

Report of the Meeting of WOAH *ad hoc* Group on Biosecurity for Terrestrial Animals

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29 Nov to 1 December 2022
Paris

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1. Introduction

The *ad hoc* Group (hereafter ‘the Group’) was convened by the Director General following the request of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (hereafter ‘the Code Commission’) to develop a new chapter on biosecurity for terrestrial animals. For this meeting, the Group was asked to design the structure of the chapter, revise the current Glossary definitions for ‘biosecurity’ and ‘biosecurity plan’ and propose a definition for a new term ‘swill’.

The Group met in person between the 29 November and 1 December 2022.

2. Adoption of agenda, terms of reference and appointment of chair and rapporteur.

Dr Dewulf accepted to chair the Group and Dr Daly was appointed as rapporteur. The Group adopted the agenda and the terms of reference. The agenda, the list of participants and the Terms of Reference are presented in [Annex 1](#), [Annex 2](#) and [Annex 3](#) respectively.

3. Welcome

The WOAHS Secretariat welcomed members of the Group and representatives from the Code Commission and the Scientific Commission, and thanked them for their support for this important WOAHS work.

Dr Dewulf, Chair of the Group welcomed the experts. He acknowledged the importance of this work and the challenges associated with the concept.

Dr Montserrat Arroyo, the WOAHS Deputy Director General, International Standards and Science, welcomed members of the Group and thanked them for their availability and contribution to the work of WOAHS. She extended her appreciation to their institutes and national governments for allowing their participation in this meeting. She acknowledged that this was an important yet challenging subject and a long awaited chapter. There are a lot of references to ‘biosecurity’ in the Code, but no specific chapter, which is mostly due to how the Code is developed. She supports the improvement of consistency in the term where used in the Code and the new chapter that will guide Members. Great care was taken when choosing members to ensure there was a wide field of expertise in the Group to deliver this chapter. She invited the members to contribute during the meeting and outside the formal meeting.

Dr Gillian Mylrea, head of Standards Department, conducted an ice-breaking session for members to introduce themselves, express their motivation for agreeing to take part in this work, to identify their contribution to the Group and to reveal a personal highlight.

The Secretariat introduced WOAHS’s standards-setting process and provided an overview of the Terms of Reference, the outcome of a review of the *Terrestrial Code* about biosecurity and an overview of relevant documents from WOAHS and other organisations that should be taken into consideration during the discussions.

4. Review of existing Glossary definitions and proposal of new definitions

The Group discussed the Glossary definitions of two existing terms: ‘biosecurity’ and ‘biosecurity plan’ and proposed a new Glossary definition for the term ‘swill’.

4.1. Biosecurity

The Group proposed to add ‘behavioural’ as part of the set of measures that describes ‘biosecurity’ to bring the ‘human’ component into the definition. Behavioural measures refer to the attitude of the people who must implement them.

The Group proposed to replace ‘animal diseases’ with ‘pathogenic agents’ as it is the agent of the disease that can be introduced, established or spread.

The Group proposed to delete ‘infections and infestations’ as they are redundant with the use of ‘pathogenic agents’.

The Group proposed to reorder the prepositions ‘to, within and from’ to align with the corresponding nouns ‘introduction, establishment and spread’.

4.2. Biosecurity plan

The Group proposed to replace ‘plan’ with ‘documentation’ to clarify what a ‘plan’ is.

The Group proposed to add ‘establishment’ and replace ‘disease’ with ‘pathogenic agents’ to be consistent with the edited definition on biosecurity.

The Group edited the rest of the definition to simplify it and make clear that the plan should also cover a description of biosecurity and an assessment of biosecurity.

4.3. Swill

At its February 2020 meeting, the Code Commission noted that the term 'swill' needed to be defined and included it in its work programme. The Code Commission requested the Secretariat to include this task within the ongoing work to prepare Guidelines on compartmentalisation for African Swine Fever. The *ad hoc* Group on African swine fever compartmentalisation (March 2020) highlighted significant differences in the scope and definition for the term 'swill' amongst countries, and in the terminology used in national legislative texts. The Code Commission asked that the definition of 'swill' consider the relevant disease-specific chapters of the Terrestrial Code (e.g. 15.1 and 15.2) but also Chapter 6.4. and chapters on disease status recognition. The Code Commission acknowledged the difficulty of finding a clear equivalent term in French and Spanish, and recognised that the complexities of the topic would likely not be solved by developing a single definition. It requested that this work be addressed in conjunction with the work on a new chapter on biosecurity.

