

The OIE Member Countries have the possibility to self-declare their country or a zone within their territory free from certain OIE-listed diseases other than those diseases for which the OIE has put in place a specific procedure for official recognition of disease status such as African horse sickness (AHS), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), classical swine fever*, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), foot and mouth disease (FMD) and peste des petits ruminants*.

*Resolution N° 29 adopted in May 2013 at the 81st OIE General Session

Self Declaration of an Equine Disease Free Zone in Turkmenistan

For the purpose of facilitating the Equestrian competitions in the framework of Ashgabat 2017

Executive summary

Introduction

The 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games will be held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in September 2017. In addition to Asian countries, for the first time in the history of the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, Oceania was included in the Games, bringing the countries eligible for participation to 62.

There will be 21 sports included in the Games. In addition to the 19 sports originally involved in the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, Turkmen traditional wrestling Goresh, and Equestrian Jumping were added to the competition schedule. The proposal was accepted by the Olympic Council of Asia and jointly approved.

In order to facilitate the participation of international equestrian athletes, the Ministry of Agriculture requested the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for its technical assistance to establish an Equine Disease Free Zone (EDFZ) to establish the health status of Turkmen horses in a specific area including the venue of the Games.

A team of OIE experts has supported the State Veterinary Services (SVS) during the period June 2016 to September 2017. SVS and the Ministry in charge of horses, Turkmen Atlary (TA), jointly identified the EDFZ's components, namely the Core zone and the Surveillance zone.

At the time of this declaration, 8 visiting nations have confirmed their participation in the equestrian competition, four of which will bring their horses from Europe, four by road from the neighboring countries.

The borders of the EDFZ components *(see Section 2 of the core document)*

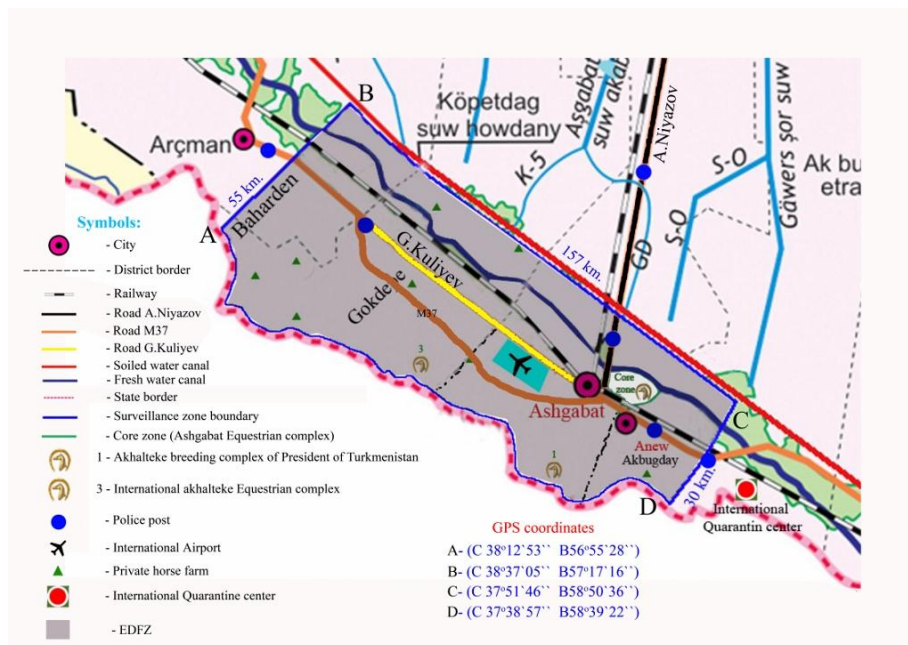
In line with OIE Guidelines¹ the EDFZ consists of a CORE zone and a surrounding SURVEILLANCE zone.

The Core zone corresponds to the venue for the equestrian competitions. It is situated at the outskirts of Ashgabat city in the Ashgabat hippodrome. It features a race course, a covered and an open competition arena as well as an open exercise arena. Additional features like a veterinary clinic,

¹ http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/Chevaux/EDFZ2.pdf

a farrier's workshop, an isolation stable barn and grooms accommodation were either converted or constructed. Resident horses (400) were removed from the venue by 15 March 2017 in order to guarantee that the venue will be empty of horses for at least 6 months.

The Surveillance zone of the EDFZ covers an area that holds the majority of Turkmen Akhal Theke horses and stretches along the mountain range border with Iran for about 110 km. Its borders are shown in the map below.



