

Recommendations of the conferences of the Regional Commissions organised since 1st June 2022

30th Conference of the Regional Commission for Europe

Catania, Italy, 3 to 7 October 2022

Recommendation No. 1: Long distance transport of live animals: WOAHP standards and best practices including societal perception and communication aspects

Recommendation No. 2: Highly pathogenic avian influenza and vaccination

Recommendation No. 1

Long distance transport of live animals: WOAHA standards and best practices including societal perception and communication aspects

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. One of the core objectives of WOAHA is to develop international standards for the facilitation of international safe trade, the prevention and control of animal diseases, including zoonoses, and the promotion of animal health and animal welfare;
2. WOAHA global animal welfare strategy provides continuing direction and coordination of the Organisation's actions in the animal welfare area, through the development of animal welfare standards, capacity building and education, communication with governments, organisations and the general public, as well as support for the implementation of animal welfare standards and policies;
3. The Second Global Animal Welfare Forum (April 2019, Paris) has highlighted the need to establish a sense of collective responsibility amongst all participants in the transportation chain of animals, as well as clearly identified individual responsibility at every point of the chain and mechanisms to transfer that responsibility between transportation chain participants; the role of effective communication and coordination among those responsible for reducing the risk of animal welfare failures, the need to develop regulatory frameworks and practices to ensure a strong buy-in from all stakeholders and a commitment to practical implementation, and the importance of having a multidisciplinary approach when developing animal welfare policies including scientific basis, technological progress and socio-economic aspects;
4. There is a growing and strong interest expressed by the civil society towards animal welfare issues during transport and society's increased perception on this matter impacts on consumer choices;
5. The Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe has identified as one of the priority topics of the Action Plans, the application of WOAHA Animal Welfare Standards during transport, and is consistently supporting Veterinary Services in implementing those standards;

And considering that, based on the response to the questionnaire provided to the Delegates of the Regional Commission for Europe in preparation of this technical item:

6. The vast majority of the responding Members have a legal basis for the implementation of animal welfare during transport and the legislation generally, but not always completely, reflects WOAHA Standards on animal welfare;
7. Awareness campaigns among stakeholders involved in animal welfare issues and capacity building activities are relevant tools for promoting the implementation of animal welfare standards for transport at country and regional levels;

8. Insufficient financial resources and lack of trained personnel are the main factors adversely affecting the ability of Competent Authorities to implement standards and requirements on animal transport control.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Members develop or update where necessary, legislation that establishes a legal basis for complying with WOAAH standards for animal welfare during transport, including the supporting regulations and procedures for assessing the fitness to travel of the animals for the journey;
2. Members develop procedures and guidelines that clearly define the individual players and their responsibilities, including training needs, along the animal transportation chain (departure, transit, arrival). These also clearly define the mechanisms to transfer the responsibilities between the different players, and the required competencies to be demonstrated to facilitate the enforcement of legislation and standards for the protection of the transported animals;
3. Members develop procedures for communication between *Competent Authorities* including pre notification of shipment and report back to the sender on significant animal welfare problems which occurred during the journey.
4. WOAAH provide targeted capacity building for Members aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the controls, the evaluation and monitoring procedures for the verification of compliance of the official control systems carried out by the *Competent Authorities* and also directly to the key players involved in the transport of animals;
5. Members promote the inclusion of animal welfare courses and welfare-related training in the veterinary school curricula;
6. Members continue collaboration at the regional level, with the involvement of WOAAH Regional and Sub-regional Representations to support the development and implementation of strategies to address regional needs and priorities on animal welfare during transport;
7. WOAAH advocates and build awareness on the role and responsibilities of the Veterinary Services, including public and private sector veterinarians in the monitoring and enforcement of animal welfare standards, and increasing awareness among stakeholders for the effective implementation of WOAAH standards and recommendations on animal welfare during transport;
8. WOAAH provides appropriate technical support to Members through the revision and development of standards and recommendations in the *Terrestrial Code* where needed taking into account scientific knowledge and technological progress.
9. WOAAH provides relevant tools for the (i) implementation of the WOAAH standards; (ii) development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of veterinary legislation; (iii) operation of the network of National Contact Points on long distance transport and (iv) good governance of Veterinary Services.

