

CHAPTER 3.2.

QUALITY OF VETERINARY SERVICES

Article 3.2.1.

General considerations

The quality of *Veterinary Services* depends on ethical, organisational, legislative and technical factors.

Compliance with standards of quality is critical for *Veterinary Services* to meet their animal health, *animal welfare*, and veterinary public health objectives, and is important for the establishment and maintenance of trust in *international trade*.

Veterinary Services should conform to the fundamental operating principles in Article 3.2.2., regardless of the political, economic or social situation of their country.

The key components of a country's *Veterinary Services* are presented in Articles 3.2.3. to 3.2.12. Four components are focused on governance aspects: Policy and Management, Personnel and Resources, the Veterinary Profession, and Stakeholders; and six components are focused on technical aspects: Animal Health, Animal Production Food Safety, Veterinary Medicinal Products, Laboratories, Animal Welfare and International Trade.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with other chapters in the *Terrestrial Code*, relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Manual* with regard to quality of *laboratories*, diagnosis and vaccines, as well as relevant Codex Alimentarius texts.

Article 3.2.2.

Fundamental operating principles

Veterinary Services should comply with the following interrelating principles to ensure the quality of their activities.

1. Professional judgement

The personnel should have the relevant qualifications, expertise and experience to give them the competence to make sound professional judgements.

2. Independence and objectivity

Care should be taken to ensure that personnel are free from any undue commercial, financial, hierarchical, political or other pressures which might adversely affect their judgement or decisions. The *Veterinary Services* should, at all times, act in an objective manner.

3. Impartiality

Veterinary Services should be impartial. In particular, all the parties affected by their activities have a right to expect that their services are delivered reasonably and without discrimination.

4. Integrity

Veterinary Services should maintain a consistently high level of integrity. Any fraud, corruption or falsification should be identified and addressed.

5. Transparency

Veterinary Services should be as transparent as possible in all their governance and technical activities, including but not limited to, disease reporting, policy and programme decision-making, human resources and financial issues.

6. Scientific basis

Veterinary Services should develop and implement their activities on a scientific basis, incorporating relevant inputs from fields such as *risk analysis*, epidemiology, economics and social science.

7. Intersectoral collaboration

Veterinary Services should operate collaboratively, including via a One Health approach, sharing professional knowledge and experience with all relevant sectors and actors while optimising the use of resources.

Article 3.2.3.

Policy and management

Veterinary Services should have the leadership, organisational structure and management systems to develop, implement and update policies, legislation and programmes, incorporating *risk analysis*, and epidemiology, economics and social science principles. Decision-making by *Veterinary Services* should be free from undue financial, political and other non-scientific influences.

The *Veterinary Authority* should coordinate other relevant governmental authorities, and should undertake active international engagement with the OIE and other relevant regional and international organisations.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) comprehensive national *veterinary legislation* in accordance with Chapter 3.4., regularly updated with reference to changing international standards and new scientific evidence;
- 2) implementation of *veterinary legislation* through a programme of communications and awareness, as well as formal, documented inspection and compliance activities;
- 3) capability to perform *risk analysis* and cost–benefit analysis to define, review, adapt and resource policies and programmes;
- 4) policies or programmes that are well documented, resourced and sustained, appropriately reviewed and updated to improve their effectiveness and efficiency, and that address emerging issues;
- 5) quality management systems with quality policies, procedures and documentation suited to the *Veterinary Services*' activities, including procedures for information sharing, complaints and appeals and for internal audits;
- 6) information management systems for collecting data to monitor and evaluate *Veterinary Services*' policies and activities and to perform *risk analysis*;
- 7) organisational structures with defined roles and responsibilities for effective internal coordination of activities from central to field levels (chain of command), which are periodically reviewed and updated as necessary;
- 8) formal external coordination mechanisms with clearly described procedures or agreements for activities (including preparedness and response mechanisms) between the *Veterinary Authority*, *Competent Authorities*, other relevant governmental authorities and stakeholders, incorporating a One Health approach;
- 9) appropriate levels of official representation at international multilateral fora, involving consultation with stakeholders, active participation and sharing of information, and follow up on meeting outcomes.

Article 3.2.4.

