Report of the WOAH Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases

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Paris

World Organisation for Animal Health
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Science Department
scientific.dept@woah.org

Status Department
disease.status.dept@woah.org

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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A meeting of the WOAH Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (the Commission) was held from 12 to 16 February 2024 at the WOAH Headquarters in Paris, France.

1. Welcome

Dr Monique Eloit, WOAH Director General and Dr Montserrat Arroyo, WOAH Deputy Director General, International Standards and Science, met with the Aquatic Animals Commission, Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases and the Code Commission on 14 February 2024, to welcome all Commission members and thank them for their ongoing contributions to the work of WOAH. Dr Eloit thanked the Commission members for their hard work throughout this term and the tremendous amount of work achieved. She acknowledged that this was the last meeting of the current term for each of the Specialist Commissions and wished all well, whether standing for re-election or stepping down.

Dr Eloit provided updates on the selection process for election to one of the four Specialist Commissions and the review of the WOAH's *Basic Texts* that will be presented to the World Assembly at the 91st General Session in May 2024.

Dr Eloit highlighted there will be a global focus on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) throughout 2024, including a UN General Assembly high-level meeting in September 2024 to highlight the global public health threat of AMR, and that WOAH will continue to participate actively in these fora and discussions on AMR.

Dr Arroyo recognised the work of each of three Commissions present throughout this term, and provided an overview of key accomplishments, and commended them on their commitment to this work.

Dr Arroyo provided a brief update on a number of topics, including the WOAH Standards Online Navigation Tool project, the decision to put the Diagnostic Kit Register activities on stand-by, an overview of the General Session kiosk topics, the work to coordinate the WOAH standard-setting process, and the publication of Member comments to the draft standards.

Dr Arroyo thanked the Commission Presidents for agreeing to deliver pre-General Session webinars again this year and emphasised that they are an important contribution to the engagement of Members and partners in the standard-setting process. Dr Arroyo noted that the pre-General Session webinars will be held on 16 April, 17 April and 18 April from 12:00 – 14:00 (CEST) for the Biological Standards Commission, the Code Commission and the Aquatic Animals Commission, respectively. The webinars will have simultaneous interpretation into French and Spanish and will be recorded and uploaded onto the WOAH website.

The Commission members thanked Dr Eloit and Dr Arroyo for their appreciation and these updates, and for their leadership and support throughout the current term. The Commission Members also acknowledged the important work of the WOAH Secretariats in support of their work.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted by the Commission. The meeting was chaired by Dr Cristóbal Zepeda and the WOAH Secretariat acted as rapporteur. The agenda and list of participants are attached as Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

3. Terrestrial Animal Health Code

3.1. Member comments received for Commission consideration

3.1.1. Chapter 1.11. 'Application for official recognition by WOAH of free status for foot and mouth disease' and Chapter 8.8. 'Infection with FMD virus'

The Commission addressed selected comments that were forwarded by the Code Commission on the amended chapters which had been circulated in the Code Commission's September 2023 report.

General comments

The Commission considered a Member comment suggesting the development of a design of the annual reconfirmation of officially recognised animal health status which would minimise the administrative burden for all involved parties. The Commission reiterated that based on the provisions for retention on the list of countries or zones free from FMD officially recognised by WOAH, supportive information for reconfirmation of the officially recognised status should be provided annually on surveillance according to the freedom article of the disease-specific chapter (i.e., Articles 8.8.2. or 8.8.3. of Chapter 8.8.) and point 4 of Article 1.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*. In addition, the annual reconfirmation should include supportive information on any significant changes to legislation, infrastructure and diagnostic capability as well as other risk factors including trading partners. The Commission requested the WOAH Status Department secretariat to develop a modified design of the annual reconfirmation form to simplify and clarify the type of the documented evidence required

while still respecting the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* for maintenance of officially recognised animal health status by WOAH.

The Commission considered a suggestion by Members to propose amendments to Chapter 1.11. to simplify the surveillance data required for the annual reconfirmation of officially recognised animal health status in order not to overburden Members in case of imports of animals vaccinated against FMD. The Commission clarified that Chapter 1.11. refers to the application for initial recognition of FMD official status. The data required for the maintenance of officially recognised animal health status are described under Articles 8.8.2. and 8.8.3. The Commission highlighted that surveillance should consider the presence of vaccinated animals, which does not necessarily imply testing vaccinated animals (other than prior to import). The Commission reiterated that upon adoption of Chapter 8.8., guidelines for surveillance will be developed taking into account the number, distribution and species of vaccinated animals imported.

The Commission agreed with Members' comments that the adoption of the revised Chapter 1.11. should be contingent on the adoption of the revised Chapter 8.8.

Article 1.11.1. Country free from infection with foot and mouth disease virus where vaccination is not practised

The Commission agreed with the replacement of 'vaccinated animals' with 'vaccinated animal populations' under point 5. c) proposed by the Code Commission at its February 2024 meeting.

Article 8.8.11. Recommendations for importation of susceptible animals from countries, zones or compartments free from FMD where vaccination is practised.

With regard to the testing of unvaccinated animals (point 3 of draft Article 8.8.11.), the Commission noted the amendment circulated in the Code Commission's September 2023 report and emphasised that serological testing alone would not detect recently infected sub-clinically animals (i.e., sheep). Therefore, the Commission was of the opinion that the requirement for virological testing should be maintained.

The opinion of the Commission was forwarded to the Code Commission for consideration at its February 2024 meeting and were discussed at the meeting of the Bureaus of both Commissions.

3.2. Other considerations

3.2.1. Chapter 4.4. 'Zoning and Compartmentalisation' and plan to develop new chapter on implementation of zoning

The Commission was informed that the Code Commission noted differences of understanding around critical aspects of the implementation of zoning based on the comments received by Members on other disease-specific chapters in its September 2023 meeting. The Commission was further informed of a thematic study that was recently done by the WOAH Observatory on this topic providing valuable information on the current state of implementation of related WOAH Standards and challenges faced by Members. The Commission agreed to collaborate with the Code Commission in the development of a new chapter on the implementation of zoning to clarify critical concepts of Chapter 4.4. 'Zoning and compartmentalisation'.

Reference should be made to the relevant past meeting reports of the Commission highlighting recommendations and clarifications with regard to the establishment of the containment zones and protection zones. The Commission noted the need for further guidance on implementation and lifting of a protection zone within a country or zone having an officially recognised animal health status by WOAH. The Commission agreed with the proposed next step by the Secretariat to draft Terms of Reference to be presented in the September 2024 meeting.

3.2.2. Chapter 11.5. 'Infection with *Mycoplasma mycoides* subsp. *Mycoides SC* (Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia)'

See item 7.1.

3.2.3. Chapter 12.1. 'Infection with African horse sickness virus'

See Item 7.1.

3.2.4. Surra in camels

At its September 2023 meeting, the Scientific Commission had requested the Secretariat to seek the opinion of camel experts regarding the waiting period applicable to camels in the *Terrestrial Code* Article 8.Z.7. on 'Recommendations for importation of susceptible animals (except dogs and cats) from countries or zones infected with *T. evansi*', arising from a comment from one of the *ad hoc* Group members that camels could carry the parasite in the absence of an antibody response.

The Secretariat consulted CaMeNet, whose opinion was also forwarded to the *ad hoc* Group on Surra and Dourine for feedback. The Commission noted the expert opinion that there is currently insufficient knowledge regarding the pathogenesis and dynamics of the immune response in camels, and that it was not possible to predict how long time a camel could carry *T. evansi* in an extra-vascular focus without exhibiting any seropositivity. A relapse was also possible following stress, such as during transportation. The Commission also reviewed the proposal from the CaMeNeT experts to impose post-arrival measures at the importing country, including a quarantine period of one month and combination of tests.

The Commission thanked the experts for their opinion. However, considering the lack of scientific information on the dynamics of seroconversion in camels and the possible relapse in response to stress, and that the trade recommendations in disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* should be designed to prevent the pathogenic agent(s) from being introduced into an importing country, the Commission was of the view that it was not possible to mitigate the risks of introduction of *T. evansi* through camels to an acceptable level with the proposed measures.

Consequently, the Commission recommended to exclude camels from *Terrestrial Code* Article 8.Z.7. It noted that Members wishing to import camels from infected countries should conduct a risk analysis according to the principles in Chapter 2.1. 'Import risk analysis', and refer to Chapter 3.1.21. of the *Terrestrial Manual* for described diagnostic methods.

The opinion of the Commission was forwarded to the Code Commission.

4. *Ad hoc* and Working Groups

4.1. Meeting reports for endorsement

4.1.1. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of African Horse Sickness Status of Members: 28-29 September and 5 October 2023

The Commission reviewed and endorsed the report of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of applications from three Members for the recognition of their AHS-free status.

The Commission agreed with the conclusions of the *ad hoc* Group and recommended that the Assembly recognise Egypt as having an AHS-free status.

The Commission concurred with the conclusion of the *ad hoc* Group on one other application that it did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. The dossier was referred to the respective applicant Member. Suggestions on actions to be taken to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* were provided.

The Commission also considered the recommendation of the *ad hoc* Group regarding the application from Saudi Arabia and provisionally concluded that it fulfilled the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. However, the Commission recommended to the Director General to mandate a mission to the country to verify compliance with the provisions of the *Terrestrial Code,* before any final decision be taken. Pending the outcome of the mission, the tentative decision of the Commission would be confirmed, and the country would be proposed for official recognition at the 91st General Session in May 2024.

The endorsed report of the *ad hoc* Group is available on the WOAH website.

4.1.2. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Official Control Programmes for Dog-mediated Rabies: 4 & 6 October 2023

The Commission reviewed and endorsed the report of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of an application from a Member for the endorsement of its official control programme for dog-mediated rabies.

The Commission agreed with the *ad hoc* Group and concluded that the application did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. The dossier was referred to the applicant Member. Suggestions on actions to be taken to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* were provided.

The endorsed report of the *ad hoc* Group is available on the WOAH website.

4.1.3. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Peste des petits ruminants Status of Members: 17–19 October 2023

The Commission reviewed the report of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of applications from Members for the recognition of their PPR-free status and the endorsement of official control programme.

- *Evaluation of an application from a Member for official recognition of PPR-free status*

  The Commission agreed with the conclusion of the *ad hoc* Group and recommended that the Assembly recognise Azerbaijan as having a PPR-free status.

- *Evaluation of an application from a Member for the official recognition of a PPR-free zonal status*

The Commission agreed with the *ad hoc* Group and concluded that the application did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. The dossier was referred to the applicant Member. Suggestions on actions to be taken to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* were provided.

- *Evaluation of an application from a Member for the endorsement of its official control programme for PPR*

The Commission considered the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group on an application and concluded that it did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* for the endorsement of its official control programme for PPR. The dossier was referred to the applicant Member indicating the main aspects that should be improved in order to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* before resubmitting its dossier. The Commission recommended to the Director General to mandate a mission to the country to support the Member in identifying and bridging the gaps.

Furthermore, the Commission considered the detailed explanations of the *ad hoc* Group in response to a request from the Commission's February 2023 meeting regarding a study suggesting that suids were an unexpected possible source for PPR virus infection, and how PPRV-infected meat of small ruminants could play a role in the transmission of PPR virus. The Commission noted that, while experimental transmission from pigs to goats had been shown to be possible, there was insufficient scientific evidence at the time to suggest that pig commodities including meat could play a role in transmitting the PPR virus. Based on this clarification of the *ad hoc* Group, the Commission reviewed and agreed with the risk mitigation measures proposed by the *ad hoc* Group for importation of domestic small ruminants destined for slaughter from countries or zones infected with PPRV. The Commission was of the opinion that such alternative provisions would respond to the needs of some Members to safely import/trade small ruminants for direct slaughter (see item 5.4.1. of this report).

The endorsed report of the *ad hoc* Group is available on the WOAH website.

4.1.4. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Foot and Mouth Disease Status of Members: 23-26 October 2023

The Commission reviewed and endorsed the report of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of applications from Members for the recognition of their FMD-free status.

- *Evaluation of an application from a Member for the official recognition of an FMD-free status where vaccination is not practised*

The Commission agreed with the conclusion of the *ad hoc* Group and recommended that the Assembly recognise Liechtenstein as free from FMD where vaccination is not practised.

- *Evaluation of an application from a Member for the official recognition of an FMD-free status where vaccination is practised*

The Commission agreed with the conclusion of the *ad hoc* Group that the application from a Member did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. The dossier was referred to the applicant Member along with the rationale for the Commission's position. Suggestions on actions to be taken to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* were provided.

- *Evaluation of applications from a Member for the official recognition of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised*

The Commission agreed with the *ad hoc* Group and concluded that the applications from one Member for two FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. The dossiers were referred to the applicant Member. Suggestions on actions to be taken to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* were provided.

The endorsed report of the *ad hoc* Group is available on the WOAH website.

4.1.5. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia Status of Members: 5- 7 December 2023

The Commission reviewed and endorsed, with minor comments, the report of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of the applications from two Members for the recognition of their CBPP-free status.

The Commission agreed with the conclusions of the *ad hoc* Group and recommended that the Assembly recognise the Czech Republic and Norway as having a CBPP-free status. The Commission encouraged the Czech Republic and Norway to take into consideration the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group and the Commission, and to submit documented evidence of the implementation of the recommendations in the annual reconfirmation.

The endorsed report of the *ad hoc* Group (including minutes of the Commission's discussions) is available on the WOAH website.

4.2. Meeting reports for information

4.2.1. Working Group on Wildlife

The Commission was provided an update of the December 2023 meeting of the Working Group on Wildlife (WGW) by the WGW Secretariat.

The Commission noted that a representative from the Working Group on Wildlife (WGW) had participated as an observer at the WOAH *ad hoc* Group on Emerging Diseases that met from December 5-7, 2023, providing wildlife inputs to the issue and exploring synergies (see Item 4.2.2.).

The Commission was informed that the WGW had developed a set of considerations for emergency vaccination of wild birds against high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in specific situations, which was available online. The WGW was also developing a statement on protecting wildlife in the face of the current HPAI epidemic and would soon release a practical guide on the management of HPAI in marine mammals.

The Commission was also informed of the different activities of the WGW relevant for the Scientific Commission, including the upcoming publication of guidelines for addressing disease risks in wildlife trade. The Commission expressed its interest in the guidelines and requested to be updated on its publication.

4.2.2. *Ad hoc* Group on Emerging Diseases (including reemerging diseases) and Drivers of Disease Emergence in Animals

The Commission was briefed on the establishment and meeting of the *ad hoc* Group on Emerging Diseases (including reemerging diseases) and Drivers of Disease Emergence in Animals that met in December 2023.

The Commission noted that there might be similarities in terms of reference and activities with the WGW and recommended that the *ad hoc* Group could coordinate with the WGW to avoid duplication of work. The Commission also recommended the *ad hoc* Group to look into climate change and changes to vector population dynamics as drivers of disease emergence.

The Commission expressed interest in the deliverables of the *ad hoc* Group, especially the twice-yearly review report on emerging and re-emerging diseases and contributions to the WOAH Incident Management System. In particular, the Commission would like to find out more about the latter and requested for an update at its next meeting.

The Commission also appreciated the *ad hoc* Group's intention to provide its expertise on case definition development for specific emerging diseases. Noting that the recommendations and work of the *ad hoc* Group would have an impact on the ongoing work of the Commission and the Code Commission on emerging

diseases, the Commission requested that the work of the *ad hoc* Group is well coordinated with the two Commissions.

4.2.3. *Ad hoc* Group on Alternative Strategies for the Control and Elimination of Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex Infection (MTBC) in Livestock

At its September 2023 meeting, the Commission had been informed of the WOAH consultancy project to develop guidelines for alternative control strategies to assist endemic Members in reducing the burden of TB in livestock through strategies other than test and slaughter. These guidelines would be generated through the consultancy eliciting science-based opinions from experts and community members through literature reviews, surveys, and focus group discussions. The recommendations would be reviewed by an *ad hoc* Group in January 2024, for which the Commission had nominated an observer.

At this meeting, the Commission was updated on the discussion of the *ad hoc* Group which reviewed the first draft of the guidelines. The *ad hoc* Group discussed the strategies for disease management and control, as well as important components such as an understanding of the epidemiological situation, resourcing and infrastructure. The *ad hoc* Group discussed that it was important to provide guidance on monitoring reduction of within-herd prevalence which could assist Members in assessing the burden of the MTBC infection in the herd and monitor the progression of control strategies. However, the *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 8.12. does not provide any specific surveillance recommendations and therefore, it invited WOAH to consider providing more guidance to Members on surveillance. The Group also suggested to update the Roadmap for zoonotic tuberculosis to incorporate new and updated science, including diagnostic techniques.

The Commission appreciated the work initiated by WOAH and agreed to review and provide its comments to the guidelines. Regarding the Group's suggestion to provide disease-specific surveillance guidance to Members, the Commission agreed that this was important and considered that such guidance would be unique to different epidemiological scenarios, and the level of information required may be too detailed for the *Terrestrial Code*. Noting that the guidelines were still being finalised, the Commission would provide its feedback on after reviewing the guidelines.

