



WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH
Protecting animals, preserving our future

Framework for the establishment of an Equine Disease Free Zone



2015

Background

An Equine Disease Free Zone (EDFZ) is the temporary establishment of a zone free from specified multiple diseases. The establishment of an EDFZ can be considered by countries that wish to host an international equestrian sport event but that cannot control and eradicate all equine diseases in their entire territory. The establishment of an EDFZ is an extension of the concepts of zoning and compartmentalization adopted by the World Assembly of Delegates of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), as described in Chapter 4.3 and 4.4 of the *OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2014)*. Horses within an EDFZ can be considered protected from diseases that may occur in other parts of a country but which are not subjected to the same control measures and biosecurity guidelines. An EDFZ also allows for the national horse population to be protected from the risk of diseases possibly imported into the zone.

An EDFZ may normally be defined with reference to a subset of specified diseases that are listed by the OIE for equines, and as appropriate, for multiple species [[OIE-Listed diseases, infections and infestations](#)]. Based on a risk analysis, consideration should also be given to diseases that are not on the OIE list but are important in the context of international horse movements and equine health. The risk analysis should include the presence/absence of vectors of importance for equine diseases, as identified by vector surveillance.

While the extent and boundaries of an EDFZ are flexible in size, an EDFZ is comprised of a Core zone which normally contains the equestrian event venue and which is separated from the surrounding areas by geographic, physical or other control measures. Around the Core zone there should be a Surveillance zone in which the health status of all animals, with special attention given to equines, is known, monitored and understood. A Protection zone may also be established to preserve the health status of equines in the EDFZ from adjacent countries or zones of different animal health status.

This document lists the main issues to be considered for the establishment of an EDFZ. It is structured into seven sections:

- **Extent and limits of the EDFZ**
- **State Veterinary Services**
- **Legal basis for animal health management**
- **Animal health management**
- **Supervision and control of the EDFZ**
- **Contingency plans**
- **Timeline for the establishment of the EDFZ**

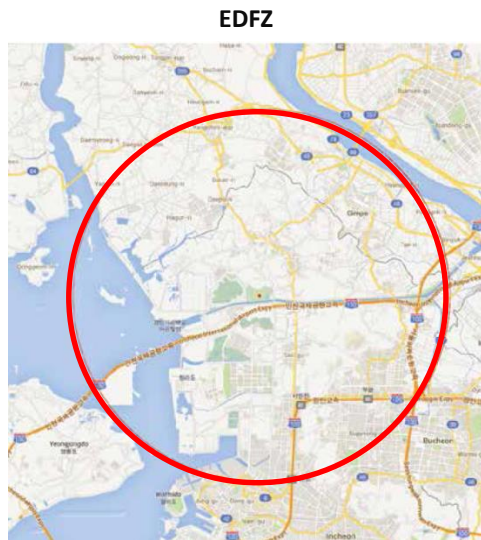
Extent and limits of the EDFZ

The area covered by the EDFZ and its geographical limits should be established with the support and final approval of the Veterinary Authority.

The physical parameters of the EDFZ depend on physical, geographical and climatic characteristics, the type and density of resident animal populations (including wildlife) and vectors that may be present in and around the zone.

All of the control points for the access to the EDFZ must be clearly identified.

Illustration. Limits of the EDFZ in Incheon, Korea for Asian Games 2014



Veterinary Services

Structure

The structure of the Veterinary Services at central and field level must have sufficient capacity to provide the staff and related resources necessary to be available to establish and maintain the EDFZ. The division of responsibilities, accountabilities and interaction between the field and the central level should be clearly documented (*Refer to section Supervision and control of the EDFZ*).

Performance

Countries proposing to establish an EDFZ should engage in the OIE global programme for strengthening the Performance of Veterinary Services. This helps to give partners confidence in the competence and good governance of the National Veterinary Services, which is essential for international acceptance of any claim of an EDFZ.

Public Private Partnership

Veterinary Services should engage in a Public Private Partnership with the equestrian industry wishing to utilize the EDFZ for equestrian events in order to delegate certain supervisory functions and delineate responsibilities.