Personnel and resources

Veterinary Services should be appropriately staffed, including *veterinarians*, *veterinary paraprofessionals* and other personnel, with appropriate competencies obtained through initial and continuing education to allow their functions to be undertaken effectively and efficiently.

Veterinary Services should have functional and well-maintained physical resources, adequate operational resources for their ongoing and planned activities, and access to extraordinary resources to respond effectively to emergency situations or new emerging issues.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) a core of full-time civil service employees including qualified and sufficient *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals*;
- 2) formal, consistent and merit-based recruitment and promotion procedures;

- 3) job descriptions, formal performance assessment and management procedures for *veterinarians*, *veterinary paraprofessionals* and other personnel that are defined and being implemented;
- 4) personnel remuneration, sufficient and regular to minimise the risk of conflicts of interest and to preserve independence;
- 5) *veterinarians'* and *veterinary paraprofessionals'* education, knowledge, skills and practices that are standardised and sufficient to perform relevant activities of the *Veterinary Services*;
- 6) *veterinary paraprofessionals* are adequately supervised by *veterinarians*;
- 7) all personnel have access to professional development, including continuing education programmes that are reviewed and updated as necessary;
- 8) established procedures for *Veterinary Services* to access personnel and other resources, including in emergencies;
- 9) access to suitable physical resources at all levels (national, state/provincial and local), including, but not limited to, functional buildings, furniture, equipment, communications, information technology, transport and cold chain, which are maintained or renewed as necessary;
- 10) access to sufficient operational resources for planned and continued activities, as well as for new or expanded operations, including but not limited to, contracts, fuel, per diem, vaccines, diagnostic reagents, personal protective equipment and other consumables.

Article 3.2.5.

The veterinary profession

Veterinarians and *veterinary paraprofessionals* are an essential component of *Veterinary Services*, whether as part of governmental authorities or as private service providers.

The *veterinary statutory body* should regulate *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* to effectively and independently maintain educational and professional standards relevant to their roles, including official tasks, veterinary clinical services and other veterinary tasks as appropriate. Mechanisms for coordination between the *Veterinary Authority*, the *veterinary statutory body* and veterinary educational establishments should be in place.

The OIE has produced guidelines on the expected competencies for *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* as well as guidelines on the curricula necessary to deliver those competencies.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) There is an independent *veterinary statutory body* that is legally responsible and adequately resourced for:
 - a) licensing and registration of *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* to perform defined activities related to veterinary science or animal health;
 - b) setting minimum standards of education required to be registered or licensed as *veterinarians* or *veterinary paraprofessionals*;
 - c) setting minimum standards of professional conduct and competence of registered *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* and ensuring that these standards are met and maintained;
 - d) investigating complaints and applying disciplinary measures.
- 2) Independence of the *veterinary statutory body* is ensured through transparent governance and funding arrangements including an elected, representative council or equivalent, and financial arrangements for the collection and management of registration fees.
- 3) Sufficient quality veterinary clinical and extension services are available to meet the needs of animal owners, including providing awareness of and access to essential diagnosis and treatment for animal disease and injury.

Article 3.2.6.

Stakeholders

A range of individuals and organisations have an interest in or concern with the activities of the *Veterinary Services*, for example livestock farmers, processors, traders, *feed* manufacturers, *wildlife* managers, researchers, private *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals*, as well as relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the general public.

Veterinary Services should communicate with these stakeholders in an effective, transparent and timely manner on *Veterinary Services* activities and developments in animal health, *animal welfare* and veterinary public health. They should also consult effectively with relevant stakeholders on *Veterinary Services* policies and programmes, involving mechanisms that actively seek stakeholders' views for consideration and response.

Competent Authorities should, where applicable, have the authority and capability to develop or engage in public private partnerships to deliver animal health, *animal welfare* or veterinary public health outcomes. That is:

- to accredit, authorise or delegate to the private sector;
- to develop or participate in collaborative joint programmes with producers or other stakeholders.

The OIE has produced guidelines for both public and private sectors to help advocate for, develop and implement public private partnerships in the veterinary domain.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) good governance relevant to all stakeholder engagement, to ensure compliance with Article 3.2.2., incorporating transparency and effective monitoring and evaluation;
- 2) ongoing, targeted and effective communication with stakeholders in accordance with Chapter 3.5.;
- 3) consultation mechanisms, including written invitation, meetings or workshops with non-government stakeholder representatives, with consultation inputs documented and duly considered;
- 4) public private partnerships, in the form of official delegation or joint programmes, which have legal authority, formal agreements and documented procedures in accordance with Chapter 3.4.

