

World
Organisation
for Animal
Health



CONTENTS

1 Editorial

2 Action for world public health:

Control of animal diseases, including zoonoses

3 Promoting sustainable development and solidarity:

Access to good quality food for all

4 Protecting world trade and food:

Access to markets for the benefit of all

5 Surveillance, prevention and control of animal diseases is a worldwide issue:

Building a world, regional and national animal health system is a priority

SYNOPSIS

Created in 1924 as the «Office International des Epizooties», the World Organisation for Animal Health still keeps its historic acronym “OIE”. It is one of the oldest intergovernmental organisations and, with its 178 Member Countries, one of the most representatives.

Present on all five continents through its network of more than 265 Reference Laboratories, Collaborating Centres and Regional and Sub-Regional Representations, the OIE manages the world animal health surveillance and early warning system, playing a key role in veterinary research and scientific information. Recognised by the World Trade Organization, the OIE is the guarantor of the sanitary safety of world trade in animals and animal products and the sole world reference on animal welfare. It prepares and issues international standards within the scope of its mandate.

EDITORIAL



The OIE was created in 1924 to control the transboundary spread of infectious animal diseases. Over and above this historic mission, its new mandate is now to “improve animal health worldwide”. Not only does this new ambition require all Member Countries to share the same political will, it also requires the development of new mechanisms to detect, prevent and control animal diseases, including zoonoses, at a national, regional and worldwide level.

It can easily be demonstrated that these mechanisms have a highly favourable impact not just on improving animal health and welfare but also on public health, access to healthy, protein-rich food for all, poverty alleviation and access to markets for animal products.

To succeed, our Organisation has a responsibility to provide policy makers with the right information, arguments and tools for this political will to be exercised effectively and sustainably. These arguments must first and foremost be founded on a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the political, economic and social benefits to be gained by investing more in new national, regional and worldwide animal health systems. They must also show that the effectiveness of investments in animal health systems depends on good governance of the mechanisms used to implement these investments.

The Veterinary Services, including their public and private sector components, are in the front line when it comes to improving animal health throughout the world. Enhancing the way they function and their effectiveness depends on adequate human and financial resources being mobilised, but also on the rigorous application of the principles of good governance and quality described in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and democratically adopted in the form of international standards by all its Member Countries.

The mechanisms for improving animal health are incontestably a global public good: more than 120 countries are in need of assistance to achieve a sanitary situation that is satisfactory for themselves and without any danger of contaminating other countries. We have a duty to mobilise all the stakeholders and work to achieve international solidarity for the benefit of all.

Bernard Vallat
Director General of the OIE



Action

for world

public health

by improving
animal health
and controlling zoonoses

Climate change, globalisation, consumerism and destruction of natural ecosystems are conducive to the spread of animal diseases, including those transmissible to humans: the OIE is in the front line against the threat from zoonoses.

Globalisation,

climate change,
higher concentrations of animals and humans

and the destruction of ecosystems are all factors that promote the spread of animal and human pathogens and help to make them more virulent: the worldwide threat from animal diseases, and especially zoonoses, is a dangerous reality.

Today, the expansion and spread of pathogens, whether natural or deliberate, is a threat without precedent in the history of mankind.

As the hub of the international animal disease surveillance system and the driving force behind world veterinary scientific research, the OIE is in the front line when it comes to dealing with this threat.

WAHIS and WAHID:

transparency
of the world animal health situation

Guaranteeing the transparency of the animal disease situation throughout the world is one of the OIE's key missions.

Each Member is required to notify the OIE of any relevant epidemiological events occurring within its borders.

Through WAHIS, the World Animal Health Information System, the OIE ensures the transparency and rapid transmission of animal health data by enabling the immediate notification of any event involving emerging or re-emerging diseases detected by Members on their territory, as well as the presence or absence in all 178 Member Countries of more than 100 animal and zoonotic diseases listed by the OIE.

Fed with information from WAHIS, the World Animal Health Database (WAHID) and its Web interface make these data available around the world.

The OIE also establishes the list of countries recognised as officially free of diseases that Members consider pose the greatest threat.

Strengthening the world's veterinary scientific community

A driving force behind world veterinary research through a network of over 265 Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres in more than 40 countries, the OIE collects, analyses and publishes updated scientific data and control methods to help Members control terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases more effectively.

Its internationally recognised veterinary expertise makes the OIE the ideal partner for other international public health bodies in a wide range of programmes covering research, training for animal health players and awareness campaigns for populations at risk.

