WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH
Protecting animals, preserving our future

Original: English
March 2020

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON RINDERPEST[1]

24–26 March 2020

———

The meeting of the OIE *ad hoc* Group on Rinderpest was held by video conference from 24 to 26 March 2020.

1. Welcome and background information

The OIE Secretariat welcomed participants to the virtual meeting and thanked the *ad hoc* Group members for their pre-meeting work to review Chapter 8.16., Infection with rinderpest virus, of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (hereafter referred to as the *Terrestrial Code)*. The Secretariat explained that due to confinement and travel restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting had to be held by video conference.

Dr David Ulaeto, the Chairperson, together with the OIE Secretariat (rapporteur) presented the background information that led to the revision of Chapter 8.16. They noted that the chapter was last revised in 2013 to ensure it was relevant for the status of global freedom, following the declaration of rinderpest eradication in 2011. They noted that the current Chapter 8.16 requires that countries wishing to recover freedom after rinderpest re-emergence through vaccination should slaughter animals which have been vaccinated. During regional rinderpest tabletop exercises to test the Global Rinderpest Action Plan[2], concerns were raised that the provisions of the current chapter were not inclusive of countries that had a vaccinate-to-live policy. Subsequent discussions with the Code Commission, Scientific Commission and FAO-OIE Joint Advisory Committee for Rinderpest (JAC) highlighted further gaps in the chapter. Given the importance of having a chapter that was fit for purpose, the OIE Director General agreed that an *ad hoc* Group be convened to address these issues.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted by the *ad hoc* Group. The adopted agenda and list of participants are presented as Appendix I and II, respectively. The Terms of Reference for the *ad hoc* Group are presented as Appendix III.

3. Revision of Chapter 8.16 of the *Terrestrial Code*

a) Definitions for suspected case and confirmed case

Given that the finding of a suspected case of rinderpest is notifiable to the OIE, the *ad hoc* Group acknowledged that the current definition for a 'suspected case', based on 'stomatitis-enteritis syndrome', was too broad and non-specific for it to be used meaningfully by Member Countries for notification purposes. The *ad hoc* Group noted that this could jeopardise early warning in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest. The *ad hoc* Group was aware that the notification of a 'suspected case' would trigger international scrutiny and therefore due diligence should be exercised to rule out other differential diagnoses which could also present as 'stomatitis-enteritis syndrome'. In this regard, the *ad hoc* Group recommended that the chapter include a gradation in the level of suspicion and proposed the following definitions:

---

1 Note: This *ad hoc* Group report reflects the views of its members and may not necessarily reflect the views of the OIE. This report should be read in conjunction with the September 2019 report of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission because this report provides its considerations and comments. It is available at http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/specialists-commissions-groups/code-commission-reports/meetings-reports/

2 http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA1965EN/

- ‘Potential case’ of rinderpest, refers to an animal with clinical signs consistent with ‘stomatitis-enteritis syndrome’ (i.e., definition of ‘suspected case’ in the 2019 *Terrestrial Code* chapter) which cannot be ascribed to another disease compatible with stomatitis-enteritis syndrome by epidemiological considerations or appropriate laboratory investigation;
- ‘Suspected case’ of rinderpest, refers to a potential case where all relevant differential diagnoses for stomatitis-enteritis syndrome have been ruled out, or which has produced a positive rinderpest test result outside an OIE Reference Laboratory (such as with a local diagnostic test that is not indicative of confirmation but provides stronger grounds of suspicion). Such a case shall be notified to the OIE; and
- ‘Case’ of rinderpest refers to an animal where infection with rinderpest has been confirmed by an OIE Reference Laboratory for rinderpest. Such a case shall be notified to the OIE.

