

Report of the WOAAH Working Group on Wildlife

Original: English (EN)

20 to 23 June 2023
Paris, France



**World Organisation
for Animal Health**
Founded as OIE

Preparedness and Resilience
Department

12, rue de Prony
75017 Paris, France

T. +33 (0)1 44 15 18 88
F. +33 (0)1 42 67 09 87
woah@woah.org
www.woah.org

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1. Summary

The Working Group discussed the opportunities and challenges for WOAAH's wildlife health programme when addressing current global priorities.

The Working Group was informed about the collaboration with international partners: the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Wildlife Disease Association (WDA), and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) through the SNAPP Project. The Working Group was also informed about the advancement of the Consultancy on "Review and analyse of diseases (caused by infectious agents and toxins) affecting wildlife that are potentially a threat to wildlife conservation" and the advancement of the Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover Events at Markets Selling Wildlife and along the Wildlife Supply Chain. It was informed and made recommendations on the relationship between wildlife and human health as well as a future definition of wildlife health.

The Working Group made comments, suggestions or recommendations on the Network of Collaborating Centres working on wildlife health, on the Network of WOAAH National Focal Points for Wildlife, and on the existing and possible future systems collecting wildlife health data and on the management of this information.

The Working Group continued its collaboration with the Terrestrial Code Commission and reviewed the Commission's work programme, which outlines the current and planned work to be undertaken to develop and update Terrestrial Code chapters, to identify areas where the epidemiology of the disease warranted review and further consideration of wildlife.

Finally, the Working Group made a statement on the vaccination of species of high conservation value against avian influenza and on El Niño climate event. It was also briefed on development of the Global Strategy for the global prevention and control of HPAI and would make recommendations when this strategy is available.

2. Opening

The meeting of the WOAAH Working Group on Wildlife (the Working Group) was held from the 20th to the 23rd of June 2023 at the WOAAH Headquarters in Paris, France; and was chaired by Dr William Karesh.

Dr Monique Eloit, Director General of WOAAH, welcomed the members of the Working Group. She mentioned to the Working Group that several significant programmes including wildlife had been initiated at WOAAH over the past few years, including the Wildlife Health Framework and the One Health programme. These programmes would highlight the worldwide interest on wildlife by WOAAH. However, many Member Countries were still concerned about wildlife diseases because of the potential impacts on livestock and human health rather than wildlife itself. Though much good work has been done, Dr Eloit pointed out that the Organisation would need to continue to play a leadership role in becoming the Global organisation for animal health, therefore including all animals. To do this, WOAAH needed to build pathways to prepare for the future. Standards and Guidelines are considered important potential tools to help support Members and further development of this pathway, recognising that there are different tools and mechanisms for different purposes. It was recognised that a definition of animal health which includes wildlife health could be a useful tool to assist Member Countries in moving forward. Position papers on what should be addressed by Standards or Guidelines regarding wildlife or on the definition of animal health would allow WOAAH to see how wildlife is perceived by its Member Countries and determine support of Members to move forward in the wildlife area. Prioritising work on the health aspect of the wildlife trade could be a good way forward. Finally, Dr Eloit thanked the members of the Working Group for the clarity of their recommendations from the last meeting and encouraged them to do the same for this meeting.

Ms Sophie Muset provided an overview of implementation of the WOAAH Wildlife Health Framework. The Working Group recognised that according to the advancement's objectives of the framework, all of them had been achieved and congratulated the WOAAH team working on wildlife for their accomplishments to date.

3. Adoption of agenda and designation of the rapporteur

Dr Marcela Uhart was appointed as the rapporteur for the meeting. The agenda and the list of participants are provided in Annexes I and II respectively.

4. Multisectoral coordination and collaboration

4.1. Network of Collaborating Centres working on wildlife

Dr Dharmaveer Shetty updated the Working Group on the project to set up a network of Collaborating Centres on Wildlife Health. This network would be developed as a resource centre for WOAAH in its goal of improving global wildlife health by targeting the needs of its Member Countries. The network would comprise the current WOAAH Collaborating Centres for Wildlife Health, as well as the interested Collaborating Centres from other designated focus areas and specialities. The network should have a workplan but also maintain enough flexibility to respond rapidly to the needs of WOAAH and the WOAAH Member Countries. The network would consist of a secretariat, a core leadership team for the inaugural year (a core group of institutions/experts responsible for guiding the establishment of the network and actively leading its activities and deliverables during its initial year) and a General Body. Dr Shetty informed the Working Group that the first meeting of the core leadership team would be planned for the second half of 2023.

