The OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the Terrestrial Code) provides standards for the improvement of terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide. The health measures in the Terrestrial Code should be used by the Veterinary Authorities of importing and exporting countries to set up measures providing for early detection, reporting and control of pathogenic agents, including zoonotic ones, in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds, reptiles and bees) and preventing their spread via international trade in animals and animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.

The standards in the Terrestrial Code have been adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates, which constitutes the organisation's highest decision-making body.

The following amendments were adopted at the 87th General Session in May 2019 for inclusion in this edition:

– Glossary (addition of 'early warning system', deletion of 'early detection system' and amendment of 'sanitary measure');
– Diseases, infections and infestations listed by the OIE (Article 1.3.3.);
– Animal health surveillance (Chapter 1.4.);
– The role of the Veterinary Services in food safety systems (Articles 6.2.3. and 6.2.4.);
– Introduction to recommendations for animal welfare (Article 7.1.4.);
– Animal welfare and pig production systems (Articles 7.13.4. and 7.13.15.);
– Infection with rabies virus (Chapter 8.14.);
– Infection with Chlamydia abortus (Enzootic abortion of ewes, ovine chlamydiosis) (Article 14.4.1.);
– Infection with African swine fever virus (Articles 15.1.2., 15.1.3., 15.1.4., 15.1.17., 15.1.23., 15.1.32.).

This edition also includes two new chapters on following titles:

– Introduction to recommendations for disease prevention and control of transmissible animal diseases (Chapter 4.1.);
– Killing of reptiles for their skins, meat and other products (Chapter 7.14.).

The development of these standards and recommendations is the result of the ongoing work by the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (the Code Commission). This Commission, which comprises six elected members, meets twice yearly to address its work programme. The Code Commission draws upon the expertise of internationally renowned specialists to prepare new or revised texts for the Terrestrial Code. The comments of OIE Member Countries are routinely sought through the twice yearly circulation of new or revised texts. The Code Commission collaborates closely with other Specialist Commissions of the OIE, including the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission, the Biological Standards Commission and the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases, to ensure that the recommendations contained in the Terrestrial Code are based upon the latest scientific information.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) formally recognises the role of the OIE as the international standard setting organisation for animal health and zoonotic diseases. According to the SPS Agreement, WTO Members should align their import requirements with the recommendations in the relevant standards of the OIE. Where there are no OIE recommendations or if the country chooses a level of protection requiring measures more stringent than the standards of the OIE, these should be based on an import risk analysis conducted in accordance with Chapter 2.1. The Terrestrial Code is thus a key part of the WTO legal framework for international trade.

The Terrestrial Code is published annually in the three official OIE languages (English, French and Spanish). An unofficial translation into Russian is also available from the OIE upon request. The Terrestrial Code may be viewed and downloaded from the OIE Web site at http://www.oie.int.
The User's guide, which follows this foreword, is designed to help Veterinary Authorities and other interested parties to use the Terrestrial Code.

We wish to thank the members of the Code Commission, Delegates and the experts participating in Working Groups and ad hoc Groups and other Specialist Commissions for their expert advice. Finally but not least, my thanks go to the staff of the OIE for their dedication in producing this 28th edition of the Terrestrial Code.

Dr Monique Eloit
Director General
World Organisation for Animal Health

Dr Etienne Bonbon
President
OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission

President: Dr Etienne Bonbon
Vice-President: Dr Gaston Maria Funes
Vice-President: Dr Masatsugu Okita
Members: Dr Lucio Ignacio Carbajo Goñi, Prof. Salah Hammami and Dr Bernardo Todeschini.

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