4.3. Planned *ad hoc* Groups and confirmation of proposed agendas

- *Ad hoc* Group on Biosecurity: 26-28 March 2024
- *Ad hoc* Group on Scrapie: April 2024
- *Ad hoc* Group on Equine Encephalitides: June 2024
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of BSE Risk Status: 1-3 October 2024 (to be confirmed)
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of AHS Status: 8-10 October 2024 (to be confirmed)
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of the Endorsement of Dog-mediated Rabies Control Programmes: 8-10 October 2024 (to be confirmed)
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of CBPP Status: 29-31 October 2024 (to be confirmed)
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of FMD Status: 5-7 November 2024 (to be confirmed)
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of PPR Status: 12-14 November 2024 (to be confirmed)
- *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of CSF Status: 19-21 November 2024 (to be confirmed)

4.3.1. Chapter 14.8. ‘Scrapie’

At its September 2023 meeting, the Commission was informed by the Secretariat that scrapie had been raised to priority ‘2’ of the work programme of the Code Commission, based on requests by Members to update the recommendations for live animal testing and testing for genetic resistance. The Commission was invited to consider including an update of the *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 14.8. Scrapie in its work programme. The Commission had also requested to seek the opinion of the Biological Standards Commission on testing of live animals and testing for genetic resistance.

At this meeting, the Commission agreed on the need to convene an *ad hoc* Group to comprehensively review Chapter 14.8. The Commission, together with the Code Commission at the Bureau meeting, reviewed and agreed with the Terms of Reference of the *ad hoc* Group. The Scientific Commission also requested that the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group on testing for genetic resistance be shared with the Biological Standards Commission for its consideration for incorporation in the *Terrestrial Manual*, as genetic resistance is regarded as a valid tool in the prevention and control of scrapie.

4.3.2. Revision of Terrestrial Code chapters on equine encephalitides

In September 2023, in coordination with the Code Commission, the Commission agreed with the experts' proposal to continue listing Japanese encephalitis, Equine encephalitis (Eastern and Western), and Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis.

At this meeting, the Commission agreed with the draft terms of reference of the *ad hoc* Group to be tasked with the revision of the disease-specific chapters, and provided advice on the potential experts of the *ad hoc* Group. The Commission noted that the first meeting of this *ad hoc* Group is tentatively planned for June 2024, and the report of the meeting and the draft revised chapters will be presented to the Commission at its September 2024 meeting.

5. Official animal health status

5.1. Annual reconfirmations for maintenance of status

The Commission was updated on the development of the Disease Status Management Platform (DSMP) initiated in 2023 in line with the strategic objectives of the WOAH 7th Strategic Plan for optimising data governance through digital transformation. The DSMP is aimed to serve as a secure, centralised system for archiving, tracking, searching, and submitting all necessary documents related to the official recognition and maintenance of animal health status, and the self-declaration of disease freedom. At the same time, it aims to facilitate information exchange between WOAH and Members, ensure Members have an easy and secure access to their documents and reports, and also are able to consult all relevant guidance related to these procedures.

The Commission was informed that the first component of DSMP on the annual reconfirmation procedure was launched for the 2023 campaign. The DSMP consists of two more components, one related to the submission of applications for official recognition of animal health status and endorsement of official control programmes and the other on the publication of self-declarations, which are under development.

5.1.1. Comprehensive review of annual reconfirmations for pre-selected status and all WOAH-endorsed official control programmes

The Commission comprehensively reviewed the annual reconfirmations of the Members that were preselected at its last meeting in September 2023. A summary of the Commission's discussions and recommendations on this matter can be found in Annex 3.

The Commission noted with appreciation that, despite this 2023 campaign being the first time to use the newly launched DSMP, a high proportion of Members (80%) successfully submitted their annual reconfirmations by the deadline. Nevertheless, taking the example of its decision to suspend for a first time a Member's official status due to failure of submission of the annual reconfirmation and documented evidence by the end of January of the following year, the Commission reemphasised the importance of timely submission of annual reconfirmations. According to the relevant Resolutions adopted by the World Assembly of Delegates and the Standard Operating Procedure on reconfirmation of animal health status and of endorsement of official control programmes of Members, Members should reconfirm during the month of November each year providing the information as prescribed in the *Terrestrial Code*.

5.1.2. Report of the annual reconfirmation assessments by the Status Department

The Commission reviewed and endorsed the report prepared by the Status Department on the remaining annual reconfirmations (those that were not selected for comprehensive review). The Commission also reviewed the annual reconfirmations for which the Status Department required the Commission's scientific advice.

The report of all annual reconfirmations, including the recommendations and conclusion of the Commission, is attached as Annex 3.

5.1.3. Form for the annual reconfirmation of the BSE risk status of Members

Considering the changes in the BSE surveillance requirements of the newly adopted BSE standards in May 2023, which no longer involve minimal target surveillance points, the Commission agreed with the WOAH Status Department Secretariat to replace the request to provide a specific reporting period at the top of the annual reconfirmation form for BSE by the request to provide data for 'the past 12 months'. The updated form is available in Annex 4.

5.2. Specific update on official animal health status

5.2.1. Update on situation of countries/zone with suspended or reinstated animal health status

The Commission took note that the 'FMD free zone where vaccination is not practised' status of the zone including central and eastern parts of Karaganda region and southern parts of Akmola and Pavlodar regions of Kazakhstan had been suspended for more than two years and, according to the requirements of the Terrestrial Code, future recovery of FMD free status would have to follow the provisions of Articles 8.8.2 or 8.8.3.

5.3. State of play and prioritisation of expert mission to Members requested by the Commission

5.3.1. State of play and prioritisation

The Commission reviewed and prioritised the missions for official recognition and for maintenance of animal health status and the endorsement of official control programmes to be undertaken, considering the priority issues identified by the Commission when reviewing the applications for official recognition as well as the annual reconfirmations submitted in November 2023. The prioritised list of missions will be confirmed following consultation with the Director General.

5.4. Standards and procedures related to official status recognition

5.4.1. Official status recognition & maintenance: Non-compliance vs Equivalence

The Commission continued its discussions from previous meetings on the issue of certain Members with an official animal health status importing commodities from countries or zones not officially recognised as free by WOAH for the respective disease without fully complying with the relevant provisions of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The Commission took note that the rationale provided by Members in some cases was that legislation/regulation of regional economic or political unions was followed especially to facilitate movements of commodities between countries of the same region considered disease-free based on a risk assessment by the importing country or on the reporting of the exporting country to WAHIS (e.g., disease never reported or not recently reported).

The Commission reiterated that, according to the definition of 'infected country or zone' under the chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* for the diseases for which WOAH grants an official status, a country or zone shall be considered as infected when the requirements for acceptance as a disease-free country or zone are not fulfilled. The Commission acknowledged that countries not officially recognised by WOAH as free from one of these diseases of concern could not be considered as infected by default. Nevertheless, the Commission emphasised that, in case alternative measures to the ones stipulated in the relevant articles for imports from infected countries are applied to imports from such countries, Members should provide documented evidence that Chapter 5.3. 'WOAH procedures relevant to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization' has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of the disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* (Figure 1).

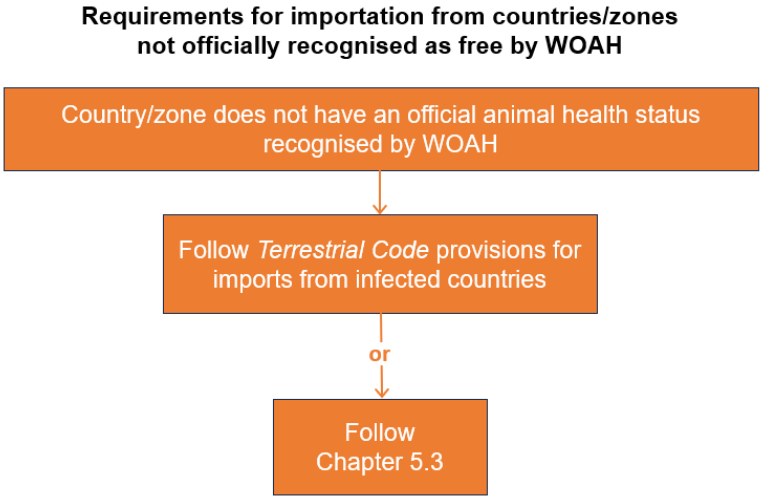

Figure 1: Requirements for importation from countries/zones not officially recognised as free by WOAH.

The Commission reiterated that Members having an official animal health status recognised by WOAH have the responsibility to comply with WOAH standards under the disease-specific chapters or demonstrate that alternative measures in place provide a level of protection that is equivalent, in accordance with Chapter 5.3. The Commission recommended that Members having an officially recognised status that apply alternative measure to those described in the disease-specific chapters should, within a period of five years, provide WOAH with the relevant documentation demonstrating that their measures meet the criteria of equivalence in Chapter 5.3.

The Commission had discussed in previous meetings that some of the non-compliances observed could be resolved by inclusion of additional articles in the disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*. Taking the example of FMD and CSF for which the provisions already exist, having recommendations for importation of domestic small ruminants destined for slaughter from countries or zones infected with PPRV under Chapter 14.7. could respond to the needs of some Members in providing alternative provisions to safely import/trade small ruminants while saving the cost of testing every individual animal according to Article 14.7.10. of the *Terrestrial Code* (see item 4.1.3. of this report). The Commission agreed to consult the Code Commission on this matter for inclusion in its future work programme.

6. Global control and eradication strategies

6.1. Rabies. Global Strategic Plan to End Human Deaths from Dog-Mediated Rabies: Zero by 30

The Commission was informed that the United Against Rabies (UAR) Forum now encompasses 70 organisations from a diverse range of sectors, with representation from more than 30 countries, all supporting the implementation of activities in 'Zero by 30: the Global Strategic Plan to end human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030' (Zero by 30). During 2023, key outputs of this network included 'Oral vaccination of dogs against rabies: Recommendations for field application and integration into dog rabies control programmes', a 'Public Information Toolkit for Rabies Prevention' and the 'Dog vaccination – barriers and solutions' guidance outlining solutions to help stakeholders overcome key barriers to dog vaccination.

The Commission was updated about the UAR continued advocacy and communication efforts, with six podcast episodes of 'Rabies Today' produced, regular United Against Rabies webinars (Rabies surveillance: what gets measured gets done; Oral Rabies Vaccination; Voices for Change: The power of communication for rabies control; Eliminating dog-mediated rabies: addressing barriers to scaling up dog vaccination campaigns), quarterly newsletters disseminated outlining key events and outputs, and an 'Experts Call to Action on Rabies' which contributed to the unpausing of Gavi's commitment to include post-exposure prophylaxis in their investment strategy.

The Commission was Informed about the 2023 United Against Rabies Forum Stakeholder meeting was held 6-8 November 2023 as a hybrid event, with in-person participation taking place at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in Rome, Italy. This hybrid format allowed wider and more inclusive participation of United Against Rabies Forum members and ensured that all members had an opportunity to review the activities and outputs of 2023 and propose priority activities for 2024. The 2023 United Against Rabies Forum Review outlines the key outputs of 2023, and priority areas for the network to focus on in 2024.

The Commission commended the progress made by the UAR forum so far and acknowledged the support provided to Members for dog mediated rabies control through the forum.

6.2. Avian Influenza. Global Control Strategy. Animal Health Forum. OFFLU

The Commission was briefed on OFFLU's (Joint WOAH-FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza) and WOAH activities on avian influenza. During the reporting period, the avian influenza epidemic continued with high numbers of detections reported globally in poultry and non-poultry including wild birds and the first incursion of the HPAI H5 virus in the Sub-Antarctic region was detected in October 2023 in South Georgia. OFFLU experts pointed out that the negative impact of HPAI H5 on Antarctic wildlife could be immense and can result in high mortality.

The Commission was also informed that in December 2023, WOAH published a policy brief on the use of avian influenza vaccination: *' Avian influenza vaccination: Why it should not be a barrier to safe trade'*. The purpose of this document is to remind national authorities that vaccination, when used in accordance with WOAH international standards, is compatible with safe trade in domestic birds and their products.

For the September 2023 WHO vaccine composition meeting, data for 1368 HPAI H5 and 117 H9 avian influenza genetic sequences were contributed by animal health laboratories in countries representing Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Additionally, data for 191 swine H1 sequences and 49 swine H3 sequences were analysed and submitted. Antigenic characterisations were undertaken by OFFLU contributing laboratories and subsequently there were updates to the WHO recommendations for the development of new candidate vaccine viruses for pandemic preparedness purposes.

The Commission was informed of OFFLU embarking on a project called avian influenza matching (AIM) to provide real time antigenic characteristics of circulating avian influenza viruses in different regions to support poultry vaccination. A preliminary pilot project has been taking place involving selected Reference Centres and OFFLU experts. In October 2023, the report was released presenting the results of this project to support stakeholders and countries in their decisions regarding vaccine selection and vaccine match.

The Commission was informed about the revision plan of the *Terrestrial Manual* chapter on avian influenza by the Biological Standards Commission with the support of WOAH Reference Laboratories avian influenza experts for an in-depth revision with the aim for adoption in May 2025.

The Commission was informed of the progress in implementing the framework on avian influenza (June 2023 – May 2025) for the implementation of Resolution No. 28 how the progress is monitored through a dedicated monitoring and evaluation tool that collects, tracks, and evaluates the execution of activities on a quarterly basis.

Lastly, the Commission was informed about the development of the new GF-TADs HPAI strategy for 2024–2033 that is ongoing and the draft strategy is set to undergo consultations and commenting process with different stakeholders including Members in March 2024 aiming for a launch in May 2024. The Commission was also invited to be part of this process and provide its feedback.

The Commission commended the publication of policy brief on vaccination and noted that it was indeed a useful document for Members. The Commission appreciated the progress so far in the implementation of Resolution No 28 and also agreed to provide feedback on the draft HPAI strategy.

7. Liaison with other Commissions and Departments

7.1. Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission)

The Bureaus (i.e. the President and two Vice-Presidents) of the Code Commission and the Commission held a meeting chaired by Dr Montserrat Arroyo. The purpose of the meeting was to provide joint updates on relevant standing items, to agree on how to address any points that may impact the potential adoption of important standards and to agree on the plans to undertake work of common interest.

At the meeting, the Bureaus were updated on ongoing works based on the SOP for listing decisions for pathogenic agents and the SOP for determining whether a disease should be considered as emerging. The Bureaus also discussed subjecting Nairobi sheep disease virus to an assessment against the criteria for listing (see Item 8.2.) and agreed on the next tranche of case definitions to be developed for terrestrial animal listed diseases to support notification (see Item 8.3.1.).

The Bureaus discussed the following *Terrestrial Code* chapter to be proposed for adoption in May 2024:

- Chapter 8.8. ‘Infection with foot and mouth disease virus’ (see Item 3.1.1.);

Acknowledging the impact of the adoption of revised Chapters 11.5. and 12.1. on the procedure on annual reconfirmation for maintenance of officially recognised AHS and CBPP status of Members and the related administrative work for both Members and WOAH, the Bureaus agreed that it would be beneficial that the revised Chapter 11.5. ‘Infection with Mycoplasma mycoides subsp. Mycoides SC (Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia)’ and revised Chapter 12.1. ‘Infection with African horse sickness virus’ are not presented for adoption at the upcoming General Session. and rather re-examined in September after review of the potential the consequences on the procedure by the Secretariat.

The Bureaus also discussed plans for the following works which require the Commissions’ coordination:

- Chapter 4.4. ‘Zoning and compartmentalisation’ and development of a new Chapter 4.Y. ‘Implementation of Zoning’ (see Item 3.2.1.);
- Chapter 14.8. ‘Scrapie’ (see Item 4.3.1.) ;
- Revision of *Terrestrial Code* chapters on equine encephalitides (see Item 4.3.2.);
- Framework for *Terrestrial Code* standards (see Item 7.1.1.);
- Animal hosts to be targeted by WOAH Standards for a listed disease (see Item 7.1.2.) and associated implications on notification obligations.

7.1.1. Framework for *Terrestrial Code* standards

The Commission was briefed that in February 2021, the Code Commission had agreed to develop a framework for Terrestrial Code Standards that would serve as a useful guide to ensure standardisation of *Terrestrial Code*

content. Since then, the Code Commission has worked closely with the Secretariat, in consultation with the Commission and the Biological Standards Commission where relevant to develop a document that provides a detailed description of the structure and content of a disease-specific chapter, i.e. Volume II of the *Terrestrial Code*, including key references to other parts of the *Terrestrial Code* and other WOAH Standards, and conventions regarding the use of terms and structure. The Commission was presented with the first edition of the framework and noted that it would be a living document, used as reference for those undertaking work on the development of new or revised chapters.

The Commission commended the effort that has gone into developing the framework, agreeing that it would be a useful reference for experts undertaking work on disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* and to promote consistency across the chapters. The Commission also recommended that the framework be shared with the *ad hoc* Groups on Scrapie and Equine Encephalitides for their use and to solicit feedback.

7.1.2. Animal hosts to be targeted by WOAH standards for a listed disease

The Commission was informed of the discussion of the Code Commission at its September 2023 meeting to develop a clear and consistent approach to defining how animal hosts for a listed disease, infection or infestation would be included in the *Terrestrial Code* and the *Terrestrial Manual*, and considered a proposal from the Secretariat of both Commissions to approach this work through a joint taskforce, given that this dovetailed with the Commission's work on case definitions.