Comments:

- The Working Group suggested development of a work plan by the core leadership team that would support the needs and interests of the WOAAH, its members and delivery of the WOAAH Wildlife Framework.
- The Working Group also highlighted the need to ensure active input by members of the network.
- Finally, the Working Group suggested that the agenda for the first meeting of the core leadership team align with the terms of reference of the network.

4.2. Network of the WOAAH National Focal Points for wildlife

Dr Dharmaveer Shetty provided the Working Group with an update on the activities conducted to further develop and support the network of the WOAAH National Focal Points for Wildlife:

- Organisation and delivery of the 6th cycle in-person training programs in various regions, including (1) Africa, (2) Asia-Pacific, and (3) Americas, while the (4) European regional program has been planned for the end of June 2023.
- Regular interaction with and between the National Focal Points for Wildlife through periodic informational emails of approximately 1 to 2 per month, side meetings, one-on-one meetings (in-person or remote), social media, and other mechanisms has commenced.
- Wildlife Focal Point Terms of Reference (ToRs).
- Exploration of new ideas and development of the groundwork for implementing ideas towards animating the network in the future.

Comment:

- The Working Group noted the update and encouraged regular interaction of WOAAH with the National Focal Points for Wildlife. The Working Group suggested that WOAAH could give consideration to organising regular events or production of a periodic communication such as a newsletter to allow the National Focal Points for Wildlife to exchange feedback on implementation of activities relating to wildlife health.
- The Working Group suggested structural edits to the proposed terms of reference for the National Focal Points for Wildlife, by moving two terms (WOAH Delegate Support and Data Reporting) to the primary position, and the remaining terms to follow subsequently as other terms.

4.3. Partnership with IUCN

The final version of the Memorandum of Understanding and the latest version of the work plan between IUCN and WOAAH were presented to the Working Group.

Comments:

- The Working Group recognised that the collaboration with IUCN would facilitate access to wildlife authorities with whom IUCN works closely and therefore welcomed this collaboration.
- The Working Group noted the work plan and pointed out the importance of the development of joint guidelines with IUCN as they would reach both wildlife authorities and veterinary services.

4.4. Partnership with CITES

The work plan was presented to the Working Group for information.

Comments:

- The Working Group suggested that consideration be given to restructuring the work plan to emphasise the importance of resolving issues of sample movement across jurisdictional boundaries for listed species as a very high priority.
- A separate email conversation was held with François Diaz and several Working Group members to gather further insights and examples indicating the challenges of moving diagnostic and forensic samples of Appendix I & II species. Previous correspondence was attached for reference.

4.5. Partnership with WDA

The Working Group was updated on the ongoing engagement with the Wildlife Disease Association (WDA), in pursuit of future collaboration with this organisation. This collaboration included the periodic communication with the WDA Executive Committee, as well as the contribution of WOAHP to the scientific committee of the next European WDA conference.

Comments:

- The Working Group emphasized the value of a partnership with WDA and that avenues needed to be explored to facilitate this partnership.
- In pursuit of a partnership, the Working Group recommended that WOAHP continue to formalise a partnership by organising regular meetings with the Executive Committee of the WDA, and, where possible, increase communication and collaboration with other sections of WDA, e.g.: European section.
- The Working Group recommended that WOAHP consider having a presence at future International Wildlife Disease Association Conferences to further engage with the membership.

4.6. WOAHP's engagement with WCS and the SNAPPS project

The Working Group was updated about the SNAPP project and indicated its interest in continuing to be kept informed of any developments. Concerns were raised about the potential for duplication between SNAPP and the WOAHP's Wildlife Health Framework.

5. Quality data collection, reporting, analysis and use improved

5.1. Update on the survey of existing information systems for wildlife health data management

Dr Claire Cayol provided an update on a survey to assess the utility of existing systems for use in wildlife health data and information management. The survey intends to compile systematic information on the design, maintenance, flexibility and use of information systems currently used for wildlife data management, with a special focus on those solely used for capture and reporting of wildlife health data. The survey would be sent to national and regional information system managers and the information gathered help with understanding the current ecosystem of wildlife data management, as well as contribute to the development of a business case for the future global information system for wildlife health data management. The survey had been finalised and circulation was pending.

