O.I.E. Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania

Final Report of the 14th Conference

Colombo, 29 July-1 August 1985

On the invitation of the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania was held in Colombo from 29 July to 1 August 1985.

Thirty Delegates and Observers attended the Conference from fourteen OIE Member Countries and one International Organisation. The Rapporteur for Item I, Dr. J. Tangtrongpiros from Thailand also participated in the proceedings of the Conference.

29 July 1985

OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

In his opening address, Dr. S.B. Dhanapala, Director of Animal Production and Health, and President of the Regional Commission, welcomed the Honourable S. Thondaman, Minister of Rural Industrial Development, and participants, in particular Dr. L. Blajan, Director General of the OIE.

He recalled the history of the OIE and the new challenges facing the Organisation due to the extension of international trade in animals and animal products which favours the spread of diseases. He stated that the OIE will benefit from the cooperation and expertise of other international Organisations in combating this problem and mentioned the importance of new technology in controlling infectious diseases.

The President closed by thanking the gathering for accepting the invitation of the Sri Lankan Government to participate in the Conference.

Dr. L. Blajan, Director General of the OIE, expressed his thanks to the Honourable Minister and the Government for hosting the Conference in Sri Lanka. He conveyed the regrets of Dr. E.J. Gimeno, President of the International Committee of the OIE, who was unable to attend the meeting due to unexpected commitments in Argentina and stated that a message from Dr. Gimeno had been distributed to all participants.
Dr. L. Blajan went on to outline the main functions and activities of the OIE.

The Director General congratulated the Members of OIE Regional and Specialist Commissions on their recent election and briefly reviewed the programme of the Conference and the technical items to be discussed.

The Honourable S. Thondaman, Minister of Rural Industrial Development, welcomed Delegates. He mentioned that the Sri Lankan Government has placed strong emphasis on livestock production due to low per capita consumption of meat.

The Honourable Minister recalled that Sri Lanka was fortunate in not having any land borders with other countries and that his country had succeeded in keeping most diseases under control. However, referring to the recent outbreak of swine fever, he stated that continued vigilance was necessary to avoid the introduction of infectious diseases.

He stressed the importance of Organisations such as the OIE which adopt a global approach to the problem of disease control.

The Honourable Minister concluded by wishing Delegates a pleasant stay in Sri Lanka.

Election of the Chairman

Participants elected Dr. S.B. Dhanapala as Chairman of the Conference.

Adoption of the provisional Agenda and Programme

The provisional Agenda and Programme were then adopted.

Item I:

FISH DISEASES AND HYGIENE OF FISH PRODUCTS

Dr. Dhanapala called upon Dr. J. Tangtrongpiros and Dr. P. de Kinkelin to present their report on this Item.

Dr. de Kinkelin gave an overview of the major communicable diseases of fish and then Dr. Tangtrongpiros presented the fish disease status and role of the Veterinary Services in the Region, based on the completed questionnaires received from Member Countries prior to the Conference.

As is the case for other animals, the health of fish is affected by aetiologies relating to the environment and to bioaggressors. This applies to all countries including those represented in this Commission.

The causes of fish diseases can be divided into two main groups, based on pathogenic and epidemiological considerations.

In the first group, the aetiological factors are potentially present everywhere. Such factors include alteration to the quality of the water, injuries, diet and bacteria present in the water and parasites carried by feral fish. Fish farmers should recognise this risk, which is inherent in any fish culture activity, and take the necessary preventive and/or curative measures to combat it, possibly with the assistance of
the technical services in their country. They may also be able to count on the participation of public authorities in cases where it is necessary to protect the quality of water.

The second group includes a limited number of bioaggressors which are resistant or do not respond well to treatment and which have a limited host range and geographic range. These pathogens represent a major threat to fish culture and necessitate preventive measures at international level. Most of these measures are provided for in the OIE International Zoo-sanitary Code.

The control of animal diseases is usually implemented by the Veterinary Services. In the case of fish diseases, not all countries have a veterinary tradition and these activities are generally conducted by the fisheries services and universities.

Moreover, for control measures to be effective, it is essential that they be desired by the farmers, who must participate in their implementation.

Frequently this is not the case for fish diseases, and some of the most important fish-producing countries (for example: Japan, Taiwan ROC and Thailand) have no specific legislation in this regard.

If veterinarians are to actively contribute to the control of fish diseases, they will have to acquire expertise in this area and be present in the field.

