AD HOC GROUP FOR THE NEXT-GENERATION WILDLIFE HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM

Online, 23rd October; Paris, 22nd-24th November; Online, 30th January 2024

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

The purpose of the ad hoc Group for the Next-Generation Wildlife Health Information System (NG-WHIS) is to provide strategic and technical pieces of advice to WOAH in the design of the new strategy for wildlife diseases reporting.

Ad hoc Groups are convened under the authority of and report to the WOAH Director General.

Background

One objective of the WOAH's Seventh Strategic Plan (2021-2025) is 'implementing digital transformation through Data Strategy' by developing data governance framework to optimise data management, while improving accessibility and visibility of data for stakeholders as well as efficiency and agility through modern internal processes and tools. The WOAH wildlife health framework further advocates for an improved collection, analysis, reporting and utilization of good quality wildlife health data at national and global levels.

Although information regarding surveillance of domestic species is captured by the existing reporting pipelines (WAHIS, relaunched in 2022), the situation with reporting wildlife diseases is ambiguous. Listed and emerging diseases occurring in wild species are currently reported to WAHIS. Other events not clearly identified can be reported in accordance with Article 1.1.5 of the terrestrial code. For a set of 56 non-listed diseases or health events, a temporary online survey WAHIS-Wild beta was launched in 2023 after five years of discontinuation of the reporting module WAHIS-Wild. A reporting gap is noticeable for diseases and species (mainly invertebrates) that are not mentioned in WOAH's lists and code.

There is an urgent need to develop a coordinated global long-term strategy to optimise disease reporting in wild species, based on a robust scoping exercise of the goal and purpose for reporting diseases in wildlife. This strategy includes the characterisation of the needs and capacity of Members and the proposition of an **optimal reporting route based on a bespoke information system** for worldwide reporting of non-listed diseases in wild species, alongside an effective communication strategy to encourage reporting. *A survey was launched in 2023 to better characterise members' needs and capacity (SURVEY 1)*. This system, temporarily called the 'next-generation wildlife health information system (NG-WHIS)', will necessarily build on knowledge gained from previous experiences and use cutting-edge technology while complementing already existing systems. It will ensure that high-quality big data is widely available for analysis to inform conservation and One Health decision-making through a bespoke user-centred wildlife health reporting system that is flexible and tailored for reporting all non-listed health events in wild species especially, first occurrences (geographic or in a new species), unusual health events or undiagnosed die-off. In 2022, a group of experts was gathered and contributed to developing *a questionnaire to audit existing information systems for wildlife health data (SURVEY 2)*. It was agreed that this group would continue the work to the next step *i.e.* create an *ad hoc* Group to contribute to the business case for a coordinated global long-term strategy for wildlife health data collection.

Specific issues to be addressed

The new long-term strategy involves adapting or developing a wildlife disease reporting system and ensuring that this system meets the current and upcoming challenges encountered by Members while contributing to making the World a safer place. It also involves developing a durable communication plan to incentivize and ensure forthwith reporting. The *ad hoc* Group on NG-WHIS aims to bring to WOAH supplementary expertise in a forum for constructive brainstorming on the best strategy to reach the objectives identified by WOAH.

The *ad hoc* Group will agree on the scope and purpose of the project and contribute to analysing the results of the two surveys launched by WOAH in 2023. With these surveys, the *ad hoc* Group will provide transparent advice on the five options regarding an information system for collection and sharing of information on wildlife health worldwide:

1. The collection of data on wildlife using the existing WAHIS system developed to collect information on listed diseases of interest for trade.
2. The revival of the WAHIS-wild module which was an extra module in WAHIS to report information on wildlife diseases.
3. The adaptation of an existing system used at national or regional levels to meet WOAH's needs.
4. The development of a new information system from scratch.
5. The *status quo:* no change to the ongoing business.

Actions to deliver

The *ad hoc* Group will be asked to:

- Acquire a good level of knowledge on the general WOAH reporting and notification, listed and non-listed diseases and wildlife health framework, as well as an overview of the existing ecosystem of information systems for reporting diseases and key stakeholders involved;

- Share relevant experience on good practices in acquisition, management, analysis of epidemiological big data, including ethical data-related concerns;

- Contribute to the analysis of the two surveys launched by WOAH;

- Provide inputs and comments, advise on the five options proposed, and recommend strategies, including high-level guidance and recommendations on wildlife disease reporting while taking into account WOAH's constraints, members' capacity, and the current ecosystem of wildlife disease reporting systems;

- Actively contribute to the final report describing the best strategy.

Consideration

Consider the results of the Wildlife Health Survey Report 2020
Consider the results of the in-country report 2021
Consider the results of the two surveys launched in 2023 by the Preparedness and Resilience Department

Expectation

Ad hoc Group members should:

- Sign the WOAH Undertaking on Confidentiality of information
- Complete the Declaration of Interest Form
- Read and study written material provided by the WOAH prior to the meeting
- Agree on the appointment of the chair and rapporteur of the meeting
- Contribute to discussions
- Contribute to drafting text for the recommendations
- Understand that the membership of the Group may be retained between *ad hoc* Group meetings to ensure continuity of the work

Deliverables

By the end of the meetings, the Group will have developed a report including high-level guidance and recommendations on NG-WHIS as well as advice on the best implementation route for the future of wildlife disease reporting and environmental surveillance to WOAH.

Reporting/timeline

A draft report for comments will be circulated no more than 8 days after the last online meeting. A review will be required to be finalized by the end of January 2024 on a date agreed with the Group.

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Participants

MEMBERS

Dr. Stuart Patterson

RVC, UK

Wild Animal Health expert, Senior Lecturer, disease processes and conservation; impact of population fragmentation on diseases dynamics

spatterson@RVC.AC.UK

Dr. Daria Di Sabatino IZSAM,

NRC for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis, Italy

Veterinary epidemiologist researcher, data analyst, standardization, SOPs; innovative risk assessment; harmonization of information systems.

d.disabatino@izs.it

Dr. Emilie Vallee

Massey University, New Zealand, Senior Lecturer. *Outbreak investigation, latent class analysis, disease surveillance and control of zoonotic diseases, CLiZOd (use of IA for risk analysis of zoonotic diseases linked to climate change)*

E.Vallee@massey.ac.nz

Pr. David Hayman

Massey University, New Zealand Disease ecologist, *Maintenance of infectious diseases within populations; emergence; impact of ecological degradation on*

pathogen emergence in humans and animals; multi-disciplinary approaches.

D.T.S.Hayman@massey.ac.nz

John/Jane Doe

IT Business Analyst

Florimond Manca

Fairness cooperative specialised in web projects with eco-responsible design.

Trained at Centrale engineer school, agilist, developer and program designer with an environmental approach.

https://fairness.coop/ florimond.manca@fairness.coop

James Maddison

Open Data Institute OID

Data ethicist, OID Open Innovation, experience in public and private sector. james.maddison@theodi.org

Dr. Danilo Leandro

National focal point for wildlife, Costa Rica

danilo.leandro.l@senasa.go.cr

Dr. Bijaya Kumar Shrestha

National focal point for wildlife, Nepal

bijaya.shrestha1@gmail.com

WOAH HEADQUARTER

Keith Hamilton

PRD

Claire Cayol

PRD

Paolo Tizzani

DID

Chehinez Ben Messaoud

WAHIAD

Audrey Thery/Marion Daché

IT

Larry Hammel*   UPEI
Canada

Aquatic veterinary epidemiologist, Professor Aquatic animal health, disease detection and surveillance; health management through identification of risk factors; disease prevention; biosecurity l.hammell_ext@woah.org