Comments:

- The Working Group discussed the approach: (1) having a link between the Reference Centres and the wildlife disease outbreak managers could be useful; (2) as would different levels of access for different categories of users of the system; (3) objectives could be rephrased and reordered to focus on trade; (4) the transboundary potential is generally unknown at time of collecting information this objective could be removed; (5) provide facility to capture and differentiate validated vs. unvalidated information; (6) Question stakeholders on the objectives of data collection identified; (7) populate the system with historical data to increase its usefulness prior to its use; (8) emphasise the need for a dedicated communication strategy around this new initiative; (9) include monitoring and evaluation, specifically regarding the number of users of the system; (10) include facility to identify disease of high concern to Members and ensure that these not be included in the database until approved by the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Member country; (11) consider inclusion of artificial learning tools to facilitate improved user experience and use for the system; (12) Governance and on-going support was considered important and needed to be carefully considered. One potential model included outsourcing management to one of the Collaborating

Centres; (13) consider the cut-off point for deal: how many countries should report to render the system operational and useful; (14) data and reporting could be stratified according to the needs of the three key stakeholder groups: trade and market access, zoonoses and conservation.

- The Working Group also highlighted the need to differentiate surveillance from monitoring or data collection, and to clearly define the purpose of the system as well as the importance of user input during the design and development of the system.

5.2. Update on the survey of National Focal Points

Dr Claire Cayol updated the Working Group on the online survey of National Focal Points that aimed to gather information on: (1) national strategies to manage wildlife health data gathered from surveillance, (2) the optimal system to support countries in reporting information to WOAHA for aquatic and terrestrial species, and (3) the stakeholders involved. The survey had been sent in June to the National Focal Points for animal disease notification, the National Focal Points for Wildlife, and the National Focal Points for Aquatic Animals.

The results of both surveys (survey to Information system designers and survey to National Focal Points for Wildlife) would be compiled by the Preparedness and Resilience Department and the results considered at the first meeting of the *ad hoc* Group for the Next-Generation Wildlife Health Information System.

5.3. Update on the constitution of an *ad hoc* Group to follow the development of a new information system

Dr Cayol presented the terms of reference, the list of participants of the future *ad hoc* Group for the Next-Generation Wildlife Health Information System and informed the Working Group that the first meeting of the Group would be organised at the WOAHA Headquarters for September 2023.

Comments

- The Working Group suggested key end-users (National Focal Points for Wildlife) be included in the list of participants as well as some Delegates, including those from low- and middle-income countries.

5.4. Update on defining diseases targeted (non-listed WOAHA-diseases that affect wildlife, internal assessment of the non-listed diseases)

Dr Claire Cayol presented the prioritisation work carried out on the 54 non-listed diseases by taking into account criteria that lead to species extinction. She also highlighted the benefit of not having a restrictive list but allowing Members to report any disease/mortality event detected.

Recommendation

- The Working Group suggested that this work be applied to all diseases identified in the consultancy on wildlife diseases that are potentially a threat to wildlife conservation. They noted that adding up the score of the weighting indicators may obscure rankings based on particular stakeholder interest (zoonosis, conservation, trade) and the tool could be modified and used as a module to help decision-making.

5.5. Update on the WAHIS-Wild Beta

Dr Jingwen Wang presented progress on development of the WAHIS-WILD Beta system. WAHIS-WILD Beta would work as an interim solution to help members report non-listed diseases in wildlife and was scheduled to be launched in June.

Comments

- The Working Group was impressed by the work done on this WAHIS-WILD Beta system and was looking forward to seeing the data provided to WOAHA through this system.
- The Working Group noted that changing the name of the system to disassociate it from WAHIS may help to reduce unintended trade implications.
- Dr Wang thanked all the positive comments by the Working Group and noted that reminders of the difference between WAHIS-WILD Beta and WAHIS have been made in every possible communication with members. Independence of these two systems were highlighted.

5.6. Wildlife Disease Situation report

Dr Paolo Tizzani briefed the Working Group on development of a global monthly situation report on wildlife diseases available on the wildlife web portal of the WOAHA website.

Comments

- The Working Group made some suggestions to improve the format and information provided in this report such as the value of open access to the data through an excel file and to include the period of time covered by the report in the title.

6. Guidelines, standards, risk reduction strategies updated & developed

6.1. Consultancy on “Review and analyse of diseases (caused by infectious agents and toxins) affecting wildlife that are potentially a threat to wildlife conservation”

The Working Group was updated on the consultancy on “Review and analyse of diseases (caused by infectious agents and toxins) affecting wildlife that are potentially a threat to wildlife conservation” and informed of the delays that had occurred during this consultancy process.