For consistency with the other disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*, these proposed definitions have been moved to Article 8.15.1. In discussing these definitions, the *ad hoc* Group stressed the importance of Member Countries maintaining the capacity to perform first-line tests to facilitate the detection of suspected cases of rinderpest, such as through RT-PCR and AGID. The *ad hoc* Group agreed that Member Countries should refer to the OIE *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (hereafter referred to as the *Terrestrial Manual*) for information about diagnostic tests for rinderpest, including local tests that may be used. Member Countries are also encouraged to establish ongoing links with OIE Reference Laboratories to guide testing. The *ad hoc* Group recommended that the OIE work with the JAC to provide advice on strengthening in-country capacity for rinderpest testing.

The *ad hoc* Group also considered the possible pathways for the re-emergence of rinderpest and agreed that while proximity to known and unknown facilities possessing rinderpest virus containing material (RVCM) is a clear risk factor, it emphasised that suspected cases should not be limited to the vicinity of institutions holding RVCM.

b) Articles for free country, infected country, free zone, containment zone and infected zone

The *ad hoc* Group recognised that contrary to other listed diseases in the *Terrestrial Code*, in this post eradication era, all countries are considered to be free of rinderpest unless proven otherwise through the detection of a case.

Country or zone free from rinderpest (Article 8.16.6)

The *ad hoc* Group proposed that in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest (i.e., when a country has notified a case of rinderpest), other Member Countries may continue to be recognised as free from rinderpest so long as they do not have a confirmed case(s). However, given the risk pathways for infection, including through movement of animals, the *ad hoc* Group was of the view that additional assurance would have to be provided by countries or zones where, although no case of rinderpest has been detected, there are significant epidemiological and ecological linkages to infected countries or zones.

Therefore, the *ad hoc* Group recommended that in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest, all Member Countries would have to perform a risk assessment for rinderpest and submit this to the OIE. The rinderpest free status of Member Countries would be suspended if the risk assessment is not accepted by the OIE. The *ad hoc* Group proposed the concept of countries at a ‘heightened risk’, where targeted surveillance, in addition to the ongoing surveillance requirements of the post-eradication era, must be performed to provide confidence in the ability to detect infection. Notwithstanding, the *ad hoc* Group emphasised that all Member Countries should still perform surveillance to facilitate early warning.

Country or zone infected with RPV (Article 8.16.7)

As explained in the preamble of 3(ii), the *ad hoc* Group proposed that the definition of country or zone infected with RPV be based on the occurrence of a case of rinderpest.

Establishment of a containment zone within a country or zone previously free from rinderpest (Article 8.16.8)

The *ad hoc* Group noted that the priority for Chapter 8.16 in this post-eradication era is the maintenance of global freedom and its prompt recovery should there be a re-emergence of rinderpest. In discussing the provisions for establishing a containment zone, the *ad hoc* Group kept in mind that the objective of its establishment, unlike other disease-specific chapters, would be for the purposes of disease control and subsequent eradication and not to facilitate continued international trade. Therefore, the *ad hoc* Group proposed additional text to clarify that international trade in commodities from the entire country would be limited to the safe commodities listed in Article 8.16.2 until free status is recovered.

c) Safe commodities and trade provisions in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest

Safe commodities (Article 8.16.2)

In developing a list of safe commodities for this chapter, the *ad hoc* Group referred to the 2010 edition of the *Terrestrial Code* and identified semi-processed hides and skins to be safe commodities for rinderpest.

The *ad hoc* Group also proposed to include gelatin and meat in a hermetically sealed container with a Fo value of 3 or above in this article, given that in accordance with Chapter 2.2, Criteria applied by the OIE for assessing the safety of commodities, standard manufacturing processes would inactivate RPV in these commodities.

The *ad hoc* Group also proposed additional text to Article 8.16.2 to clarify that the list of safe commodities would apply in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest to avoid confusion with this post-eradication era, where all susceptible animals and their products are considered safe with respect to rinderpest.