DISCUSSION

As an example of the possibility for Veterinary Services to be involved in the diagnosis and prevention of fish diseases, it was recorded that the Government of Taiwan ROC is giving consideration to authorise veterinarians at Livestock Disease Control Centres (LDCC’s) to become involved in fish disease diagnosis and prevention.

During the past ten years, fish biologists and veterinarians have been joining forces with regard to research on fish diseases. The present trend of mobilising veterinarians is considered as a more concrete step towards the implementation of a fish disease control programme, by strengthening the infrastructure at field operational level.

At the level of the prefectures, Taiwan ROC has twenty-one LDCC’s with a field workforce of approximately 500 veterinarians. This structure will become an effective force to combat fish diseases, even in the absence, at present, of legislation which is also under serious consideration.

Additional information was given on fish disease control activities and studies in Taiwan ROC. Reference was made to matters such as detection and identification of pathogens, histopathology and pathogenesis of major fish diseases, pharmacotherapy and drug residues, nutritional issues, aquacultural water management, monocultural and polycultural problems, genetic engineering and hybridoma techniques in viral research and vaccine production, etc.

Item II :

ERADICATION OF RINDERPEST IN ASIA

Dr. M. Sasaki (FAO/APHCA) presented a review of rinderpest in South Asia. Because the FAO region for which he is concerned does not include the Middle East, his review did not include the situation in countries in that area.
The countries of the Region can be categorised as follows:

(a) countries where the disease does not occur and which are not directly threatened;

(b) countries where the disease occurs sporadically and/or which are under constant threat by virtue of the existence of the disease in neighbouring territories;

(c) countries where the disease is endemic.

The endemic status of rinderpest in the Indian sub-continent represents a threat to all neighbouring territories and impedes the orderly trade in livestock.

Strategic vaccination is practised by countries where the disease is endemic and by neighbouring countries under threat to protect their cattle and buffalo populations and contain the disease in the endemic zones.

Both goat tissue (54.4 million doses) and tissue culture (28.01 million doses) vaccines are used.

Recommendations of policies for countries under threat include improved reporting systems, rapid confirmation of diagnosis, effective emergency response procedures and strategic vaccination.

For countries where the disease is endemic, eradication through vaccination and containment programmes were recommended.

International agencies can facilitate coordination of programmes to achieve control on a regional basis.

DISCUSSION

It was apparent from the discussions that the situation in Asia is not as clearly defined as it is in Africa, and there is less commitment to a regional programme.

Nevertheless, the continuing existence of endemic foci represents a threat to neighbouring territories and imposes a significant on-going cost on those countries of the Region which are under threat because of the need to maintain a buffer vaccination programme.

The technology needed to achieve eradication is already available. Standardisation of tissue culture vaccine is strongly recommended. The OIE Norm on rinderpest tissue culture vaccine describes production and quality control methods.

Because rapid accurate diagnosis is a prerequisite to the implementation of effective control procedures, the proposed development of a simple field diagnostic kit was considered to be a priority. This kit is expected to be available by 1986.

Eradication of rinderpest requires a national commitment which ensures that Veterinary Administrations have eradication as their objective and they have the resources to achieve that objective.

There was general agreement that the time was ripe for a concerted regional programme to eradicate the disease.
Item III:
FEASIBILITY OF A REGIONAL RABIES ERADICATION PROGRAMME

Dr. Blajan reviewed the rabies status of the countries in the Region and the steps being taken towards control of the disease. The review was based on response to a questionnaire prepared jointly by the OIE and WHO.

WHO support for national and international initiatives to control rabies was indicated, as well as the type of support which that Organisation was able and prepared to give.

Replies were received from twenty-two of the forty-eight countries in the Asia, Far East and Oceania Region. Eight of the twenty-two countries which replied report rabies. The FAO/WHO/OIE Animal Health Yearbook records twenty-five affected countries in the Region.

Rabies is absent from fourteen of the twenty-two countries which replied. Generally, these countries seek to maintain their disease-free status by the application of measures such as restricted importation of carnivores, the application of quarantine and, in some cases, compulsory vaccination.

The principal vector of human rabies in the Region is the dog. While wildlife reservoirs may exist in some countries, this reservoir is considered of minor importance. Cases of rabies are observed in other domestic animals in some countries, but they are not considered to contribute to the reservoir for human infections.

Seven of the eight countries reporting rabies have official control programmes, but there was some variation in the administrative systems employed. In most, cooperation between veterinary and medical administrations was involved.