From its experience in reviewing case definitions proposed by subject-matter experts and *ad hoc* Groups, the Commission had noted the varying considerations that were raised when determining animal hosts to be included in the case definition, notwithstanding epidemiological significance. The Commission supported this work to establish consistency across listed diseases, infections and infestations, and noted that any guidance or criteria used should not be rigid, but serve to provide experts with a set of considerations that they should take into account whilst assessing the relevance of animal hosts.

The Commission was also briefed that the Code Commission had received a Member's request for clarity on notification obligations in Chapter 1.1. when it comes to unusual host species, and noted that this would also be addressed as part of the work on animal hosts.

7.2. Biological Standards Commission

The Commission and the Biological Standards Commission both have responsibilities in the ongoing work of developing case definitions, and in the assessment of pathogenic agents against the criteria for listing in Chapter 1.2. of the *Terrestrial Code*. At this meeting, the Commission considered the Biological Standards Commission's opinion on two proposed case definitions (see Items 8.3.2.1. and 8.3.2.3.).

8. Disease control: specific issues

8.1. Emerging diseases

The Commission was informed that currently there were no ongoing assessments and requests received for whether a disease should be considered emerging as per the Standard Operating Procedure.

8.2. Evaluation of pathogenic agent against listing criteria of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 1.2.

The Commission noted that there were no ongoing assessments of pathogenic agents against the listing criteria of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 1.2. In its discussion on Nairobi sheep disease (NSD), the Commission recommended to assess NSD against the criteria of Chapter 1.2. 'Criteria for the inclusion of diseases, infections and infestations in the WOAH list' of the T*errestrial Code* (see Item 8.3.2.2.).

The Commission was also informed that there had been a Member request to reinstate low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) as a listed disease and the Code Commission's assessment to not embark on this work, given that the listing of avian influenza viruses had recently been reviewed, along with corresponding standards in Chapter 10.4. 'Infection with avian influenza viruses'. The Commission concurred with the recommendation and highlighted the importance of continuing to monitor circulating strains and implementation of the recently revised standards (see Item 7.2.).

8.3. Development of case definitions

8.3.1. Case definition process and progress update

The Commission noted the progress made with development of case definitions to date, and appreciated the opportunity to review this with the Code Commission at the meeting of the Bureaus of the two Commissions.

Furthermore, the Commission reviewed three case definitions (infection with avian metapneumovirus, infection with Nairobi sheep disease virus and infection with *Francisella tularensis*). The Commission noted the efforts made to incorporate feedback received in the development of new case definitions and the usefulness of the joint review of case definitions with the Biological Standards Commission.

The Commission was briefed by the Secretariat on the remaining listed diseases, infections and infestations for which a case definition was missing or incomplete in the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission, in agreement with the Code Commission at the Bureaus meeting, supported the Secretariat proposal to focus on the following diseases in the upcoming year: paratuberculosis and caprine arthritis-encephalitis (CAE) and maedi-visna (MV). The Commission noted that case definition development for scrapie and equine encephalitides (Eastern, Western, Venezuelan), would be undertaken through the WOAH *ad hoc* Groups which would be convened to work on *Terrestrial Code* Chapters for equine encephalitides (see item 8.1.) and Chapter 14.8. Scrapie (see item 5.2.4.).

In addition, the Commission recommended prioritising case definition development on sheep and goat pox, due to its incursion into new areas, apparent under-reporting, and purported difficulties in diagnosis owing to recombination between lumpy skin disease virus and sheep and goat pox virus. Furthermore, the Commission noted that since *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 14.9. on sheep and goat pox has not been updated since its adoption in 1986, it recommended to review Chapter 14.9. thoroughly to include up-to-date recommendations on disease prevention, control and surveillance which would benefit Members in controlling the disease. The Commission recommended to develop the case definition for sheep and goat pox as part of the revision of the Chapter.

In reference to the proposal to develop case definitions for CAE and MV, the Commission noted that since both diseases are similar and grouped together as the small ruminant lentiviruses in the *Terrestrial Manual* Chapter 2.7.23., it would be possible to invite the same experts to work on the case definitions. Resource-permitting, the Commission recommended to also develop a case definition for contagious caprine pleuropneumonia in the next tranche as it is a significant disease in endemic areas.

8.3.2. Case definitions

8.3.2.1. Infection with Avian metapneumovirus (Turkey rhinotracheitis)

At its September 2023 meeting, the Commission had received a point of clarification from the Code Commission regarding the animal hosts to be included in the case definition for infection with avian metapneumovirus (turkey rhinotracheitis). Whilst reviewing the comment from the Code Commission, the Commission also noted that information on detection of antigen in respiratory tissues, which was recommended as a diagnostic criterion by experts, was not described in *Terrestrial Manual* Chapter 3.3.15. 'Turkey rhinotracheitis (avian metapneumovirus infections)'. The Commission therefore requested the Secretariat to seek additional clarification from experts.

At this meeting, the Commission reviewed the clarification provided by the experts. The Commission was also informed that Biological Standards Commission will propose an amendment to *Terrestrial Manual* Chapter 3.3.15. to remove antigen detection in respiratory tissues from Table 1, after considering expert comments that this was an outdated method and that there is no standardised protocol. Correspondingly, the Commission amended the draft case definition to delete 'antigen detection' as one of the diagnostic criteria.

Regarding the scope of animal hosts, the Commission confirmed that the most epidemiologically relevant species are 'poultry', as currently defined in the Glossary of the *Terrestrial Code* and that the animal hosts for notification should not be expanded to 'aves'. It considered that the other subpopulations outside of 'poultry', including wild birds, do not play a significant role in the epidemiology of the disease. Furthermore, the Commission noted that this is aligned with the approach that has been applied to the case definitions for recently adopted avian disease chapters in the *Terrestrial Code* (e.g. Chapter 10.4. 'Infection with avian influenza viruses' and Chapter 10.9. 'Infection with Newcastle virus').

The opinion of the Commission was forwarded to the Code Commission.

8.3.2.2. Infection with Nairobi sheep disease virus (Nairobi sheep disease)

At its September 2023 meeting, the Commission considered the information provided by the Secretariat on the absence of reporting of Nairobi sheep disease (NSDV) by Members and apparent limited impacts to animal health, and was requested to provide guidance on next steps for developing a case definition. The Commission had requested the Secretariat to consult experts from the field to

acquire more information on the occurrence and economic importance of NSDV. Based on the new information, the Commission would make the decision on whether to proceed with the development of a case definition or its assessment against the listing criteria.

At this meeting, the Secretariat presented the Commission with the opinion from two experts who operate in areas where NSDV had been detected in ticks. The actual incidence of NSDV in animals is unknown given the lack of apparent outbreaks, and NSD is not a priority disease in their countries. One expert suggested that the absence of reported cases could be due to the circulating strains being of a weak virulence. Nonetheless, given that transmission occurs via ticks, caution should be exercised with environmental factors favouring expansion of vector range to reach naïve populations.

The Commission considered the experts' opinions and noted that since infection with NSDV had not been reported by Members, there have been no significant outbreaks in the last ten years and there was an apparent lack of pathogenicity of the virus even if it was known to be circulating in ticks. The Commission recommended subjecting NSDV to an evaluation against the listing criteria of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 1.2. (Step 1.1.b of the standards operating procedure for listing decision for pathogenic agents of the terrestrial animals).

8.3.2.3. Infection with *Francisella tularensis* (Tularemia)

The Commission reviewed the draft case definition for infection with *Francisella tularensis* (tularemia) prepared by the experts, along with the accompanying technical report and the Biological Standards Commission's opinion on the case definition. This report summarises their combined position.

In terms of the pathogenic agent, both Commissions agreed with the experts' opinion that for the purposes of notification, only two subspecies, *Francisella tularensis subsp. tularensis* (Type A) and *Francisella tularensis subsp. holarctica* (Type B) are relevant.

The Commission also agreed with the experts' view that all animals under the Orders *Lagomorpha* and *Rodentia* are epidemiologically relevant and important to be considered as the animal host species for notification for tularemia. The Commissions noted that animals in the aforementioned orders are natural hosts for *Francisella tularensis* and despite the reports of tularemia occurring in other animal species such as dogs and sheep, these are considered to be incidental or dead end hosts. The Commissions also considered that the risk of transmission via mechanical carriage from these other animal species is low and therefore agreed with the experts to exclude these from the case definition. The Commissions also agreed that as tularemia is primarily a disease of wild lagomorphs and rodentia, wild animals of these orders should also be included in the case definition.

Both Commissions noted that the experts had recommended three options (isolation, nucleic acid and antigen detection, and antibody detection, excluding seroconversion) as part of the diagnostic criteria to confirm a case of infection with *Francisella tularensis.* The Biological Standards Commission agreed with the expert's opinion that detection of nucleic acid specific to *Francisella tularensis* without any evidence on clinical and epidemiological criteria is sufficient, but in case of antigen detection, it would be insufficient and recommended to combine with supporting clinical and epidemiological evidence as per usual case definition construct. The Commission however, considered that an epidemiological link is essential even in the case of detection of nucleic acid to rule out false positives. Furthermore, adding the requirement for clinical or epidemiological link would be consistent with the case definition approach used for other diseases, given that it is unlikely for Veterinary Services to rely on a diagnostic test result alone (with the exception for isolation) to classify a positive detection as a case. Therefore, the Commission recommended that both nucleic acid and antigen detection should be complemented with clinical signs and/or epidemiological links to a confirmed case, and this could also be a human case.

Regarding the detection of antibodies, both the Biological Standards Commission and the Commission did not agree with the experts' opinion that the detection of antibodies alone is sufficient to define an animal host as a case, as it was important to rule out the possibility of false positives since cross-reactions may occur. In view of this, both Commissions recommended to reinstate the option for seroconversion. Instead of having 'seroconversion' as a standalone option, the Commission recommended to include this under the option for antibodies, noting that 'seroconversion' is defined in the *Terrestrial Manual* as a four-fold or more rise in antibody titres or a change from seronegative to seropositive condition. As an additional observation, both the Commissions proposed to not refer to antibodies 'specific to (pathogenic agent)' if the antibodies mounted are not specific. The experts' report is provided as Annex 5.

The opinion of the Commission was forwarded to the Code Commission.

9. For Commission information

9.1. Updates on standing items

9.1.1. WOAH Standards Online Navigation Tool Project

The Commission was updated on the WOAH Standards Online navigation tool project, which is an project aimed at providing users with streamlined access and navigation of WOAH Standards.

The project will deliver three new user interfaces, on the WOAH Website:

- Navigation and search tool; this interface will provide a guided navigation experience that will allow users to navigate through the WOAH Codes and Manuals.
- Recommendations for safe international trade, by commodity; this interface will enable users to easily visualise recommendations for safe international trade by commodity through a comprehensive filtering system.
- Management of Standards; this interface will enable WOAH staff to efficiently manage and update WOAH International Standards, following adoption of new or revised text at the WOAH General Assembly.

The tool will be demonstrated at a kiosk at the 91st General Session in May 2024 and is projected to go 'live' in July 2024.

This project represents a significant milestone in WOAH's commitment to enhance access and utilisation of WOAH standards and contributes to the objectives of the 7th Strategic Plan to implement digital transformation, respond to Members' needs and improve WOAHs efficiency and agility.

The Commission commended the efforts on developing the tool which would be useful for Members and Commission members alike. The Commission recommended to connect the diseases displayed as a result of a search of the Recommendations for Safe International Trade tool to the corresponding diagnostic tests from the *Terrestrial Manual*. In addition, the Commission enquired whether a similar search function could be developed for *Terrestrial Manual.* The Commission was informed that the different interfaces mentioned above rely on the digitisation of the four sets of WOAH Standards but as yet, there are still some limitations in the current content. Nevertheless, this, together with other useful connecting links across the standards could be explored in a potential sequel of this project. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the work and looked forward to receiving further updates.

9.1.2. WAHIAD and WAHIS platform updates

The Commission was updated on the state of play and timeline of the development and evolutions of the platform in 2023 which included the optimisation of the early warning and six-monthly report modules, and the development of the annual report module. The Commission was informed that sessions had been organised in 2023 with selected members of the Commissions to demonstrate WAHIS functionalities and to gather feedback on their needs. Similar sessions will follow in 2024 and the Commission was encouraged to take part in them.

The Commission was briefed on the relevant updates of the WAHIS Reference Tables completed in December 2023. The objective of this work was to align with the changes adopted in the *Terrestrial* and *Aquatic Animal Health Code, Manual of Diagnostic Tests Aquatic Animals*, and *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* at the 2023 General Session. The Commission commended this work and agreed that good communication between the Secretariat and World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department (WAHIAD) regarding the work that might result in changes to the *Codes* and *Manuals* which will need to be reflected in WAHIS behaviour or functionality. This would enable WAHIAD to advise of any limitations or constraints that might exist from a platform reporting perspective.

Finally, the Commission was informed that WAHIAD will collaborate with Standards Department to actively participate in the standard-setting process by providing inputs to the relevant Commissions. This collaborative work will start with the *Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission,* but the aim is to progressively also extend it to the other Commissions.

The Commission appreciated the work done on WAHIS so far and further suggested to conduct frequent workshops for the delegates to improve their understanding of this platform.

9.1.3. Updates from WOAH Observatory

The Commission was updated on the activities of the WOAH Observatory, which aimed at monitoring the implementation of WOAH Standards by Members. The recently published thematic study on the use, challenge and benefit of zoning (report and factsheet) was presented. The following main points were highlighted:

- Zoning is mainly used to control diseases and less for trade purposes and import risk analysis
- The use of zoning has a positive impact on disease control
- A significant proportion of Members have not yet integrated WOAH standards on zoning in their regulatory framework or practices.
- Acceptance of free zones by trading partners is still a challenge and further analysis is being conducted to try to identify the factors influencing this acceptance.

The Commission provided positive feedback on the importance of the work conducted by the Observatory and discussed the case of a country infected by highly pathogenic avian influenza that not only maintained but increased the international trade of poultry products as a result of zoning.

Specifically, the Commission highlighted one of the challenges identified in the zoning report on the enforcement of biosecurity requirements, concurring that buy-in and commitment from farmers and other stakeholders were an important component to ensuring that the requirements of the Veterinary Services are well understood and applied. Additionally, the Commission suggested the importance of considering social sciences to provide a comprehensive understanding of this issue.

The Commission queried the level of understanding of Members regarding the concept of zoning as some Members may not be aware of standards in Chapter 4.4. of the *Terrestrial Code* and could already be implementing zoning in response to outbreaks even without clear notion of the zoning principles described in the *Terrestrial Code*.

When asked about the information that would be relevant to include in an Observatory report specifically dedicated to newly elected Specialist Commissions, the Commission suggested: i) a summary of what the Observatory is and intends to do, as well as a description of the frequency, content and purpose of each type of reports to provide the newly elected members background on the Observatory, and ii) the key findings of the Observatory on the main challenges related to the standards and recommendations of where the thematic focus should be.

9.1.4. Global Burden of Animal Diseases Programme (GBADs)

The Commission was updated on the progress of the Global Burden of Animal Diseases programme (GBADs) to date and noted the activities completed since February 2023 included the completion of a case study in Senegal and demonstration of utility of the GBADs approach in investment decision making processes in Senegal and Ethiopia. The Commission was also informed of WOAH's decision to reposition its involvement in GBADs from a co-leadership to an advisory and steering role, so that it may continue to evaluate the programme's scientific robustness in terms of being fit-for-purpose for WOAH Members and advise on the programme direction to ensure consistency and usefulness for WOAH Members' policy needs. The Commission appreciated the progress made by GBADs so far and looked forward to understanding the final methodology developed through this project that may inform WOAH standards and guidelines.

10. Programme and priorities

10.1. Update and prioritisation of the work programme

The Commission updated its work programme, identified the priorities, and scheduled the dates for the various *ad hoc* Group meetings, which will be accessible to Members through the WOAH website. The updated work programme is attached as Annex 6.

11. Adoption of the meeting report

The Commission adopted the report that was circulated electronically after the meeting.

12. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled to take place in September 2024. The dates will be determined with the newly elected Commission.

13. Meeting Review

A meeting review was conducted in accordance with the Commission Performance Management Framework.

