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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON VETERINARY SERVICES¹ Paris (France), 3–5 July 2019

The OIE *ad hoc* Group on Veterinary Services (the *ad hoc* Group) met at OIE Headquarters from 3–5 July 2019.

The agenda and the list of participants are presented in [Annex I](#) and [II](#).

1. Welcome and introduction

Dr Monique Eloit, Director General of the OIE, welcomed members of the *ad hoc* Group and the representative from the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) and thanked them for their continued support for this important OIE work.

Dr Eloit noted the importance of the topics to be discussed by the group, as they have a serious impact on the quality of Veterinary Services, which is essential to achieve the OIE objectives. She also encouraged the members of the group to take into consideration their broad experience to develop quality standards that could be useful to all OIE Member Countries, without prescribing any particular governance model.

Dr Eloit also emphasised that the same considerations should be had in mind while reviewing the definitions of the terms ‘Competent Authority’, ‘Veterinary Authority’ and ‘Veterinary Services’, as they are key for the whole *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*, and that special attention should be paid to Member Country comments to understand the challenges for the understanding of these definitions at the national level.

Dr John Weaver, Chair of the *ad hoc* Group, welcomed the experts and thanked them for their commitment to this work. He also commended the Secretariat’s preparatory work for this meeting.

The Secretariat delivered a short presentation to provide the context of *ad hoc* Group work within the OIE’s mandate and the OIE standard-setting process, with particular emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of *ad hoc* Groups, Specialist Commissions and the OIE Secretariat.

2. Background

2.1. Summary of recent work of the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services on Chapters 3.1. and 3.2.

The Secretariat explained that, as presented in the Terms of Reference, their task should be based on the outputs of the *ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Veterinary Services and briefly summarised the work done by that group. The *ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Veterinary Services had met in May 2018, primarily to update the OIE PVS Tool, but also to consider the need to review *Terrestrial Code* Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. As a consequence of this work, it recommended that these chapters be revised to ensure they reflect the contemporary activities and responsibilities of the Veterinary

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/>

Services and be better aligned with other chapters in the *Terrestrial Code*. It was noted that almost all the text was drafted approximately 20 years ago. The Code Commission, at its September 2018 meeting, supported this proposal and recommended that the *ad hoc* Group be reconvened to develop proposed changes to Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. The *ad hoc* Group met in November 2018 to progress this work. As a result of that meeting, preliminary drafts of Chapters 3.1 and 3.2 were presented to the Code Commission in February 2019. The Code Commission provided feedback on the proposal and requested that revision of the chapters be continued.

The Terms of Reference are presented in [Annex III](#).

2.2. Brief on previous Code Commission's discussions relevant to the work of the *ad hoc* Group on definitions

The Secretariat informed the *ad hoc* Group of previous work and discussions of the Code Commission on definitions that preceded this meeting. In May 2018, a revised Chapter 6.2. - The role of the Veterinary Services in food safety systems was proposed for adoption in the 86th General Session, and during the discussion of this chapter, United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia and New Zealand commented on the use of the terms 'Competent Authority', 'Veterinary Authority' and 'Veterinary Services'.

Following up on this intervention, the Code Commission discussed this issue further in its September 2018 meeting and responded to the countries' comments. To improve the understanding, the Commission agreed to revise the definitions of the three terms and proposed amendments that were circulated for Member Country comments.

In February 2019, the Code Commission considered comments received on the proposed amendments to the Glossary definitions for 'Competent Authority', 'Veterinary Authority' and 'Veterinary Services'. Taking into consideration the different views expressed by Member Countries, and the importance of these definitions not only in the *Terrestrial Code* but also in the *Aquatic Animal Health Code (Aquatic Code)* and other OIE activities such as the PVS Pathway, the Code Commission requested that an *ad hoc* Group provide support to address the issue of definitions, together with proposed revisions of Chapters 3.1. and 3.2.

3. Definitions of Competent Authority, Veterinary Authority and Veterinary Services in the *Terrestrial Code* Glossary

The *ad hoc* Group considered comments from Australia, Canada, Chile, India, New Zealand, Switzerland, USA and the EU member countries, and discussed in depth these definitions and their interplay. To aid the discussion, the use of the definitions across the *Code* and the previous work of the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services were carefully reviewed.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed that the current definitions lacked clarity and led to contradicting interpretations among Member Countries. Significant discrepancies in the understanding of each of the terms Veterinary Authority, Competent Authority and Veterinary Services were noted.