Recommendation:

- The Working Group noted that the work would be very welcome and is looking forward to delivery, while acknowledging the workload and the risks for non-delivery within the decided timeframe. The Working Group suggested consideration to reducing the scope of work.

6.2. Terrestrial Animal Health Code: Discussion on opportunities for coordination in the development and review of the Terrestrial Code (TAHSC work programme)

In February 2023, the Chair of the Working Group met with the Code Commission, to provide an update on the outcomes of the Working Group’s meeting in December 2022 ([February 2023 Code Commission’s meeting report](#)). In follow-up of the agreement to work closely to include contributions from the Working Group to address wildlife health in the development and review of the Terrestrial Code, Dr Francisco D’Alessio, as Secretariat to the Code Commission, presented the Commission’s work programme, which outlined the current and planned work to be undertaken to develop and update *Terrestrial Code* chapters, as presented in the [February 2023 Code Commission’s meeting report](#). The Working Group reviewed the work programme and identified areas where the epidemiology of the disease warranted review and further consideration of wildlife.

It was **AGREED** that:

1. members of the Working Group would be available to provide comment on relevant Chapters of the Terrestrial Code as part of the review process for each Chapter,
2. that this input be considered by the Code Commission along with other submissions received, and
3. That, given the very large number of diseases involved and noting that work items progress at different paces and not all are active, the Secretariat will coordinate Working Group inputs are sought in a timely manner.
4. As a priority, the Working Group would provide succinct comments, for consideration of the Code Commission at its September 2023 meeting, for those Chapters which had already been circulated among WOAHA Members: Infection with African horse sickness virus (Chapter 12.1.) Infection with foot and mouth disease virus (Chapter 8.8.), and Rabbit haemorrhagic disease (Chapter 13.2.).

7. Scientific knowledge developed and disseminated

7.1. Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover Events at Markets Selling Wildlife and along the Wildlife Supply Chain (final version)

An update on the advancement of the WOAHA Guidelines for addressing disease risks in wildlife trade was provided to the Working Group. The Guidelines are in a process of copy editing, the aim being to get them into a format that was easier to read and understand. A distribution process is required that targets Focal Points and other key stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- The Working Group suggested that social media, Focal Points and Delegates, WOAAH press releases, e-modules and WOAAH training sessions, WDA newsletter, IUCN Members, CITES Parties, GIZ, International Alliance, and World Bank could be used and targeted to diffuse the Guidelines broadly.

7.2. Analysis and need assessment of stakeholders involved in the wildlife trade and along the supply chain

The analysis and needs assessment of stakeholders involved in the wildlife trade, along the supply chain and wildlife health surveillance is an activity identified in the Wildlife Health Framework. The assessment is part of the overall baseline and stocktaking exercise that will provide a solid foundation to inform decision making during the implementation of the programme. The aim of this exercise is to determine the needs of key stakeholders in order to understand the current gaps and possibilities for collaboration on issues of mutual concern.

A two-step process is planned:

1. stakeholder identification and prioritization, and
2. needs assessment interview (focussed on prioritized stakeholders).

The exercise, based on the Mendelow Matrix (Interest vs. Power/Influence), identified internal (e.g. Headquarters staff, Delegates, Regional Representatives, Collaborating Centres, or members of the Working Group) and external (e.g. Donors, Intergovernmental Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations, Academia, Treaty, Platforms, general Public, or Activists) key stakeholders with high power/high interest, high power/low interest, low power/high interest, and low power/low interest. In the next step, identified key stakeholders will be interviewed (planned for the summer 2023) to (1) understand their expectations vis a vis of WOAAH and (2) identify their needs in order to understand the current gaps and possibilities in collaboration.

7.3. Discussion on White paper / advocacy paper: the relationship between wildlife and human health & intrinsic value of wildlife

The Working Group was presented with the executive summary of a literature review written as a white paper on the relationship between wildlife and human health and the intrinsic value of wildlife. The paper is undergoing internal review and will be shared with the DG and the head of WOAAH Communication. Advice was sought on a strategy for publication.

The Working Group highlighted that the paper did not bring any new concept and in its current shape, publication in a high rank scientific journal would be challenging. However, publication as a perspective or opinion paper highlighting WOAAH's role would be useful. The journals "Transboundary Animal Diseases", "CABI One Health", "Ecohealth", "Journal of Wildlife Diseases", "WOAH technical journal", "Human Dimension of Wildlife" could be considered. However, publication as part of a WOAAH technical journal could be extremely useful given the content and offering advantages of targeting the key audience as well as speed of release.