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…/Annexes

Annex 1. Adopted Agenda

MEETING OF THE WOAH SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION FOR ANIMAL DISEASES

Paris, 12 to 16 February 2024

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1. **Welcome**
2. **Adoption of the agenda**
3. **Terrestrial Animal Health Code**
   - 3.1. Member comments received for Commission consideration
     - 3.1.1. Chapter 1.11. 'Application for official recognition by WOAH of free status for foot and mouth disease' and Chapter 8.8. 'Infection with FMD virus'
   - 3.2. Other considerations
     - 3.2.1. Chapter 4.4. 'Zoning and Compartmentalisation' and plan to develop new chapter on implementation of zoning
     - 3.2.2. Chapter 11.5. 'Infection with *Mycoplasma mycoides* subsp. *Mycoides SC* (Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia)'
     - 3.2.3. Chapter 12.1. 'Infection with African horse sickness virus'
     - 3.2.4. Surra in camels
4. ***Ad hoc* and Working Groups**
   - 4.1. Meeting reports for endorsement
     - 4.1.1. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of African Horse Sickness Status of Members: 28-29 September and 5 October 2023
     - 4.1.2. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Official Control Programmes for Dog-mediated Rabies: 4 & 6 October 2023
     - 4.1.3. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Peste des petits ruminants Status of Members: 17–19 October 2023
     - 4.1.4. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Foot and Mouth Disease Status of Members: 23-26 October 2023
     - 4.1.5. *Ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia Status of Members: 5- 7 December 2023
   - 4.2. Meeting reports for information
     - 4.2.1. Working Group on Wildlife
     - 4.2.2. *Ad hoc* Group on Emerging Diseases (including reemerging diseases) and Drivers of Disease Emergence in Animals
     - 4.2.3. *Ad hoc* Group on Alternative Strategies for the Control and Elimination of Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex Infection (MTBC) in Livestock
   - 4.3. Planned *ad hoc* Groups and confirmation of proposed agendas
     - 4.3.1. Chapter 14.8. 'Scrapie'
     - 4.3.2. Revision of Terrestrial Code chapters on equine encephalitides
5. **Official animal health status**
   - 5.1. Annual reconfirmations for maintenance of status
     - 5.1.1. Comprehensive review of annual reconfirmations for pre-selected status and all WOAH-endorsed official control programmes
     - 5.1.2. Report of the annual reconfirmation assessments by the Status Department

5.1.3. Form for the annual reconfirmation of the BSE risk status of Members

5.2. Specific update on official animal health status

5.2.1. Update on situation of countries/zone with suspended or reinstated animal health status

5.3. State of play and prioritisation of expert mission to Members requested by the Commission

5.3.1. State of play and prioritisation

5.4. Standards and procedures related to official status recognition

5.4.1. Official status recognition & maintenance: Non-compliance vs Equivalence

6. Global control and eradication strategies

6.1. Rabies. Global Strategic Plan to End Human Deaths from Dog-Mediated Rabies: Zero by 30

6.2. Avian Influenza. Global Control Strategy. Animal Health Forum. OFFLU

7. Liaison with other Commissions and Departments

7.1. Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission)

7.1.1. Framework for *Terrestrial Code* standards

7.1.2. Animal hosts to be targeted by WOAH standards for a listed disease

7.2. Biological Standards Commission

8. Disease control: specific issues

8.1. Emerging diseases

8.2. Evaluation of pathogenic agent against listing criteria of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 1.2.

8.3. Development of case definitions

8.3.1. Case definition process and progress update

8.3.2. Case definitions

8.3.2.1. Infection with Avian metapneumovirus (Turkey rhinotracheitis)

8.3.2.2. Infection with Nairobi sheep disease virus (Nairobi sheep disease)

8.3.2.3. Infection with *Francisella tularensis* (Tularemia)

9. For Commission information

9.1. Updates on standing items

9.1.1. WOAH Standards Online Navigation Tool Project

9.1.2. WAHIAD and WAHIS platform updates

9.1.3. Updates from WOAH Observatory

9.1.4. Global Burden of Animal Diseases Programme (GBADs)

10. Programme and priorities

10.1. Update and prioritisation of the work programme

11. Adoption of the meeting report

12. Date of the next meeting

13. Meeting Review

Annex 2. List of Participants

MEETING OF THE WOAH SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION FOR ANIMAL DISEASES

Paris, 12 to 16 February 2024

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Dr Cristóbal Zepeda
(President)
Regional Director
North America Region
USDA-APHIS-International Services
U.S. Embassy, Mexico City
MEXICO

Dr Trevor Drew
(Vice-President)
AUSTRALIA

Dr Misheck Mulumba
(member)
Senior Manager Research
Agricultural Research Council
SOUTH AFRICA

Dr Kris De Clercq
(Vice-President)
Department of Infectious Diseases in Animals
Exotic and Vector-borne Diseases Unit
Sciensano
BELGIUM

Dr Silvia Bellini (Remote)
(member)
Staff Director
Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna
ITALY

Dr Baptiste Dungu
(member)
Veterinary Specialist
Afrivet Business Management
SOUTH AFRICA

WOAH HEADQUARTERS

Dr Gregorio Torres
Head
Science Department

Dr Monal Daptardar
Scientific Coordinator
Science Department

Dr Min Kyung Park
Head
Status Department

Dr Charmaine Chng
Deputy Head
Science Department

Dr Natalie Moyen
Disease Status Officer
Status Department

Dr Anna-Maria Baka
Chargée de mission
Status Department

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Annex 3. Report of the annual reconfirmation assessments for maintenance of official animal health status and of the endorsement of official control programmes

MEETING OF THE WOAH SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION FOR ANIMAL DISEASES

Paris, 12 to 16 February 2024

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During its February 2024 meeting, the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (the Commission) comprehensively reviewed all annual reconfirmations provided by Members having an endorsed official control programme on the progress made, as well as a selection (approximately 10%) of the annual reconfirmations for officially recognised status. The Commission pre-selected these annual reconfirmations at its September 2023 meeting based on the list of technical and administrative considerations according to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on reconfirmations: Official Disease Status - WOAH - World Organisation for Animal Health.

A reminder letter was sent in October 2023 by the Director General of WOAH to the Delegates of Members having at least one officially recognised animal health status or an endorsed official control programme. The pre-selected Members were also informed of their official status being selected for a comprehensive review.

In accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures governing the official recognition of animal health status, all annual reconfirmations were screened by the Status Department. When necessary, additional information was requested in accordance with the relevant provisions of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*. A report was prepared and provided for the Commission's consideration and endorsement, as presented below.

1. Maintenance of the AHS-free status

1.1. Annual reconfirmations comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of Austria, Kazakhstan, Oman, Philippines and Romania were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were:

Austria: The Commission noted that horses were imported from countries not officially recognised AHS-free by WOAH and that the conditions applied to these imports were not fully aligned with Article 12.1.7 of the Terrestrial Code. The Commission strongly encouraged Austria to provide in its 2024 annual reconfirmation documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Article 12.1.7. of the Terrestrial Code or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 12.1.

Kazakhstan: The Commission commended Kazakhstan for addressing the Commission's recommendations. The Commission encouraged Kazakhstan to continue providing information on the importation of equids, including documented evidence demonstrating compliance with Chapter 12.1. and in particular Article 12.1.7. of the Terrestrial Code in future annual reconfirmations.

Oman: The Commission acknowledged that Oman had addressed the request from the Commission further to the annual reconfirmation of 2023 by updating the general conditions for permanent importation of horses and the correspondent health certificate in order to comply with Article 12.1.7. of the Terrestrial Code. However, the Commission noted that the same conditions were not implemented for the temporary importation of horses from countries not officially recognised AHS-free by WOAH. In particular, horses were not submitted to a 28-day quarantine in vector-protected facilities and AHS testing prior to shipment. The Commission stressed that Article 12.1.7 applies to all horse imports from infected countries regardless of the duration of the import (permanent or temporary). In this regard, the Commission requested Oman to revise the provisions for temporary imports of horses from countries not officially recognised AHS-free by WOAH and provide an updated veterinary health certificate for such imports to WOAH showing full compliance with Article 12.1.7. of the Terrestrial Code when reconfirming in November 2024, or provide documented evidence that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 12.1.

Philippines: The Commission noted the information provided by the Philippines on AHS surveillance activities and ongoing efforts to participate in an international proficiency testing scheme for AHS diagnostic tests organised by a WOAH Reference Laboratory. The Commission looks forward to receiving the outcome of the Philippines' national laboratory's participation in the interlaboratory proficiency testing for AHS in its annual reconfirmation in November 2024.

Romania: The Commission noted that horses were imported from countries not officially recognised AHS-free by WOAH and that the conditions applied to these imports were not fully aligned with Article 12.1.7 of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission strongly encouraged Romania to provide in its 2024 annual reconfirmation documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Article 12.1.7. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 12.1.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised AHS-free status of the above-listed Members.

1.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for AHS-free status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission as follows:

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Algeria	Cyprus	Kuwait	Portugal[1]
Andorra	Czech Rep.	Latvia	Qatar
Argentina	Denmark	Liechtenstein	Singapore
Australia	Ecuador	Lithuania	Slovakia
Azerbaijan	Estonia	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Bahrain	Finland[2]	Malaysia	Spain[3]
Belgium	France[4]	Malta	Sweden
Bolivia	Germany	Mexico	Switzerland
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Greece	Morocco	Thailand
Brazil	Hungary	New Caledonia	The Netherlands
Bulgaria	Iceland	New Zealand	Tunisia
Canada	India	North Macedonia (Rep. of)	Türkiye
Chile	Ireland	Norway	United Arab Emirates
China (People's Rep. of)[5]	Italy	Paraguay	United Kingdom[6]
Chinese Taipei	Japan	Peru	United States of America[7]*
Colombia*	Korea (Rep. of)	Poland	Uruguay
Croatia			

The Status Department raised the Commission's attention to the Members marked with an asterisk (*). The corresponding annual reconfirmations were discussed during the Commission's meeting as follows:

Colombia: The Commission noted that horses from Colombia had been exported for a temporary period to a country not officially recognised by WOAH as AHS-free and returned to Colombia without having been subjected to quarantine in vector protected facilities and laboratory testing for AHS prior to shipment, as per Article 12.1.7. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission requested Colombia to provide documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Article 12.1.7. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 12.1. when reconfirming in November 2024,

United States of America: The Commission noted that horses were imported from countries not officially recognised as AHS-free by WOAH. As a consequence of the different status recognition followed by the United States of America, horses were imported from those countries without having been subjected to quarantine in vector-protected facilities and laboratory testing for AHS prior to shipment, as per Article 12.1.7. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission strongly encouraged the United States of America to provide in its 2024 annual reconfirmation documented evidence to demonstrate full compliance with Article 12.1.7. of the *Terrestrial Code*

[1] Including Azores and Madeira.
[2] Including Åland Islands
[3] Including Balearic Islands and Canary Islands.
[4] Including French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion, Saint Barthélémy, Saint Martin, Saint Pierre and Miquelon.
[5] Including Hong Kong and Macau.
[6] Including Cayman Islands, Guernsey (incl. Alderney and Sark), Isle of Man, Jersey, Saint Helena and Falkland Islands (Malvinas). (A dispute exists between the Government of Argentina and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (see resolution 2065 (XX) of the General Assembly of the United Nations).
[7] Including American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands.

or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 12.1.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised AHS-free status of the above-listed Members.

2. Maintenance of BSE risk status

With reference to the adoption of the new BSE standards at the 2023 General Session, the Commission noted that the specific reporting period of this annual reconfirmation covers the transition between the past and current standards. In light of this, the Commission agreed to maintain the BSE risk status of the Members who had not reached minimal target surveillance points or sampled from less than three of the four subpopulations (routine slaughter, fallen stock, casualty slaughter, and clinical suspects).

2.1. Maintenance of the controlled BSE risk status

2.1.1. Annual reconfirmation comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of **Ecuador** and the **United Kingdom** were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Ecuador: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Ecuador about the audits of rendering plants and testing for cross-contamination in feed mills, where some investigations are still in progress. The Commission underlined the importance of continuing inspections of feed mills and rendering plants to prevent the potential recycling of the BSE agent and its entry into the feed chain and requested that the outcomes of corrective measures still being implemented be provided in next year's annual reconfirmation.

United Kingdom (**one zone** consisting of England and Wales as designated by the Delegate of the United Kingdom in documents addressed to the Director General in September and October 2016 and in November 2021): The Commission commended the UK for having developed a Code of Practice for farmers concerning the cleaning and disinfecting of feed silos, for the BSE awareness activities implemented, having progressed on the analysis of silo samples, and the online survey of cattle farmers. The Commission would appreciate receiving an update, including the pending test results, when the UK reconfirms its controlled BSE risk status (Zone covering England and Wales) in November 2024.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised BSE risk status of the above-listed Member and zone.

2.1.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for controlled BSE risk status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission as follows:

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Chinese Taipei	United Kingdom[8]
Greece	Russia

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised controlled BSE risk status of the above-listed Members and zones.

2.2. Maintenance of a negligible BSE risk status

2.2.1. Annual reconfirmations comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of **Austria**, **China (People's Rep. of), India** and **Panama** were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

[8] One zone consisting of Scotland as designated by the Delegate of the United Kingdom in documents addressed to the Director General in September and October 2016 and in December 2018.

Austria: The Commission noted the information provided by Austria in the annual reconfirmation and encouraged Austria to continue its activities regarding the maintenance of its negligible BSE risk status.

China (People's Rep. of)[9]: The Commission noted that China would provide its updated risk assessment following the provisions of the new BSE standards in June 2024. The Commission further noted that live cattle had been imported into China from a country with an undetermined BSE risk status and concluded that the provisions for these imports were compliant with Article 11.4.10. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission requested that China clearly describe in the updated risk assessment how the risk of such imports is being managed to ensure no potential recycling of the BSE agent in China. The Commission requested that the updated risk assessment be evaluated by the *ad hoc* Group on BSE risk status evaluation of Members at its 2024 meeting prior to further consideration by the Commission.

India: The Commission appreciated that India had replaced ELISA with PCR for the analyses of bovine protein in feed samples collected from feed mills producing feed for bovines, as per the Commission's recommendation. The Commission further noted that India would provide its updated risk assessment following the provisions of the new BSE standards in June 2024. The Commission requested that the updated risk assessment be evaluated by the *ad hoc* Group on BSE risk status evaluation of Members at its 2024 meeting prior to further consideration by the Commission.

Panama: The Commission noted the information provided by Panama in response to the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group on the revision of BSE standards and the maintenance of official BSE risk status in June 2022 and thanked Panama for the additional information on the changes in the surveillance programme coordination. The Commission encouraged Panama to continue strengthening its surveillance.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised BSE risk status of the above-listed Members and zone.

2.2.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for negligible BSE risk status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission.

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Argentina	Germany	Norway
Australia	Hungary	Paraguay
Belgium	Iceland	Peru
Bolivia	Ireland	Poland
Brazil	Israel	Portugal[10]
Bulgaria	Italy	Romania
Canada	Japan	Serbia[11]
Chile	Korea (Rep. of)	Singapore
Colombia	Latvia	Slovakia
Costa Rica	Liechtenstein	Slovenia
Croatia	Lithuania	Spain[12]
Cyprus	Luxembourg	Sweden
Czech Republic	Malta	Switzerland
Denmark	Mexico	The Netherlands
Estonia	Namibia	United Kingdom[13]
Finland[14]	New Zealand	United States of America
France	Nicaragua	Uruguay

[9] A zone designated by the Delegate of China in a document addressed to the Director General in November 2013, consisting of the People's Republic of China with the exclusion of Hong Kong and Macau.
[10] Including Azores and Madeira.
[11] Excluding Kosovo administered by the United Nations.
[12] Including Balearic Islands and Canary Islands.
[13] One zone consisting of Northern Ireland as designated by the Delegate of the United Kingdom in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2016 and one zone consisting of Jersey as designated by the Delegate of the United Kingdom in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2019.
[14] Including Åland Islands.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised negligible BSE risk status of the above-listed Members and zones.

3. Maintenance of the CBPP-free status

3.1. Annual reconfirmations comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of **Colombia** and **Mongolia** were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Colombia: The Commission appreciated the information on the actions taken by Colombia in addressing the recommendations made by the CBPP *ad hoc* Group and the Commission when the application was evaluated. The Commission reiterated its recommendation to Colombia to provide information on a documented traceback exercise showing that imported genetic material can be traced back from the final destination at the farm level to the importing establishment authorised by Colombia. The Commission encouraged Colombia to continue its efforts to follow the recommendations and make progress on the activities to ensure successful maintenance of the official CBPP-free status.

Mongolia: The Commission commended Mongolia for the activities implemented to address the recommendations of the Commission and appreciated the detailed information provided particularly on the clinical and bacteriological surveillance conducted at slaughterhouses.

The Commission took note that Mongolia was planning to contact a WOAH Reference Laboratory in 2024 in order to request the participation of its laboratories in proficiency tests for CBPP diagnosis and to resume the annual serological surveillance, as foreseen in their five-year (2021-2025) CBPP Strategy, as soon as reagents for CBPP serology become available.

The Commission noted that, while the prohibition of the importation of CBPP-vaccinated animals had not been addressed through a revision of current legislation, the relevant requirements for such prohibition have been incorporated into bilateral agreements with trading countries. However, the Commission noted with concern that no information was provided by Mongolia on the formal prohibition of vaccination against CBPP in the country. The Commission, therefore, requested Mongolia to provide documented evidence that the legislation has been updated to formally prohibit both the use of vaccines and the importation of vaccinated animals. The Commission requested Mongolia to provide an update on the points above when reconfirming in November 2024.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised CBPP-free status of the above-listed Members.

3.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for CBPP-free status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission as follows.

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Argentina	Eswatini	Peru
Australia	France[15]	Portugal[16]
Bolivia	India	Russia
Botswana	Italy	Singapore
Brazil	Mexico	South Africa
Canada	Namibia[17]	Switzerland
China (People's Republic of)	New Caledonia	United States of America
Ecuador	Paraguay	Uruguay

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised CBPP-free status of the above-listed Members and zone.