Following discussions, the *ad hoc* Group provided specific feedback to OIE Headquarters on each of the three terms. Considering that these definitions are closely related with other OIE standards, as well as with many OIE activities, OIE Headquarters will seek further advice from the Specialist Commissions, among others, before proposing modifications to the *Code* glossary.

4. Revision of Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. of the *Terrestrial Code*

The Secretariat updated the *ad hoc* Group on discussions held during the February 2019 meeting of the Code Commission. The Code Commission suggested modifying the structure of Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. of the *Terrestrial Code*, and stressed that the main reason for Veterinary Services to apply provisions in Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. was to be able to fulfil their duties and to implement provisions in the *Terrestrial Code*, and not for the purposes of evaluation. Therefore, presenting the standards in terms of how Veterinary Services should be evaluated should not be the main focus of the text. The Code Commission requested that a separate chapter deal with the evaluation aspects including objectives and types of evaluation.

Following these directions, the *ad hoc* Group undertook a thorough revision of Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. The main proposals for the structure and content of the new chapters are presented below.

4.1. Chapter 3.1. Quality of Veterinary Services

The *ad hoc* Group proposed to change the title of the Chapter to “*Quality of Veterinary Services*”, to better reflect the content.

The proposed draft chapter describes the key elements of quality Veterinary Services including the fundamental operating principles that should be considered for any activity of the Veterinary Services, and the major quality components, structured under ten titles, four on governance and six on technical aspects.

Each component contains an introductory description of the recommendation and a list of recommended elements to consider.

4.2. Chapter 3.2. Evaluation of Veterinary Services

As requested by the Code Commission, this short chapter provides contextual information on the evaluation of Veterinary Services, notably the main objectives and types of evaluation. Three types of evaluation are covered; self-evaluation, external evaluation by another Member Country, and external OIE evaluation.

Taking into consideration the development of the quality principles in Chapter 3.1, the *ad hoc* Group agreed to remove the detailed Evaluation Criteria described in Articles 3.2.3. to 3.2.12. of the current chapter, as well as much of the text detailing requirements for the self-evaluation or evaluation of the Veterinary Services of a country described in current Article 3.2.14.

In consideration of the proposals of the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services and the Code Commission’s feedback, the *ad hoc* Group recognised the value of some generic content that would be applicable to several chapters in Section 3 and proposed to include a new introductory Chapter 3.X. The proposed title for the new introductory Chapter 3.X is “Introduction to Veterinary Services”. This would align with some other sections of the *Terrestrial Code* which start with a short introductory or background chapter. The *ad hoc* Group proposed a chapter that incorporates the concept of Veterinary Services, their role and importance, and summarises the overall structure of Section 3, to be considered once proposed changes to the definitions of Competent Authority, Veterinary Authority and Veterinary Services have been finalised.

The revised draft Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. are attached as Annexes IV, and V, respectively.

5. Next steps

The *ad hoc* Group was informed that its report, including the amended draft Chapters 3.1. and 3.2., will be considered by the Code Commission at its next meeting in September 2019.

.../Annexes

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Paris (France), 3–5 July 2019

Agenda

- 1) Introduction from the OIE Headquarters
 - 2) Welcome (Chair Dr John Weaver)
 - 3) Background
 - a) Summary of the last work of the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services
 - b) Brief on previous Code Commission's discussions relevant to the work of the *ad hoc* Group.
 - 4) *Terrestrial Code* Glossary definitions for 'Competent Authority', 'Veterinary Authority' and 'Veterinary Services'
 - a) Consideration of the use of these terms throughout the *Terrestrial Code*: context, meaning, ease of understanding, inconsistent or inappropriate use;
 - b) Review and answer to Member comments received on the proposed revised definitions circulated in the Code Commission's September 2019 report; and amendment of texts if deemed necessary
 - 5) Chapters 3.1. Veterinary Services and 3.2. Evaluation of Veterinary Services
 - a) Review of Code Commission's feedback on the revised texts drafted by the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services (November 2018);
 - b) Analysis of the structure and organisation of the two chapters;
 - c) Revise the text drafted by the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services (November 2018).
 - 6) Report
 - 7) Any other business
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Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the *ad hoc* Group on Veterinary Services is to review and revise *Terrestrial Code* Chapters 3.1. Veterinary Services and 3.2. Evaluation of Veterinary Services, and to provide advice on the *Terrestrial Code* Glossary definitions for ‘Competent Authority’, ‘Veterinary Authority’ and ‘Veterinary Services’.