Article 3.2.7.

Animal health

Veterinary Services should organise and implement programmes to prevent, detect, control or eradicate animal diseases, including through being able to identify *animals* to trace and control their movements.

Veterinary Services should organise and implement an effective animal health *surveillance* system and be prepared to respond effectively to sanitary emergencies.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) effective *surveillance* for the early detection, monitoring and reporting of known and *emerging* animal *diseases*, including in *wildlife*, via an appropriate field animal health network, using laboratory confirmation and epidemiological disease investigation with prompt and transparent reporting and data analysis technologies, in accordance with relevant chapters, including Chapters 1.1., 1.2., 1.3., 1.4. and 1.5.;
- 2) an updated list of *notifiable diseases* that includes relevant *listed diseases*;
- 3) use of the formal procedures for self-declaration and official recognition by the OIE for both disease freedom and disease control programmes, in accordance with Chapter 1.6.;
- 4) emergency management, including preparedness and response planning, a legal framework, and access to the human, physical and financial resources to respond rapidly to sanitary emergencies in a well-coordinated manner, including for disposal and *disinfection* in accordance with Chapters 4.13. and 4.14.;
- 5) *official control programmes* for priority diseases with scientific and risk-based evaluation of their efficacy and efficiency, in accordance with the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- 6) a programme for managing the risks to animal health from germplasm, including the collection, processing and distribution of semen, oocytes or embryos, in accordance with the relevant chapters in Section 4.;
- 7) a programme for the official health control of bee diseases, in accordance with Chapter 4.15.;
- 8) a programme for managing the risks to animal and public health from animal *feed*, including feeding animal materials to susceptible *animals*, in accordance with Chapter 6.4.;
- 9) a system for *animal identification*, *animal traceability* and movement control for specific animal *populations* as required for traceability or disease control, in accordance with Chapters 4.2. and 4.3.

Article 3.2.8.

Animal production food safety

Veterinary Services should contribute to assuring the safety of food of animal origin for domestic and export markets as part of a food safety system, with effective coordination of official controls between relevant *Competent Authorities*.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) regulation, inspection, authorisation, supervision and auditing of establishments and processes for production and processing of food of animal origin (*slaughtering*; rendering; dairy, egg, honey and other animal product processing) for export, national and local markets, including the inspection, sampling and testing of products, in accordance with Chapters 6.1. and 6.2.;
- 2) implementation of procedures for ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection at slaughter facilities, including *slaughter* associated with live *animal markets*, incorporating *risk analysis* and principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), veterinary supervision, independent inspection, and the collection of information relevant to animal diseases including zoonoses, in accordance with Chapters 6.2. and 6.3. and the relevant Codex Alimentarius texts;
- 3) regulation and implementation of controls on animal *feed* safety covering processing, handling, storage, distribution and use of both commercial and on-farm produced animal *feed* and *feed ingredients*, including risks such as microbial, physical, chemical and toxin contamination;
- 4) a residue monitoring programme for veterinary medicines (e.g. antimicrobials and hormones), chemicals, pesticides, radionuclides, heavy metals, etc. and the capacity to respond appropriately to adverse findings;
- 5) identification and traceability of products of animal origin for the purposes of food safety, animal health or trade, in accordance with Chapter 6.2.;
- 6) procedures for corrective actions and for proportional and dissuasive sanctions in response to regulatory non-compliance to mitigate risks to the safety of food of animal origin for export or domestic markets in accordance with Article 6.2.3.;
- 7) preparedness and response planning to manage food or *feed* safety incidents of animal origin.

Article 3.2.9.

Veterinary medicinal products

Veterinary Services should regulate all *veterinary medicinal products* such as veterinary medicines, biologicals and medicated *feed*, in order to ensure their quality and safety, as well as their responsible and prudent use, including *monitoring* antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance, and minimising the associated risks.