[15] Including French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Réunion.
[16] Including Azores and Madeira.
[17] One zone located south to the Veterinary Cordon Fence, designated by the Delegate of Namibia in a document addressed to the Director General in October 2015.

4. Maintenance of the endorsement of the official control programme for CBPP

The annual reconfirmations of **Namibia** and **Zambia** were comprehensively reviewed by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Namibia: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Namibia in support of the reconfirmation of its endorsed official control programme for CBPP. The Commission commended Namibia for successfully completing the interlaboratory proficiency testing but noted the low vaccination rate and falling short on clinical surveillance. The Commission appreciated that Namibia had started implementing corrective measures to address these gaps. The Commission noted that the construction of a physical barrier will be based on the results of a feasibility study to be conducted in 2024. Considering that the construction and maintenance of such a barrier is challenging, the Commission recommended that Namibia start exploring alternative control measures to be implemented in case the feasibility study does not support the construction of the barrier. The Commission requested an update on the progress made on this and the vaccination coverage when reconfirming in November 2024.

Zambia: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Zambia on the progress of its endorsed official control programme for CBPP. While noting some delays in meeting the annual targets due to the increased incidence of CBPP, the Commission also noted the follow-up action taken by establishing laboratory diagnostic capacity for CBPP in the infected zone. The Commission took note of the progress made regarding the legal framework for facilitating the implementation of the animal identification system and requested an update on the progress when reconfirming in November 2024. In addition, the Commission requested an update on the outcome of the expert consultation to improve the contingency plan for CBPP that is planned for 2024, as well as on the progress made on the annual targets for vaccination coverage, the employment of veterinary staff, the re-demarcation of veterinary camps and the procurement of vehicles, when reconfirming in November 2024.

Conclusion: The Commission considered that the annual reconfirmations of the above-listed Members were compliant with the relevant provisions of Chapter 11.5. of the *Terrestrial Code* for an endorsed official control programme for CBPP.

5. Maintenance of the CSF-free status

5.1. Annual reconfirmations comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of **Bulgaria**, **Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland** and **the United Kingdom** were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Bulgaria: The Commission acknowledged the detailed information provided by Bulgaria in support of the annual reconfirmation of its CSF-free status. The Commission encouraged Bulgaria to continue its activities to ensure the successful maintenance of its CSF-free status.

Latvia: The Commission noted that commodities were imported from countries not officially recognised CSF-free by WOAH and that the conditions applied to these imports were not fully aligned with Article 15.2.10 of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission strongly encouraged Latvia to provide, in its 2024 annual reconfirmation, documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Chapter 15.2. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 15.2.

Luxembourg: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Luxembourg in support of the annual reconfirmation of its CSF-free status. The Commission recommended Luxembourg to carry out CSF (and other exotic diseases) awareness activities targeted to professionals and the general public and to submit the next annual reconfirmations before the set deadline of 30 November 2024.

Poland: The Commission noted that commodities were imported from countries not officially recognised CSF-free by WOAH and that the conditions applied to these imports were not fully aligned with Articles 15.2.25 and 15.2.10 of the Terrestrial Code. The Commission strongly encouraged Poland to provide in its 2024 annual reconfirmation documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Chapter 15.2. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 15.2.

The United Kingdom[18] **:** The Commission acknowledged the information provided by the UK in support of the annual reconfirmation of its CSF-free status, and the actions taken in response to the Commission's request from last year to comply with Article 15.2.24. The Commission encouraged the UK to finalise the review of its import requirements and to provide, in its 2024 annual reconfirmation, documented evidence demonstrating full

[18] Including Guernsey (incl. Alderney and Sark), Isle of Man and Jersey.

compliance with Chapter 15.2 of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 15.2.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised CSF-free status of the above-listed Members.

5.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for CSF-free status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission as follows:

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Argentina	Croatia	Italy	Slovakia
Australia	Czech Republic	Liechtenstein	Slovenia
Austria	Denmark	Malta	Spain[19]
Belgium	Ecuador[20]	Mexico	Sweden
Brazil[21]	Finland[22]	New Caledonia	Switzerland
Canada	France[23]	New Zealand	The Netherlands
Chile	Germany	Norway	United States of America[24]
Colombia[25]	Hungary	Paraguay	Uruguay
Costa Rica	Ireland	Portugal[26]	

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised CSF-free status of the above-listed Members and zone.

6. Maintenance of the endorsement of the official control programme for dog-mediated rabies

The annual reconfirmations of **Namibia,** the **Philippines,** and **Zambia** were comprehensively reviewed by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Namibia: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Namibia in support of the reconfirmation of its endorsed official control programme for dog-mediated rabies. The Commission commended the progress on stakeholder involvement and quarterly rabies plan monitoring meetings. The Commission, however, reiterated that Namibia should utilise methods for population estimation and vaccination monitoring described in Articles 7.7.5. and 4.18.9. of the *Terrestrial Code*, as planned, and provide an update during the next annual reconfirmation. The Commission appreciated that Namibia had identified gaps, such as the lack of data collection of dog bites and rabies post-exposure prophylaxis and was working to address it. The Commission requested Namibia to provide when reconfirming the endorsement of its official control programme in November 2024, a detailed update and review of the objectives and indicators and the stage of completion, including:

i. The progress on the implementation of IBCM and a summary of joint investigations undertaken.
ii. Detailed information on the surveys to estimate the free-roaming dog population and understand its role in rabies transmission.
iii. Progress on dog vaccination and post-vaccination monitoring, including that of oral bait vaccines.
iv. Progress on collection of data on dog bites and Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis.

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19 Including Balearic Islands and Canary Islands.
20 One zone consisting of the insular territory of the Galápagos, as designated by the Delegate of Ecuador in a document addressed to the Director General in October 2018.
21 One zone composed of the States of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina as designated by the Delegate of Brazil in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2014 and one zone covering the States of Acre, Bahia, Espírito Santo, Goias, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Rondônia, São Paulo, Sergipe and Tocantins, Distrito Federal, and the municipalities of Guajará, Boca do Acre, South of the municipality of Canutama and Southwest of the municipality of Lábrea in the State of Amazonas as designated by the Delegate of Brazil in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2015 and in October 2020; and one zone consisting of the State of Paraná as designated by the Delegate of Brazil in a document addressed to the Director General in October 2020.
22 Including Åland Islands.
23 Including French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Réunion.
24 Including Guam, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands.
25 One zone designated by the Delegate of Colombia in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2015; and the central-eastern zone as designated by the Delegate of Colombia in a document addressed to the Director General in October 2020.
26 Including Azores and Madeira.

Philippines: The Commission noted with concern the increase of rabies incidents and new incidents in areas that the Philippines had previously declared free from rabies. It also expressed concerns about the ongoing constraints preventing the country from meeting the targeted annual progress based on the performance indicators of the programme. The Commission acknowledged that, although with some delay, the Philippines had conducted a comprehensive review of the programme and strategic planning for rabies control activities in selected clusters for the year 2023 and was in discussions with resource partners to explore funding opportunities for these activities. The Commission took note that the Philippines was still in the process of collating information on conducted dog vaccinations and requested the Philippines to provide an update on these activities as soon as relevant data became available. The Commission urged the Philippines to start implementing the revised programme and provide an update on the progress achieved when reconfirming in November 2024.

Zambia: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Zambia in support of the reconfirmation of its endorsed official control programme for dog-mediated rabies. The Commission commended the progress made on awareness-raising activities and having the rabies strategy endorsed by all relevant stakeholders. The Commission noted additional activities and partnerships planned on dog population management and recommended Zambia utilise methods for population estimation and vaccination monitoring described in Articles 7.7.5. and 4.18.9. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission recommended Zambia continue its effort to make progress as per the revised work plan and timelines and provide i) the results of baseline studies conducted, ii) detailed information on the estimation of the free-roaming dog population and its management, and iii) results and figures from joint rabies outbreak investigations conducted under the IBCM framework when reconfirming the endorsement of its official control programme in November 2024.

In addition, the Commission reiterated its recommendation with regard to S.M.A.R.T.[27] indicator number 4 on laboratory capacity building, that Zambia could strengthen the efficiency of the laboratory network by establishing a national/central reference laboratory and regional laboratories at strategic locations rather than by increasing the number of regional laboratories with advanced rabies diagnostic capacities. The Commission also recommended reconsidering the need for Fluorescent Antibody Test (FAT) facilities in all seven regional laboratories. Finally, the Commission wished to highlight Section 1.3.3 of Chapter 3.1.18. of the *Terrestrial Manual* regarding LFDs and the need for further improvements in sensitivity, consistency and validation using appropriate diagnostic samples. The Commission further stressed that LFDs are not included in Table 1. 'Test methods available for the diagnosis of rabies and their purposes', under section B of this Chapter.

Conclusion: The Commission considered that the annual reconfirmations of the above-listed Members were compliant with the relevant provisions of Chapter 8.15. of the *Terrestrial Code* for an endorsed official control programme for dog-mediated rabies.

7. Maintenance of the FMD-free status

7.1. Annual reconfirmations comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of **Albania, one zone of Bolivia, three zones of Botswana, one zone of Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Guyana, five zones of Kazakhstan, Lesotho, one zone of Malaysia, one zone of Russia and one zone of Türkiye** were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Albania: The Commission acknowledged the supportive information provided by Albania regarding import requirements for FMD susceptible animals from countries not officially recognised as free from FMD by WOAH, which were compliant with Article 8.8.12. The Commission also acknowledged the recent updates made to the National surveillance programme for FMD, and the information on active and passive surveillance activities that took place in 2023. The Commission took note of some unsatisfactory results in the interlaboratory proficiency testing, for which recommendations were delivered by the WOAH Reference Laboratory. The Commission requested Albania to provide the corrective measures taken to address these recommendations when reconfirming in November 2024.

The Commission concluded that the annual reconfirmation of Albania was compliant with the relevant requirements of Chapter 8.8 of the *Terrestrial Code* for the maintenance of the officially recognised FMD-free status and encouraged Albania to continue providing information on the importation of FMD susceptible animals and their products, including documented evidence demonstrating compliance with Chapter 8.8. in future annual reconfirmations.

[27] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

Bolivia (one zone without vaccination consisting of the Department of Beni and the northern part of the Department of La Paz merged with the zone consisting of the Department of Pando (August 2018), as designated by the Delegate of Bolivia in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2022):

The Commission appreciated Bolivia's detailed report following its recommendations, in particular the detailed information regarding the activities conducted on surveillance, awareness campaigns and control of movements. The Commission strongly recommends that all vesicular disease suspicions are tested using virological methods, since serology alone may not pick up active infection. The Commission further noted that few vaccinated cattle from the FMD-free zone with vaccination were temporarily moved into the zone for exhibition/competition. While highlighting that the introduction of vaccinated animals – even from FMD-free zones with vaccination – into an FMD-free zone without vaccination is currently not allowed, the Commission was satisfied with the stricter measures applied to such movements. Nevertheless, these types of temporary movements should be restricted, and Bolivia should report all such movements.

In this regard, the Commission recommended Bolivia continue the progress made and submit an update on the conditions to move vaccinated animals into the FMD-free zone when reconfirming its status in November 2024.

Botswana (One zone without vaccination covering Zone 3b designated by the Delegate of Botswana in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2016; **two zones without vaccination**, namely Zone 3c and 6a, designated by the Delegate of Botswana in documents addressed to the Director General in August and November 2014 as follows): The Commission acknowledged the information submitted by Botswana on investigations following the buffalo's incursion and finding the FMD virus in the animals that entered the FMD-free zone. The Commission recognised the amount of work in response to an incursion that spanned over several FMD-free zones. Although hard to accomplish, preventing incursions by faster identification of fence damage could prevent an outbreak of FMD. There is concern that the amount of time to respond to a large incursion will allow time and opportunity for exposure of susceptible animals, spread of the disease and loss of status. Considering that these fences serve as a crucial barrier between the free zones of Botswana, tThe Commission encouraged Botswana to maintain the fence control activities in place.

Colombia (one zone, namely Protection Zone I (PZ I) covering 29 municipalities of the Department of Norte de Santander, as designated by the Delegate of Colombia in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2022):

The Commission appreciated the detailed information provided by Colombia and the actions initiated in addressing the recommendations made by the FMD *ad hoc* Group and the Commission when the application was first evaluated. The Commission took note of the activities conducted with regard to animal identification, surveillance, awareness campaigns and measures to prevent the entry of the FMD virus.

The Commission acknowledged that, due to sociopolitical factors invoked by Colombia, implementation of animal identification on the total susceptible population was challenging and urged Colombia to explore alternative methods to monitor the animals not individually identified.

The Commission noted that the investigation of NSP reactors included only the collection and testing of a paired serum sample from the reactors and clinical examination of the animals, which were part of the initial survey. The Commission emphasised that, in accordance with the provisions of Article 8.8.42 of the *Terrestrial Code*, the epidemiological investigation of each herd with NSP reactors should include serologically sampling not only the animals that tested positive in the initial survey but also from all animals in direct contact with the reactors. In other words, the investigation should include the reactor animals, susceptible animals of the same epidemiological unit and susceptible animals that have been in contact or otherwise epidemiologically associated with the reactor animals. The Commission further stressed that the animals initially sampled should remain in the establishment pending test results, should be clearly identified and accessible, and should not be vaccinated during the investigations so that they can be retested after an appropriate period of time. The Commission requested Colombia to review the procedures to follow-up on NSP reactors in that sense and provide documented evidence of the updated protocol implemented when reconfirming its status in November 2024.

The Commission appreciated the transparency demonstrated by Colombia in providing information on the detection of illegal imports of animal products or products non-compliant with import requirements and commended Colombia for the efficient monitoring system, enabling the detection of illegal imports before the products enter the FMD-free zone. The Commission encouraged Colombia to continue the intensive inspections and provide an update on the findings when reconfirming in 2024.

Cuba: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Cuba regarding the measures for FMD prevention and early detection and the results of the NSP serological surveys conducted in 2023. The Commission further noted that Cuba had continued to import commodities from an FMD-infected country. Despite reiterated requests, Cuba did not provide information about viral and serological diagnostic tests carried out to detect FMD

virus infection in the imported animals prior to shipment in accordance with Article 8.8.12. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission strongly encouraged Cuba to provide, when reconfirming its status in November 2024, documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 8.8. The Commission further mentioned that such non-compliance can lead to suspension of official status.

Guatemala: The Commission acknowledged Guatemala's efforts to comply with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* and to address the recommendations for surveillance improvement made by the Commission. The submission of the annual reconfirmation in time and prompt responses to WOAH communications, along with the reduction in time for laboratory test submission, showcase the improvements made. However, the Commission reiterated the importance of revising the protocol for investigating suspect cases of vesicular diseases. The Commission emphasised again that Guatemala should implement a follow-up procedure involving virological and serological laboratory testing of all suspicious cases and in-contact animals as per Articles 8.8.40. to 8.8.42. of the *Terrestrial Code* and urged Guatemala to reduce the time from notification of suspicion to laboratory results. The Commission suggested that such revision should be done before the FMD simulation exercise so further improvements can be made during the event. The exercise should reveal areas needing improvement that can be easily achieved without additional resources and improve the overall disease surveillance programme. The Commission appreciated Guatemala's efforts to explore the establishment of partnerships in order to secure funds for the implementation of the activities needed to maintain the official status. In this regard, the Commission recommended that Guatemala continue the progress made and submit an update on these activities, including lessons learnt from the FMD simulation exercise when reconfirming in November 2024.

Guyana: The Commission noted that the 2023 report was sent with an excessive delay and after the deadline. It also lacked the information needed to substantiate the absence of FMD in the country, and requested updates were not provided in time. Guyana also indicated that FMD surveys were planned for 2023, but the results were not provided. The Commission repeatedly underlined the importance of the timely submission of updated information and documented evidence associated with the reporting year to substantiate the responses and statements made in the annual reconfirmation following Article 8.8.2. of the Terrestrial Code. In accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure on the reconfirmation of officially recognised animal health status, the Commission regretted that this has resulted in the suspension of official status.

Kazakhstan (five zones with vaccination)[28]: The Commission acknowledged the supportive information provided by Kazakhstan. The Commission commended the actions taken by Kazakhstan to address the recommendations of the Commission and WOAH Expert mission and encouraged Kazakhstan to continue considering these recommendations until they are all fully addressed and adequately implemented. The Commission noted that SOPs had been developed and implemented for the follow-up of NSP reactors. However, documented evidence demonstrating their implementation was not provided. The Commission requested Kazakhstan to submit those data when reconfirming in November 2024.

The Commission acknowledged the efforts to rectify the current policy allowing processed products of animal origin to be imported without an international veterinary certificate to comply with the relevant articles in Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code*. However, it is unclear whether these measures are uniformly implemented and effective. The Commission requested Kazakhstan to provide documented evidence, including the directive in use, on the compliance on imports from all countries. An updated version of the legislation is expected when available.

The Commission advised Kazakhstan to continue participating in the interlaboratory proficiency testing and provide an update when reconfirming in November 2024.

Lesotho: The Commission commended Lesotho for the activities implemented to address its recommendations and acknowledged the detailed information provided on cross-border coordination, imports, surveillance, and laboratory proficiency testing.

