluded that a number of key developments have been made, including, in particular, the construction of the RAWS website and the publication of a second edition of RAWS, with translations into Thai, Bahasa, Tagalog, Malay and Chinese. The evidence indicates, at least from advice provided by some countries in the region, that animal welfare improvements are being made in areas such as legislation, strategic planning and training.