Legal basis for animal health management

The requirements critical to the establishment and maintenance of the EDFZ (*Refer to the section on Animal Health Management*) must be laid down in a legislative framework with supporting regulations and authorities to ensure their enforcement and compliance with appropriate penalties applied when breaches of the law occur.

Animal health management

Census

The livestock population in the country should be established and regularly updated, with special emphasis on the equine population (number of equines and premises). The number of equines in the EDFZ should be precisely known and any movements into or out of the zone must be recorded in real time. Premises where equines are residing should be registered.

Identification and traceability

All equines residing in the EDFZ and every horse imported into the EDFZ should be individually identified and registered in such a way that their history and movements can be documented and audited.

Disease surveillance and laboratory diagnosis

+ Disease surveillance in the country

Disease surveillance programmes must comply with the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* general provisions on disease surveillance and specific provisions for the diseases for which the EDFZ is established.

+ Laboratory diagnosis

Laboratory capacity and competency for the reliable testing for the diseases for which the EDFZ is established must be demonstrated (proficiency testing, accreditation).

The tests should be carried out in line with the provisions of the OIE *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals*.

+ Baseline disease situation

- The status regarding the diseases listed for the EDFZ must be documented for at least three years for the free status to be established.
- Application for the recognition of its status by the OIE as a country officially free of African Horse Sickness (AHS), in accordance with the provisions of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* should be submitted, if not already done.
- Voluntary country declaration of freedom from glanders, in accordance with the provisions of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, at least in the area of the EDFZ, should be submitted to the OIE.
- Vaccination records, including the type of vaccine and frequency of administration, should be available to enable appropriate interpretation of surveillance data.

+ Enhanced surveillance in the EDFZ

Before, during and after the equestrian event, an enhanced surveillance programme should be implemented in the EDFZ to ensure early detection of the introduction of any equine disease agent.

Maintenance of the EDFZ

+ Control of movements into or out of the EDFZ

Relevant animal movements into or out of the EDFZ should be documented and controlled based on the issuance of official movement permits and strict access control, certification and quarantine.

The entry points into the EDFZ should be limited in number and organized to facilitate the conducting of effective official controls.

+ Biosecurity measures at the event venue (Core zone)

The biosecurity measures to be applied in the Core zone are provided in detail in the OIE Biosecurity Guidelines for horses in the High health status horse subpopulation and for equestrian events, and should include:

- Regulation of the entry of animals, humans and equipment
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures
- Procedures to avoid or minimize contact with horses from other regions
- Protection against vectors
- Clinical inspection and health monitoring of the horses
- Isolation stables and an equine hospital

Biosecurity plan

A comprehensive biosecurity plan should describe the routine operating procedures to provide clear evidence that the surveillance conducted, the live animal identification and traceability system, and the practices to maintain the EDFZ are adequate.

Supervision and control of the EDFZ

Governance

The requirements critical to the maintenance of the EDFZ should be supported by effective systems for supervision and control to ensure the integrity of the EDFZ once it is established.

The legislation should clarify who is responsible for official controls and enforcement of the EDFZ requirements and the line of command between the different actors should be clearly documented. A collaborative approach with the private sector can be embraced under the Authority of the Veterinary Authority.

Documentation

Documentation should provide clear evidence that the standard operating procedures critical to the maintenance of the EDFZ are effectively and consistently applied.

Verification

The implementation of the standard operating procedures critical to the maintenance of the EDFZ should be continuously monitored and should be subject to a verification process.

Contingency plan

Disease prevention and control

A contingency plan for dealing with a suspected or confirmed outbreak of an infectious disease affecting equines at the venue or within the EDFZ must be developed and the regular conducting of simulation exercises is encouraged to test their effectiveness and to update them in light of new information.

The arrangements to ensure the early detection of the disease incident, rapid response, effective containment and traceability should be documented.

Animal welfare

The contingency plan should also address horse welfare and cover incidents during transport as well as in competitions.

Timeline for the establishment of the EDFZ

In view of the complexities involved in establishing an EDFZ, it is suggested to prepare an EDFZ project proposal as a tool to support the development and timing for the establishment of the EDFZ in relation to the scheduled event.