10. WOAHA works closely with regional and international organisations, and donors committed to animal welfare to collaborate and support the *Competent Authorities* and their partners to implement the WOAHA standards on animal welfare during transport from place of departure until final destination; and
 11. WOAHA collaborates and forms partnerships with organisations representing relevant private sector stakeholders to implement WOAHA animal welfare standards as the key reference for national, regional and international transport. WOAHA urge the private sector to adopt private standards that are consistent with the WOAHA standards, to ensure the standards on welfare of animals intended for transport are applied consistently globally.
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(Adopted by the Regional Commission for Europe on 7 October 2022)

Recommendation No. 2

Highly pathogenic avian influenza and vaccination

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. Over the last years, there has been substantive increased risk to the Region from annual waves of HPAI leading to large epidemics. Exceptional changes in risk profile for the Region from HPAI necessitates review of disease prevention and control options;
2. Spread to domestic poultry being initially introduced and mediated via migratory birds, and domestic poultry in turn can be a source of infection, the viruses are continuing to evolve in these populations and present an annual cyclical threat and continuous risk to poultry production and an existing challenge to identify protective vaccines;
3. HPAI has captured the attention of the international community due to the devastating consequences for the health and welfare of poultry in infected establishments, poultry industry, farmer's livelihoods, international trade, health of wild birds, and potential threat to human health. Furthermore the death and culling of millions of birds incurs huge cost to government and industry and have major impacts on society;
4. Conventional control strategies based on surveillance, stamping-out, movement restriction and biosecurity measures whilst achieving success in eliminating infection and return to freedom from infection may not now be sustainable and additional tools and options to prevent and mitigate infection may be required;
5. The *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* recognises that vaccination can be used as an effective complementary control tool, part of a disease control programme and provides guidance on HPAI surveillance in vaccinated birds, to demonstrate freedom from HPAI and gathering evidence for the effectiveness of the vaccination program. Moreover, the standards on the requirements for vaccines are available in the *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (Terrestrial Manual)*, and on the surveillance methods for detecting infection in vaccinated flocks and vaccinated birds, as well as standards for surveillance and vaccination in the *Terrestrial Code*;
6. Experiences of large-scale vaccination to control and prevent HPAI at population level are limited, and a few Members apply different approaches to protection by vaccination with varying results, such as the routine vaccination of poultry targeting certain productions systems, protection of susceptible animals in zoological collections or emergency vaccination in response to outbreaks as an adjunct control measure;
7. Existing vaccines to HPAI have the potential to reduce disease, increase resistance to infection, limit virus shedding and reduce transmission but rarely are able to induce extended sterilising immunity in poultry. Moreover, several Members in the Region are currently undertaking vaccine discovery, using next generation vaccines, and efficacy studies covering a range of vaccine types to explore vaccine efficacy and response in different susceptible poultry species. Currently available vaccines lack proven effectiveness to cover all the needs in particular the capacity to match circulating viruses, protection of the main poultry species, and vaccines compatible with Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals (DIVA) strategy; and

8. HPAI is identified as a regional 'priority disease' and regional and global initiatives are being developed such as under the GF-TADs to develop diseases strategies taking into account the evolution of diseases and Members' needs. The strategies must be based on the latest available scientific information and answer to several different criteria, including safety, efficiency, and economic viability.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. WOAAH, Members' Veterinary Authorities and WOAAH Reference Laboratories for avian influenza exchange information related to the development, testing and use of vaccines against HPAI and modelling activities that inform collective assessment of possible vaccination strategies and policy;
2. Members' Veterinary Authorities continue to review their HPAI prevention and control options that include strengthening biosecurity and surveillance which remain the cornerstone, and consider vaccination programmes to be part of an overarching control strategy and integrated in emergency plans, in compliance with the *Terrestrial Code* and the *Terrestrial Manual*;
3. Members maintain their surveillance efforts, the biosecurity measures at farm level, and continue timely reporting of avian influenza outbreaks in both poultry and non-poultry species. High quality of information is key to support early detection and rapid response to potential threats to both animal and public health;
4. Members' Veterinary Authorities ensure that surveillance in vaccinated populations is conducted to detect infection with wild type viruses, and have further interventions to stamp out to control infection in these vaccinated flocks;
5. Members encourage research institutions and vaccine manufacturers to invest and collaborate on research and development of new HPAI vaccines, in particular, in new generation vaccines that offer improved outcomes whilst enabling the application of DIVA programmes, adapted to different species of poultry and conduct vaccines quality controls in accordance with the standards in the *Terrestrial Manual*;
6. Members require careful selection of candidate vaccines informed by local factors (including risk assessments and implementation conditions) and local requirements. Vaccines used need to have assurance of efficacy on the bird species, against a diverse family of HPAI viruses (currently predominated by H5 HPAI viruses) with formal systems for regular review, appropriate regulatory control and licensing, together with flexibility to update as required;

