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## OIE WORLD ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM: THE ROLE OF OIE REFERENCE LABORATORIES AND COLLABORATING CENTRES IN DISEASE REPORTING

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One of the OIE's main objectives is to ensure transparency and knowledge of the world animal health situation. To achieve this noble objective, the OIE relies on a network of OIE Members that is complemented and supported by the activities of OIE Reference Laboratories (RL) and Collaborating Centres. In their mandate, it is stated that, in the case of positive results for diseases notifiable to the OIE, the RL should inform the OIE Delegate of the Member from which the samples originated, with a copy to the OIE Headquarters. However, since 2006 the OIE has received a limited number of notifications from RL, which implies either that they are not complying with their mandate or that they have not received any samples that tested positive for OIE-listed diseases.

In preparation for this Conference, a questionnaire was sent to all RL to try to clarify the situation. We noticed a discrepancy between the answers to the questionnaire and the actual situation with regard to the sharing of positive laboratory findings. Two main factors emerge: the need for RL to fulfil their role in disease reporting and the need for an awareness campaign to sensitise national Veterinary Services on the importance of conducting surveillance (and consequently of submitting samples to RL) for all OIE-listed diseases. In their questionnaire returns, RL indicated two main reasons for not sharing data on positive samples with the OIE: a) a perceived contradiction between their mandate as OIE RL and ISO standards; and b) certain Members or stakeholders asking RL not to share positive results with the OIE, for political or economic reasons. A lack of transparency on the part of a small number of countries is unacceptable and a strategy for better communication must now be developed between the OIE and its RL to overcome the current problems. The OIE has already put forward proposals to help RL resolve these problems in future. However, further efforts are required to maintain the overall positive trend in the improvement of transparency and knowledge of the world animal health situation. When information on a significant disease event is not shared, the repercussions of this lack of transparency may jeopardise the biosecurity of several countries, regions or even the whole world.



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