TRANSPORTATION AND HANDLING OF BIOLOGICALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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In a world that has complicated routes and means of transportation, the handling and transfer of biological products and materials, becomes a very critical process to be carried out safely. It becomes, sometimes, a considerable risk as it was not ever before. The intended and unintended mishandling and misuse of these substances can pose threat and lead to harmful consequence over unlimited areas and people.

Biological materials (including specimens for testing, reagents, disease agents, vaccines, etc.) should be carefully collected, packed, labeled, stored, shipped and received according to specific regulations and conventions established by International and regional agencies.

National and International organizations have found it necessary to develop recommendations and guidelines to safeguard production, handling and transportation of hazardous materials.

The OIE has included in its *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines* both for terrestrial and aquatic animals, a chapter dedicated to collection and shipment of diagnostic specimens describing guidelines for:

- The collection of samples from live animals and postmortem.
- The requirements for packaging and transport of samples including IATA categorization and regulations for different sort of materials containing infectious substances and biological agents.
- The shipping forms.
- The preservation of samples for prolonged storage (Serum banks...)

The transport of infectious materials is mainly described in the chapter related to biosafety and biosecurity in veterinary microbiology laboratory and animal facilities, in which high standards of laboratory safety and containment requirements, that will ensure healthy working conditions for laboratory staff and protection of the environment, are described and defined as the greatest priority.

Also appropriate training and competence has been demonstrated and documented to be the essential means required for the protection of involved people in handling, packaging and shipping of biological materials mainly veterinarians and laboratory personnel.

The uncontrolled transfer of biological materials by individuals, groups and organizations which sometimes may lead to bioterrorist actions may destroy all efforts that have been made by other countries to achieve safeguarded transfer of biologicals.

The OIE, as the world setting-standards organization for animal health and trade in animals and animal products, is well placed to lead the international and regional efforts for setting up guidelines and recommendations for safe handling and transport of veterinary biologicals including vaccines and disease agents.