7. WOAHP through the OFFLU (WOAHP-FAO network of expertise on animal influenza) develop a platform to provide up to date information to the Members, poultry sector, and poultry vaccine manufacturers on antigenic characteristic of circulating avian influenza viruses including comparison with vaccine antigens and to enhance capacity to collect information on surveillance data associated to vaccination programmes. This information will facilitate the selection of appropriate vaccines for poultry and updating of poultry vaccine antigens;
 8. WOAHP assess the requirements and challenges for the establishment a WOAHP managed HPAI vaccine bank in the long term to support its Members in the control of HPAI;
 9. FAO and WOAHP urgently revise the HPAI global strategy to support the regional efforts in the control and prevention of avian influenza viruses of high pathogenicity, including communication to relevant stakeholders and the general public; and
 10. WOAHP to review standards on HPAI vaccination in the *Terrestrial Code* and *Terrestrial Manual* with a view to facilitate safe international trade of vaccinated animals and products thereof taking into account the latest scientific information available and the revised FAO/WOAHP Global HPAI Strategy.
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(Adopted by the Regional Commission for Europe on 7 October 2022)

**26th Conference of the
Regional Commission for the Americas**

8 and 9 November 2022
(by videoconference)

Due to the adaptation of the Conference to a virtual format (reduced agenda), the two traditional technical items presented and discussed for the elaboration of recommendations, to be presented to the World Assembly of Delegates for endorsement, were not included in the agenda. Thus, no recommendations were developed.

25th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa

Gaborone, Botswana, 21-24 February 2023

Recommendation No. 1: Eradication of PPR: Results and Perspectives

Recommendation No. 2 : Elimination of dog-mediated human rabies by 2030 in Africa – national strategies, legal framework, tools to track the progress

Recommendation No. 1

Eradication of PPR: Results and Perspectives

CONSIDERING:

1. The importance of sheep and goats for livelihoods, food and nutrition security, incomes and resilience of rural households in Africa, as well as their contribution to national economies and the emerging opportunities for enhanced intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area;
2. The continued threat of PPR to sheep and goat populations in Africa and the uncontrolled internal and cross-border movements of animals;
3. The gaps in knowledge on the global, regional and sub-regional PPR strategies/programmes and the tools to support and assess the implementation of the national PPR strategies;
4. The different approaches to the implementation of national PPR vaccination programmes, and the potential value of DIVA vaccines and accompanying laboratory tests;
5. The general lack of funds for PPR emergency interventions and the inadequate resources (human, technical and financial) to effectively implement existing national strategies for the eradication of PPR and to undertake WOAHP processes and procedures for PPR Status recognition and the endorsement of official control programmes towards meeting the global eradication target of 2030;
6. The need to strengthen the engagement of all stakeholders in PPR control and eradication efforts.
7. On one hand, the attainment of WOAHP PPR free status recognition by six Members and a PPR free zone by one and, on the other hand, the slow progress towards WOAHP PPR status recognition of other Members without history of the disease or its vaccination.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. WOAHP continue to provide support to its Members in strengthen their Veterinary Services and mainly with respect to the control and eradication of PPR through the implementation of the PVS Pathway with a PPR specific content to assess the Members' specific needs to control this disease, including training on WOAHP official recognition procedures;
2. Members and Regional Economic Communities (REC) enhance efforts in collaboration and coordination to enforce regulations and procedures to control both internal and cross-border animal movements. This should be supported by the regular sharing of information on nomadic, transhumant and trade-related movements of animals;
3. WOAHP, FAO, AU-IBAR and RECs to continuously raise awareness on the PPR-GCES, the pan-African PPR Strategy and the respective regional PPR strategies among Members and policy makers, to enhance ownership, buy-in and continued support as well as the appropriate alignment and harmonisation of national PPR eradication activities, including vaccination strategies as espoused in the recently launched PPR-GEP Blueprint to eradication, which needs to be widely disseminated;