7.4. Definition of wildlife health - Update on the Delphi exercise and identification of experts

The Working Group was informed of a change in strategy with an overall definition of animal health instead of the previously presented approach of wildlife health definition. The marketing opportunity for presenting this initiative at the occasion of the 100th anniversary General Session was highlighted. Potential implementation steps were presented: a position paper, a technical item or animal forum.

Recommendation

- The Working Group noted that human health is defined in the constitution of WHO and highlighted the need for a similar approach.

8. Highly pathogenic avian influenza

8.1. Consideration of a specific statement on vaccination of species of high conservation value against Avian Influenza

Dr Samantha Gibbs, from the National Wildlife Refuge System in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided a presentation to the Working Group on the rationale, justification, decision and inter-agency approval process to

undertake emergency off-label vaccination for HPAI of the critically endangered California condor, including free-living individuals.

Given the global level of concern regarding avian influenza and its potential impact on wildlife, it was agreed that the Working Group would prepare a brief statement on considerations associated with emergency vaccination of high conservation value species. The document would be shared with SCAD and OFFLU (and any other relevant departments at WOAAH as needed) and be consistent with previous guidance provided.

8.2. Consider updating recommendation related to AI and wildlife

Dr Gounalan Pavade presented the recommendations and resolution adopted by the Assembly from the recent 2023 Animal Health Forum on Avian Influenza (AI) that took place at the WOAAH General Session, in May 2023. Dr Pavade highlighted that the resolution recommended that WOAAH closely follow the changes of Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus ecology, epidemiology, validated sampling and diagnostic methods, to ensure WOAAH Standards were up to date with the latest scientific information and invited the Working Group to highlight any needs or concerns for wildlife.

The Working Group was briefed on the revision and update of the Global Strategy for the prevention and control of HPAI. The strategy, which is in preparation, is being led by GF-TAD avian influenza task force and will be circulated to the Working Group for comments.

An update on the OFFLU working group on wildlife was also presented.

Comments and Recommendations:

- The Working Group thanked the presenters and the opportunity to provide feedback and highlighted the changed situation regarding HPAI and its significance for wildlife conservation. The Working Group supported the recommendations and resolution adopted by the General Session, particularly regarding the importance of surveillance and reporting of HPAI in wildlife. It was, however, noted that there appeared to be a mismatch between the recommendations and Resolution adopted by the General Session and articles in the Code relevant to surveillance and reporting of LPAI, which would need to be addressed.
- The Working Group offered to review the GF-TADs HPAI global strategy and to provide feedback.
- The Working Group expressed support to OFFLU and nominated a member of the Working Group, Marcela Uhart, as part of the OFFLU wildlife technical group for AI.

8.3. WOAAH Initiative on HPAI in marine mammals – update

The steps taken over the past months to provide guidance on response to HPAI outbreaks in marine mammals were presented to the Working Group. The Working Group discussed options and next steps.

Recommendation:

Francois Diaz will reach out to the Marine Mammal Collaborating Centers soliciting a concise (about 5 page) practical guide for field response to HPAI outbreaks in marine mammals, with a focus on biosecurity and sample collection and carcass disposal. The Working Group will review the guidance document before it is shared with other key stakeholders such as the International Whaling Commission's committee on diseases of concern (led by Dr Raphaela Stimelmayer).

9. Any other business

9.1. El Nino

Predicted climate impacts of El Nino on wildlife mortalities was discussed. The shared experience of the Working Group has been that El Nino will, towards the end of the calendar year, bring with it mass mortality events in wildlife for example, as have previously occurred on the west coast of southern America and associated with drought in southern Africa.

The Working Group agreed that a short notification to this effect would be of value and would prepare a short document for consideration for circulation to Delegates by WOAAH.

10. Date of next meeting

The Working Group proposed the following dates for its next meeting from Tuesday 28 to Friday 1 December 2023.

11. Adoption of the report

The report was adopted by the Working Group.

.../Annexes

Annex I.