The Group proposed a definition for the Commissions' consideration. The definition emphasises the difference between swill and appropriately treated swill that is considered as feed. The former is untreated and once treated it becomes feed and should no longer be called 'swill'. The proposed definition mentioned that swill consists of food scraps or food waste that contains (or has been in contact with) meat, by-products (e.g. bakery waste, by products from production of beer as well as animal by-products such as fat, blood, bones) or other animal products (e.g. milk), which were not originally intended to be used as feed for any animals, and not just for pigs. The definition mentions that it is swill when it is 'not originally intended to be fed to animals' but that it can only be safely fed to animals after it has been properly processed or treated.

5. Structure of the new chapter 4.X.

The Group acknowledged the recommendations provided by the [Terrestrial Code Commission](#) and the [Scientific Commission](#) in their respective September 2022 meeting report and it used the recommended concepts as a starting point.

The Group proposed a chapter structure with eleven articles for the Code Commission and the Scientific Commission's consideration. The Group outlined what the eleven articles could cover, providing examples of concepts in bulleted lists.

The overall proposed structure and its content aims to provide guidance to various entities for developing a biosecurity plan and implementing biosecurity, and to support *Veterinary Authorities* in assessing performance of their national biosecurity programmes.

The Group proposed:

1. that an introduction to the chapter should be drafted to contextualise the concept of biosecurity, explain why it should be implemented, and define the objectives of the chapter. The Group proposed that the purpose of the new chapter is to provide guidance to different actors involved in the design, the implementation and the assessment of performance of biosecurity including the *Veterinary Authority* when assessing their own national biosecurity programmes.
2. that, in agreement with the recommendation of the Commissions, the scope of the chapter should encompass
 - a. all animals, including wildlife;
 - b. any husbandry systems;
 - c. any listed or emerging diseases or other transmissible diseases.
3. that an article should be included in case terms used in the new chapter require a specific definition to improve understanding. However, it decided to identify which terms need to be defined once the content of the chapter has been drafted.
4. to include an article that will describe the essential concepts to be considered should consider when designing and implementing a biosecurity plan.
5. to include an article that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various actors involved in the design, implementation, and assessment of biosecurity and of adherence to a biosecurity plan, to provide clarity on the governance.
6. that the chapter should include an article outlining the potential sources of pathogenic agents, as it is essential to understand and consider these sources when determining the required biosecurity.

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7. to include an article that defines the possible ways of transmitting pathogenic agents, as this is a crucial concept to grasp when defining measures to reduce the spread of disease.
 8. that, once sources of pathogenic agents and their transmission pathways have been identified, it is essential to have an article that helps users understand the managerial, behavioural and physical measures they should consider when creating a biosecurity plan. This will ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to reduce risk of transmission.
 9. to include an article that defines the purpose of a biosecurity plan, as well as the components that it should cover. This article will serve as a foundation for a subsequent article on assessment and compliance.
 10. that an article was necessary to provide recommendations to the Veterinary Authorities, industry and producers on how to evaluate the effectiveness of biosecurity. Without assessment, it would be impossible to determine if the measures are effective, need to be adjusted, or are worth pursuing. The Group proposed that this article includes criteria to assess whether the objectives outlined in the plan have been met. Additionally, the Group proposed criteria to assess compliance with the plan, to ensure that not only the measures defined in the plan are suitable, but also that the plan's owner is actually implementing these measures.
 11. that training on biosecurity is essential to implement it successfully. It therefore proposed to include an article that defines the concepts that training on biosecurity should cover.

