

DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE OIE WITH RESPECT TO ANIMALS IN DISASTERS

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Summary

The OIE has a well-recognised leadership role in protecting the world against biological disasters, whether of natural or man-made origin, through its work in the elaboration of standards for diagnosis, early detection, reporting and control of animal diseases and zoonoses. However, planning and preparedness in relation to animals affected by disasters is not specifically addressed in OIE standards or guidelines, nor is this topic mentioned in the OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS Tool). Moreover, no other international organisation has elaborated standards for Veterinary Services on this topic, nor is another international organisation as well placed as the OIE to address this important issue.

At its June 2012 meeting, the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group recommended that the OIE provide guidance to Member Countries on the management of animals in disasters. In November 2012, the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas discussed a technical item on 'Disaster management: the role and preparedness of Veterinary Services' and adopted a Resolution urging the OIE to do more to support the activity of national Veterinary Services in disaster prevention and response. In 2013, the Director-General commissioned this Discussion Paper on possible future actions for the OIE in the field of disaster management.

In response to the UN Resolutions and global strategies that have been adopted during the past two decades, government policies on disasters are becoming more focused on prevention, facilitating response and improving resilience. Risk assessment, risk mitigation and risk communication techniques are increasingly being used in the field of preparedness and planning for disasters.

The mandate of veterinary services for the prevention and control of animal diseases and zoonoses; safeguarding food safety and environmental health; and animal welfare is well recognised. Many of the technical requirements and veterinary skills that are relevant to disaster planning and management are covered (without specific reference to disaster management) in the *Terrestrial Code* Section 3 (Quality of Veterinary Services) and in the OIE PVS Tool.

In light of the relevance of these issues to disaster management and relief, there is a possible rationale for involvement of the Veterinary Services in disaster management more generally.

In support of this proposition, it is clear that some sub-sets of veterinary knowledge and skills are particularly relevant to preparedness and planning for disasters, and to disaster response. For example, risk assessment, risk management and risk communication are routinely used in disease prevention and control and can have more general application to disaster management. Epidemiological surveillance of animal diseases (including zoonoses) and the environment, and programmes for the control of the food production chain are based upon the types of activities that can be applied to early warning, forecasting and prevention of emergencies. There is scope to improve animal welfare by focusing on the mitigation and preparedness stages of disaster management – specifically, in the case of slow-onset disasters, such as droughts and famines. The chain of command that is vital to the veterinary response to disease outbreaks is comparable to the incident command system that is used in responding to disasters and emergencies. Finally, the training of veterinarians, with its strong emphasis on assessment, diagnosis and problem solving, provides a sound basis for involvement in disaster prediction and response actions.

It is recommended that the OIE consider the following options:

- Option 1.** A draft text could be developed by an *ad hoc* expert Group for submission to the relevant elected Commission(s). Following the OIE democratic procedures for standard setting, the new text would be the subject of consultation with Member countries during a 2 year period and, if accepted by Member countries, would be adopted as new text in the *Terrestrial Code*. If appropriate, new competencies could be added to the PVS Tool to reflect the adopted standard

Option 2. The OIE could develop a set of guidelines for location in the OIE website. The text would be developed by an *ad hoc* expert group reporting to elected Commission(s) and Member Countries could be apprised of progress but would not be asked to formally adopt the text. This approach would provide information and guidance to Member countries on technical requirements, without introducing an obligation to implement new systems or upgrade existing ones. In this case, the PVS Tool would not be modified, as the critical competencies in the PVS Tool are directly based on adopted texts in the *Terrestrial Code*.

Option 3. If there is no desire to develop standards or guidelines at this time, the OIE could provide additional, more detailed input to the revision of the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) Handbook. The second edition of the Handbook will come out in 2014 so, if the OIE wishes to propose major modifications or new chapters, the LEGS Secretariat should be contacted as soon as possible. It is noted that, based on the existing LEGS Handbook, major modification would be needed if the Handbook were to provide the type of information that is typically found in OIE standards or guidelines.

