



Official disease status of Member Countries

In today's globalised world, animal diseases can spread as a result of the exponential growth in trade and tourism. The official sanitary status of countries regarding animal diseases has become a key factor to preserve animal health, public health and a safe international trade. Since 1996, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has developed a procedure for the official recognition of country sanitary status that today covers six priority animal diseases. The Lists of Member Countries with an official disease status, ratified each year by the Organisation, have become an indispensable element of international trade and global disease control strategies.

KEY FACTS

- OIE Member Countries can apply for official disease status recognition (covering six diseases).
- These can refer to a zone or the totality of their territory.
- The official disease status of Member Countries is of great significance for international trade.
- OIE Member Countries can also apply for the endorsement of their official national control programme for some diseases.

The OIE is the only world organisation to grant an official status on freedom from specified animal diseases. The overall objective is for countries to progressively improve the situation, find national and international support for implementing their programme and eventually attain free status for these diseases.

OFFICIAL DISEASE STATUS

Each year, the World Assembly of OIE Delegates adopts a List of Member Countries, or zones within these countries, officially recognised with a sanitary status on selected diseases. The first such List of free countries was published in 1996, with regard to foot and mouth disease. Since then a similar procedure has been developed for several other diseases.

This List currently includes six diseases:

- Foot and mouth disease (FMD)
- Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP)
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)
- African horse sickness (AHS)
- Peste des petits ruminants (PPR)
- Classical swine fever (CSF).

For FMD only, countries or zones can be given a free status with or without vaccination.

2011: Rinderpest is eradicated. The procedure for official recognition of free status for [rinderpest](#) is over: Therefore, it is no longer included in the list. OIE Resolution 18/2011 recognises all 198 countries with rinderpest-susceptible animal populations in the world as free of the disease.

OFFICIAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES

The OIE also implemented a procedure for the endorsement of official national control programmes for CBPP, FMD and PPR.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN THE FRONT LINE

The official disease status of Member Countries is of great significance for international trade. A Member Country may either lose or enhance its commercial attractiveness in the eyes of potential or existing importing partners, depending on official recognition of its status. By acquiring and maintaining its official status, a Member Country demonstrates transparency and helps to promote animal health and public health worldwide, thereby gaining the trust of its partners and of the international community.

Official recognition of disease status provides developing and in-transition countries support to better defend their interests in trade, as well as giving them guidelines that they can use as national objectives in order to attain disease-free status.

The growing number of Member Countries recognised as free by the OIE is an important booster to convince governments and donors to invest in credible global programmes of control and eradication of priority diseases.

THE SIGNIFICANT WORLDWIDE REDUCTION IN THE INCIDENCE OF BSE PROVES EFFICACY OF OIE MEASURES

The number of BSE cases reported each year in the United Kingdom has dropped from nearly 40,000 in 1992 to only 3 in 2013. The cumulative number of cases reported from the rest of the world has gone from over 1,000 reported cases in 2001 to 4 cases in 2013. The further propagation of the infection in cattle has been prevented among others by the strict prohibition, recommended by the OIE standards, of feeding meat and bone meal of ruminant origin to cattle. The very low number of recent BSE cases being reported and investigated seems to include the presence of sporadic and atypical forms of the disease, not related to classical BSE and resembling similar sporadic forms of encephalopathies found in other animal species and humans (Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease).

2014: For the first time, 48 countries have been declared free of PPR. A global strategic plan is currently in preparation to eradicate the PPR, following the example of successful eradication plan of the Rinderpest.



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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Granting, suspension and recovery of official disease or risk status are handled in an objective and transparent manner, governed by the [Standard Operating Procedures](#).

Application for official recognition of disease status by a Member Country



Examination of the application by OIE high scientific level *Ad hoc* Groups



Recommendation of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases



Adoption (or rejection) by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates

To ensure an impartial and democratic procedure, the OIE convenes *ad hoc* Groups of highly renowned international experts to examine the applications for official recognition of disease status submitted by OIE Member Countries on a voluntary basis. The conclusions and recommendations of these Groups are then reviewed and either accepted, or rejected by the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (created through election of its experts by OIE Member Countries).

All draft decisions are submitted to all Member Countries. Then they are invited to make comments if necessary. Each year, at the OIE General Session in Paris, the status of Member Countries in regard to these diseases is reviewed and, where appropriate, ratified and published.

In the case of a country or zone which previous official status was suspended, the Scientific Commission has been given the mandate to proceed with the previous status recovery without further consultation of the World Assembly.

Annual re-confirmations at the OIE General Session

- Countries having an officially recognised status should reconfirm every year that their status has remained unchanged.
- Countries having an endorsed official national control programme for FMD, CBPP and PPR should annually inform the OIE on the progress on its implementation.

Providing that all the conditions are fulfilled, official statuses are confirmed annually during the OIE General Session, after consultation of OIE Member Countries.

Criteria for evaluating the applications for official recognition

These criteria are revised on a regular basis to take into account the latest research on the diseases and their characteristics.

Member Countries may maintain their official status recognised by the OIE provided they respect the conditions which are set in the *Code* and immediately notify any significant sanitary event which could change that status. If a Member Country fails to comply with these obligations it can be withdrawn from the official OIE List for that particular disease.

Country or zone

The Delegates of OIE Member Countries may submit an application for the whole of their country or only a zone of the country to be recognised as free from one of the OIE- listed diseases for which the OIE has put in place a specific procedure for official recognition of disease status. In the latter case, the OIE's decision relates only to the part of the territory concerned.

Compartment

Establishing and maintaining a disease free status (without vaccination) throughout the country should be the final goal for OIE Member Countries. However, at the beginning, there may be benefits to a Member Country in establishing and maintaining compartments for the purpose of disease control and/or international trade.

Compartmentalisation is a procedure implemented by a Member Country with a view to defining subpopulations of distinct health status within its territory primarily through management and husbandry practices related to biosecurity endorsed by Veterinary Services. Countries can make self-declaration of free status for a given compartment. These declarations can be published by the OIE Bulletin on request of OIE Member Countries.

Self-declaration

Member Countries may also make [self-declarations](#) of freedom, under their own responsibility, from other OIE- listed diseases for which no official recognition procedure exists. They may do this based on the criteria and standards defined in the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (the Code). Their trading partners may in this case request more detailed information as well as an audit of their Veterinary Services. Self-declarations can be published by the OIE Bulletin on request of Member Countries.

The example of Avian influenza: it is not one of the diseases for which the OIE has a procedure for official recognition of a country's status. Article 10.4.2. ([Chapter 10.4.](#)) of the *Terrestrial Code* lists the conditions under which a country may make a 'self-declaration' as a country free from avian influenza, under its sole responsibility. Nevertheless, importing countries can request additional information or even request to audit the Veterinary Services of the country.

For more information

- [Official disease status](#)