6. Next steps

The Group asked that, at their February 2023 meeting, the Code Commission and Scientific Commission provide guidance on whether:

1. the proposed structure is fit for purpose or requires changes;
2. other concepts should be covered in new or existing articles;
3. wildlife or captive wildlife should be considered more specifically in the chapter or whether the focus should be on the impact wildlife may have on biosecurity in domestic animals. If wildlife should be covered, the Group asked that guidance be provided on where the recommendations should be covered in the chapter;
4. the proposed changes to the existing Glossary definitions and the definition of the proposed new term are appropriate for the purpose of the Code.

The Group requested that the Commissions suggest changes to be made to the proposed structure or the content of each article or both.

The Secretariat informed the Group of the next steps in the process. The Group confirmed its availability to pursue the work upon receiving guidance from the two Commissions.

.../Annexes

Annex 1. Agenda

MEETING OF THE *AD HOC* GROUP ON BIOSECURITY FOR TERRESTRIAL ANIMALS

Paris, 29 November – 1 December 2022

1. Welcome from DDG-ISS
 2. Adoption of the Agenda, Chair introduction and appointment of rapporteur
 3. Introduction of members
 4. Presentation WOAHA standard-setting process and Terrestrial Code, role of AHGs, Terms of Reference, modalities of working and system functionalities (Zoom, Teams, SharePoint)
 5. Adoption of the Terms of reference
 6. Review of the information paper and other relevant working documents
 7. Discussion on the objectives and scope of the new chapter on biosecurity in terrestrial animals and relevant definitions
 8. Discussion on the structure of the new chapter and description of the content of each article
 9. Any other business
 10. Next steps, next meeting
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Annex 2. List of Participants

MEETING OF THE *AD HOC* GROUP ON BIOSECURITY FOR TERRESTRIAL ANIMALS

Paris, 29 November – 1 December 2022

MEMBERS OF THE *AD HOC* GROUP

Prof Jeroen Dewulf (chair)

Department Chair
Internal medicine, Reproduction,
Population Medicine, Ghent
University
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BELGIUM

Dr Kerry Daly (rapporteur)

Senior Veterinary Officer
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries
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Dr Jorge Caetano Junior

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and
Food Supply,
General Coordinator of Animal Health
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Dr Lionel Gbaguidi

Animal Health and Production Officer
UNFAO Subregional Office for West
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Dr Etienne Bonbon

Terrestrial Animal Health Standards
Commission
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Dr Silvia Bellini

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WOAH HEADQUARTERS

Dr Gillian Mylrea

Head of Department
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Dr Francisco D'Alessio

Deputy head
Standards Department

Ms Elizabeth Marier

Chargée de mission
Standards Department

Dr Roberta Morales

Scientific Coordinator
Science Department

Annex 3. Terms of Reference

AD HOC GROUP ON BIOSECURITY FOR TERRESTRIAL ANIMALS

First meeting, Paris, 29 November – 1 December 2022

Purpose

The overall purpose of the *ad hoc* Group on biosecurity for terrestrial animals is to develop a new draft chapter on Biosecurity for terrestrial animals, for inclusion in Section 4. 'Disease prevention and control' of the WOAHA Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the Terrestrial Code). It also aims to review the current definitions for 'biosecurity' in the Glossary of the Terrestrial Code or propose new definitions as deemed necessary.

The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (the Code Commission) requested that an *ad hoc* Group be convened to undertake this work, which was approved by the WOAHA Director General.

Background

The Code Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific Commission, is progressively updating Section 4. 'Disease prevention and control' of the *Terrestrial Code*. A new Chapter 4.18. 'Vaccination' was adopted in 2018, and the revised Chapter 4.4. 'Zoning and compartmentalisation' and a new Chapter 4.19. 'Official control programmes for listed and emerging diseases' were adopted in 2021. The revision of Chapter 4.6. 'General hygiene in semen collection and processing centres' and of Chapter 4.7. 'Collection and processing of bovine, small ruminant and porcine semen' is in progress. The Code Commission also acknowledged the need to revise Chapter 4.13. 'Disposal of dead animals' and Chapter 4.14. 'General recommendations on disinfection and disinsection'. It agreed that this work be undertaken after progressing the development of a new chapter on biosecurity.