In view of the arguments in favour of the Veterinary Services taking on a stronger role in planning and preparedness for disasters and emergencies, and considering the lack of standards currently available on the design and implementation effective systems, it is recommended that the OIE follow option 1.

Background

The OIE has a well-recognised leadership role in protecting the world against biological disasters, whether of natural or man-made origin, through its work in the elaboration of standards for diagnosis, early detection, reporting and control of animal diseases and zoonoses. The OIE also makes standards for animal production food safety and for animal welfare. At present, the OIE does not give Member countries specific recommendations on preparedness for and response to disasters, either in the OIE standards for Veterinary Services (*Terrestrial Code* Section 3) nor in the OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services PVS Tool (PVS Tool).

The direct involvement of the OIE in the development of specific recommendations animals in disasters likely dates from 2006, when the OIE provided input to the LEGS Handbook (see below). At its June 2012 meeting, the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group recommended that the OIE provide guidance to Member Countries on the management of animals in disasters. In November 2012, the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas discussed a technical item on 'Disaster management: the role and preparedness of Veterinary Services' and adopted a Resolution urging the OIE to do more to support the activity of national Veterinary Services in disaster prevention and response. In 2013, the Director-General requested the preparation of a Discussion Paper on possible future actions for the OIE.

This paper reviews current approaches to animals in disasters and proposes options for future action by the OIE in this field.

Discussion

1. Definitions and terminology

There are many definitions of 'disaster'. In this paper, the definitions and terminology used are those of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). According to the OCHA, a disaster is 'a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources'¹.

OCHA advises that although disasters are often due to natural causes, they can be due to human causes, either deliberate (e.g. bioterrorism) or accidental (e.g. chemical spills). For a disaster to be entered into the database of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), at least one of the following criteria must be met:

- a report of 10 or more people killed
- a report of 100 people affected

¹ <http://www.eird.org/cd/on-better-terms/docs/OCHA-Definitions.pdf>

- a declaration of a state of emergency by the relevant government a request by the national government for international assistance.

The combination of hazard, vulnerability and inability to mitigate risk results in disaster. The classification of disasters includes natural disasters (e.g. flooding, hurricane, drought), human disasters (e.g. fire, conflict) and technical disasters (e.g. failure of nuclear reactor, chemical spill). Biological disasters, which are a subset of natural disasters, result from processes of organic origin or those conveyed by biological vectors, including exposure to pathogenic microorganisms, toxins and bioactive substances, which may cause loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. These include epidemics and insect infestations.

In considering future OIE action, it is useful to look at what exists in terms of approaches, organisations and standards relevant to disaster management at the international, regional and national level.

2. Organisations and standards at the international and regional level

This section gives a brief overview of the key actors in disaster planning and management, and relevant activities at the international, regional and national level.

2.1. The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) provides global leadership on disasters, through the adoption by the UN General Assembly of various Resolutions that establish the international framework for disaster planning and management.

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) builds upon the experience of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999), which was launched by the UN General Assembly in 1989. The International Strategy embodies the principles articulated in a number of major documents adopted during the Decade, including, in particular, the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, and the report "A Safer World in the 21st Century: Disaster and Risk Reduction". <http://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/international-strategy-for-disaster-reduction>

The ISDR reflects a major shift from the traditional emphasis on disaster response to disaster reduction, and in effect seeks to promote a "culture of prevention". UNISDR is the secretariat of the International Strategy and mandated by the UN General Assembly to ensure its implementation.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015) is a 10-year plan to make the world safer from natural hazards. It was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in the Resolution A/RES/60/195 following the 2005 World Disaster Reduction Conference. <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa>

On 9 April 2013, at its 67th session, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 67/231, 'International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development'. Noting that local communities are the first responders in most disasters, underlining the critical role played by in-country capacities in disaster risk reduction, the UN acknowledged the need to support efforts of Member States to develop and enhance national and local capacities. The Resolution encourages Member States, the UN system and other humanitarian and development actors to increase funding and cooperation for disaster risk reduction activities, including preparedness. It also calls for further steps to review and strengthen operational and legal frameworks for international disaster relief.