Background

Section 3 of the *Terrestrial Code* Quality of Veterinary Services consists of four chapters: Chapter 3.1. Veterinary Services first adopted in 1998; Chapter 3.2. Evaluation of Veterinary Services first adopted in 2002; Chapter 3.3. Communication first adopted in 2011 and Chapter 3.4. Veterinary Legislation first adopted in 2012. All chapters have only had minor amendments since adoption.

The *ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Veterinary Services met in May 2018, primarily to update the OIE PVS Tool, but also to consider the need to review *Terrestrial Code* Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. As a consequence of this work, it recommended that these chapters be revised to ensure they reflect the contemporary activities and responsibilities of the Veterinary Services and are better aligned with other chapters in the *Terrestrial Code*.

The Code Commission, at its September 2018 meeting, supported this proposal and recommended that the *ad hoc* Group be reconvened to develop an outline of proposed changes to Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. The *ad hoc* Group met in November 2018 to progress this work.

In February 2019, the Code Commission considered the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group regarding a revised structure for the two chapters and recommended that the *ad hoc* Group continue its work, and at the same time assist with the ongoing revision of the Glossary definitions for Veterinary Services, Veterinary Authority and Competent Authority.

Following the recommendations of the Code Commission OIE Headquarters decided to create a new *ad hoc* Group to address this work, noting that although this work was linked to evaluation of Veterinary Services using the PVS Tool, it required a broader profile and competencies in its membership.

Specific issues to be addressed

- 1) Provide advice as to whether the *Terrestrial Code* Glossary definitions for ‘Competent Authority’, ‘Veterinary Authority’ and ‘Veterinary Services’ are fit for purpose and/or require any amendments taking into consideration:
 - a) the use of these terms throughout the *Terrestrial Code*: context, meaning, ease of understanding, inconsistent or inappropriate use;
 - b) Member comments received on the proposed revised definitions circulated in the Code Commission’s September 2019 report; and propose amendments if deemed necessary, with supporting rationale, considering the impact of any modification on the implementation of the OIE standards.
- 2) Prepare revised draft Chapters 3.1. and 3.2., taking into consideration:
 - a) the revised texts of Chapters 3.1. Veterinary Services and 3.2. Evaluation of Veterinary Services, drafted by the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services (November 2018);
 - b) the advice of the Code Commission on the November 2018 *ad hoc* Group report, i.e.

Annex III (contd)

- i) Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. should be aligned with and support the other chapters of the *Code* including the use of cross-references, as appropriate.
- ii) Chapter 3.1. should be focused on standards for the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of Veterinary Services to meet their animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health objectives, and should be written as recommendations that can be implemented by Member Countries, instead of requirements or criteria to be assessed in evaluations.

Suggested the chapter addresses:

- General Considerations on Veterinary Services
 - General Considerations on quality standards, considering its context, use, and importance
 - Standards for Quality Veterinary Services:
 - Fundamental principles
 - Specific recommendations (e.g. Policy and Management, Personnel and Resources, Veterinary Profession, International Trade, Animal Health, Animal Production Food Safety, among others).
- iii) Chapter 3.2. should be focused on standards for how the evaluation of Veterinary Services should occur, recognising the different approaches and contexts for such evaluations.

Considerations

Ad hoc Group members should be familiar with the structure of the *Terrestrial Code*, and the use of Glossary definitions.

The significant progress made by the *ad hoc* Group on Evaluation of Veterinary Services in drafting Chapters 3.1 and 3.2, and as acknowledged by the Code Commission, should be taken into account. The Chair and some of the membership are being retained between the two *ad hoc* Groups to ensure this continuity of work.

Report

The *ad hoc* Group will finalise its report prior to 31 July 2019 for consideration by the Code Commission at its September 2019 meeting.

[Note: this Annex has been replaced by Annex 20 to the report of the meeting of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission which was held on 10–19 September 2019.]

[Note: this Annex has been replaced by Annex 21 to the report of the meeting of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission which was held on 10–19 September 2019.]