For example, the OIE and FAO run a worldwide scientific network (OFFLU) to support the Veterinary Services and their laboratories in the diagnosis and control of animal influenza. This initiative also enables active cooperation with WHO on matters relating to the animal-human interface, including the advance preparation of human vaccines thanks to the collection of new animal strains of the virus as soon as they appear.

The OIE also collaborates with FAO and WHO on the Global Early Warning and Response System (GLEWS), whose primary objective is to share animal disease information, and especially that derived from the active search for non-official information. Information is disseminated within the GLEWS network, whereby the three organisations use their respective disease tracking mechanisms and verification networks for the information thus obtained, finally pooling the results of the verification.

ZOONOSES: A TOP PRIORITY

Microbial storm or regular cycle? Every year another animal disease emerges or re-emerges and over two-thirds of these diseases present a risk of transmission to humans. At the current time, 60% of known infectious human diseases are of animal origin.

Aware of the extreme danger that the natural or deliberate spread of these diseases represents and the considerable human and financial cost of not eradicating them in time, the OIE constantly alerts the international community.

Along with FAO, WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, the OIE is working to set up a global strategy for the prevention and control of animal diseases, including those transmissible to humans. This is the concept of "One Health".



3

Promoting sustainable development and solidarity:

Access to good
quality food for all

Animals are a source of dietary protein but also provide draught power, warm clothing, shoes, a cash income and precious natural fertilizer. The OIE is a core driving force for economic development and food security for developing or in transition countries.

Fighting poverty and hunger

Preventing and controlling the world's animal diseases, one of the OIE's key missions, takes on added significance given that some estimates have suggested that world demand for animal protein will increase by 50% by 2030.

It has also been estimated that, on average, over 20% of the world's production of milk, meat and eggs is currently lost as a result of animal diseases. Better disease control would therefore lead to increased production and much healthier food.

Yet many developing and in transition countries are unable to play their part in the continuous chain of detection and intervention needed to deal with the ever increasing number of emerging and re-emerging animal diseases that weaken their economies and pose a threat to countries not yet affected.

The OIE constantly alerts the international community to the plight of more than 120 of its Member Countries that are in urgent need of support:

- because they are the most severely threatened by diseases and the least able to prevent and control them and stop them spreading to the rest of the world;
- because their ability to access markets, which is blocked by presence of these diseases, is often both essential for their economic development and a necessity for the equilibrium of world trade.

SCIENTIFIC SOLIDARITY

Nearly 70% of OIE Members are developing countries with variable scientific capacity or access to scientific expertise within their national laboratories. Through its laboratory twinning programme the OIE invites countries with OIE Reference Laboratories or Collaborating Centres to help laboratories in developing and in transition countries to build their capacity and scientific expertise, with the aim of some of them eventually becoming OIE Reference Laboratories in their own right. This will extend the OIE network's geographical representation and in so doing provide developing countries with direct support to strengthen their veterinary scientific community and enable them to take part in international negotiations on updating OIE and Codex Alimentarius standards.

Campaigning

for compensation and insurance schemes for producers

Compensation mechanisms in the event of epizootics, so that farmers can be compensated when their infected animals have to be culled, are essential in order to ensure early warning and transparency when dealing with animal disease events.

The OIE calls for international compensation mechanisms to mutualise the risks inherent in the animal production chain, thereby safeguarding public health and the sustainability of trade for the benefit of the poorest countries.

Experience has shown the importance of organisational and economic factors in enabling the world's 600 million livestock farmers to play their part in the chain of protection.

Supporting producers as the first link in the chain of disease surveillance by giving them suitable training is the best way of protecting the health of animals at the earliest possible stage in production.

Compensation mechanisms for producers and improvements in their health training are therefore central to the risk anticipation and risk mutualisation strategies that the international community must now initiate with the private-sector professionals involved in animal health and world operators in the agri-food, pharmaceutical and insurance sectors.

Food security and food safety

Food security means access to and availability of an adequate supply of food of suitable quality.

Food safety means ensuring that food is hygienic and safe to eat.

Structuring programmes

in all regions of the world

The OIE plays a key role in the implementation of the African Livestock (ALive) programme, aimed at poverty reduction and the development of livestock production in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This initiative, conducted under the auspices of the World Bank and in collaboration with the FAO, the European Commission, the African Union and other African institutions involved in the fight against animal diseases, enables joint action on improving farm practices, the quality of investments and the effectiveness of the animal health policies being implemented.

In South-East Asia, the OIE's SEAFMD Programme aimed primarily at the control of foot and mouth disease also serves to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the Veterinary Services in 8 countries of the region.