2.1.1. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) www.unocha.org

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) supports mobilization, funding and coordination of humanitarian action in response to complex emergencies and natural disasters. OCHA's objectives are to:

- alleviate human suffering caused by disaster or conflict;
- promote better preparedness for and, where possible, prevention of, disasters;
- help provide timely and effective international assistance to those who need it;

- ensure that those affected by disasters and conflicts find sustainable solutions;
- advocate for those in need.

OCHA supports and facilitates the work of UN agencies and NGOs in delivering humanitarian services. OCHA works closely with governments to support them in their lead role in humanitarian response: at the start of a crisis; at the country level; and on policy issues related to humanitarian action.

OCHA plays a key role in operational coordination in crisis situations. This includes assessing situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; developing common strategies to address issues such as negotiating access, mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress.

Working through its regional and country offices, OCHA deploys staff at short notice to emergencies. It also supports several surge-capacity mechanisms and networks that enable the humanitarian community to respond rapidly to disasters and conflicts.

Amongst its 18 thematic areas, OCHA lists food security. However, there is scant reference in the OCHA website to the contribution of veterinary services or veterinarians to humanitarian activities. The provision of access to veterinary services depends on linkages with FAO programmes – for example, see <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/cerf-emergency-response-funds-darfur>.

2.1.2. UN Food and Agriculture Organization

FAO is an important global actor in the field of humanitarian relief, with a focus on reducing vulnerability to hazards before, during and after disasters through risk assessment, risk reduction, emergency response and rehabilitation.

FAO programmes specifically address recovery and rehabilitation to increase the resilience of livelihoods through longer-term interventions that facilitate the transition from relief to development.

FAO supported the livelihoods of 1.1 million herders, distributing emergency veterinary inputs, multivitamins and mineral food supplements for livestock. FAO also helped restock herds by providing vaccinated small ruminants and poultry. FAO worked with the Governments of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger to monitor desert locust infestations and to take pre-emptive measures to minimize damages to food crops and pasture.

FAO's Sub-regional Emergency and Rehabilitation Office for West Africa/Sahel (REOWA), based in Dakar, Senegal, played a crucial role in strengthening early warning systems in the Sahel, helping to analyse the immediate and underlying causes of food insecurity, evaluate risks and early warning to inform decision-making at national and regional level. REOWA also guided FAO's emergency and rehabilitation programme on the ground, acting as a liaison between the various FAO offices and the network of humanitarian actors in the sub-region.

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/FAOs%20Response%20to%20the%20012%20Sahel%20Crisis.pdf

2.2. The Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards Project (LEGS)

The LEGS Project is an independent initiative, established in 2005, that aims to improve the quality and positive impact on livelihoods of livestock-related projects in humanitarian situations. It is overseen by a Steering Group that includes representatives from the African Union, FAO, the Red Cross, Tufts University, WSPA, and Vetnet UK. LEGS activities are coordinated by Vetnet UK and the project is funded by various donors and in-kind contributions. LEGS addresses all types of slow and rapid onset emergency, included those compounded by conflict. The central concept of LEGS is 'save lives and livelihoods'.

2.2.1. The LEGS Handbook

The key output of the LEGS project is the LEGS Handbook, which is supported by a global training programme and other awareness raising activities. In 2007, the OIE contributed to the first edition of the LEGS Handbook. In 2013 the Handbook is being revised, using a consultative process based on the LEGS website (<http://www.livestock-emergency.net/>) and mailing List. The OIE has already submitted some preliminary comments on content of the Manual to the LEGS coordinator. The second edition of the Handbook will be published in 2014.

The LEGS Handbook provides guidelines for responses to emergencies based on three 'livelihoods objectives':

- Providing immediate assistance to crisis-affected communities
- Protecting the livestock-related assets of crisis-affected communities
- Assisting the re-building of key assets among crisis-affected communities

Within each of these objectives, the Handbook makes recommendations on: destocking; veterinary care; supplementary feeding; provision of water; livestock shelter and settlement; and the provision of livestock or restocking. The LEGS Handbook also makes recommendations on 'Minimum standards for veterinary services'. While it is encouraging to see that the topic of Veterinary Services is seen as important and relevant, the recommendations in the LEGS Handbook do not resemble OIE recommendations in terms of level of approach, content or level of detail.