While most affected countries have national legislation or regulations relating to control measures such as compulsory vaccination of dogs, elimination of stray dogs, reporting of dog bites, there is some variation in the extent to which regulations are enforced. It was clear that there is a direct correlation between the extent to which regulations are enforced and the progress of the national control programme.

Post-exposure treatment of people is carried out in thirteen countries reporting rabies. Costs are variable but can be as high as US $500. All participants considered treatment to be efficient.

DISCUSSION

As dogs are virtually the only important vector of human rabies in the affected countries of the Region, eradication is feasible.

The success of national campaigns is directly correlated to the successful enforcement of national regulations which embody the principles of control, namely: compulsory vaccination of dogs, elimination of stray dogs and education of the
people. Where there is a commitment to these principles, progress has been spectacular. On the other hand, some affected countries report lack of progress because of lack of enforcement.

The adoption of a total regional eradication programme at this time is unduly optimistic. However, there is reason to believe that experience within the Region can be shared. In particular, there are a number of practical solutions used in countries enjoying successful programmes which might be used in other countries. For example, some of the techniques for control of stray dogs being used in Sri Lanka could be used in other countries.

The abhorrence by the public of some of the measures that are necessary for successful control of the disease can be overcome by education programmes, designed to show how those measures are necessary if the national objective of eradication is to be achieved.

Item IV:

ANIMAL HEALTH STATUS OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

Written reports were received from twelve Member Countries and verbal reports from three countries. Members commented briefly on their reports.

Concurrent outbreaks of FMD caused by the Asia 1 strain occurred in Malaysia and Thailand in 1985. The virus isolated in Malaysia has proved to be somewhat different from other Asia 1 type strains. Good progress in controlling FMD outbreaks in Indonesia has been made.

In Australia, rapid eradication of an outbreak of virulent avian influenza (H7N7) was achieved by the application of strict sanitary controls. Circumstantial evidence points to wild water fowl as the origin of the virulent virus.

Aujeszky's disease of pigs has proved troublesome in Taiwan ROC and Japan. New Zealand has established that the South Island is free of the disease.

The potential for spread of rinderpest from endemic foci in the Region imposes a substantial cost on neighbouring countries in the form of protective vaccination.

Progress in the control of tuberculosis and brucellosis continues to be encouraging. Where eradication of brucellosis by slaughter is not feasible, excellent control through the concerted use of Strain 19 vaccine is being obtained.

An outbreak of classical swine fever in Sri Lanka has been attributed to the feeding of untreated swill derived from the international airport.

Item V:

PROGRESS REPORTS ON RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE 13TH CONFERENCE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION
(Seoul, 10-14 October 1983)

Only four written reports were received by the Central Bureau and because of this no summary was compiled. Both the President of the Regional Commission
and the Director General expressed disappointment in the number and timeliness of response from Member Countries to this and other items on the Regional Commission Agenda.

Australia and New Zealand have joined five other countries in an international vaccine bank to be based in the United Kingdom. The bank provides a relatively cheap form of assurance that vaccine will be available in an emergency. It is hoped that more banks will be developed by cooperation between Member Countries.

Embryo transfer technology is probably the most significant development for the safe transfer of genetic material between countries to have occurred in the last decade. To capitalise on the technology, the development of infrastructure which parallels the infrastructure of the artificial insemination industry will be necessary.

31 July 1985

FIELD TRIP

A field trip was organised to Kandy. This included a visit to the Yakkala Veterinary Service Centre and the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage and ended with viewing the annual Perahera pageant.

1 August 1985

Item VI:
O.I.E. INTERNATIONAL ZOO-SANITARY CODE

The Director General recalled that, since the last edition of the Code in 1982, the International Committee has adopted many texts which had been proposed by the Code Commission, the Norms Commission and the Animal Health Information Group. It was therefore necessary to prepare a new edition of the Code. It is planned to publish this new edition before the end of the year. A guide to the use of the Code was also adopted by the Committee during its last annual General Session.

In 1983, the Code Commission recommended that the Code be included on the Agenda of Regional Conferences so that Member Countries would have the opportunity to raise questions or make suggestions on it. This item had already been discussed by the Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania during the 13th Conference in Seoul in October 1983.

The most significant changes to the Code since 1982 concern Section 1.2. on notifications and epizootiological information. The main amendments concern the list of diseases notifiable to the OIE and the formats to be used. They provide the basis of the new OIE information system which is being tested by a pilot group of nineteen countries, four of which belong to the Asia, Far East and Oceania Region. The pilot phase has been in progress for almost two years. Certain amendments have been made to the system and it is now shown to operate satisfactorily.
However, it is essential that the people in charge of disease notification in Member Countries clearly understand the system. Therefore, after the Workshop held in Paris in April 1984, it was decided to organise regional workshops. The first one will be held in Buenos Aires (Argentina), next September. As Dr. Gimeno, President of the OIE Committee, stated in his message to the Conference, it will be important to organise a similar workshop in Asia in 1986.