However, the Commission expressed its concerns that point 4 of the Veterinary Health Certificate to import animals from FMD-infected countries is not followed. The commission reminded Lesotho that both serological and virological tests should be requested prior to importation from FMD-infected countries, as per Article 8.8.12. This is of importance as the virological test can detect an early infection while the serological NSP test is only positive

[28] Five zones with vaccination as designated by the Delegate of Kazakhstan in documents addressed to the Director General in August 2016 as follows: one zone consisting of Almaty region; one zone consisting of East Kazakhstan region; one zone including part of Kyzylorda region, northern part of South Kazakhstan region, northern and central parts of Zhambyl region; one zone including southern part of Kyzylorda region and south-western part of South Kazakhstan region; one zone including south-eastern part of South Kazakhstan region and southern part of Zhambyl region.

from 9-11 days post-infection. The Commission encouraged Lesotho to provide, in its 2024 annual reconfirmation, the revised conditions applied to imports of commodities from FMD-infected countries to ensure compliance with the *Terrestrial Code* or to provide documented evidence that Chapter 5.3 has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 8.8.

The Commission noted the successful completion of the inter-laboratory proficiency testing in 2023 and the planned ring trials in 2024.

With regard to FMD surveillance, the Commission noted that Lesotho used an NSP test to rule out an FMD-suspected case, which is not in accordance with Chapter 3.1.8. on FMD of the *Terrestrial Manual*. As NSP antibodies can only be detected 9-11 days post-infection, serological tests can easily produce false negatives. Therefore, they are not fit for purpose for the early detection of an FMD case. The Commission encouraged Lesotho to follow the provisions of the *Terrestrial Manual* to always use a virological test in case of clinical suspicion of FMD. Furthermore, the Commission noted from the surveillance results provided that the procedure in case of positive test results is not compliant with Article 8.8.42 of the *Terrestrial Code*, and strongly encouraged Lesotho to retest seropositive reactors and in-contact animals using repeat and confirmatory tests and to conduct epidemiological investigations (i.e. serologically, clinically, etc.) in all herds with at least one laboratory confirmed reactor.

Lastly, the Commission observed that Lesotho only provided the Proficiency testing (PT) performed for NSP testing, substantiating the capability to perform a test for serological screening but not for virological tests which are of paramount importance for the early detection of FMD cases. The Commission encouraged Lesotho to participate in inter-laboratory PTs for virological tests for FMD as soon as possible.

In this regard, the Commission recommended Lesotho continue the progress made and submit an update on these activities when reconfirming in November 2024.

Malaysia (one zone without vaccination consisting of the provinces of Sabah and Sarawak as designated by the Delegate of Malaysia in a document addressed to the Director General in December 2003):

The Commission appreciated Malaysia for fully supporting the expert mission in Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia, in July 2023, and for acting upon the recommendations aimed at improving prevention and emergency preparedness.

The Commission further noted that Malaysia is considering revising the surveillance design, as the surveillance target could not be achieved this year due to the emergence of other competing diseases. However, it is recommended that the design be scientifically sound, with the appropriate confidence level and statistical power to demonstrate the absence of FMD virus circulation in Sabah and Sarawak.

The Commission requested Malaysia to provide progress reports on the expert's mission recommendations and the actions taken to prevent the risk of incursion in the free zone when reconfirming in November 2024.

Russia (one zone with vaccination - Zone V 'Far East' - consisting of five Subjects: Amur Oblast, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Primorsky Krai, Khabarovsky Krai, Zabaykalsky Krai, as designated by the Delegate of Russia in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2022): The Commission acknowledged the supportive information provided by Russia and actions taken in response to the recommendations of this Commission. The Commission encouraged Russia to continue monitoring and improving immunity levels in all vaccinated species and to review the design of its serological surveys by using a two-stage sampling design, geographically stratified and weighted by the number of farms by oblast to seek the best representativeness of the population in the samples as possible. The Commission requested Russia to continue providing the investigation results concerning low immunity levels (below 80%), corrective actions implemented based on the results, as well as any further adjustments made on the design of the serological survey and on the procedure for following-up of NSP reactors to ensure its alignment with Article 8.8.42, when reconfirming in November 2024.

Türkiye (one zone with vaccination designated by the Delegate of Türkiye in a document addressed to the Director General in November 2009): The Commission acknowledged the prompt response and control measures implemented by Türkiye after the FMD SAT2 incursion in Anatolia. However, the Commission was concerned about the spread of the virus in the naïve population and highlighted the importance of continuing intensified control measures for the movement of animals into the FMD-free zone for the Kurban festival.

The Commission noted the use of NSP ELISA testing for triage of animals in Anatolia to source the Kurban festival in Thrace. The Commission reiterated its recommendation to Türkiye to also conduct post-monitoring vaccination studies in animals in Anatolia vaccinated against SAT2 prior to their movement to Thrace for the Kurban festival.

The Commission noted that Türkiye's aim with regard to FMD in Anatolia had shifted towards keeping the disease under control without applying for the endorsement of its FMD control programme due to the regional epidemiological situation. Türkiye further informed that the plan to submit a dossier to WOAH will be reassessed after the epidemiological analysis, following the introduction of the FMD-SAT2, has been completed. The Commission encouraged Türkiye to continue its efforts to progress along the Progressive Control Pathway for FMD (PCP-FMD). An update on the FMD situation in the country should be provided when reconfirming in November 2024.

Conclusion: Except for Guyana, the Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised FMD-free status of the above-listed Members and zones.

7.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for FMD-free status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission as follows:

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Australia	El Salvador	Luxembourg	Romania
Austria	Estonia	Madagascar	San Marino
Belarus	Eswatini	Malta	Serbia[29]
Belgium	Finland[30]	Mexico	Singapore
Belize	France[31]	Montenegro	Slovakia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Germany	New Caledonia	Slovenia
Brunei	Greece	New Zealand	Spain[32]
Bulgaria	Haiti	Nicaragua	Suriname
Canada	Honduras	North Macedonia (Rep. of)	Sweden
Chile	Hungary	Norway	Switzerland
Costa Rica	Iceland	Panama	The Netherlands
Croatia	Ireland	Paraguay	Ukraine
Cyprus	Italy	Peru	United Kingdom[33]
Czech Rep.	Japan	Philippines	United States of America[34]
Denmark[35]	Latvia	Poland	Uruguay
Dominican Republic	Lithuania	Portugal[36]	Vanuatu

Argentina: **Three zones without vaccination**

- one zone designated by the Delegate of Argentina in a document addressed to the Director General in January 2007;
- the summer pasture zone in the Province of San Juan as designated by the Delegate of Argentina in a document addressed to the Director General in April 2011;
- Patagonia Norte A as designated by the Delegate of Argentina in a document addressed to the Director General in October 2013;

Two zones with vaccination designated by the Delegate of Argentina in documents addressed to the Director General in March 2007 and October 2013, and in August 2010 and February 2014;

Bolivia: **One zone without vaccination** consisting of:

- one zone in the Macro-region of the Altiplano designated by the Delegate of Bolivia in

[29] Excluding Kosovo administered by the United Nations
[30] Including Åland Islands.
[31] Including French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion, Saint Pierre and Miquelon.
[32] Including Balearic Islands and Canary Islands.
[33] Including Guernsey (incl. Alderney and Sark), Isle of Man, Jersey and Falkland Islands (Malvinas). (A dispute exists between the Government of Argentina and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (see resolution 2065 (XX) of the General Assembly of the United Nations).
[34] Including American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands.
[35] Including Faroe Islands and Greenland.
[36] Including Azores and Madeira.

documents addressed to the Director General in November 2011;

One zone with vaccination covering the regions of Chaco, Valles and parts of Amazonas and Altiplano as designated by the Delegate of Bolivia in documents addressed to the Director General in October 2013, February 2014 and August 2018;

Botswana: **Three zones without vaccination** designated by the Delegate of Botswana in documents addressed to the Director General in August and November 2014 as follows:

- one zone consisting of Zones, 4b, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13;
- one zone covering Zone 4a;
- one zone covering Zone 6b, with the exclusion of the containment zone as designated by the Delegate of Botswana in documents addressed to the Director General in November 2022 and February 2023;

One zone without vaccination covering Zone 7 designated by the Delegate of Botswana in **a** document addressed to the Director General in August 2018;

Brazil: **One zone without vaccination** – State of Santa Catarina designated by the Delegate of Brazil in a document addressed to the Director General in February 2007;

Three zones without vaccination as designated by the Delegate of Brazil in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2020 as follows:

- State of Paraná;
- State of Rio Grande do Sul;
- one zone (Block 1) including the States of Acre and Rondônia and 14 municipalities in the State of Amazonas and five municipalities in the State of Mato Grosso;

One zone with vaccination consisting of two merged zones designated by the Delegate of Brazil in documents addressed to the Director General in August 2010, September 2017 and September 2019, covering the States of Alagoas, Amapá, Amazonas, Bahia, Ceará, Espíritu Santo, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Maranhão, Minas Gerais, Pará, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Norte, Roraima, São Paulo, Sergipe, Tocantins and Distrito Federal, with the exclusion of the municipalities of the States of Amazonas and Mato Grosso that are part of the zone of Block 1 (free from FMD where vaccination is not practised) as addressed to the Director General in August 2020;

Chinese Taipei: **One zone without vaccination** covering Taiwan, Penghu and Matsu areas, as designated by the Delegate of Chinese Taipei in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2019;

One zone with vaccination: one zone consisting of Kinmen County as designated by the Delegate of Chinese Taipei in a document addressed to the Director General in September 2017;

Colombia: **Two zones without vaccination:**

- one zone designated by the Delegate of Colombia in documents addressed to the Director General in November 1995 and in April 1996 (Area I - Northwest region of Chocó Department);
- one zone designated by the Delegate of Colombia in documents addressed to the Director General in January 2008 (Archipelago de San Andrés and Providencia).

Three zones with vaccination designated by the Delegate of Colombia in documents addressed to the Director General in September 2019 as follows:

- Zone I (Northern border) consisting of Departments of La Guajira, Cesar and part of the Department of Norte de Santander;

- Zone III (Trade) consisting of the Departments of Atlántico, Córdoba, Magdalena, Sucre and part of Antioquia, Bolívar and Chocó Departments;

- Zone IV (Rest of the country), consisting of the Departments of Amazonas, Caldas, Caquetá, Cauca, Casanare, Cundinamarca, Guainía, Guaviare, Huila, Meta, Nariño, Quindío, Putumayo, Risaralda, Santander, Tolima, Valle del Cauca, Vaupés and part of Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, and Chocó Departments.

One zone with vaccination consisting of two merged zones designated by the Delegate of Colombia in documents addressed to the Director General in September 2019 and in August 2020, which includes Zone II (Eastern border) and the former high surveillance zone covering the Departments of Arauca and Vichada and the municipality of Cubará of the Department of Boyacá;

Ecuador: **One zone without vaccination** consisting of the insular territory of the Galápagos, as designated by the Delegate of Ecuador in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2014;

One zone with vaccination consisting of the continental Ecuador, as designated by the Delegate of Ecuador in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2014;

Moldova: **One zone without vaccination** designated by the Delegate of Moldova in a document addressed to the Director General in July 2008;

Namibia: **One zone without vaccination** designated by the Delegate of Namibia in a document addressed to the Director General in February 1997;

Russia: **One zone without vaccination** designated by the Delegate of Russia in documents addressed to the Director General in August 2015 and March 2016;

Two zones with vaccination designated by the Delegate of Russia in documents addressed to the Director General in August 2020 as follows:

- Zone-South including Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts, consisting of 13 Subjects: Rostov Oblast, Stavropol Krai, Krasnodar Krai, Volgograd Oblast, Astrakhan Oblast, Republic of Kalmykia, Chechen Republic, Republic of Ingushetia, Republic of Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, Karachay-Cherkess Republic, Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Republic of Adygea;

- Zone-Sakhalin consisting of the Island of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands;

One zone with vaccination - Eastern Siberia consisting of two Subjects (Republic of Tuva and Republic of Buryatia) and one administrative Raion of the Republic of Altai (Kosh-Agachsky Raion) designated by the Delegate of Russia in a document addressed to the Director General in August 2021;

The Status Department informed the Commission that the annual reconfirmations that were received and assessed were compliant with the relevant provisions of Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised FMD-free status of the above-listed Members and zones.

8. Maintenance of the endorsement of the official control programme for FMD

The annual reconfirmations of **Botswana**, **China (People's Rep. of)**, **India**, **Kyrgyzstan**, **Morocco**, **Namibia** and **Thailand** were comprehensively reviewed by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Botswana: The Commission acknowledged the information submitted by Botswana on progress made on FMD risk analysis and control activities in the northern part of the country. While some progress was made in some zones, others had no progress, and it was observed that laboratory results were pending. The Commission also noted that limited resources were the reason for the lack of progress, and some of the activities were diverted to 2024. The Commission encouraged Botswana to continue its activities to control and eradicate FMD in the northern parts of the country and to inform of any changes in the goals or objectives of the FMD control programme. The Commission will continue to monitor the progress of these activities in Botswana's annual reconfirmation in November 2024.

China (People's Rep. of): The Commission acknowledged the information submitted by China regarding the progress made in implementing its official FMD control programme. The Commission noted that, as per recommendations by the Commission, China had followed up on FMD outbreaks by investigating the vaccination status and the herd immunity level of the farms where clinically positive animals had been detected and performed PVM data analysis stratified by age. However, the Commission noted that FMDV-positive animals detected through pathogenic surveillance were not classified as FMD cases or outbreaks. The Commission considered that this is a critical component of an endorsed programme, and whilst noting that some of the recommendations had been addressed, this remained pending. In addition, the Commission noted that the revision of the prevention and control targets and performance indicators of the FMD official control plan initiated three years ago had not been finalised. Therefore, the Commission concluded that China no longer fulfils the requirements in Articles 1.6.2. and 8.8.39. of the *Terrestrial Code* for a country having an endorsed official control programme for FMD and recommended the withdrawal of the endorsement. The Commission stressed that should China wish to apply for the endorsement of an FMD official control programme, an updated plan must be submitted including a revised case definition aligned with Article 8.8.8.

India: The Commission acknowledged the information submitted by India regarding the progress made in implementing its official FMD control programme. The Commission appreciated that, as per its recommendations, India had started working on implementing appropriate follow-up investigations on NSP positive reactors countrywide, which included supplementary testing and clinical inspection of the seropositive animals and in-contact animals, and that India was planning to conduct extensive sampling in 2024 for the follow-up of NSP reactors. The Commission also took note of India's reporting of a gradual increase in the population immunity levels.

The Commission acknowledged the updated work plan with a timetable and performance indicators provided by India for the next five years of the programme. The Commission requested India to submit the following as part of its 2024 reconfirmation: i) progress made in implementing appropriate follow-up investigations on NSP positive reactors over all states, ii) progress achieved along the updated work plan.

Kyrgyzstan: The Commission acknowledged the continuing efforts of Kyrgyzstan on serosurveillance and vaccination activities, as well as on the progress made on the traceability of animals and the control of movements of animals and animal products.

With regard to the follow-up investigations of NSP reactors and related epidemiological investigations, the Commission noted that NSP reactors were re-tested, and clinical examination was conducted only in the animals in contact. The Commission emphasised that in accordance with the provisions of Article 8.8.42 of the *Terrestrial Code*, the epidemiological investigation of each herd with NSP reactors should include a second serological sample from the animals tested in the initial survey with emphasis on animals in direct contact with the reactors. Thus, the investigation should include the reactors, susceptible animals of the same epidemiological unit, and susceptible animals that have been in contact or otherwise epidemiologically associated with the reactor animals. For this reason, the animals initially sampled should remain in the establishment pending confirmation of the results; they should be clearly identified and accessible and should not be vaccinated during the investigations. The Commission strongly recommended Kyrgyzstan to review the procedures for follow-up on NSP reactors, in particular as this has already been identified and communicated in the past and provide documented evidence of the epidemiological investigations conducted. This will help to understand the NSP-positive reactions in cattle and exclude a possible FMDV transmission.

The Commission appreciated that following the participation of the National Laboratory in a proficiency test organised by a WOAH FMD Reference laboratory, an interlaboratory testing was organised for the country's regional laboratories. The Commission encouraged Kyrgyzstan to provide the results of the interlaboratory testing for regional laboratories when reconfirming in 2024.

The Commission expressed concerns regarding the population immunity levels in cattle and requested Kyrgyzstan to investigate and address the reasons for the low immunity levels detected. The Commission requested Kyrgyzstan to provide an update on the implemented activities and progress made against the work plan and performance indicators when submitting the annual reconfirmation in November 2024.

Morocco: The Commission acknowledged the information submitted by Morocco on the progress of FMD control activities, including the updated work plan for the next three years. The Commission noted that the serological surveillance implemented had revealed a 2,08% seropositivity level. The Commission stressed that, unless these positive reactors are followed up to rule out FMD, they should be reported as FMD outbreaks through WAHIS. The Commission was concerned that the updated programme included few indicators with identical targets over the years, making it challenging to monitor the progress of the programme. The Commission encouraged Morocco to consider revising the programme and include further activities to address the risk of FMD introduction due to the situation of the disease in the region and enable progress towards eradication. The Commission will continue to monitor the progress of these activities in Morocco's annual reconfirmation in November 2024.

