RESPECT OF OIE REFERENCE CENTRE COMMITMENTS: FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

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The OIE’s network of Collaborating Centres and Reference Laboratories constitutes the core of OIE scientific expertise and excellence. The contribution of this network of institutions ensures that the standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the Specialist Commissions and published by the OIE are scientifically sound and up-to-date.

The role of Reference Centres is critical to the work of the OIE to establish technical standards and procedures aimed at the prevention and control of animal diseases. They must meet the challenge of changes in scientific knowledge, technology, and patterns of disease spread to remain at the forefront of animal disease investigation. OIE Reference Centres have an important role to provide scientific and technical assistance and training to both the OIE and its Member Countries.

Terms of reference outline activities under the mandate of the Reference Centres, and the commitments entered into by their designation. To maintain the integrity of the OIE’s Reference Centre network, it is essential that the terms of reference are adhered to. The OIE’s annual questionnaire is one method of monitoring reference centre activity and performance.

A key aspect of Reference Laboratory terms of reference is the need to maintain a system of quality assurance, biosafety and biosecurity relevant to the specific pathogens and diseases. This is critical to ensure the reliability and reproducibility of results provided to the OIE and to OIE Member Countries. The communication of results through appropriate channels is essential to support members and to maintain confidence in the network.

It is important OIE Reference Centres continue to observe the criteria that they met for initial designation. There has been a recent example where failure to meet the Reference Laboratory terms of reference led to the removal of designation by the OIE. The OIE Reference Laboratory was inspected and evidence of flaws in its quality system was detected. These flaws did not allow optimal performance and indicated a lack understanding of the laboratory’s obligations. The laboratory’s designation was subsequently withdrawn by a decision of the OIE’s International Committee.