Similarly, when faced with the emergence of avian influenza at the end of 2003, the OIE helped to mobilise the international community on behalf of the countries most threatened in Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

For example, thanks to the generosity of donors such as Canada, the OIE has set up a vaccine bank for Member Countries experiencing massive, uncontrollable outbreaks of avian influenza. This vaccine bank is due to be extended to other animal diseases, including zoonoses, in certain regions, for the benefit of the poorest countries.

In 2006, the considerable financial support pledged by donors at the Beijing Conference marked the first historic step in the building of a sustainable global, regional and national framework for the management of animal health.



Protecting world trade and food:

Access to markets
for the benefit of all

National, regional and world trade in animals and animal products is a key issue with major sanitary, food and economic implications.

The standards that the OIE develops in support of the WTO help to improve animal health and public health and facilitate exports of healthy products and the flow of trade, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that all people can have access to the food they need.

Ensuring the safety of world trade

The animal disease status of countries is now a key factor in trade negotiations between countries. Since 1996, the OIE has helped to facilitate these negotiations through a procedure for officially recognising a country's status, a procedure that currently relates to four priority animal diseases for world trade: foot and mouth disease (FMD), rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

This official recognition, ratified each year by the Members of the Organisation, is an important element in international trade in animals and animal products.

Undeniably science-based, the standards developed by the OIE, designed to ensure the safety of world trade in animals and animal products, are the result of a broad consensus of the veterinary authorities of Members, by whom they are democratically adopted during the annual World Assembly of national Delegates.

The OIE's standard-setting work in this field falls within the framework of the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), which came into force in 1995.

The *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, the *Aquatic Animal Health Code* and their respective *Manual of Diagnostic Tests* compile the sanitary, technical and organisational rules published by the OIE relating to the conditions governing international trade in animals and animal products and the rules applicable to animal disease surveillance and prevention. Standards adopted to ensure the safety of international trade also have a major impact in improving the national animal health situation in all Members and in so doing help to improve animal health and public health worldwide.

Animal welfare

The interest shown in animal welfare and the growing attention that consumers around the world are focusing on the subject, make it an important economic issue for the world market in animals and animal products.

Although this topic does not fall within the scope of the WTO SPS Agreement and in the absence of any worldwide normative framework to promote animal welfare, the OIE decided, at the request of its Members, to develop from 2002 onwards the first international standards in this field, beginning with conditions for animal transport by land, air and sea, slaughter of animals for human consumption and killing of animals for disease control purposes, as well as for the control of stray dog populations and the use of laboratory animals. These standards will soon be followed by recommendations on livestock production systems.

When these standards are in the preparatory stage, the OIE endeavours to involve as many stakeholders as possible, including Collaborating Centres, NGOs, universities, research institutes and production sectors, to ensure that the standards, guidelines and recommendation developed are, as always, science based.

Aquatic animals, a valuable sector

The OIE's sanitary standards apply to the prevention and control of animal diseases and the promotion of animal welfare for 'terrestrial' animals (mammals, birds, bees) as well as for 'aquatic' animals (fish, crustaceans, molluscs, amphibians). It is interesting to note that the farming of these aquatic animals (aquaculture) accounts for over 50% of total world production, roughly equivalent to fisheries in natural waters.

Public standards and private standards

In some cases, private firms, especially supermarket chains, establish their own trade standards relating to animal health and welfare which they apply to their suppliers. These standards are developed without the direct involvement of governments and are increasingly common in international trade.

The OIE is constantly taking action to propose a harmonisation of these standards and checks that any standard adopted unilaterally by private firms in the field of sanitary risks and animal welfare is consistent with those published by the OIE and does not constitute an insurmountable barrier for developing countries.

In fact, while complying with OIE standards (adopted democratically and in complete transparency), countries set trade conditions that are based on scientific standards that protect animal health, public health and animal welfare without being more constraining than necessary.

In this respect, the OIE also has a procedure for mediation between Member Countries to try to resolve any bilateral differences that may arise.

(Maintaining the safety of the food chain

The OIE's standard-setting activity also involves the production phases prior to the slaughter of animals and the primary processing of their products (meat, milk, eggs, etc.).

Faced with the development of zoonotic risks associated with the world's food system, the OIE is stepping up its actions to help ensure the supply of healthy food for all and is developing new synergies with the Codex Alimentarius Commission. For instance, since 2006, the two organisations have included cross references to each other's texts in their standards relating to traceability of live animals and animal products and international certification of animals and animal products by the Veterinary Services.

The OIE is also very active in evaluating and strengthening the quality of national Veterinary Services which, in the vast majority of Member Countries, are the guarantors of food safety and veterinary public health.