Namibia: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Namibia in support of the reconfirmation of its endorsed official control programme for FMD and, in particular, the revised work plan submitted for the coming years.

The Commission noted that the construction of a physical barrier to strengthen livestock movement control is planned but based on the results of a feasibility study to be conducted in 2024. The Commission was concerned about the delay as this is an important element in controlling the movement of animals between the two countries.

The Commission commended Namibia for the advances in vaccinating against all circulating FMD serotypes in the infected zone. The Commission recommended using the same vaccines in the protection zone. It was also noted that the results of the longitudinal post-vaccination monitoring (PVM) study revealed flaws in the study design and logistics, which impaired the data analysis and interpretation. In this regard, the Commission recommended that Namibia implement corrective measures to address this issue before the next PVM study and provide an update on these actions as well as on the construction of the physical barrier when submitting its annual reconfirmation in November 2024.

Thailand: The Commission noted that Thailand had achieved the vaccination coverage target set at 100% for FMD-susceptible animals. The Commission also took note of the significant decrease in FMD outbreaks in 2023 compared to the number of FMD cases reported in 2022.

Nevertheless, the Commission noted that, according to the results of the post-vaccination monitoring (PVM), the immunity levels remained low despite the corrective action taken, which included awareness-raising activities for farmers on the importance of vaccination as a tool to prevent and control the spread of diseases. Thailand explained that these results were mainly observed in young calves (beef cattle), as 50% of samples collected for PVM were from such animals, and attributed them to the limitations in implementing boosters in young beef calves compared to dairy cattle due to the farming system and animal handling and restraint. The Commission appreciated that Thailand had acknowledged this gap in the KAP[37] study on FMD vaccination and had started working to address it by sensitising farmers on the importance of FMD vaccine boosters in young calves and by planning a PVM in this population to evaluate the effectiveness of the vaccine booster programme. However, the Commission recommended that Thailand conduct further analysis of the PVM results, including age-specific stratification, which may lead to a revision of the PVM study design and strategy for vaccination.

The Commission appreciated that Thailand had initiated in November 2023 a study on vaccine stability planned to be completed in November 2024 in response to the Commission's recommendations to implement quality controls for vaccines not only immediately after their production but also a few months after manufacturing to verify their stability. The Commission requested Thailand to provide in its annual reconfirmation of 2024 an update on the results of this study as well as on the progress of the corrective actions taken to ensure an adequate level of vaccine efficacy and effectiveness and on PVM results after the next vaccination campaign.

Conclusion: Except for China, the Commission considered that the annual reconfirmations of the above-listed Members were compliant with the relevant provisions of Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code* for an endorsed official control programme for FMD.

9. Maintenance of the PPR-free status

9.1. Annual reconfirmations comprehensively reviewed by the Commission

The annual reconfirmations of **Germany**, **Greece**, **Italy**, **Madagascar**, **Mauritius**, and **Spain**[38] were selected for comprehensive review by the Commission. Specific comments made by the Commission were as follows:

Germany: The Commission noted that commodities were imported from countries not officially recognised PPR-free by WOAH and that the conditions applied to these imports were not fully aligned with Article 14.7.10 of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission strongly encouraged Germany to provide in its 2024 annual reconfirmation documented evidence demonstrating full compliance with Chapter 14.7. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 14.7.

Greece: The Commission appreciated Greece's actions in response to its recommendations and concluded that imports of small ruminants were in accordance with Chapter 14.7. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Commission recommended that, in future annual recommendations, Greece continue providing information on the importation of PPR-susceptible animals and their products, including documented evidence demonstrating compliance with Chapter 14.7. of the *Terrestrial Code*. In case measures alternative to the ones stipulated in Chapter 14.7 are applied, especially on imports of commodities from countries not officially recognised PPR-free by WOAH, the Commission stressed that documented evidence should be provided demonstrating that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that these measures achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 14.7.

[37] Knowledge, attitude and practice
[38] Including Balearic Islands and Canary Islands.

Italy: The Commission noted that Italy has raised the issue of misalignment in the PPRV inactivation treatment protocol for raw hides and skins (as well as for pig bristles for CSFV) to the European Commission, of which, as an EU Member, Italy is obliged to follow the regulations. The Commission recommended that, in future annual reconfirmations, Italy continue providing information on the importation of PPR-susceptible animals and their products, including the progress made on the revision of the EU Regulation and documented evidence demonstrating compliance with Chapter 14.7. of the *Terrestrial Code* or that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that the alternative measures applied to such imports achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 14.7.

Madagascar: The Commission commended Madagascar on the efforts to implement its recommendations regarding the development of the legal framework and the steps taken towards the identification of small ruminants. However, the Commission was concerned by the slow progress made towards individual identification of small ruminants. It strongly encouraged Madagascar to continue its activities to ensure the effective implementation and operation of the remaining recommendations for the successful maintenance of the official PPR-free status. In addition, the Commission remained concerned by the absence of positive reactors during the cross-sectional survey as well as the absence of clinical suspects. In this regard, the Commission requested that Madagascar show evidence of awareness activities on PPR, specifically targeting farmers and other key stakeholders to strengthen the passive surveillance system. Finally, the Commission commended Madagascar for successfully taking part in a PPR proficiency test and recommended regular participation. The Commission requested an update on the progress made when reconfirming in November 2024.

Mauritius: The Commission appreciated Mauritius' efforts to address the Commission's recommendations and took note that the Animal Health Bill enforcing PPR notifiability and general disease control measures had been submitted to the State Law Office for final approval in 2024. The Commission further noted changes in diagnostic capability and that a Molecular Unit had been established, and Mauritius was planning to procure kits for PCR diagnosis for PPR. The Commission was, however, concerned that Mauritius was still encountering issues to promptly procure serological test kits for PPR. The Commission requested Mauritius to confirm the date for the Bill's approval and provide drafts of regulations on imports that are planned to be prepared after the Bill's enactment, as well as updates on the progress made with regard to improving laboratory capacity for serological and molecular (PCR) diagnosis of PPR in the country when reconfirming its PPR status in November 2024.

Spain: The Commission acknowledged the information provided by Spain in its annual reconfirmation and noted that the imports of commodities of PPR susceptible animals were solely from countries with an officially recognised PPR free by WOAH. The Commission recommended that Spain continue providing, in future annual reconfirmations, information on the importation of PPR-susceptible animals and their products, including documented evidence demonstrating compliance with Chapter 14.7. of the *Terrestrial Code.* In case measures alternative to the ones stipulated in Chapter 14.7 are applied, especially on imports of commodities from countries not officially recognised PPR-free by WOAH, the Commission stressed that documented evidence should be provided demonstrating that Chapter 5.3. has been followed to determine that these measures achieve an equivalent level of risk mitigation as the provisions of Chapter 14.7.

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised PPR-free status of the above-listed Members.

9.2. Annual reconfirmations screened by the Status Department

The Status Department reviewed the rest of the annual reconfirmations for PPR-free status and reported the outcome of its analysis to the Commission as follows:

The annual reconfirmations for the following Members were reviewed:

Argentina	Czech Republic	Lithuania	Portugal[39]
Australia	Denmark	Luxembourg	Romania
Austria	Ecuador	Malta	Russia
Belgium	Estonia	Mexico	Singapore
Bolivia	Eswatini	Namibia[40]	Slovakia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Finland[41]	New Caledonia	Slovenia

[39] Including Azores and Madeira.
[40] One zone located south of the Veterinary Cordon Fence, designated by the Delegate of Namibia in a document addressed to the Director General in November 2014.
[41] Including Åland Islands.

Botswana	France[42]	New Zealand	South Africa
Brazil	Hungary	North Macedonia (Rep. of)	Sweden
Canada	Iceland	Norway	Switzerland
Chile	Ireland	Paraguay	The Netherlands
Chinese Taipei	Korea (Rep. of)	Peru	United Kingdom[43]
Colombia	Latvia	Philippines	United States of America[44]
Croatia	Lesotho	Poland	Uruguay
Cyprus	Liechtenstein		

Conclusion: The Commission recommended the maintenance of the officially recognised PPR-free status of the above-listed Members and zone.

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[42] Including French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion, Saint Barthélémy, Saint Martin, Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

[43] Including Cayman Islands, Guernsey (incl. Alderney and Sark), Isle of Man, Jersey, Saint Helena and Falkland Islands (Malvinas). (A dispute exists between the Government of Argentina and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (see resolution 2065 (XX) of the General Assembly of the United Nations).

[44] Including American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands.

Annex 4. Revised form for the annual reconfirmation of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk status of WOAH Members

MEETING OF THE WOAH SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION FOR ANIMAL DISEASES

Paris, 12 to 16 February 2024

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QUESTION			YES	NO
1.	Has the risk assessment for BSE in accordance with Article 11.4.3 been reviewed by the Competent Authority of the country/zone, through incorporation of documented evidence, in the past 12 months?		Please provide the conclusions of the review and any subsequent actions/updates that may have been taken.	Please explain why and provide the tentative date of completion of the review.
2.	a) Have there been any changes in the livestock industry practices in the past 12 months, as described under Point 1.b.i of Article 11.4.3., including any changes in auditing practices or any increase in non-compliances detected?		Please provide an updated description of the industry practices preventing bovines from being fed ruminant-derived protein meal, as per Point 1.b.i of Article 11.4.3. Please provide the rationale for the changes in auditing practices.	
	b) Have there been any changes to the BSE-specific risk mitigation measures (other than import requirements addressed under question 4b) during the past 12 months, as described under Point 1.b.ii of Article 11.4.3., including any changes in auditing practices or any increase in non-compliances detected?		Please provide an updated description of specific risk mitigation measures preventing bovines from being fed ruminant-derived protein meal. Please provide the rationale for the change in measures.	
3.	Have any modifications in the legislation regarding BSE (except for import requirements addressed in question 4b) been made during the past 12 months?		Please summarise the modification(s) made, highlighting their potential impact on BSE risk mitigation measures, including surveillance. Please explain how the updated legislation still aligns with Articles 11.4.4 and 11.4.5. Please provide the rationale for the change in legislation.	
4.	a) Have the following commodities been imported during the past 12 months? If yes, please indicate the quantities imported during	i. Bovines		
		ii. Ruminant-derived protein meal		
		iii. Feed (not intended for pets) that contains ruminant-derived protein meal		

QUESTION			YES	NO
	that period by commodity and origins in Table 1.	iv. Fertilizers that contain ruminant-derived protein meal		
		v. Any other commodity that either is, includes, or could be contaminated by commodities listed in Article 11.4.15.		
	b) Have there been any changes to the import requirements of the following commodities during the past 12 months?	i. Bovines	Please summarise the modifications, the rationale for the changes, and highlight their potential impact on BSE risk mitigation measures. Please describe how the updated legislation is still aligned with Articles 11.4.3. and 11.4.4.	
		ii. Ruminant-derived protein meal		
		iii. Feed (not intended for pets) that contains ruminant-derived protein meal		
		iv. Fertilisers that contain ruminant-derived *protein meal*		
		v. Any other commodity that either is, includes or could be contaminated by commodities listed in Article 11.4.15.		
5.	a) Has the surveillance programme continued to report and test all animals that show signs on the clinical spectrum of BSE during the past 12 months, as described under Points 1 & 2 of Article 11.4.20.?		Please provide supportive information by completing Table 2.	Please describe why the system has not continued to report and/or test all bovines that show signs on the clinical spectrum of BSE during the past 12 months. In addition, please provide the corrective measures implemented/to be implemented and the timeline for implementation.
	b) Have the awareness and training programmes for the different stakeholder groups been implemented during the past 12 months as described under Point 3a of Article 11.4.20.?		Please provide a summary of the activities conducted, including the target audience.	Please describe why and provide the corrective measures and the timeline for implementation.
	c) Has BSE continued to be notifiable throughout the whole territory during the past 12 months (Point 3b of Article 11.4.20)?			Please describe why and provide the corrective measures implemented/to be implemented and the timeline for implementation.

QUESTION		YES	NO
	d) Have all tests for BSE been conducted in accordance with the *Terrestrial Manual*? (Point 3c of Article 11.4.20)		Please describe why and provide the corrective measures implemented/to be implemented and the timeline for implementation.
	e) Is the surveillance system still supported by robust, documented evaluation procedures as listed in Point 3d of Article 11.4.20?	Please provide a summary of these procedures and, if applicable, non-compliances and subsequent corrective measures.	Please describe why and provide the corrective measures implemented/to be implemented and the timeline for implementation.
6.	a) Have any cases of atypical BSE occurred during the past 12 months?	Please include the number of cases and how the cases were identified. Please also provide documented evidence that the case was atypical and assurance that it wasn't recycled (i.e. that measures were taken to ensure that all detected cases have been completely destroyed or disposed of to ensure they did not enter the feed or food chain, as per point 4 of Article 11.4.4.)	
	b) Have any cases of classical BSE occurred during the past 12 months?	Please attach the final epidemiological investigation report that was provided to WOAH further to the notification. Please describe any measures that may have been taken to avoid reoccurrence. Please describe the measures taken to ensure that all detected cases have been completely destroyed or disposed of to ensure they did not enter the feed or food chain, as per point 4 of Article 11.4.4.	
7.	Have any changes in the epidemiological situation or other significant events occurred during the past 12 months?	Please describe the "significant event(s)" and any significant changes in the epidemiological situation and the actions taken in response to such events/changes.	

Table 1: Record of imports in the past 12 months.

Describe bovines, ruminant-derived protein meal and other commodities imports from all countries in this table.

Country of origin of import	Commodity and quantity									
	Bovines		Ruminant-derived protein meal		Feed (not intended for pets) that contains ruminant-derived protein meal		Fertilizers that contain ruminant-derived protein meal		Any other commodity that either is, includes, or could be contaminated by commodities listed in Article 11.4.15.	
	Number of animals	Intended use	Amount	Type of commodity (+)	Amount	Type of commodity (+)	Amount	Type of commodity (+)	Amount	Type of commodity (+)

(+) Specify the type and intended use of feedstuff or species composition of ingredients

Table 2: Record surveillance conducted in the past 12 months.

Summary of all bovines with clinical signs suggestive of BSE that were reported and evaluated by the Veterinary Services.

Clinical presentation (See Point 2 of Article 11.4.20)	Number reported	Number tested for BSE
Bovines displaying progressive clinical signs suggestive of BSE that are refractory to treatment and where the presentation cannot be attributed to other common causes of behavioural or neurological signs		
Bovines showing behavioural or neurological signs at antemortem inspection at slaughterhouses/abattoirs		
Bovines presented as downers (non-ambulatory) with an appropriate supporting clinical history (i.e., the presentation cannot be attributed to other common causes of recumbency)		
Bovines found dead (fallen stock) with an appropriate supporting clinical history (i.e., the presentation cannot be attributed to other common causes of death)		

Annex 5. Report of the Development of the Case Definition for Infection with *Francisella tularensis* (tularemia)

(1 November 2023 to 30 January 2024)

MEETING OF THE WOAH SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION FOR ANIMAL DISEASES

Paris, 12 to 16 February 2024

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The objective of this report is to provide the rationale and scientific justification for elements of the case definition for infection with *Francisella tularensis* (tularemia), which was developed via videoconference and email exchange between 1 November 2023 to 19 January 2024.

The purpose of the case definition is to support notification to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE) as described in the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (the *Terrestrial Code)* Chapter 1.1.

Details of the external experts and WOAH staff who contributed to the drafting process are provided in Appendix 1.

1. Process

The Official Bulletin 2021-1 provides a synopsis of this initiative: 'Developing case definitions for OIE-listed diseases for terrestrial animals'[45].

This report and the draft case definition will be presented for consideration first to the Biological Standards Commission (BSC) and then to the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (SCAD) at their next meetings. After endorsement by SCAD and provided there is no conflict with either the WOAH *Terrestrial Code* or the WOAH *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (the *Terrestrial Manual)*, the finalised case definition will be published on the WOAH website and, following the standard-setting process, eventually will be included in the *Terrestrial Code*.

2. Background

Tularemia is a zoonosis caused by *Francisella tularensis*. It occurs naturally in lagomorphs (rabbits and hares) and rodents. Transmission to humans can occur through direct contact with sick animals, infected tissues, consumption of infected animals, drinking or direct contact with contaminated water, and inhalation of bacteria-loaded aerosols [1]. *Francisella tularensis* is considered a potential agent of biological warfare because inhalation of an aerosol containing as few as 10–100 colony-forming units can cause severe and fatal disease in humans [2].

Tularemia is listed in the *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 1.3. Diseases, infections, and infestations listed by the WOAH in Article 1.3.7. in the category of 'multiple species'. While there is a corresponding disease-specific chapter in the *Terrestrial Code* (Chapter 8.20., most recent update 2014), it does not include a case definition to guide notification by WOAH Members. The *Terrestrial Manual* contains Chapter 3.1.23. on tularemia, which was last adopted in 2022.