**DISCUSSION**

There was general agreement that the Zoo-sanitary Code is a most useful and important document and is widely used by both Member and non-member Countries during development of protocols for the exchange of livestock and genetic material.

The definitions used in disease reporting need to be translated into the language of each Member Country so that officers at all levels have a common understanding when reporting disease incidents.

The budget available to the OIE for regional workshops is not sufficient to cover all expenses of participants. The Director General will seek support from the Asian Development Bank to obtain funds which will ensure a high level of participation in the workshop.

It was agreed that the Regional Workshop should be held as soon as practicable in 1986. Australia's offer to host the workshop and provide administrative support was gratefully accepted.

It was stressed that the workshop must involve those officers in Member Countries who are responsible for disease reporting to the OIE.

Delegates were asked to make a particular effort to apply the definitions required for disease reporting as approved by the 51st General Session so as to identify any problems in interpretation which should be discussed at the Workshop.

**Item VII :**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**FOLLOW-UP TO RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED DURING THE 1985 GENERAL SESSION**

The Director General reported to the Conference on actions taken by the Central Bureau to follow up Resolutions adopted by the International Committee during the last General Session in May 1985.

In application of the Resolution on «Diseases transmissible by semen and embryo transfer techniques», he was organising a round-table with the participation of the International Embryo Transfer Society and the Code Commission, before the end of the year.

The legality of the Resolution on OIE extra-budetary financing was questioned by a Delegate during the General Session. The Legal Adviser of the OIE was there-
fore requested to study this issue in depth. Without waiting for the conclusions of this study, the President of the Committee and the Director General were considering practical means for the OIE to obtain funds from a foundation which would be independent from private firms.

As stated by Dr. Gimeno in his message, Sir William Henderson had been invited to present a comprehensive report on the organisation of Veterinary Services, a major item of the next General Session. This report will be based on the results of the survey carried out by the Central Bureau, through a questionnaire disseminated to all Member Countries. Sir William Henderson will also receive contributions from people who have detailed knowledge of the organisational structure of Veterinary Services in specific regions.

EQUESTRIAN EVENTS AT THE ASIAN GAMES AND THE 1988 OLYMPICS IN SEOUL, KOREA

Conditions for the importation of horses by Korea for participation in the Games were circulated. Member Countries were asked to advise Korea if there are problems in meeting these conditions.

Discussions on the provision of quarantine facilities in Seoul for imported horses participating in the Games are not yet complete. Arrangements will be advised as soon as possible.

As far as is known, horses from countries with serious equine diseases are not participating.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Dr. Dhanapala thanked participants and the Director General for their contribution to the success of the Conference. He also expressed his appreciation to the Supporting Committee for the excellent work conducted before and during the Conference.

Each Delegation then took the floor to thank the Government of Sri Lanka and to congratulate Dr. Dhanapala and his colleagues who had ensured the success of the meeting and had made their stay most enjoyable.

Dr. Blajan drew attention to the discussion on fish diseases which had been most informative. He expressed gratitude to Dr. Tangtrongpiros and Dr. de Kinke-lin for their valuable contributions. He also thanked Dr. Sasaki for his presentation on rinderpest.

However, there remained the disappointment that an insufficient number of reports had been received from countries in the Region, particularly on the rabies item.

Dr. Blajan closed by expressing sincere appreciation to Dr. Dhanapala and to his Organising Committee for their excellent welcome and the arrangements they had made for the Conference.
Appendix

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

FISH DISEASES AND HYGIENE OF FISH PRODUCTS

Considering that

Fish protein is a major component of the diet of the people of many countries of the Region;

Aquaculture is an important developing industry in most countries of the Region;

Inter-country trade in fish and fish products is increasing;

Aquaculture systems have developed in an empirical manner and knowledge of fish diseases and their control and management is a relatively new discipline;

Hygiene of fish products remains a regular field of veterinary activity;

The increasing involvement of Veterinary Services in the management of disease, quarantine, and hygiene of fish products is a high priority;

The close cooperation of veterinarians and fish biologists is essential to ensure the organisation of a disease management infrastructure;

The services of veterinarians are available in most Member Countries of the Region;