Trade provisions (Article 8.16.12)

In reviewing the trade provisions applicable to countries free from rinderpest in the 2010 edition of the *Terrestrial Code*, the *ad hoc* Group noted inconsistencies in the residency period required of animals prior to exportation or the harvesting of products (e.g., 3 months for semen collection and 30 days for susceptible animals). The *ad hoc* Group further noted that there was no residency period stipulated for donor animals of *in vivo* embryos. In view of the 21-day incubation period for rinderpest and considering the allowance of a safety margin, the *ad hoc* Group recommended to have a 30-day residency period in a country free of rinderpest for susceptible animals and animals from which products were derived or harvested. The *ad hoc* Group noted that oocytes may also be harvested from susceptible animals, and therefore proposed provisions for this in the draft chapter.

Instead of having separate articles for each commodity as per the convention in the *Terrestrial Code*, the *ad hoc* Group recommended incorporating all the provisions into one article for conciseness given that the focus of the chapter is on post-eradication and not trade in the event of re-emergence.

d) Provisions for recovery of freedom to ensure timelines for recovery of country freedom and global freedom are compatible

Recovery of global freedom (Article 8.16.10)

The OIE Secretariat drew the *ad hoc* Group's attention to the incompatibilities between the waiting periods for recovery of country freedom, and the reinstatement of global freedom status in the current chapter. The time limit of six months for the reinstatement of global freedom (if global freedom was not reinstated within six months, the global freedom status would be 'lost') after the confirmation of an outbreak was not a practical timeframe as it was unachievable in the event infected countries did not employ stamping-out as a control measure.

Separately, the *ad hoc* Group also discussed the significance of a loss of global freedom status and agreed that this would imply that the status of all non-infected countries would become undetermined, and these countries would need to submit an application to the OIE for the official recognition of free status, in addition to the risk assessment that should have been previously submitted to the OIE. The *ad hoc* Group advised that the contents of the questionnaire for the assessment of country status be developed by the OIE Headquarters with possible consultation of experts, although the questionnaire may be abbreviated for countries that have been free of rinderpest since its eradication in 2011.

The *ad hoc* Group considered that the re-initiation of the official status recognition framework for all countries may not be warranted if the outbreak was confined to a limited area and effectively contained. Therefore, considering this and the impracticality of the six-month timeframe for the reinstatement of global freedom after the confirmation of an outbreak, the *ad hoc* Group recommended abolishing the time limit for the reinstatement of global freedom, and proposed the concept of global freedom status suspension provided:

- The outbreak is limited to a country or zone without any further outbreaks outside the ecosystem of the first outbreak.

- The outbreak is handled in a prompt and efficient manner shown to be successful in mitigating the spread of rinderpest and reducing its incidence.

During a period of global freedom status suspension, the requirement would be for Member Countries to submit a risk assessment as described in point 3(ii) above, thereby easing the administrative burden on Member Countries that are at low risk of infection in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest. To ensure that global freedom status suspension does not go on indefinitely, the *ad hoc* Group proposed a period of 12 months for the infected country(s) to demonstrate that the control measures are being effective, failing which global freedom status would be lost. Notwithstanding, an obvious failure of control measures during the period of 12 months could lead to an immediate loss of global freedom. Likewise, as the *ad hoc* Group also pointed out, evidence of a wider spread of rinderpest at the outset would justify the loss of global freedom status, in lieu of its suspension.

The *ad hoc* Group considered that global rinderpest freedom may be recovered from a suspended status once the infected country(s) has recovered freedom. In the event of loss of global rinderpest freedom, an additional requirement for recovery is for all countries to be officially recognised by the OIE as free from rinderpest.

The table below illustrates the concept and implications of global rinderpest freedom suspension and loss:

	Global freedom status <u>suspended</u>	**Global freedom status <u>lost</u>**
Time of commencement	Confirmation of first case of rinderpest in post-eradication era, provided conditions in Article 8.16.6 are met.	When conditions in Article 8.16.6 are not met. This could be within 12 months of the suspension of global freedom status or immediately if, upon confirmation of first case, there is already evidence of wider dissemination.
End time	Until such time infected countries have regained freedom (i.e., global freedom recovery).	Until such time infected countries have regained freedom and all countries have undergone official recognition for free status (i.e., global freedom recovery).

