



# Exercise Phoenix

## Preparing to respond to agroterrorism

**Dr Kathy Gibson**

European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD)

Daniel Donachie (WOAH), Fanny Ewann (INTERPOL), Pamela Hullinger (EuFMD), Frederic Poudevigne (FAO-EMC), Adrien Sivignon (INTERPOL), Jimmy Tickel (IIAD), Fabrizio Rosso (EuFMD)

**3-5 April 2023**

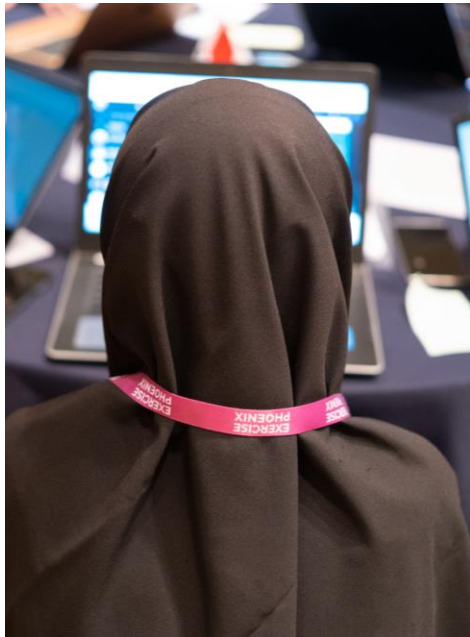
Maison de la Chimie, Paris, France



# Exercise Phoenix overview

---

- Exercise Phoenix (February 2023) was an international discussion exercise (TTX)



Comprising

- **Three 4 – day face-to-face regional exercises** involving the veterinary services and law enforcement agencies of **12 countries**
  - held concurrently across **three time zones**
  - Delivered in **three languages** (English and French, and translated on-site into Arabic)
  - And 10 days later
- **A one-day discussion exercise** for international organisations
  - with **three participating** and **six observer** international organisations
  - Held in hybrid (face-to-face and virtual) format.
- Planned and delivered during a global pandemic.

# Background

---



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Organisation  
for Animal Health  
Founded as OIE

- FAO, INTERPOL and WOAH are partners in the project 'Building sustainable global resilience against animal health emergencies caused by agro-terrorism and agro-crime'
- Project support by the Weapons Threat Reduction Program of Global Affairs Canada
- 4-year project supported a series of training workshops and exercises
  - Training workshops were conducted in two of three target regions (delivery impacted by COVID-19)
- Exercise Phoenix was the culmination of the project



# Aim and objectives

**Aim:** to improve the preparedness and coordination of national and regional veterinary services, law enforcement agencies, and international organizations to work together in response to an agro-terrorism incident

**Objectives:**

- To **raise awareness** of, and **confirm** triggers of suspicion of, an agro-terrorism act at national and regional level.
- To **discuss** initial joint response to suspicion and the initial response measures put in place when detecting an agro-terrorism event.
- To **practice** collaboration and cooperation between Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services at the national and regional level.
- To **discuss** information sharing at national, regional and international level in response to this threat
- To **explore** the roles of selected national, regional, and international entities in dealing with an international agro-terrorism incident.



# Exercise planning and writing

## Exercise planning team

### Organisation

EuFMD

FAO Emergency Management Center

Institute of Infectious Animal Diseases (IIAD) (Texas A&M University)

INTERPOL

World Organisation for Animal Health

Exercise Plan, Risk Register, Facilitator and Player Guides, Briefings and Situation Updates

### Evaluation

Independent lead evaluators appointed by WOA

Vet services & law enforcement evaluators



## Scenario writing team

### Veterinary Services injects

EuFMD

FAO - EMC

IIAD, Texas, USA

National Veterinary Institute, Sweden (Chair)

WOAH

### Law Enforcement injects

Australian Federal Police

Federal Bureau of Investigation (USA)

INTERPOL

Nigeria Police

Portugal Army

Service départemental-métropolitain d'incendie et de secours France

### Scenario and injects





# Exercise scenario

- Intentional release of a biological agent affecting animal health and food security
  - Tailored to country/region
- Regional exercises focused on cooperation between law enforcement and veterinary services in joint investigation and response
- National vet services and law enforcement players received different information

## EXERCISE ONLY

Control No.: O-578/02-2023  
 Date of publication: 16 February 2023  
 Last update on: 16 February 2023

### IMMINENT THREAT



Veterinarians wearing protective overalls from the Ministry of Agriculture were seen yesterday on the farm. A cordon is in place preventing movements of people and animals. Reports have emerged of dead animals being seen on the farm.

Meanwhile panic is spreading across the region. Ali Khalil, a farmer in a neighbouring village said "I don't know what is happening but everyone here is worried. We have heard of cattle dying on other farms in the area. We are waiting on advice from the Government on what we need to do."

Farmers in the area have also been trying to move cattle quickly with few restrictions being put in place.

