INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE MATERIAL - CHALLENGES

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Listed in the published Terms of Reference for OIE Reference Laboratories (RL) is the requirement for all RL:

‘To develop reference material in accordance with OIE requirements, and implement and promote the application of OIE Standards’.

The OIE Biological Standards Commission (Laboratories Commission) coordinates a programme for the preparation, validation and distribution of OIE-approved International Reference Standards (IRS) for antibody assays for infectious diseases of animals. The standards are prepared by an OIE RL in accordance with Guidelines drawn-up by the Laboratories Commission and in collaboration with other laboratories. The Commission views the production of IRS as a key activity of RL and information on the availability and provision of such materials is requested through the annual reports of activities of the OIE Reference Laboratories. There are currently 22 IRS available for 19 of the 111 OIE-listed diseases. These are produced by 19 separately listed RLs. Nine of the 22 standards are produced in only two institutions.

Based on responses received from RL it would seem that few of them are aware of this procedure and list. Given that OIE Reference Laboratories are mandated to develop reference materials, and the vast majority of them comply with this mandate, but do not submit their materials for evaluation, the Commission agreed at its meeting in September 2013 that its standardisation programme needs to be reviewed, updated and overhauled.

The Commission is examining ways to assist and support laboratories to fully undertake this crucial part of their role. The production of further guidelines on the preparation of international reference standards to complement the existing ones is planned, with the aim of further supporting RL to fulfil their Mandate.