

## Preventing and controlling health risks associated with globalisation

The national Veterinary Services include official veterinarians assisted by veterinarians working in private sector. The Veterinary Services are crucial for the prevention, early detection and control of animal diseases, including those transmissible to humans (zoonoses). They play an essential role in all countries and are in the forefront when it comes to ensuring animal health, food security and food safety, thereby helping to protect public health.

This crucial role was again demonstrated recently during the emergence of the influenza A(H7N9) virus strain in China in spring 2013: the Chinese Veterinary Services played a large part in helping to contain a potentially very serious human epidemic.

The control measures taken in China from the very first suspicions that the virus was of avian origin clearly demonstrate the importance of early detection and a rapid response to sanitary events by acting directly on the animal source. These measures, including control of live animal markets and the destruction of infected animals, led to a sharp decline of the human epidemic in just a few weeks.

This example is a perfect illustration of the approach that should be adopted, in strict compliance with the provisions of the OIE *International Animal Health Code*, whenever a contagious animal disease occurs anywhere in the world.

Now, at a time of unprecedented globalisation of pathogenic microorganisms, it is more than ever appropriate to promote the importance of these animal disease prevention and control measures implemented by effective national Veterinary Services, and to recognise their crucial role in protecting public health.

The OIE has adopted and published international standards to ensure the quality of governance of the Veterinary Services, and it implements programmes throughout the world to help its Member Countries apply them. Using the PVS Pathway (PVS: Performance of Veterinary Services), the OIE works tirelessly to bring national Veterinary Services into line with international standards of quality democratically adopted by all.

It is important to remember that these international standards also enable countries wishing to export animals and animal products to access the most lucrative regional and international markets, from which they might be excluded due to the presence of animal diseases on their territory or due to the quality of their Veterinary Services not complying with OIE standards.

The arsenal of measures available to OIE Member Countries to ensure the sanitary safety of, and access to, international trade in animals and animal products (eggs, milk, meat) also includes official recognition by the World Assembly of national Delegates of OIE Member Countries of the health status of countries, or zones within countries, with regard to certain specific priority diseases. This official recognition, which follows a strict procedure, can be seen as an international standard, to be recognised by all trading partners. Consequently, any non-acceptance of a sanitary status published in accordance with this procedure would have to be scientifically justified by the importing country in question.

Thanks to the concept of “zoning”, this procedure also helps countries, where a single zone is affected by a disease subject to official recognition, to maintain or facilitate their access to international markets for animals and animal products from the remaining, unaffected part of their national territory.

Members can also ask for the recognition of zones free from disease within an infected country.

Since being introduced in May 1994 for foot and mouth disease (FMD), the OIE procedure for official recognition has been extended to include official recognition of the status of countries or zones with respect to rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and,

since 2012, African horse sickness. This year, the possibility for Member Countries to have their disease status officially recognised by the OIE World Assembly has been further extended to include peste des petits ruminants and classical swine fever.

The OIE has also strengthened this procedure to provide support for Member Countries not yet in a position to apply for an official status and to help them with controlling certain specific diseases. For instance, Member Countries may now, if they wish, submit their national control programmes for FMD and peste des petits ruminants for comment and, where appropriate, official endorsement by the OIE. This procedure enables Veterinary Services to seek the required funding for control and eradication programmes for FMD and peste des petits ruminants from their government or the international community of public or private donors. The procedure is fully in line with the programmes currently being implemented by the OIE and FAO aimed at worldwide control of both these diseases.

To help them with their work of preventing and controlling animal diseases, OIE Member Countries will always find relevant technical and organisational information in the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* and *Aquatic Animal Health Code*, which detail international standards, including both horizontal standards (such as quality of national Veterinary Services and procedures for certifying the sanitary safety of products) and vertical standards (specific provisions on controlling risks relating to each OIE-listed animal disease).

The OIE *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* and *Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals* contain standards relating to the appropriate diagnostic techniques and vaccine quality.

Lastly, on behalf of its 178 Member Countries the OIE organises continuous training and support programmes to facilitate the application of standards adopted by all.

Thus, through all the mechanisms that the OIE offers its Member Countries, animal diseases around the world are on the decline and sanitary crises are becoming less frequent despite globalisation, and at the same time public health is being strengthened.