	Global freedom status suspended	Global freedom status lost
Requirements	All Member Countries to submit risk assessments to the OIE. Member Countries identified to be at 'heightened risk' required to perform additional surveillance to provide confidence in ability to detect cases. Expert mission to infected countries to verify containment and eradication measures.	Official status recognition procedure reinstated; all Member Countries required to submit dossiers for freedom recognition (abbreviated version possible for countries that have been free of rinderpest since its eradication in 2011). Expert mission to infected countries to verify containment and eradication measures.

Recovery of free status for a country or zone (Article 8.16.9)

The *ad hoc* Group referred to recommendations in the current and 2010 editions of the *Terrestrial Code* for the control measures to be applied and the corresponding waiting periods for the recovery of free status for a country or zone.

In point 1(a), which referred to the application of a stamping-out policy, the *ad hoc* Group agreed that three months is a reasonable time period as it encompasses a minimum of two incubation periods and provides a conservative buffer considering experience from previous rinderpest outbreaks where larger ecosystems and animal populations were involved, rather than in closed herds where outbreaks could be relatively contained.

In point 1(b), which referred to the application of a stamping-out policy and emergency vaccination followed by the slaughter of animals, the *ad hoc* Group agreed that the waiting period of three months is appropriate as per the rationale in point 1.

In point 1(c), which referred to the application of a stamping-out policy and emergency vaccination not followed by the slaughter of vaccination animals (i.e. vaccinate-to-live), the *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the waiting period of six months, because of the possibility of interference by maternal antibodies with serological surveillance. The *ad hoc* Group noted maternal antibodies may persist for up to 10 months, and thus recommended a conservative waiting period of 18 months.

In point 2, which referred to when stamping-out was not applied, the *ad hoc* Group agreed with the waiting period of 24 months, which is the period used in the OIE pathway.

The *ad hoc* Group noted that guidance was available to Member Countries for the control of animal diseases[3] and further concurred with the importance of international expert missions to ascertain the successful application of containment and eradication measures.

e) Provisions on surveillance

Surveillance for recovery of rinderpest free status (Article 8.16.11)

Given that rinderpest can produce different clinical presentations and clinical surveillance alone could fail to detect mild cases of the disease, the *ad hoc* Group recommended including a provision for serological surveillance to complement clinical surveillance. However, the *ad hoc* Group also noted that there was no DIVA (differentiating infected from vaccinated animals) technology for rinderpest, and thus recommended that, for the purposes of serological surveillance, the target population should exclude vaccinated animals and animals with maternal antibodies. For this reason, the *ad hoc* Group also noted that serological surveillance for the purposes of demonstrating freedom should only take place after the cessation of vaccination.

[3] https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/animal-disease-control/

The *ad hoc* Group noted that, at the current time, there are no assays available for serological surveillance for rinderpest antibodies and this will become of critical importance in the event of a re-emergence of rinderpest.

In revising the chapter, the *ad hoc* Group also made changes to the order of some articles to ensure alignment with other disease-specific chapters in the *Terrestrial Code*. In addition, given the extensive nature of the revisions the *ad hoc* Group only provided a 'clean' version of the revised draft chapter.

The revised draft Chapter 8.16, Infection with rinderpest virus, is attached as Appendix IV.

4. Next steps

The *ad hoc* Group was informed that its report, including the amended draft Chapter 8.16, will be considered by the Code Commission at its next meeting in September 2020.

5. Adoption of the report

The *ad hoc* Group reviewed the draft report provided by the rapporteur and agreed to circulate it electronically for comments before the final adoption.

