



4th OIE Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health: Collaboration, sustainability – our future

Santiago, Chile, 2-4 April 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. Food derived from aquatic animals is an important source of high-quality nutrition. Aquaculture continues to grow faster than any other major food producing sector and close to 50% of aquatic animal global consumption is derived from aquaculture;
2. Aquaculture production is very diverse worldwide producing aquatic animals not only for food but also for restocking and the ornamental trade, from subsistence-oriented family run farms to intensive integrated production systems supplying local and international markets;
3. Small scale and artisanal aquaculture make a significant contribution to human nutrition and poverty alleviation but may present challenges for effective aquatic animal health management;
4. Aquaculture is unique in that it includes hundreds of distantly related species from several phyla including arthropods (crustaceans), chordates (fish, amphibians, reptiles) and molluscs (bivalves and gastropods). Over 500 different aquatic animal species are being cultured globally, with species regularly being farmed in new geographical locations or for the first time;
5. Aquatic animal products from fisheries and aquaculture are a major international commodity, with more than one third of the world's production traded internationally. Growth in international trade of live aquatic animals and aquatic animal products can be a significant pathway for spread of aquatic animal diseases;
6. Aquatic animal diseases, including new and emerging diseases, continue to challenge the aquaculture sector and cause significant losses in aquaculture production throughout the world with significant detrimental impacts on national economies in many countries and regions;
7. New and emerging aquatic animal diseases also pose a significant threat to the health and biodiversity of wild aquatic animals; notably, amphibian populations have been seriously affected by outbreaks of infection with *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* and infection with *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*, which have resulted in the extinction of many species;
8. Managing emerging diseases presents particular challenges due to a lack of understanding about their epidemiology, and potential impacts; a lack of diagnostic tests and treatment tools; and the need to make management decisions despite these limitations in knowledge. In recent decades the global performance in managing these diseases has been poor, with numerous outbreaks spreading internationally;
9. OIE Member Countries are obliged to report the occurrence of epidemiologically important events via the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS). International reporting allows actions to prevent disease spread. In addition, prompt reporting establishes a country's reputation as a trustworthy trade partner and can support a case for technical assistance. Disease reporting for aquatic animal diseases continues to be lower than for terrestrial animal diseases;

10. One of the objectives of the OIE is to improve aquatic animal health worldwide and to facilitate safe international trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products;
11. There is a need for all OIE Member Countries to meet their OIE membership obligations and, through their Aquatic Animal Health Service, implement the OIE standards for disease prevention and control, and trade in aquatic animals in line with the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, as appropriate;
12. The OIE is developing an Observatory on the implementation of its international standards with the intention of better understanding how the standards development process and capacity development programmes can lead to stronger implementation practices by Members;
13. The quality of an Aquatic Animal Health Service depends on a set of factors which include fundamental principles of an ethical, organisational, legislative, regulatory and technical nature. Compliance with these fundamental principles is important in the establishment and maintenance of confidence in its aquatic animal health status and in the international aquatic animal health certificates provided by the Aquatic Animal Health Service ;
14. In many Member Countries, Aquatic Animal Health Services, whether part of the Veterinary Services or not, lack human and financial resources and infrastructure, including legislation, to implement efficient aquatic animal health programmes;
15. Veterinarians and other aquatic animal health professionals play a key role in the establishment and implementation of aquatic animal health programmes;
16. Private-Public-Partnerships are an essential component to ensure continued growth in aquaculture and the effective implementation of OIE standards;
17. The OIE continues to work to reinforce the capacity of Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services, using the OIE PVS Pathway;
18. OIE Reference Centres are of critical importance to help the OIE to fulfil its mandate relevant to diagnostic capacities and to set science-based standards, guidelines and recommendations on aquatic animal health; and noting that there are only two OIE Collaborating Centres for aquatic animal topics;
19. Almost all OIE Member Countries have nominated a national Focal Point for Aquatic Animals, under the responsibility of the National OIE Delegate; the OIE is providing ongoing capacity building regional seminars for national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals to assist them to meet their responsibilities;
20. There are a number of successful examples of global initiatives for Twinning of OIE Reference Centres for aquatic animal diseases;
21. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global One Health challenge for the human health, animal (aquatic and terrestrial) health, food safety, plant health and environment sectors that must be addressed through coordinated implementation of the Global Action Plan, and more specifically for the animal health sector, the OIE Global Strategy on AMR and Prudent Use of Antimicrobials;
22. Breeding and genetics can be used to develop disease resistant stock and thus are important tools for improving aquatic animal health.

23. Antimicrobial agents for treatment of diseases in aquatic animals are over used in some aquaculture sectors or countries. Alternative methods for disease prevention are needed to facilitate prudent antibiotic usage and maintain effective antibiotics for treatment in human and veterinary medicine;
24. A number of important and relevant topics and issues were identified at the 3rd OIE Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health, held in Ho Chi Minh City in 2015, including improving compliance with OIE standards, notably for surveillance and early detection.