The development of appropriate legislation must be supported by an effective research, diagnosis and surveillance infrastructure;

The important epidemic diseases should be confined to their existing geographical locations,

The OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania

Endorses the need for

The Veterinary Services of each country to take steps to develop expertise in the diagnosis, management and industry support systems for aquaculture;

Each Member Country to take steps to develop an infrastructure and legislative framework appropriate to the various forms of aquaculture in their country;

Each Member Country to take steps to apply quarantine systems for all forms of cultured fish to protect the health of their fish;

Veterinarians, in view of their training, both to participate and to coordinate research on many aspects of fish diseases;

Recommends that

1. Greater emphasis be given to the training of veterinarians in aquaculture and the recognition and management of disease.

2. The participation of veterinarians in the control of fish diseases be encouraged.

3. Training in fish diseases be included in veterinary curricula.
4. Regular regional meetings be held to review progress in the knowledge of diseases of fish.

5. The Director General of the OIE be empowered to seek financial support for regional training programmes and reviews of progress.

6. Priority be accorded to the following approaches:
   (a) diagnostic techniques;
   (b) the application of genetics to disease resistance;
   (c) the epidemiology of diseases;
   (d) the potential for application of biological control technology to control of fish pathogens.

7. Research be directed towards improvement of knowledge on:
   (a) the structure, function and biology of fish pathogens;
   (b) the host reaction to fish pathogens and its relation with pathogenicity; these two points being essential to the improvement of diagnostic techniques.

8. Closer cooperation be established between veterinarians and other scientists in universities and research institutions involved both in environmental studies and fish genetics.

II

ERADICATION OF RINDERPEST IN ASIA

Considering

That the presence of rinderpest in the Region represents a continuing threat to the livestock economy of the countries of the Region and impedes free trade of livestock;

That the technology to achieve total eradication through effective vaccination is available to the Region;

That the countries where the disease is endemic have demonstrated the capacity to achieve some control over the disease;

The genetic value of the cattle and buffalo breeds of the Indian sub-continent to the whole Region;

The Resolution on rinderpest taken by the 50th General Session of the OIE;

That for successful eradication, campaigns should have objectives of vaccinating all susceptible species and systems for ensuring that the number of animals with effective immunity is of the order of 80%.

The OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania

Endorses

Concerted efforts by all countries to achieve total eradication;

The need for the countries to adopt a national commitment to eradication which ensures that Veterinary Administrations have the resources to achieve a high level of immunity in cattle and buffalo populations;

The commitment of FAO/APHCA to coordinating a sub-regional eradication programme;
**Recommends that**

1. The concerned countries of the Region be urged to adopt a positive commitment to the total eradication of rinderpest.

2. The Governments of the countries in the Region ensure that their Veterinary Administrations adopt an objective of total eradication and ensure that these Administrations are given all necessary resources to achieve this objective.

3. The production of a simple accurate diagnostic kit should be given high priority.

4. Tissue-culture vaccine as recommended by the OIE Norms Commission should be adopted as the standard vaccine.

5. The countries concerned should adopt monitoring systems to ensure that a high level of effective immunity is maintained in the cattle and buffalo population.

**III
FEASIBILITY OF A REGIONAL RABIES ERADICATION PROGRAMME**

**Considering that**

Rabies is the most important zoonosis in the Region;

The continuing cost of dealing with human rabies and post-exposure treatment is high and increasing;

The problems and cost of human treatment can only be reduced by elimination of canine rabies;

The dog is the main vector of human rabies in the Region and rabies in wildlife is not a significant source of human exposure in the Region as a whole,

**The OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania**

**Endorses**

The development of national campaigns for eradication of canine rabies;

International technical cooperation to support national programmes with particular reference to advice on strategies, legislation, organisation of infrastructure and surveillance;

The development of systematic distribution of information between cooperating administrations within countries and information needed by international agencies (OIE, FAO, WHO);

**Recommends that**

1. The Governments of the countries of the Region accord high priority to the eradication of canine rabies.

2. The appropriate medical, veterinary and other relevant organisations of each affected country develop programmes based on mass vaccination of dogs, elimination of stray dogs and active participation of their communities.

3. There be full consideration of social, economic and ecological aspects of dog rabies control measures to ensure that programmes are designed to be understood and accepted by the community.
The OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania

Recommends that

1. The Regional Workshop on disease reporting systems should be held in Australia as soon as practicable in 1986.

2. The Director General seek financial support from the Asian Development Bank so that funds will allow as high a level of participation as possible.