The Code Commission agreed that biosecurity is essential for disease prevention and control and that this topic was not consistently covered in the *Terrestrial Code*. There is a Glossary definition that acknowledges the fact that a disease is a complex interaction between the host, the disease-causing agent, and the environment and a reference to 'biosecurity' is found several times in various chapters. However, there is no single chapter describing what the standards on biosecurity are, what the role and responsibilities of various entities in enforcing the biosecurity recommendations are or how biosecurity should be approached in a consistent manner across specific contexts, various diseases, production sectors or in other possible contexts. It therefore agreed that the next priority was to develop a new chapter on Biosecurity for terrestrial animals. The Commission agreed that the new chapter should include the principles of biosecurity and that these principles should be relevant for all WOAHA Members.

At their September 2022 meetings, the Scientific Commission and the Code Commission discussed in length the meaning of 'biosecurity' and how the term is used in the *Terrestrial Code* and proposed the scope and objectives.

Scope and objective

The **objective** of the chapter should be to support *veterinary authorities* when enforcing regulations or when certifying an effective implementation of biosecurity, in the context of zoning and compartmentalisation. The chapter should provide recommendations on what biosecurity consists of to support disease prevention and control programme as well as on how to assess the effectiveness of the biosecurity implemented.

The **scope** of the chapter should be to describe the overarching principles of biosecurity at a high level using the Glossary definitions and how the concept is used throughout the *Terrestrial Code* as a starting point.

Actions to deliver for the first meeting

In this first meeting, the *ad hoc* Group should:

1. Review how the term 'Biosecurity' is used throughout the Terrestrial Code as defined in the Glossary.
2. Advise on whether the definition for 'Biosecurity' and other related terms (e.g., Biosecurity plan) are fit for purpose and revise as necessary. Propose new definitions (e.g., Swill) as appropriate.
3. Refine the objectives of the new chapter on biosecurity for terrestrial animals.
4. Develop a draft article structure (outline) for the new chapter, including a brief description of the proposed content for each article.

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5. Review and advise on existing standards on biosecurity included in various Terrestrial Code chapters to ensure consistency and to link these to this new chapter.
 6. If relevant, define specific guidance required from the Code Commission and the Scientific Commission at their February 2023 meeting for the future development of the draft chapter.

Considerations

When developing this work, the *ad hoc* Group should consider:

1. the structure and the content of the *Terrestrial Code* (in Section 4) and terms in the Glossary definitions;
2. the recommendations from the Scientific Commission and Code Commissions (September 2022).
3. existing recommendations and references to biosecurity used in the *Terrestrial Code*, the *Terrestrial Manual* and the current Glossary definitions for 'biosecurity' and 'biosecurity plan' used throughout the *Terrestrial Code*;
4. that the draft chapters should be relevant for all WOAAH Members and consider all animal species and types of production (as relevant for the *Terrestrial Code*), regardless of the geographical diversity of terrestrial animal disease and species worldwide given the different environments for implementation.
5. all relevant material provided by the *ad hoc* Group Secretariat in preparation of the meeting.

Expectations

Ad hoc Group members should:

- sign off the WOAAH Undertaking on Confidentiality of information form before the meeting;
- complete the WOAAH Declaration of Interest form before the meeting;
- acknowledge the WOAAH personal data management policy;
- be familiar with the structure of the *Terrestrial Code* and the use of Glossary definitions;
- be familiar with relevant *Terrestrial Code* chapters (to be provided in the working documents);
- read all working documents provided by the Secretariat prior to the meeting;
- contribute to discussions;
- contribute to drafting text; and
- understand that the *ad hoc* Group may be reconvened during Spring 2023 to ensure continuity of the work.

Deliverables

1. a report that contains:
 - a) the refined objective(s) of the new chapter;
 - b) a summary of the rationale for decisions and proposals;
 - c) specific points on which guidance would be required from the Code Commission and the Scientific Commission for the future development of the draft chapter.
2. a skeleton of the new chapter including a brief description of the proposed content for each article;

Reporting / timeline

The *ad hoc* Group will finalise its deliverables in time for the February 2023 Commission meetings after the completion of the *ad hoc* Group meeting.