2.3. The Sphere Project

The Sphere Project was initiated in 1997 by humanitarian NGOs whose aim was to improve the quality of their actions during disaster response and to be held accountable for them. Sphere tenets are that people affected by disaster or conflict have a right to life with dignity and, therefore, a right to assistance; and that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising from disaster or conflict. The LEGS Handbook is a key reference to the Sphere Project. The Sphere Humanitarian Charter and minimum standards for humanitarian response are published as the Sphere Handbook: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/>

2.4. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

Several international animal welfare NGOs are involved in disaster relief and some play an important role in response by putting operational teams with emergency veterinary aid and feed into the field.

WSPA is the largest association of animal welfare NGOs globally. It has a longstanding collaboration with the OIE and the two organisations signed an official cooperation agreement in 2007.

WSPA has been involved in disaster relief for more than 40 years and is active in preparedness, response and rehabilitation. WSPA works with governments and local animal welfare groups to help prepare communities in disaster-prone areas, by setting up national warning systems and showing people how to prepare for disasters.

WSPA has a global network of disaster response teams, working with national partners to help in the rapid implementation of relief programmes. WSPA provides emergency veterinary care, animal feed and services to reunite animals with their owners. In the aftermath of an emergency situation, WSPA puts in place preparation plans to minimise the impact of future disasters in the area; these plans can serve as models for other countries.

See: <http://www.wspa-international.org/wspaswork/disastermanagement/>

2.5 Other NGOs

In addition to WSPA, several NGOs are active in disaster management at the international and regional level. For example, the Humane Society International (HSI) worked in Japan, to provide aid for animals affected by the Tohoku disaster. In Japan, the HSI worked with a central response team which included the Japan VMS, Japan SPCA, Japan Animal Welfare Society, and Japan Pet Care Association – see: http://www.hsi.org/news/news/2012/03/organizing_japan_response_030912.html

3. Organisations and standards at the national level

This section presents information on structures and standards relevant to the management of animals in disasters at the national level. There are many different approaches to the organisation of services and it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide exhaustive information on approaches used by OIE Member countries. Instead, the paper makes reference to the approach used in the United States, to illustrate some possible key actors, with whom the Veterinary Services must cooperate and collaborate, at the national level.

3.1. The US Federal Emergency Management Authority

The Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) is the US agency dedicated to the management of emergency situations. FEMA has a comprehensive website, with information in 12 languages (www.fema.gov). Some of the information on the website that is relevant to animals in disasters, includes:

- Helping pets (<http://www.fema.gov/helping-pets>);
- Caring for animals (<http://www.ready.gov/caring-animals>);
- Brochure on planning for disasters and pets prepared in collaboration between FEMA; American Kennel Club, AVMA, HSUS and ASPA. (http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/pets_brochure.pdf)
- The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program makes an important contribution to disaster preparedness and response in the United States, and is supported by FEMA. CERT educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. CERT includes training modules on all animals (not just pets).

3.2. The American Veterinary Medical Association

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) promotes the involvement of veterinarians in emergency management, including in planning and response operations. Citing the linkages between the health of animals, humans, and the environment (i.e. One Health) and the veterinary role in assuring food safety, the AVMA considers that veterinarians are vital to the success of the overall emergency management process.

The AVMA encourages and fosters veterinary leadership in local, state and federal efforts to deal with "all hazards / all species"– preparing for disasters and emergencies involving animals, animal and public health, and other veterinary issues.

AVMA established the Committee on Disaster and Emergency Issues in 2001 to:

- Address the veterinarian's role in emergency and disaster issues
- Address the effects of disasters on animal health, public health, and the veterinary profession
- Contribute to the development of AVMA position statements on disaster and emergency issues that affect the veterinary profession
- Develop guidelines for the veterinary profession to use regarding various aspects of disaster situations

3.2.1. AVMA Veterinary Medical Assistant Team programme

The Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) program provides volunteers who serve as first responders to ensure high-quality care of animals during disasters and emergencies. The VMAT program, which is supported through funding from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF), was created after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. It began as a public-private partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but evolved into a program operated solely by the AVMA.