#### Test Report - Final

Lab Reference: N-23-997  
 Report Date: 14/02/2023  
 Report Number: N-23-997



Date Received: 13/02/2023 Country of Origin\*: Indonesia  
 Date Tests Completed: 14/02/2023

#### Tests Requested\* and Method Followed:

Analysis	Method
Rinderpest Virus Real Time PCR - Primary Assay	NVR-SOP-13

Sample Number	Animal ID*	Sampling Date*	RPV RT-PCR	Final Result
N-23-997-1	302 Blood	12/02/2023	POS	POS

Other Detail\*: Bovine, Blood



# Rehearsals and Exercise Conduct

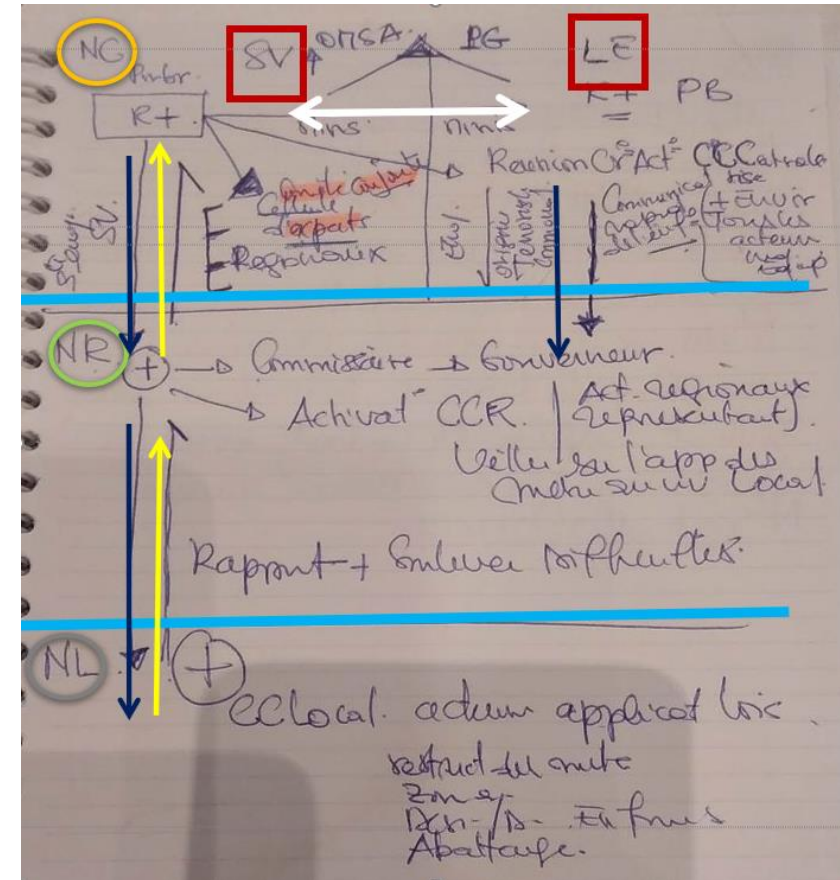
- **Rehearsal 1:** Scenario writing team
- **Rehearsal 2:** Exercise control teams
  - using Facilitator Guide and simex software
- **Exercise control and coordination:**
  - Autonomous exercise control teams in each region
  - Common **Facilitator Guide** and other docs
  - Global exercise monitoring and coordination from Rome
- **Evaluation**
  - Against exercise objectives



WOAH

# Observations

- **Triggers**
  - Of suspicion for agrocrime
  - For action – joint investigation and response
  - **Definitions** of Agro-crime and agroterrorism not universally agreed (*'no law, no crime'*)
- **Information exchange – triggers and constraints**
  - Between Law Enforcement – Veterinary Services
  - Countries – Regions
  - Countries and International organisations
- **Collaboration**
  - Understanding of roles, responsibilities helped build trust between agencies





# Observations

- **Existing** crisis/emergency management **structures** are applicable to agro-terrorism
  - Need to develop operating plans/procedures specific to biological threats
  - Not all countries routinely include veterinary services in national emergency management arrangements
- Roles of **international organisations**
  - Existing relationships and mandates
  - Constraints to information-sharing
  - Coordination of agency response



# Conclusions

---

- Exercise Phoenix achieved its aim and objectives
- Effect of pre-exercise preparation and training of participants
- Opportunities to improve preparation for responding to agrocrime and agroterrorism
- Value of multi-agency exercises

*Exercise Phoenix was supported by the Weapons Threat Reduction Program of Global Affairs Canada*





# Thank you

**Kathy Gibson**

*Emergency Preparedness Specialist – Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Similar Transboundary Diseases, EuFMD*

[Katherine.gibson@fao.org](mailto:Katherine.gibson@fao.org)

**This event is supported by funding from:**



Canada 



Counter Proliferation  
& Arms Control Centre



Co-funded by  
the European Union