4. Members in consultation with WOAAH, FAO, AU-IBAR, development partners and respective RECs prioritise the review and implementation of their national PPR strategic and investment plans in alignment with the global PPR GEP Blueprint, GF-TADs Strategy and regional priorities and in the spirit of cooperation under the GF TADs, apply for WOAAH endorsement of their official control programmes;
5. Members improve knowledge of their PPR epidemiological situation, by monitoring the trends of PPR in their ecosystem through coordinated surveillance activities and submit reports to WOAAH in compliance with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* regarding the notification of diseases and provision of epidemiological information. This knowledge should support decision making to target the animal populations at risk for PPR eradication activities, in line with the episystem approach;
6. Members improve their PPR diagnostic capacity through participation in relevant activities among them, through membership and participation in WOAAH PPR Reference Laboratory Network;
7. Members ensure the use of quality vaccines including taking advantage of WOAAH vaccine bank mechanism as an additional WOAAH tool supporting disease control and eradication through the facilitation of procurement of high-quality vaccines at special negotiated prices;
8. WOAAH, in collaboration with FAO, AU-IBAR, AU-PANVAC and RECs, develop vaccination guidelines to facilitate post vaccination monitoring and evaluation of national PPR vaccination programmes, with the aim of cessation of vaccinations two years before any application of official recognition of PPR free status or by 2028 in order to achieve PPR eradication by 2030;
9. WOAAH Reference Centres and Members expedite the validation of the DIVA vaccines and the regulatory approvals for field use respectively;
10. WOAAH, in collaboration with partners, encourage Governments to continue to commit to, and support PPR control and eradication by allocating necessary resources (financial, structural and human) as well as supportive legislation to foster proper implementation of relevant strategies or programmes including, among others, cooperation with farmers, targeted vaccination, post-vaccination monitoring and movement control;
11. Members enhance the engagement and involvement of stakeholders in PPR control and eradication activities beyond the conventional partners. In particular, efforts should be made to leverage on and reach out to sheep and goat farming communities, of private sector animal health service providers, farmers associations, community based organisations, and service providers in other community focused sectors, to better deliver PPR control and eradication interventions;

12. Members that have never reported PPR and do not vaccinate against the disease implement the necessary activities to ensure compliance with the relevant WOAAH standards with regard to official PPR free status and subsequently undertake the procedures and processes for submission of an application to WOAAH for the official recognition of their PPR free status.
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(Adopted by the Regional Commission for Africa on 24 February 2023)

Recommendation No. 2

**Elimination of dog-mediated human rabies by 2030 in Africa – national strategies,
legal framework, tools to track the progress**

CONSIDERING:

1. Africa suffers around 40% of the world's human rabies cases (estimated at 24000/year), with the majority being children, and mainly affects people living in rural areas, and PEP are essential for the prevention of human deaths;
2. The challenges faced by Africa for vaccine procurement and vaccination coverage due to the inaccessibility to free-roaming dogs not only in rural but also in urban areas;
3. Ministries responsible for animal health are mainly focused on economically important animal diseases which affect livestock productivity thus, canine rabies control and dog population management are often neglected;
4. With the global framework set out for rabies elimination in humans, 'Zero by 30: The Global Strategic Plan to end human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030', the existing global and Regional coordination mechanisms offer many benefits and opportunities to support WOAHA Members in engaging on rabies control ;
5. WOAHA endorsement of official control programmes is an international recognition of the capacity of the Veterinary Services and other competent authorities to control dog-mediated rabies in line with International Standards and best practices. Namibia is the first country from the African region to have WOAHA endorsement of its official dog-mediated rabies control programme;
6. Systematic mass dog vaccinations, dog population management, post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and advocacy are the key elements towards dog-mediated rabies elimination;
7. WOAHA Rabies vaccine bank was established in 2012 to facilitate the procurement of high-quality dog vaccines at special negotiated prices, with a limited constraints. It is an entry point to the rabies elimination roadmap, helping countries to implement vaccination campaigns. In 2022, almost 800,000 rabies vaccine doses have been delivered to Members from the Africa Region through WOAHA vaccine bank to support and encourage systematic mass dog vaccinations. Additionally, WOAHA has updated the standard on dog population management to support Members in achieving better vaccination coverage in dog populations;
8. Veterinary Services play a key role in addressing health risks linked to rabies through coordinated activities with other relevant public institutions and agencies. Thus, it is crucial to strengthen the animal health workforce and especially those involved in carrying out service delivery to animal owners and livestock keepers in remote areas by increasing capacity-building programmes targeted towards vaccinators, community animal health workers, and veterinary paraprofessionals. Veterinarians and laboratory professionals are also encouraged to improve their understanding of rabies prevention and control programmes;