This article should be read in conjunction with the *Terrestrial Manual*, which sets standards for the production and control of vaccines and other biological products.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) effective regulatory and administrative control, in accordance with Article 3.4.11., including communications and compliance programmes for:
 - a) the market authorisation of *veterinary medicinal products*, including registration, import, manufacture, quality control and reducing the risk from illegal imports;
 - b) responsible and prudent use of *veterinary medicinal products*, including the labelling, distribution, sale, dispensing, prescription, administration and appropriate safe storage and disposal of these products;
- 2) *risk management* and *risk communication* for antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance, based on *risk assessment*. This includes *surveillance* and control of the use of antimicrobials and the development and spread of antimicrobial resistant pathogens in animal production and food products of animal origin. This should be coordinated using a One Health approach, and in accordance with Chapter 3.4. and relevant chapters of Section 6.

Article 3.2.10.

Laboratories

Veterinary Services should have access to quality *laboratory* diagnosis through a sustainable network of *laboratories*, capable of accurately identifying and reporting *infections* and *infestations* or other relevant *hazards*.

Veterinary Services require *laboratory* services for purposes such as early detection, measuring disease prevalence and progress with control, assessing the quality and effectiveness of *veterinary medicinal products*, implementing antimicrobial resistance *surveillance*, assessing the safety of food or *feed*, or supporting *international trade* (e.g. demonstration of *animal health status*), as well as for associated research. The *laboratory* services include official government laboratories and other *laboratories* authorised by the *Competent Authorities* to conduct official testing, including private laboratories or those abroad.

This article should be read in conjunction with the *Terrestrial Manual*, which sets *laboratory* diagnostic standards for all OIE *listed diseases* as well as several other diseases of global importance.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) access to *laboratory* diagnosis that meets the needs of the *Veterinary Services*, which is efficient and sustainable with an appropriate throughput of samples, in accordance with the *Terrestrial Manual*;
- 2) access to approved *laboratories*, such as national, regional or international reference *laboratories*, to obtain or confirm a correct diagnosis for *notifiable diseases* and to investigate *emerging diseases* or *hazards*, in accordance with the *Terrestrial Manual*;
- 3) appropriate levels of laboratory biosafety and *biosecurity*;
- 4) formal *laboratory* quality management systems and proficiency testing programmes, in accordance with the *Terrestrial Manual*.

Article 3.2.11.

Animal welfare

Veterinary Services should implement policies, legislation and programmes in accordance with Section 7.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) *animal welfare* programmes, supported by suitable legislation, with appropriate stakeholder and public awareness and compliance inspection activities;
- 2) communication, consultation and coordination with stakeholders.

Article 3.2.12.

International trade

Through the implementation of OIE standards, *Veterinary Services* play a critical role in ensuring the safety of *international trade of commodities* and *veterinary medicinal products*, while avoiding unjustified barriers.

Veterinary Services should implement risk-based measures for import and export following relevant provisions in the *Terrestrial Code* and in accordance with Chapter 5.3. Quality of *Veterinary Services* is essential for these measures to be recognised and trusted.

This component should comprise the following specific elements:

- 1) *sanitary measures* developed and implemented in accordance with Chapter 2.1. and other relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- 2) effective implementation of *official veterinary controls* to prevent the entry of diseases and other *hazards* through effective border inspection and quarantine operations, in accordance with Chapter 5.6.;
- 3) effective application of relevant animal health measures at or before departure for exports, during transit through the country, and on arrival for imports, in accordance with Chapters 5.4., 5.5. and 5.7.;
- 4) effective development and implementation of international veterinary certification for *animals*, animal products, services and processes for export under their mandate, in accordance with *importing country* requirements and relevant chapters in Section 5.;
- 5) effective development, implementation and maintenance of equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners, where applicable, in collaboration with national stakeholders, and in accordance with Chapter 5.3.;
- 6) regular and timely official notification to the OIE, World Trade Organization, trading partners and other relevant organisations of changes in animal disease status, regulations and *sanitary measures* and systems, in accordance with the procedures established by these organisations, including Chapters 1.1. and 1.3.;

- 7) where applicable, effective implementation and maintenance of disease-free *zones*, *compartments* or other high health status *subpopulations* for the purposes of trade, in collaboration with producers and other stakeholders, and in accordance with relevant chapters in Sections 4. and 5.;
- 8) active participation in the OIE and Codex Alimentarius standard setting processes.

NB: FIRST ADOPTED IN 1998; MOST RECENT UPDATE ADOPTED IN 2022.

