



**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP ON TECHNICAL REFERENCES
FOR AQUATIC ANIMALS**

Paris (via Zoom), 21-22 September 2021

1 Opening

The OIE *ad hoc* Group on Technical References for Aquatic Animals (hereafter referred to as ‘the Group’) met from 21st to 22nd September 2021 via an on-line application, 13:00 – 16:00 (Central European Time), coordinated by the OIE Headquarters in Paris, France.

Dr Ólafur Valsson, Deputy Head of the OIE Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products (AMR & VP) Department, welcomed the Group members and thanked them for their participation in the Group.

2 Adoption of the agenda and appointment of the rapporteur

The agenda was adopted without additions or revisions. The Group was chaired by Dr Donald Prater and Dr Siow Foong Chang acted as rapporteur. The adopted Agenda and List of Participants are presented in Appendices I and II of this report, respectively.

3 Review of input provided to the Excel Spreadsheet template

3.1 Limitations on the sources of information and geographical coverage of antimicrobial use search

The Group was thanked for their efforts in collecting data on use of antimicrobials in aquatic animals to fill the Excel Spreadsheet template of the *Technical Reference Document Listing Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance for Aquatic Animals* (hereafter referred to as the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*).

The Group identified several challenges and limitations associated with the information collected so far. It was noted that:

- Information is not always available on whether use of a particular antimicrobial agent in a given country is in accordance with its officially permitted usage. It can therefore be difficult to distinguish products authorised for use in aquatic species from the off-label use authorised for other species. In some cases, direct contact would need to be made with the veterinary services of a country to obtain this information.
- Information on use taken from published articles and other text-based sources may not be up to date. It is also difficult to confirm if the information from such sources is reflective of current use in the field.
- The information collected may not be comprehensive for all geographic areas with aquaculture production systems, and has less information for crustaceans than for fish. Further information may need to be sought in consultation with external experts.

3.2 Consideration of off-label use of antimicrobials

The Group discussed the off-label use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic species, and whether antimicrobial agents used in this way should be included in the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*. It was noted that in many countries, very few or no antimicrobial agents are authorised for use in aquatic species. In these cases, antimicrobial agents that are not authorised for use may in fact be commonly used in aquatic animals, and in some countries, such use may be the norm. Some countries do have regulations to permit off-label use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals under certain circumstances.

The Group also considered the methodology and approach used for the *Technical Reference Document Listing Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance for Poultry* (hereafter *Poultry Technical Reference Document*), for which antimicrobial agents were only included if they were found to be authorised for use in poultry species in at least one country. It was agreed that it would be important to use a similar approach for all *Technical Reference Documents Listing Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance* for different animal species for consistency. Furthermore, as the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document* is to be used as a risk management tool for the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobial agents, it was considered preferable to avoid including off-label use of antimicrobial agents in the main table as it could be interpreted as an endorsement for their use.

Based on this, the Group agreed that the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document* should only include antimicrobial agents which have been identified as authorised for use in aquatic animals in at least one country.

However, the Group agreed that off-label use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals will be addressed in the accompanying explanatory text to the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*. This explanatory text will acknowledge the importance of off-label use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic species and discuss their use in context. Further information could also be included where relevant in the annexes (*List of major pathogens and diseases affecting the main aquatic animal species (fish and crustaceans only)* and *Antimicrobial classes used to treat aquatic animal infections*). In this way, the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document* will function as a positive list (including only those antimicrobial agents which are authorised for use in aquatic animals) while acknowledging that individual countries may take a different approach to regulation of off-label use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals.

3.3 Consideration of combinations of antimicrobials (pending discussion on off-label use)

The Group discussed use of combinations of antimicrobial agents in aquatic species, and whether such combinations should be included in the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*. It was agreed by the Group to use the same approach as for the *Poultry Technical Reference Document*, and therefore to only include well-established combinations for use in aquatic animals, with proven efficacy and proven synergism.

3.4 Antimicrobials other than antibiotics

The Group discussed the use of antimicrobial agents other than antibiotics (such as antiprotozoals, antifungals, antivirals, as well as use of biocides and disinfectants) in aquatic species, and whether such agents should be included in the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*.

It was noted that many chemical products with antibacterial properties are used in aquaculture, as are certain antifungals with antibacterial properties (such as pyceze/bronopol) and that such products may be authorised for this use. In other cases, chemical products used in hatcheries of crustaceans and fish as disinfectants are, in some cases, used to treat live adult fish.