9. Various tools and training programmes are available for Members to support the management, implementation and monitoring of the rabies control programmes which are in line with the Global Strategic Plan "Zero by 30" through the United Against Rabies Forum, the Tripartite, and other stakeholders; and
10. Rabies is a WOAAH - listed disease and Members have the obligation to regularly notify WOAAH in compliance with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* regarding the notification of diseases and provision of epidemiological information on their rabies situation in domestic and wild animals. Despite rabies being a notifiable disease in many Members, there is still under reporting of both animal and human rabies cases.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBERS:

1. Nominate a 'National Rabies Point of Contact' with the main responsibility to advocate for a rabies elimination policy, monitor the implementation of the national strategic plans or official rabies control programme for dog-mediated rabies elimination in their country and support the regional coordination;
2. With the support of WOAAH Regional and Subregional Representations, WOAAH Reference Laboratories, the Tripartite partners and UAR forum update or develop a national strategic plan or official rabies control programme for dog-mediated rabies elimination based on One Health approach, utilising the UAR Forum roadmap and available tools, while including a sustainable operational plan with adequate financial resources;
3. Are encouraged to submit official control programmes for dog-mediated rabies for WOAAH endorsement, in compliance with the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* notably for the vaccination programmes and the management of dog populations, to prioritise rabies elimination at national level;
4. Scale up dog vaccinations by using high-quality vaccines in a strategic manner and promote responsible dog ownership for a successful dog population management programme in order to achieve vaccination of at least 70% of the at-risk dog population; and consider the support of the WOAAH vaccine bank;
5. Advocate for more sustainable commitment, leadership and coordination by governmental authorities to prioritise rabies control and mobilise policymakers from health, veterinary, and allied sectors at national and local levels to ensure availability of resources and therefore, sustainability in rabies control;
6. Commit to working in partnership with multi-disciplinary agencies, the private sector, local communities, civil society, regional and international organisations following the One Health approach, to accelerate progress towards elimination of dog-mediated human rabies by 2030. This can be done through media campaigns, stakeholder meetings, partnerships with organisations and local communities;
7. Advocate for Public health authorities to ensure accessibility and availability of human post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for animal bite cases and promote integrated bite case management to prevent human deaths from rabies;

8. Strengthen diagnostic capacity of their National Rabies Diagnostic Laboratory to perform confirmatory diagnostic test according to WOAHA international standards and, when necessary, request the support of WOAHA Rabies Reference Laboratories, including through WOAHA laboratories twinning program.
 9. Enhance laboratory-based rabies surveillance by establishing routine testing of suspected animals, and improve transparent data sharing between human and animal health sectors and reporting of animal and human rabies cases by using standard case definitions for reporting to national authorities and to WOAHA and WHO;
 10. Take advantage of the evaluation and capacity building WOAHA processes and tools such as the Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway programme with Rabies Specific Content, the National Bridging Workshop on Rabies and the Stepwise approach for Rabies Elimination (SARE). These tools will empower the Veterinary Services via a systems approach and building capacity in the One Health space;
 11. Veterinary Services establish a coordination mechanism with public health authorities and local authorities to coordinate rabies elimination activities and raise the profile of rabies through the annual observation of World Rabies Day.
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(Adopted by the Regional Commission for Africa on 24 February 2023)