Map 1 showing the boundaries of the EDFZ (surveillance and core zone)

Equine health status in the EDFZ surveillance zone (see Section 4 of the core document)

To establish the health status of the resident animal population of 3878 horses, 599 camels, 112 donkeys and 6 kulans, a series of sero-surveys for the diseases of interest was planned. Diseases were selected on the basis of risk to visiting horses and the Turkmen horse population and were identified as African horse sickness (AHS), Equine Influenza (EI), Equine infectious anemia (EIA), glanders, surra and piroplasmiasis. At the same time passive surveillance in the entire surveillance zone was enhanced. The surveys took place in November 2016, February and June 2017. A representative number of samples, randomly chosen, was taken from horses, donkeys and camels during the 1st and 2nd survey, from horses and donkeys in the 3rd survey. All sport horses that potentially qualify for participation in the Games were sampled each time. For lack of suitable tranquilizers, the kulans in the zoo could not be sampled.

The surveys revealed the presence of surra in camels (1st survey) and the presence of piroplasmiasis (*T.equi* and *B.caballi*) in horses and donkeys in the 2nd and 3rd survey. Horses were negative for glanders, equine infectious anemia (EIA), African horse sickness (AHS) and Equine influenza (EI). The latter two diseases were only tested for in the 1st survey to prove their absence.

AHS has never been reported in Turkmenistan and vaccination is prohibited, as regularly notified by Turkmenistan to the OIE through WAHIS. In addition to the above -mentioned surveys, Turkmenistan conducted a serological survey to confirm the absence of AHS and applied for the OIE recognition of AHS free status. The assessment of the application for official recognition of AHS freedom by the OIE is under way.

Based on the evaluation of all findings, the SVS concludes that the equine health status in the equine population within the boundaries of the EDFZ is now known as not presenting a risk of highly infectious diseases of importance to equestrian event, namely AHS, EI, glanders and EIA.

The presence of surra in camels and piroplasmiasis in horses found during the surveys will be mitigated by a multi-pronged approach to vector control implemented at the International Quarantine Centre (IQC) and at the venue.

Biosecurity measures (see Section 6 of the core document)

Biosecurity measures have been introduced since the 15 March 2017. The venue has been fenced off completely and the rod-iron perimeter fence was enhanced with mash-wire of a size that does not allow rodents, cats and dogs to enter the area. Strict control of incoming vehicles and persons at the one single entrance open to access the venue until the Games has been established with wheel-, foot- and hand-wash facilities. Once the horses arrive, the Biosecurity Operational Manual (See Annex 1) will be implemented. The Manual describes step-by-step all measures to be applied to horses in their stables, while exercising and during competition and to people dealing with the horses.

The IQC will be subject to a very tight biosecurity management. One barn each will be allocated to the four participating nations whose horses need to undergo quarantine.

Biosecure transport corridors from the airport to the venue and from the two designated border posts for arrival by road have been established and SVS and TA will escort horse transporters with participating horses. The transport from the IQC to the venue after horses will have completed their 3-week quarantine period is equally biosecured.

Health Certification (see Section 3.4. of the core document and the annexes)

An international Animal Health Certificate specific for the Games has been developed and provided by SVS, TA and the Organising Committee to the participating Nations stipulating the health requirements to enter Turkmenistan temporarily (*Veterinary Certificate for the Temporary Importation of horses into Turkmenistan to compete in the equestrian events of the 5th Asian Indoors & Martial Arts Games*).

Additional Certificates for the purpose to (i) enter the Surveillance zone from Turkmenistan territory; (ii) enter the Core zone from the Surveillance zone; (iii) to move from the IQC to the Core zone; (iv) to move from the IQC or the Core zone to the Equine hospital; have been developed and put in place.

Maintenance of the EDFZ

As shown in Map 1, there are police posts based at strategic entry points into the Surveillance zone of the EDFZ. These police posts have a border post SVS inspector resident since the 15 March 2017, assisting the police to inspect all vehicles transporting animals. In case of a horse wishing to pass these posts, the relevant Animal Health Certificate will have to be produced.

Regionalization of the EDFZ

At the same time as preparing for the establishment of the EDFZ, an application for regionalization of the EDFZ for the purpose of the equestrian Games was submitted to the European Commission, assessed and approved in April 2017 and published on the 17 May 2017 in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Self-declaration of the EDFZ

The State Veterinary Services of Turkmenistan herewith declare the Equine Disease Free Zone as established and ready to receive horses from participating Nations for the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games.

Conclusion

With this document, the Veterinary Services self-declare the EDFZ for the period 15 March to 10 October 2017 for equine infectious anemia, equine influenza and glanders and declare that the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* (particularly in Chapters 12.5., 12.6. and 12.10.) have been met, assuring the participating Nations that the equine health status is in line with OIE requirements for the hosting of an international equestrian event.

For more information, please contact the Delegate of Turkmenistan, Dr Dovlet Nuryyev.