These efforts include the ever-increasing number of public - and private-sector players involved in the chain of surveillance and certification of animal products. The detailed role of the Veterinary Services in ensuring food safety is the subject of a normative chapter published by the OIE with the agreement of the other international organisations involved.

COMPARTMENTALISATION MAINTAINING TRADE DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF DISEASES

Compartmentalisation makes it possible to continue to trade from disease free compartments within a country or zone affected by one or more animal diseases.

Under the terms of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, a compartment "means an animal subpopulation contained in one or more establishments under a common biosecurity management system with a distinct health status with respect to a specific disease or specific diseases for which required surveillance, control and biosecurity measures have been applied for the purpose of international trade". This new OIE provision makes it possible for countries that still have areas infected with diseases to access international markets without placing importers at risk, whereas until quite recently they would not have had this possibility.



5 Surveillance, prevention and control of animal diseases is a worldwide challenge:

Building a world, regional and national animal health system is a global public good and a priority

Our world is undergoing unprecedented changes, all of which tend to amplify the emerging and re-emerging health risks for animals and humans. The OIE makes it a priority to improve sanitary governance and bring Veterinary Services into line with international standards on quality.

(Improving sanitary governance

Faced with the challenge that animal diseases and zoonoses represent in a globalised world, the OIE urges the international community to make a major effort to restructure global, regional and national animal health systems.

In the absence of effective Veterinary Services, countries are not in a position to prevent the introduction or emergence and re-emergence of animal diseases, and quickly control the outbreaks they cause. Ineffective Veterinary Services cannot provide their trading partners with credible guarantees that the animals and animal products they wish to export are safe.

Offering Member Countries an independent evaluation of their national Veterinary Services based on harmonised standards of quality and helping to strengthen world sanitary governance are therefore essential objectives for the OIE.

(Prevention is better than cure

The economic losses caused by animal diseases can be devastating and prove far more costly than the application of preventive measures.

The OIE has undertaken socio-economic studies, in particular on the cost of prevention schemes for emerging and re-emerging diseases in various regional contexts representative of its Member Countries. The results of these studies show that the cost of these prevention schemes in “peacetime” under the auspices of public and private components of the Veterinary Services complying with OIE standards of quality is derisory compared to the cost of dealing with sanitary crises. These studies should help to convince all governments throughout the world to put in place or strengthen their Veterinary Services so as to guarantee a reassuring and cost-effective network covering their entire territory.

The re-emergence of diseases such as FMD and bluetongue, and the emergence of zoonoses such as BSE and avian influenza, have enabled the OIE to restate principles of veterinary public health that are now widely accepted: control animal diseases at source, integrate all public and private sector animal health players in prevention, surveillance, early detection, rapid response and elimination mechanisms, strengthen the comprehensiveness and transparency of animal health information and the effectiveness of both public and private components of the Veterinary Services throughout the world.

Over and above its support for good veterinary governance throughout the world, the OIE supports the modernisation and harmonisation of sanitary legislation and the strengthening of national veterinary scientific communities so that all Members are able to take part in the development and updating of international animal health standards based on the surveillance and control of diseases.

(Improving the performance of Veterinary Services

The PVS Tool (Tool for the Evaluation of the Performance of Veterinary Services) serves as a guide for Members seeking to ensure that their Veterinary Services comply with international standards of quality democratically adopted by all the OIE Members, thereby guaranteeing their excellence and effectiveness. The OIE trains and accredits experts from all over the world, who can then act as facilitators for the evaluation process in the various countries.

Application of the PVS Tool helps to determine national investment priorities for the prevention and control of diseases. This procedure is coordinated by the OIE Headquarters and implemented with the support of its Regional Representations and offices in all five continents, with the backing of the World Bank and the major international development funding agencies.

The OIE is piloting the evaluation and strengthening of the quality of the Veterinary Services and governance mechanisms in over 120 developing and in transition countries. The PVS Tool can help to identify, analyse and correct gaps with respect to standards on the quality of Veterinary Services. OIE support for Veterinary Services also includes the development of generic models of modern veterinary legislation, with support missions to countries at their own request, and a worldwide programme of North South twinning arrangements for veterinary laboratories, aimed at strengthening the veterinary scientific community in developing and in transition countries.

A FUND FOR ACTION

The World Animal Health and Welfare Fund was set up to strengthen the capacities of OIE Members for animal disease surveillance, detection and rapid response. In action since 2004, the Fund is used to finance missions aimed at evaluating the performance of national Veterinary Services and identifying gaps, to conduct training courses for national officials in charge of modernising their Veterinary Services, to develop generic models of veterinary legislation and to organise laboratory twinning activities.

