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OIE GUIDELINES ON THE WELFARE OF LABORATORY ANIMALS

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The use of animals in research, testing and teaching, as a possible future element of the OIE's strategic initiative on animal welfare, was discussed at the 2004 first OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare. This paper summarises the initial consultation that took place, the process used and the progress made in the development of the draft *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* chapter on the Use of animals in research and education.

Formal support for OIE involvement in laboratory animal welfare was confirmed at the 2005 OIE General Session and relevant review papers were published in the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review Series* issue "Animal Welfare: Global Issues, Trends and Challenges" later in 2005. From the outset, it was seen to be vitally important that the OIE clearly scoped, and defined, any potential international role it could play regarding laboratory animal welfare. It was also envisaged that any OIE international involvement would involve close liaison with already established specialist international organisations.

The International Council for Laboratory Animal Science (ICLAS) and the International Association of Colleges of Laboratory Animal Medicine (IACLAM) were identified as key organisations and have provided critical input to the establishment, and membership, of the OIE *ad hoc* Group established in 2006 to progress work in this area. The importance of the relationship with the International Cooperation on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Veterinary Medical Products (VICH) has also been recognised as a priority.

The development of a chapter on the use of animals in research and education was the first of four priority projects developed by the Laboratory Animal Welfare *ad hoc* Group. Laboratory animals play an important role in the work of the OIE's international network of Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres and in the regulatory testing of veterinary medical and biological products conducted by OIE members. It is, thus, pleasing to see the strong support given for the OIE's international involvement in the laboratory animal welfare area.



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