OIE MEMBER COUNTRIES ARE REQUESTED TO:

1. Engage in the OIE standard setting process by commenting on the reports of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission and by taking an active part in other relevant OIE activities;
2. Take steps to improve compliance with OIE standards, notably surveillance and early disease detection; notification to the OIE of listed and emerging aquatic animal diseases; and the control of pathogenic agents in aquatic animals and prevention of their spread via trade, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade;
3. As appropriate, comply with their WTO SPS obligations with respect to harmonisation of national systems with international standards and the transparency of aquatic animal health measures for managing disease risks associated with international trade;
4. Work with industry to implement biosecurity measures for aquaculture establishments as an important component of national, regional and global frameworks to improve aquatic animal health management. These measures should mitigate the risk of the introduction of specific pathogenic agents into aquaculture establishments, and if they are introduced, to mitigate the risk of further spread within, or release from aquaculture establishments;
5. Promote the development of Public-Private-Partnerships, to ensure the effective implementation of OIE standards;
6. Actively contribute to regional and global collaboration initiatives, including those facilitated by the OIE, which aim to control important new and emerging diseases in aquatic animals;
7. Ensure transparent, timely and consistent notification of all OIE listed and emerging diseases to the OIE through WAHIS to support Member Countries to take appropriate action to prevent the transboundary spread of important diseases of aquatic animals;
8. Ensure that the OIE standards and guidelines for responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents are respected in their country; and promote advances in disease management to reduce the need for antimicrobials;
9. Develop, approve and implement national action plans to reduce antimicrobial resistance under a “One Health” approach that includes aquatic animals, taking into account multi-sectoral and multinational experience and alignment with the Global Action Plan developed by WHO and formally endorsed by OIE and FAO;
10. Contribute to the OIE annual collection of data on antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals, and to publish, whenever possible, their own national reports on the sales or use of antimicrobial agents in relation to the aquatic animal population of the country;

11. Mobilise adequate resources to develop sustainable communication and behaviour change activities targeting AMR in line with OIE international standards, and ensuring the strategic development of activities that include all relevant animal health stakeholders;
12. To strengthen curricula of veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals to ensure they are well equipped to work in aquatic animal health roles across both the public and private sectors;
13. Ensure participation of nominated focal points in OIE regional capacity building seminars and other relevant activities and ensure that their roles and responsibilities, under the authority of the OIE Delegate, are well defined;
14. Encourage potential centres of expertise to apply to become an OIE Collaborating Centre or a Reference Laboratory in order to expand the current network, and, if appropriate, take opportunities to develop the required expertise through participation in OIE Twinning programmes for Reference Centres;
15. Consider requesting an OIE PVS evaluation of their Veterinary Service or Aquatic Animal Health Service, if not yet done, with the objective of improving competencies and general compliance with OIE standards for aquatic animals, where aquaculture is an important or potentially growing sector;
16. Ensure that aquatic animal health professionals authorised by the Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services to perform regulatory functions in aquatic animal health programmes, receive appropriate training.

THE OIE IS REQUESTED TO:

1. Continue to revise and develop OIE international standards in the *Aquatic Code* for the improvement of aquatic animal health and welfare of farmed fish worldwide, in particular chapters on biosecurity for aquaculture establishments, emergency disease preparedness, disease outbreak management, approaches to demonstrate disease freedom and safe trade in genetic material. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that standards are relevant for small scale aquaculture;
2. Consider specific guidance to Member Countries to minimise the risk of transboundary diseases associated with international trade in ornamental aquatic animal species.
3. Continue to implement improvement in critical areas of the disease-specific chapters of the *Aquatic Manual* to improve consistency among chapters and improve the quality and completeness of information that reflects the latest scientific knowledge, including case definitions, test validation, and defining the appropriateness of test methods for surveillance, detection and diagnosis;
4. Assist Member Countries to improve compliance with reporting obligations, including emerging diseases, to prevent disease spread. Consider developing more extensive guidelines to when and how emerging diseases should be notified to the OIE;
5. Assist Member Countries in strengthening their Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services to promote good governance practices including national legislation and regulatory frameworks, with specific emphasis on the prevention of aquatic animal diseases and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals;

6. Promote the role and responsibility of the Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services in aquatic animal health, including the importance of both public and private sector veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals, and the opportunities that arise for service improvements and efficiency through public-private-partnerships;
 7. Continue to encourage governments, relevant regional and international organisations and donors to provide resources for applied research in vaccines, alternative therapeutics and other management approaches to reduce the need for use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals, including consideration of the regulatory processes to efficiently authorise commercial use of these alternatives;
 8. Cooperate with governments and with relevant international and regional organisations to increase awareness of the need for aquatic animal health programmes; improved disease reporting and foster cooperation between veterinary and other relevant authorities at the national, regional and international level;
 9. Consider how it may contribute to improved regional and global collaboration to assist Member Countries in their response to significant new and emerging diseases of aquatic animals;
 10. Continue to strengthen collaboration with donors and with regional and international organisations, such as FAO, to advocate for the key role of veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals in the prevention, reporting and control of aquatic animal disease;
 11. Encourage governments and donors to invest in Aquatic Animal Health Services, and to strengthen their work on prevention, control and eradication programmes for aquatic animal diseases and more fully comply with the OIE international standards, including through making full use of the OIE PVS Pathway;
 12. Collaborate with donors and governments to assist Member Countries in strengthening their diagnostic capacity for aquatic animal diseases through the use of Twinning programmes for OIE Reference Centres;
 13. Work together with FAO and WHO using the tripartite 'One Health' approach to reduce the impacts of transboundary and emerging diseases for aquatic animals.
-