The Group provisionally agreed to exclude biocides and disinfectants in the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*, but to include the reasons for this decision in the explanatory text, as well as recognising that these are important substances used in aquaculture. It was agreed that further information could be added on the types of chemicals, as well existing guidance and references for their use.

3.5 Consideration of the Excel Spreadsheet template

The Group reviewed the updated Excel Spreadsheet template of the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document* which had been updated to include the Group's feedback following the previous meeting.

It was noted that this feedback included information on use of antimicrobial agents for which no authorised product had been identified. The Group agreed to seek further information on these products and, in line with the decision on off-label use, to not include these antimicrobial agents unless an authorised product could be found. This was identified as an area that external experts could potentially help with.

It was also noted that some information related to several antimicrobial agents obtained from the *OIE Global database on antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals* may be difficult to understand due to the language barrier. The Group members requested that the OIE contact the OIE National Focal Points for Veterinary Products and/or Aquatic Animals to seek clarification. The Group noted that where differences existed between information collected by the Group, information from the OIE database, and the *OIE List of Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance* (hereafter the *OIE List*), criteria should be developed to determine whether an antimicrobial agent should be included in the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document* or not. It was agreed that if an antimicrobial agent was listed as “Used” for aquatic species in the *OIE List*, but no other information could be found on its current use in aquatic species, careful consideration should be given as to whether this would be removed from the *OIE List*.

The Group discussed whether the species category of “fish” (currently “PIS” in the *OIE List of Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance*) should be considered separate to “crustaceans”, or whether these should be grouped under one category. It was noted that separating the two categories would create a list that would be more user-friendly, though this would require some additional work.

The Group discussed the issue of terminology for species. For example, it was noted that the current draft of the Excel spreadsheet template makes reference to “shrimps” and “lobsters”, whereas the terms used in other parts of the world are “prawns” and “crayfish”. The Group agreed to use the Latin name of aquatic species and to use the current terminology for subcategories of fish (Cyprinidae, Cichlidae, Salmonidae, Siluriformes for freshwater fish) and crustaceans (Penaeidae for shrimp/prawn) used in the *OIE Global database on antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals*,

4 Evaluate need for external experts

The Group agreed that there is a need to reach out to external experts to provide additional information for the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document*. The Group was reminded that any feedback received from external experts would be reviewed by the Group, and that the final draft of the *Aquatic Technical Reference Document* result would be sent to the Working Group on AMR.

The Group found that there may be additional opportunities for outreach to and engagement with other networks and resources to request information on lists of antimicrobials authorised for use in aquatic species before contacting external experts. The Group was informed that the OIE currently runs a Network on AMR in Aquaculture who could be contacted. It was also proposed that information could be sought from the OIE Focal Points for Veterinary Products and/or Aquatic Animals, and to potentially target questions to Focal Points from countries which have significant aquaculture production and/or for which information has been identified as missing. It was suggested that it would also be important to engage with major producer associations, the pharmaceutical industry, the medicines regulatory authorities of a country or region, and aquatic veterinary associations.

The Group agreed to conduct some additional targeted outreach – for this, the Group would develop questions to send as part of this outreach that would be applicable for all antimicrobial classes, and a list of contacts. The information collected would be reviewed by the Group in the next meeting.

Any outstanding questions or information gaps would be sent to additional external experts, and the feedback would be reviewed in a subsequent meeting of the Group.

The Group members will be requested to provide suggestions for the additional external experts. It was noted that the experts should include individuals such as veterinarians, producer groups, industry, and be representative of different countries, regions, species groups (including marine vs. freshwater species) and temperature ranges.

5 Date of next meeting

The proposed date of the next meeting is 8th-9th February 2022.

6 Any other business

None.

7 Adoption of report (online)

The Group adopted the draft report via online consensus.

.../Appendices

MEETING OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP ON TECHNICAL REFERENCES FOR AQUATIC ANIMALS

Paris (via Zoom), 21-22 September 2021

Day 1 (September 21)

1. Opening
2. Short self-introduction by participants
3. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur
4. Review of input provided to the Excel Spreadsheet template.
 - 4.1. Limitations on the sources of information and geographical coverage of antimicrobial use search
 - 4.2. Consideration of off-label use of antimicrobials
 - 4.3. Consideration of combinations of antimicrobials (pending discussion on off-label use)
 - 4.4. Antimicrobials other than antibiotics

Day 2 (September 22)

5. Evaluate need for external expert group
 6. Date of next meeting
 7. Any other business
 8. Adoption of report (online)
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