The VMAT program serves three primary functions: Early Assessment Volunteer Teams; Basic Treatment Volunteer Teams; and Training.

3.3. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Agriculture

Extensive resources are provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services (with particular reference to the public health dimension of disasters) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). As an example of USDA's programmes, the Centre for Food Safety and Public Health (CFSPH), with the support of USDA APHIS Animal Care Emergency Programs, offers a 10 part course for Animal Care employees on emergency planning and response roles. Animal Care conducts periodic Web-based training using these modules.

3.4. NGOs

NGO's may play an active role in the care and welfare of animals affected by disasters at the national level. An example of direct advice to the public is found in the HSA website, under the rubric 'disaster planning for pets, horses and livestock' - see:

http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/disaster_preparedness.html

3.5. Academia

In the United States, veterinary schools and colleges may have significant involvement in the field of disaster management, including input to the development and implementation of preparedness plans at state and local level.

4. The OIE role with respect to animals in disasters

4.1. Background

The OIE's central role in the prevention and management of infectious diseases has been well recognised for decades and, in more recent years, the OIE has turned its attention to disasters caused by natural events and by human intervention.

Relevant reports published in the *Scientific and Technical Review* include:

- Vol. 18 (1) 'Management of animal health emergencies' (1999)
- Vol. 25 (1) Biological disasters of animal origin. The role and preparedness of veterinary and public health services.
- Vol. 28(2) Preparing for veterinary emergencies: disaster management and the Incident Command System. Madigan, J. and Dacre, I. (2009).

Many authors consider that the involvement of the veterinary profession in emergency preparedness, with a focus on animals, is essential for the profession to meet its obligations to animals and humans.

The direct involvement of the OIE in the development of specific recommendations on animals in disasters likely dates from 2006, when the OIE provided input to the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) Handbook. In 2007 the OIE participated in an International Working Group on Animals in Disasters (IWGAID). This Group, which was formed at the initiative of WSPA, included international organisations active in the humanitarian response to disasters, such as UNESCO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the OECD. In 2008 WSPA published a brochure based on the work of this Group.

At its September 2010 meeting, the OIE Council discussed the question of what the OIE could and should do in relation to the issue of animals in disasters, and concluded that:

- in light of the OIE mandate, the subject of animals in disasters is a relevant and appropriate topic for OIE involvement;
- capacity building of national Veterinary Services so that they are trained and ready to carry out interventions in serious disaster situations could be integrated as a criterion in the PVS Tool (noting that OCHA, like the OIE, encourages the designation and training of national focal points); and
- it could be useful for the OIE to develop guidelines as a support for OIE Members, in addition to responding to OCHA recommendations.

- Note: In this case, 'OCHA recommendations' refers to the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, adopted by the state parties to the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in November 2007².

At its June 2012 meeting, the OIE Animal Welfare Working Group recommended that the OIE provide guidance to Member Countries on the management of animals in disasters.

At the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas (Barbados, 26 – 29 November 2012), Dr Ernesto Fabián Mendoza Mainegra, of the OIE Collaborating Centre on the Reduction of the Risk of Disasters in Animal Health, Cuba, presented a technical item (with questionnaire) on 'Disaster management: the role and preparedness of Veterinary Services'. The Regional Commission adopted a Resolution urging the OIE to do more to support the activity of national Veterinary Services in disaster prevention and response.

In 2013, the Director-General commissioned this Discussion Paper on possible future actions for the OIE.

4.2 Future role of the OIE

In response to the UN Resolutions and global strategies that have been adopted during the past two decades, government policies on disasters are becoming more focused on prevention, facilitating response and improving resilience. Risk assessment, risk mitigation and risk communication techniques are increasingly being used in the field of preparedness and planning for disasters.