Adopted Agenda

MEETING OF THE WOAHP WORKING GROUP ON WILDLIFE

Paris (France), 20 to 23 June 2023

1. **Opening**
2. **Adoption of agenda and designation of the rapporteur**
3. **Multisectoral coordination and collaboration**
 - 3.1. Network of Collaborating Centre's working on wildlife
 - 3.2. Network of the WOAHP National Focal Points for wildlife
 - 3.3. Partnership with IUCN
 - 3.4. Partnership with CITES
 - 3.5. Partnership with WDA
 - 3.6. WOAHP's engagement with WCS and the SNAPPS project
4. **Capacity in wildlife health management strengthened**
 - 4.1. Update on the development of the e-modules (training materials)
 - 4.2. Competencies and ToR's for Wildlife Focal points
5. **Quality data collection, reporting, analysis and use improved**
 - 5.1. Update on the survey of existing information systems for wildlife health data management
 - 5.2. Update on the survey of NFP (including wildlife, aquatic and notification) on need regarding wildlife health data
 - 5.3. Update on the constitution of an *ad hoc* Group to follow the development of a new information system
 - 5.4. Update on defining diseases targeted (Consultancy of main diseases that affect wildlife and internal assessment of the non-listed diseases)
 - 5.5. Update on the WAHIS-Wild Beta
 - 5.6. Wildlife Disease Situation report
6. **Guidelines, standards, risk reduction strategies updated & developed**
 - 6.1. Consultancy on "Review and analyse of diseases (caused by infectious agents and toxins) affecting wildlife that are potentially a threat to wildlife conservation."
 - 6.2. Terrestrial Animal Health Code: Discussion on opportunities for coordination in the development and review of the Terrestrial Code (TAHSC work programme)
7. **Scientific knowledge developed and disseminated**
 - 7.1. Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover Events at Markets Selling Wildlife and along the Wildlife Supply Chain (final version)
 - 7.2. Analysis and need assessment of stakeholders involved in the wildlife trade and along the supply chain
 - 7.3. Discussion on White paper / advocacy paper: the relationship between wildlife and human health & intrinsic value of wildlife
 - 7.4. Definition of wildlife health - Update on the Delphi exercise and identification of experts.

8. **Highly pathogenic avian influenza**

- 8.1 Consideration of a specific statement on vaccination of species of high conservation value against Avian Influenza
- 8.2 Consider updating recommendation related to AI and wildlife.
- 8.3 WOAH Initiative on HPAI in marine mammals – update

9. **Any other business**

10. **Date of next meeting**

11. **Adoption of the report**

Annex II.

List of Participants

MEETING OF THE WOAHP WORKING GROUP ON WILDLIFE

Paris, 20 to 23 June 2023

MEMBERS

Dr William B. Karesh (Chair)

Executive Vice President for Health and Policy
EcoHealth Alliance / Wildlife Trust
520 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1200
New York, NY. 10018
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dr Markus Hofmeyr

Director of the Rhino Recovery Fund
Wildlife Conservation Network
209 Mississippi Street
San Francisco CA
USA
Based in South Africa

Prof. Koichi Murata

Department of Wildlife Science
College of Bioresource Sciences
Nihon University
1866 Kameino, Fujisawa
Kanagawa 252-8510
JAPAN

Dr Jonathan Sleeman

Science Advisor, Wildlife Health and Ecology
US Geological Survey
US Department of Interior
Madison, Wisconsin 53711
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dr Rupert Woods

Chief executive officer at Wildlife Health Australia
Suite E 34 Suakin Drive
Mosman, NSW 2088
AUSTRALIA

Dr Marcela Uhart

Latin America Program
One Health Institute
School of Veterinary Medicine
University of California, Davis
Los Alerces 3376
Puerto Madryn, Chubut (9120)
ARGENTINA

OBSERVERS

Dr Misheck Mulumba

ARC-Ondertsepoort Veterinary Institute
Private Bag X5
Onderstepoort
Pretoria, 0110
SOUTH AFRICA

WOAHP HEADQUARTERS

Dr Keith Hamilton

Head
Preparedness and Resilience
Department

Dr Paolo Tizzani

Epidemiologist
World Animal Health Information
and Analysis Department

Dr François Diaz

Scientific Coordinator for bees and
wildlife
Preparedness and Resilience
Department

Dr Tiggy Grillo

Scientific Coordinator
Preparedness and Resilience
Department

Ms Sophie Muset

Program Manager,
Preparedness and Resilience
Department

Dr Dharmaveer Shetty

Wildlife Networks Coordinator,
Preparedness and Resilience
Department

Dr Claire Cayol

Information Manager
Preparedness and Resilience
Department

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