Appendix I

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON RINDERPEST

24–26 March 2020

_____

Agenda

1) Welcome and background information

2) Adoption of the agenda

3) Revision of Chapter 8.16 of the *Terrestrial Code*

   a) Definitions for suspected case and *case*

   b) Articles for free country, infected country, free zone, containment zone and infected zone

   c) Safe commodities and trade provisions in the event of re-emergence of rinderpest

   d) Provisions for recovery of freedom to ensure timelines for recovery of country freedom and global freedom are compatible

   e) Provisions on surveillance

4) Next steps

5) Adoption of the report

_____

Appendix II

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON RINDERPEST

24–26 March 2020

_____

List of Participants

MEMBERS

Dr David Ulaeto
Principal Scientist
Department Biomedical Sciences
DSTL Porton Down
Salisbury SP4 0JQ
UNITED KINGDOM
DULAETO@mail.dstl.gov.uk

Dr Michael Baron
Honorary Institute Fellow
OIE Expert on Rinderpest and PPR
The Pirbright Institute
United Kingdom
michael.baron@pirbright.ac.uk

Dr Geneviève Libeau
Head of FAO Reference Centre for Morbilliviruses in Ruminants
CIRAD-Département Systèmes Biologiques UPR
Groupe Virologie
Campus International de Baillarguet
France
genevieve.libeau@cirad.fr

Dr Paul Rossiter
Expert Consultant
paulrossiter@btinternet.com

Dr Rabindra Pratap Singh
Principal Scientist & Head
Division of Biological Products
ICAR - Indian Veterinary Research Institute
rabindra.singh@icar.gov.in

Representative of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission

Dr Etienne Bonbon
President / Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission
Senior Veterinary Advisor
EMC-AH / Animal Health Service
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 Rome
Italy
Etienne.Bonbon@fao.org

Representative of the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases

Dr Baptiste Dungu
2nd Vice-President/ Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases
CEO – Onderstepoort Biological Products
SOUTH AFRICA
Baty@obpvaccines.co.za

OIE Headquarters

Dr Mariana Marrana
Chargée de mission
Programmes Department
m.marrana@oie.int

Dr Charmaine Chng
Chargée de mission
Standards Department
c.chng@oie.int

Dr Eliana Lima
Chargée de mission
Status Department
e.lima@oie.int

OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON RINDERPEST
24–26 March 2020

_____

Terms of reference

Background

Following the declaration of rinderpest eradication in 2011, Chapter 8.16, Infection with rinderpest virus, of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (hereafter referred to as the *Terrestrial Code*) underwent a major revision in 2013 to reflect the global freedom status.

However, it became evident that further work on the chapter was needed when concerns were expressed by some Member Countries that the recovery of global freedom, should the disease re-emerge, would be impeded if infected countries chose not to stamp-out sick animals, or slaughter vaccinated animals. Subsequent issues were raised by the FAO-OIE Joint Advisory Committee for Rinderpest which further highlighted discrepancies in the chapter.

The OIE Headquarters is coordinating the review of this chapter, which seeks to address the afore-mentioned concerns and, at the same time, to ensure that the provisions in the chapter are compatible with the objective of maintenance of global freedom and its prompt recovery should there be a re-emergence.

Purpose

The *ad hoc* Group on Rinderpest will revise the scientific and technical aspects of Chapter 8.16 of the *Terrestrial Code*, in light of the guidance provided by the OIE Secretariat, the relevant Specialist Commissions and the FAO-OIE Joint Advisory Committee for Rinderpest.

Terms of Reference

The *ad hoc* Group will provide input to the following areas:

1) Propose revised definitions for suspected case and *case* (presently in Article 8.16.5);

2) Propose articles for *free country, infected country, free zone, containment zone* and *infected zone*;

3) In revising the trade provisions, develop a list of *safe commodities* in accordance with criteria in Chapter 2.2 for trade with infected countries, in case of an outbreak[4];

4) Review the current provisions on recovery of freedom in Article 8.16.6 to ensure that the timelines for recovery of country freedom and global freedom are compatible, in particular for the scenario where stamping-out is not practised;

5) Review the current provisions on surveillance in Articles 8.16.3 and 8.16.8 and the provisions on surveillance in the 2010 edition of the rinderpest chapter and propose any amendments, if necessary.

Expected outputs of the *ad hoc* Group

1) An *ad hoc* Group report for consideration by the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission at its September 2020 meeting.

_____

[4] In the event of re-emergence of rinderpest, only safe commodities may be traded.