In emergencies and disasters, humanitarian efforts focus on saving human life. However, there is a growing awareness that actions to 'save livelihoods' should also be considered if donors wish to achieve sustainable improvements through their interventions. When considering animals in disasters, the emphasis in developing countries may be on livestock, due to the importance of food and draft animals for livelihoods. However, the importance of the human-companion animal bond should not be overlooked in any community. Experience in some countries has shown that management and support of communities in disasters is more effective if plans are in place for companion animals, and this is now a routine element of preparedness in many countries.

Traditionally, veterinarians and veterinary services are mainly involved in prevention and management of biological disasters relating to outbreaks of disease, including zoonoses. In disasters of non-biological origin, veterinarians are primarily recognised for their participation in 'First response'. This includes operational support to rescuers and working animals, rescued animals and the provision of advice and prophylaxis in relation to health risks associated with animals, food and water.

The mandate of veterinary services for the prevention and control of animal diseases and zoonoses; safeguarding food safety and environmental health; and animal welfare is well recognised. In light of the relevance of these issues to disaster management and relief, there is a possible rationale for involvement of the Veterinary Services in disaster management more generally.

In support of this proposition, it is clear that some sub-sets of veterinary knowledge and skills are particularly relevant to preparedness and planning for disasters, and to disaster response. For example, risk assessment, risk management and risk communication are routinely used in disease prevention and control and can have more general application to disaster management. Epidemiological surveillance of animal diseases (including zoonoses) and the environment, and programmes for the control of the food production chain are based upon the types of activities that can be applied to early warning, forecasting and prevention of emergencies. There is scope to improve animal welfare by focusing on the mitigation and preparedness stages of disaster management – specifically, in the case of slow-onset disasters, such as droughts and famines. The chain of command that is vital to the veterinary response to disease outbreaks is comparable to the incident command system that is used in responding to disasters and emergencies. Finally, the training of veterinarians, with its strong emphasis on assessment, diagnosis and problem solving, provides a sound basis for involvement in disaster prediction and response actions.

² <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/idrl/idrl-guidelines/>

Experience with disasters and emergencies in OIE Member countries suggests that Veterinary Services could play a more significant role, not only in response but also in planning, preparedness and risk mitigation.

If the Veterinary Services are to play a significant role in national disaster preparedness and response, their responsibilities and powers should be defined in legislation. The relevant programmes and activities integrated into the general disaster planning processes at national, regional and local level. Veterinary services are one part of the overall government framework and it is important that they collaborate closely with lead agencies for disaster management, in addition to human health agencies and emergency services.

In the planning and management of disasters, as in many areas of government activity, collaboration with the private sector (for example, the livestock industry and private veterinary associations) and with NGOs is an essential element.

Consideration should be given to the need for training veterinary students to deal with emergencies and disasters. Large-scale incidents can have grave consequences not only for humans but also for domestic and wild animals. It has been argued that emergency preparedness is essential for the veterinary profession to meet its obligations to both animals and humans. The most important skills that are taught in the field of disaster management are problem solving, leadership, organisational thinking, project management and effective communications – all of which are relevant to the lifelong learning of veterinarians.

5 Options for OIE future action and recommendation

The OIE has not to date developed standards, guidelines or recommendations to Veterinary Services with specific respect to disasters and emergencies. Moreover, no other international organisation has elaborated standards for Veterinary Services on this topic, nor is another international organisation as well placed as the OIE to address this important issue.

Many of the technical requirements and veterinary skills that are relevant to disaster planning and management are covered (without specific reference to disaster management) in the *Terrestrial Code* Section 3 (Quality of Veterinary Services) and in the OIE PVS Tool.

It is recommended that the OIE consider the following options:

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In view of the arguments in favour of the Veterinary Services taking on a stronger role in planning and preparedness for disasters and emergencies, and considering the lack of standards currently available on the design and implementation effective systems, it is recommended that the OIE follow option 1.

List of references

OIE Scientific and Technical Review:

Vol. 18 (1) 'Management of animal health emergencies' (1999)

Vol. 25 (1) Biological disasters of animal origin. The role and preparedness of veterinary and public health services.

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