Changing veterinary teaching for a safer world

The growing involvement of the Veterinary Services in actions relating to public health, poverty reduction, food safety and animal welfare requires a more thorough integration of all these topics in the education given to the veterinarians of tomorrow.

The quality and comprehensiveness of initial and continuing veterinary education have a direct impact on the quality and performance of the public and private sector components of the Veterinary Services. For this reason the OIE considers that veterinary education and the harmonisation of syllabus content are an essential component of any national animal health system.

OIE standards provide for the national Veterinary Statutory Bodies to oversee the deontological and technical excellence of all the veterinarians working in their respective countries in the field of animal health and veterinary public health. To be able to fulfil their mission, the Veterinary Statutory Bodies must be able to rely on the validity of the initial and continuing education that these veterinarians have received. Furthermore, given the number of veterinarians who move to other countries to practise their profession, there is now a need for a worldwide system of standards and accreditation for veterinary teaching institutions throughout the world.

A global Public Good

The flagship of animal disease protection and control, the Veterinary Services are an international public good: if a single country fails to meet its obligations, it may endanger its population, its neighbours and even the whole world. Given that the populations of many developing countries are still largely dependent on agriculture, that more than a billion people living in rural areas depend at least partially on animals for their livelihoods and that 75% of emerging diseases are of animal origin, the role of the Veterinary Services has never been so crucial. The Veterinary Services must be able to act within a national legislative framework that complies with international standards of quality and they must be allocated the financial and human resources needed to enforce it.

To be effective, an animal health policy must include transparent and continuous communication between the Veterinary Services and the public

Crises such as those involving avian influenza, FMD, bluetongue or other emerging or re-emerging diseases arouse increasing concern and there is a growing demand for information on the part of the general public, the media and also decision-makers. Communication with the public must demonstrate that effective animal health systems protect countries from diseases, promote public health and help to reduce poverty, while allowing fair trade in animals and animal products.

The OIE puts a great deal of effort into its communication actions at the international level to make policy-makers and civil society more aware of the economic and social utility of all the activities that Veterinary Services throughout the world are carrying out on a daily basis. The OIE can also help national Veterinary Services in this respect by providing them with the tools they need to create or develop their capacity to communicate with the general public.

One Health: a world strategy for managing health and food risks at the animal–human interface

Although interactions between human health and animal health are not a new phenomenon, the ever-increasing threat that our world is facing from zoonoses means that we must review and strengthen all the prevention and control mechanisms for these diseases.

Globalisation and the ever faster transport of a growing number of commodities and passengers means that emerging pathogens can spread around the world on a scale unprecedented in the history of mankind. Most of the diseases that have emerged recently are of animal origin and virtually all are potentially zoonotic. Measures to prevent and control them must be developed through collaboration between the public health and animal health authorities.

The fight against zoonoses starts with the elimination of the pathogen at its animal source. This places the Veterinary Services, livestock producers, wildlife managers and the OIE in the front line, both at the national and international level. The OIE fulfils its responsibilities by acting alongside its partners – FAO, WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank – to set up a global prevention and control strategy for animal diseases, including those transmissible to humans, that places the prevention and control of zoonoses at their animal source at the core of the “One Health” concept.

To provide support at the world level alongside the Codex Alimentarius Commission, aimed at the production, processing and consumption of healthy food, the OIE publishes standards designed to prevent pathogens being spread by international trade. With the agreement of the other international organisations, the OIE has also published guidelines on the role of Veterinary Services in food safety and standards applicable to the inspection of animals before, during and after slaughter for human consumption.

GLOSSARY

- **ALIVE**
Platform for the development of livestock in Africa
- **BSE**
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
- **CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION**
Commission of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
- **CBPP**
Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia
- **FAO**
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- **GLEWS**
OIE/FAO/WHO Global Early Warning and Response System
- **NGO: Non-governmental organisation**
- **OFFLU**
OIE/FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza
- **Pathogen**
Disease-causing agent (e.g. bacteria, virus, parasite)
- **PVS Tool**
OIE Tool for evaluating the performance of Veterinary Services
- **SEAFMD**
OIE South-East Asia Foot and Mouth Disease Campaign
- **SPS Agreement**
WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- **UNICEF**
United Nations Children's Fund
- **WAHID**
World Animal Health Information Database
- **WAHIS**
World Animal Health Information System
- **WTO**
World Trade Organization
- **WHO**
World Health Organization
- **Zoonoses:**
Animal diseases transmissible to humans

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