WAHIS was consulted on 1st December 2023 for summary information[46] on '*Francisella tularensis* (tularemia)' developed from data contained in official reports (six-monthly reports, immediate notification, and follow-up reports). To date, the disease has been reported from 38 species. In addition to rabbits and hares the disease has been reported in cattle (N=5), sheep (N=8), dogs (N=11) and wild fox (N=16) among domestic and wild animals. Figure 1 . Below a table that summarises the total numbers of countries reporting this disease to WOAH between January 2005 and December 2023 is presented.

[45] https://oiebulletin.fr/?officiel=10-3-2-2021-1_case-definitions
[46] https://wahis.oie.int/#/dashboards/qd-dashboard

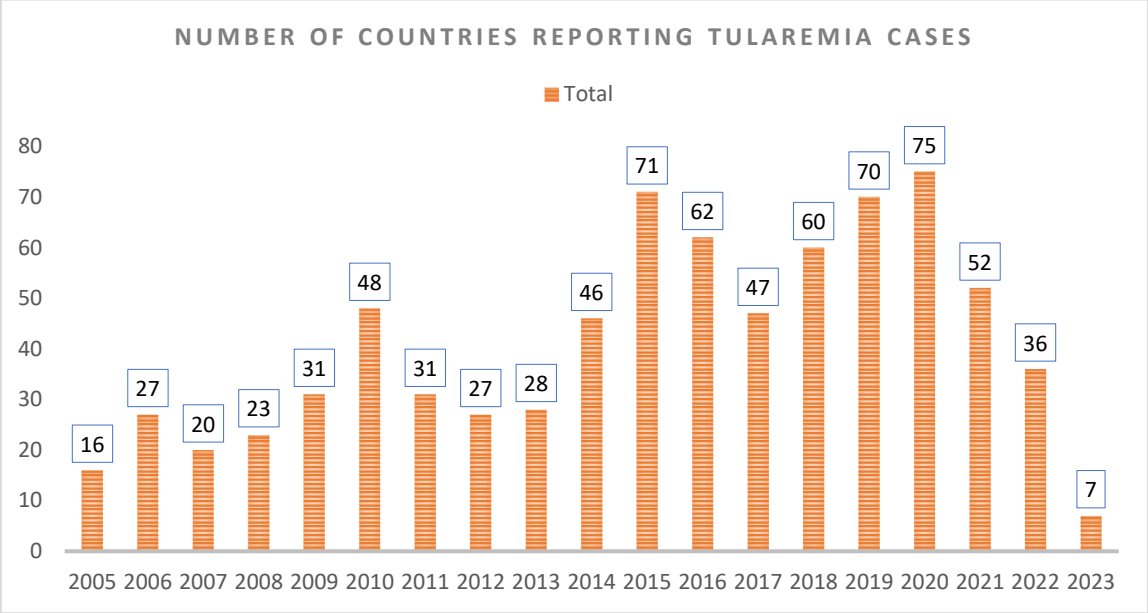

Figure 1. Number of new cases of 'tularemia" notified to WOAH-WAHIS by Members between January 2005 and December 2023.

3. Discussion

3. 1. Disease name

The experts agreed to use the term ‘tularemia’ to describe the disease caused by Gram-negative bacterium *Francisella tularensis*.

3.2. Pathogenic agent

The experts agreed that the pathogenic agent for 'tularemia' is *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *tularensis* (Type A) and *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* (Type B). Hereafter, ‘*Francisella tularensis*’ is used to collectively refer to these two subspecies.

Experts noted that there are two other subspecies of *Francisella tularensis* – *F. mediasiatica* that is circulating in Central Asia [1,2] but there is little information on this subspecies, and *F. novicida* which is less virulent but can cause disease in immunocompromised humans. In the case of *F. mediasiatica*, experts noted that it could be more widespread than what is currently known, but no cases have been reported in humans thus far. There is some suggestions that its virulence is compatible with *F. holarctica* but again, there is not much documentation on this.

In addition, experts considered that most laboratories would not have the capacity to perform typing to the subspecies level, and may simply report the case as a case of *Francisella tularensis.*

3.3. Hosts

The experts discussed that tularemia is primarily a wildlife disease with a complex ecology. Multiple ecological factors, such as exposure to contaminated natural water, an increase in the population of microtine rodents and vector species, can increase the risk of contact of susceptible hosts with infected animals which could lead to infection. Considering tularemia is primarily a disease of wildlife and the domestic rabbit is less susceptible (see next paragraph), the experts made a separate observation that it may not be a disease of priority for Veterinary Authorities.

The experts noted that *Francisella tularensis* has been isolated from more than 300 species of vertebrates and invertebrates, but it is primarily the disease of rodents and lagomorphs [3]. It occurs naturally in lagomorphs (rabbits and hares) and rodents, especially microtine rodents such as voles, and muskrats, and beavers [4]. The experts agreed that all animals under the Order *Lagomorpha* and *Rodentia*, both domestic and wild, are susceptible to infection with *Francisella tularensis*. However, the experts noted that some species, such as the European wild rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and the domestic rabbit could be presumed to be relatively resistant to *Francisella tularensis* [5]. Nonetheless, the experts considered that host animals for the purposes of notification of infection with *Francisella tularensis* to WOAH should consist of all domestic

and wild animals of the Order *Lagomorpha* and *Rodentia*. In particular, the experts were of the view that including wild species is justified as it is quite 'common' for hunting dogs to acquire infection from wild hares.

In discussing the animal hosts to be covered in the case definition, the experts considered that even if cases have been sporadically reported in other animal species such as dogs and sheep, such reports are rare and these species are considered incidental and dead-end hosts [6]. The experts acknowledged the possibility of these dead-end hosts to serve as mechanical carriers, such as cats that have been documented to carry the bacterium in their claws or mouths and subsequently infecting humans [6,7], however they did not advice to include them in the case definition.

3.4. Epidemiologic and diagnostic criteria

The experts identified **three options** (either/any one of which is sufficient) for confirming a case of infection with *Francisella tularensis* for the purposes of notification to WOAH.

3.4.1. Option 1

The experts agreed that isolating the organism from the samples from host species would be sufficient to confirm a case of infection with *Francisella tularensis*.

3.4.2. Option 2

The experts discussed whether the detection of antigen or nucleic acid (and antibodies for that matter) alone from the host species would be sufficient, or whether additional criteria, such as supporting clinical signs and epidemiological evidence would be required to classify the animal host as a case. All experts agreed that for animal hosts under the Orders *Lagomorpha* and *Rodentia*, the detection of antigen or nucleic acid alone would be enough to consider the animal host as a case. This is in contrast to incidental or dead-end hosts like dogs and cats, which can show seropositivity even after abortive infections.

3.4.3. Option 3

The experts did not recommend the inclusion of seroconversion in the diagnostic criteria as they considered that the detection of antibodies alone is sufficient to satisfy the definition of a case (see elaboration under Option 4).

3.4.4. Option 4

The experts noted that to their knowledge that there is currently no approved vaccine for *Francisella tularensis* in humans and animals and therefore any detection of antibodies in animals could only be from infection with *Francisella tularensis*.

However, experts noted that it is important to exclude serological cross-reactions with *Brucella spp*, *Yersinia spp*, *Legionella spp* and further tests would have to be performed to exclude these. In particular, the European brown hare could be infected with *Brucella suis* biovar 2 as well, and both this and *Francisella tularensis* shows a positive result on the slide agglutination test. This has to be followed up with a tube agglutination test with both antigens to see which produces a higher titre (these methods are described in Chapter 3.1.23.). Alternatively, serology could be combined with PCR and/or bacteriology to discriminate these bacteria spp. However, it was also noted that it could be rare to find a positive RT-PCR and/or 16S rRNA PCR for *Francisella tularensis* in laboratory setting.

Two of the three experts considered that the detection of antibodies, even if in the absence of clinical signs, pathological lesions and supporting epidemiological history (e.g. previous exposure or contact with suspected/ infected animals or vectors) would be sufficient to classify an animal host as a case. Notwithstanding, these experts also noted that serology has limited value as animal hosts often die before the development of antibodies. However, one expert, while acknowledging that serological tests in animals are the most sensitive and practical diagnostic tests, pointed out that these tests have some limitations, such as low sensitivity, especially during the first two weeks of pathogenesis of the disease, and the possibility of false positives in some animals. Therefore, this expert recommended additional supporting evidence such as epidemiological data or confirmation of the presence of the pathogen.

4. References

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…/Appendices

Appendix 1

REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CASE DEFINITION FOR INFECTION WITH PATHOGENIC AGENT (OLD DISEASE NAME)

1 November – 30 January 2024

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List of contributors

EXTERNAL EXPERTS

Miklos Gyuranecz
HUN-REN Veterinary Medical Research Institute
Hungária krt. 21,
Budapest, 1143

Gete Hestvik
Dept. of Pathology and Wildlife Diseases
Swedish Veterinary Agency, SVA

Ehsan Mostafavi
National Reference laboratory for diagnosis and research on Plague, Tularemia and Q fever,
Pasteur Institute of Iran

WOAH

Gregorio Torres
Head of Science Department

Charmaine Chng
Deputy Head of Science Department

Monal Daptardar
Scientific Coordinator
Science Department

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Annex 6. Work Programme

MEETING OF THE WOAH SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION FOR ANIMAL DISEASES

Paris, 12 to 16 February 2024

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Abbreviations: BSC: Biological Standards Commission; SCAD: Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases; TAHSC: Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission)

		February 2024	Next steps	Timeline
Update of WOAH Standards				
	Glossary	**Not on agenda**		
1	Ch. 1.2. Criteria for the inclusion of diseases, infections or infestations in the WOAH list	Not on agenda; at its February 2023 meeting, revisions had been proposed to the guidance document aimed at improving experts' interpretation of the listing criteria and the revised guidance was applied to the listing assessment for equine encephalitides. At this time, no specific revisions to Chapter 1.2. are recommended but SCAD welcomes the opportunity to be involved in discussions when the chapter is opened for revision.	Continue to review experts' interpretation of listing criteria and ensure consistency in application.	N.A.
1	Ch. 1.3. Diseases, infections and infestations listed by the WOAH	Not on agenda.	N.A.	N.A.
	Ch. 1.6. Procedures for official recognition	Not on agenda.	N.A.	N.A.
1	Ch. 1.11. FMD Questionnaire	Considered comments forwarded by TAHSC received from Members after the September 2023 meeting on the revised draft chapter.	SCAD opinion forwarded to TAHSC and addressed at February 2024 SCAD-TAHSC Bureau meeting	N.A.
1	Ch 4.X. New chapter on biosecurity	Not on agenda, SCAD noted that next meeting of the *ad hoc* Group will take place in March 2024; a representative from the SCAD will attend the meeting.	N.A.	N.A.
1	Ch 4.4. Zoning and compartmentalisation	SCAD informed of plan to develop new chapter on implementation of zoning	Secretariat to prepare proposal on development of chapter	SCAD to review proposal at its September 2024 meeting.

		February 2024	Next steps	Timeline
			of implementation of zoning.	
1	Ch.8.8. Infection with foot and mouth disease virus	Considered selected comments forwarded by TAHSC received from Members after the September 2023 meeting on the revised draft chapter.	SCAD opinion forwarded to TAHSC and addressed at February 2024 SCAD-TAHSC Bureau meeting.	
1	Chapter 8.X. Infection with *Trypansoma evansi* (surra)	Considered expert opinion on surra in camels and made recommendations to Article 8.Z.7.	SCAD opinion forwarded to TAHSC and addressed at its February 2024 meeting.	N.A.
1	Ch. 11.5. Infection with *Mycoplasma mycoides* subsp. *mycoides SC* (Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia)	SCAD considered the impact of the adoption of the revised chapter on the procedure on annual reconfirmation for maintenance of officially recognised AHS status of Members. SCAD and TAHSC agreed that the revised chapter will not be presented for adoption at the upcoming GS.	SCAD to review draft revised chapter at Sept 2024 meeting.	
1	Ch. 12.1. Infection with African horse sickness virus			
1	Ch. 12.3. Dourine	Not on agenda.	N.A.	N.A.
Official animal health status recognition				
1	Evaluation of Member dossiers	SCAD considered five reports of *ad hoc* Groups on the evaluation of Members' status and endorsement of official control programmes (AHS, CBPP, FMD, dog-mediated rabies and PPR). No applications were received for BSE and CSF. Six applications were recommended for recognition of official status/endorsement (including one pending a mission) and seven applications were rejected.		
2	Expert missions to Members	SCAD prioritised four missions with two of them to be conducted possibly before its September 2024 meeting. One mission related to recognition of official status, one on maintenance of official status and two missions	SCAD to consider the reports and recommendations of the missions after their completion.	

		February 2024	Next steps	Timeline
		to offer support to applicant Members.		
2	Follow up of Members with official animal health status or with suspended status	SCAD was informed about the withdrawal of status of a Member that could not recover the suspended status within two years.	No actions, until any applications are submitted for SCAD's assessment using the fast-track procedure.	
	Non-compliance of Members having an official animal health status by WOAH with provisions of the *Terrestrial Code* for imports of commodities from countries not officially recognised as free by WOAH	SCAD considered a discussion paper prepared by the Secretariat and proposed a way forward.	SCAD to continue monitoring the compliance of Members with provisions of the *Terrestrial Code* for imports of commodities from countries not officially recognised as free by WOAH during upcoming annual reconfirmations.	
1	Review of annual reconfirmations	SCAD comprehensively reviewed the annual reconfirmations preselected at its September 2023 meeting as well as additional annual reconfirmations brought to its attention by Status Dept.	Maintain work strategy for the assessment of the annual reconfirmations selected for comprehensive review in the future February meetings.	
1	Harmonisation of the requirements in the *Terrestrial Code* Chapters for recognition and maintenance of official animal health status	Completed for FMD. SCAD agreed to postpone the adoption of the Chapters on CBPP and AHS.	SCAD to review draft revised chapters at Sept 2024 meeting.	
2	BSE Annual Reconfirmation form	SCAD reviewed and endorsed the draft form based on the newly adopted BSE standards in May 2023.	The form will be annexed to SCAD's February 2024 report and published on the website. No further action required from SCAD.	
Disease control issues				
2	Advise on global strategies and initiatives (FMD, PPR, rabies, ASF, AI, zTB)	Updates were provided on the global strategies/initiatives for AI, rabies and zTB. SCAD requested for outcome-based updates.	N.A.	SCAD to receive updates on global strategies and initiatives (FMD, PPR, ASF, AI)
2	Assess recent developments in control and eradication of infectious diseases	SCAD raised the growing concern of sheep and goat pox and requested to prioritise case definition development and preferably review *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 14.9.	Secretariat to follow-up with a proposal on reviewing Chapter 14.9.	SCAD to review proposal of Secretariat in September 2024.
1	Consider *ad hoc* Groups reports falling into the SCAD remit (that	SCAD was updated of the meeting of *ad hoc*	N.A.	N.A.

		February 2024	Next steps	Timeline
	are not related to disease-Status or standard-setting)	Group on emerging diseases.		
1	Evaluation of emerging diseases	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1	Evaluation of pathogenic agents against the listing criteria of Chapter 1.2.	SCAD proposed to subject Nairobi sheep disease for evaluation against the listing criteria	Secretariat to follow-up with experts on evaluation.	SCAD to consider expert opinion at its September 2024 meeting.
1	Development of case definitions	SCAD reviewed the following case definitions: **Avian metapneumovirus (turkey rhinotracheitis)**: SCAD discussed the opinion of the BSC and experts and proposed changes to the case definition. It also provided clarification to the query from the TAHSC on animal hosts. ***Francisella tularensis* (Tularemia)**: case definition discussed with BSC; SCAD made refinements to proposed case definition. **Nairobi sheep disease (NSD)**: SCAD requested to put case definition development on hold and subject NSD to evaluation against the listing criteria. Next tranche of diseases for case definition development was identified and agreed with TAHSC.	Forward opinion and revised draft case definition to the TAHSC. Forward opinion and endorsed case definition to the TAHSC. (see above) Secretariat to follow-up with experts on case definition development	(see above) SCAD to consider draft case definitions at its September 2024 meeting.
Liaison with other Specialist Commissions				
1	Terrestrial Animal Health Commission	Bureau meeting took place; agreed on next tranche of case definition work, to subject NSD to listing assessment, plan of action for status related chapters (FMD, AHS, CBPP), agreed on convening *ad hoc* Group meetings on scrapie and equine encephalitides and taskforce to rationalise animal hosts.		
1	Biological Standards Commission	No liaison meeting, but through coordination by Secretariat, discussed		

		February 2024	Next steps	Timeline
		case definition for tularemia and avian metapneumovirus.		
Working Groups				
2	Antimicrobial Resistance Working Group	Not on agenda.		
2	Wildlife Working Group	Noted discussion of the Working Group as captured in the December 2023 report and requested to be updated on the publication of guidelines addressing disease risks in wildlife trade.	WGW Secretariat to update on publication when released.	N.A.
Other activities that could impact SCAD work programme				
1	Evaluation of applications for WOAH Collaborating Centre status	None at this meeting		
3	Update on the main conclusion/ recommendations of meetings relevant for the work of the Commission	None at this meeting		
3	Updates provided for SCAD information	SCAD was updated on: WOAH Standards Online Navigation Tool Project, WAHIAD and WAHIS platform updates, updates from WOAH Observatory and Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADs) programme.		
	Any other business	None at this meeting		