



**WOAH AD HOC GROUP ON THE REVISION OF SECTION 6
'ANTIMICROBIAL USE IN AQUATIC ANIMALS' OF THE AQUATIC ANIMAL
HEALTH CODE – TERMS OF REFERENCE**

APRIL 2025

Purpose

The *ad hoc* Group will be responsible for the revision of Section 6. '*Antimicrobial use in aquatic animals*' of the *Aquatic Animal Health Code*. The *ad hoc* Group will take into consideration current approaches on antimicrobial stewardship to address antimicrobial resistance (AMR) such as the One Health approach, emphasizing the responsibility of the national authorities accordingly, as well as extending the remit of the section to aquatic animals that are not for human consumption.

Background

Currently regarded as a silent pandemic, AMR is one of the greatest global health challenges. According to the [EcoAMR study](#), co-published by WOAHA and the World Bank, between 2025–2050 it is forecasted 38.5 million human deaths associated with bacterial AMR. By 2050 production losses in the livestock sector could reach the equivalent to the consumption needs of more than two billion people annually. It is therefore one of the priority areas of cooperation of the Quadripartite organisations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Environment Programme, World Health Organization, World Organisation for Animal Health). In the last years, newer approaches (notably the One Health approach) have been considered to address AMR in different fields, including the veterinary field. These approaches have been adopted in global guiding documents like the latest version of the [Codex Alimentarius Code of Practice](#) (2021), and the [Global Action Plan on AMR](#) (2015). They have also been incorporated in the updated WOAHA's [Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance and the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials](#). Taking this into consideration, the Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMRWG) and the Code Commission [agreed to start a process of updating chapter 6.10](#) '*Responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine*' of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.

Following the revision of [Chapter 6.10](#) of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, adopted at the 91st General Session, the [AMRWG has also recommended the revision of relevant standards of the Aquatic Animal Health Code](#). The Aquatic Animal Health Standard Commission (AAHSC) [agreed to start the update of Section 6, starting with Chapter 6.2](#) "*Principles for responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals*" (first adopted in 2011), with the creation of an *ad hoc* Group to update the chapters

Objectives

The *ad hoc* Group will be responsible for the revision of the five chapters of Section 6 "*Antimicrobial Use in Animals*":

- [chapter 6.1](#). *Introduction to the recommendations for controlling antimicrobial resistance*;
- [chapter 6.2](#). *Principles for responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals*;
- [chapter 6.3](#). *Monitoring of the quantities and usage patterns of antimicrobial agents used in aquatic animals*;
- [chapter 6.4](#). *Development and harmonisation of national antimicrobial resistance surveillance and monitoring programmes for aquatic animals*;

- [chapter 6.5](#). *Risk analysis for antimicrobial resistance arising from the use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals.*

The first chapter to be addressed will be chapter 6.2., based on the mapping exercise and [gap analysis](#) conducted by WOA's Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department (AMR&VPD) and the Collaborating Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship for Aquaculture (CASA). This analysis, based in the newer approaches to address AMR, observed that current advancements in antimicrobial stewardship to address AMR should be included in the update.

Membership

The *ad hoc* Group will ensure a fair representation of all our regions and the diversity of practices. It will be composed of a core group (3-4 members) and additional experts (1-2 members) that would change according to the subject involved in each revised chapter.

The core group would be composed of one member from the AMRWG, potentially one member from AAHSC, and one or two experts recruited from the WOA's Collaborating Centres, or other stakeholders across the large WOA's network. The additional experts would be recruited through the large WOA's network of experts.

The *ad hoc* Group shall be composed by internationally recognized experts on aquatic animal health with demonstrated expertise on antimicrobial use (AMU) and/or AMR on aquatic animals, with relevant experience on AMU monitoring programs (for chapter 6.1, 6.2, 6.3), AMR surveillance (for chapter 6.4), or risk analysis development (for chapter 6.5).

Prerequisites:

- Sign the WOA's Undertaking on Confidentiality of Information;
- Complete the Declaration of Interest Form;
- Agree on the appointment of the chair and rapporteur of the meetings;
- Understand that the work will be conducted during virtual meetings and in between meetings until the revised chapter is finalised and endorsed by the WGAMR and the AAHSC.

Actions

With support from the AMR&VPD Secretariat, the *ad hoc* Group will be responsible for:

1. Assessing the mapping exercise conducted by the AMR&VPD and the WOA's Collaborating Centre CASA (in particular for chapter 6.2) to ascertain if any other additional points should be considered in the update;
2. Developing and implementing a revision plan with timescales for provision of regular updates and drafted chapters to the AAHSC and AMRWG, based on the mapping exercise findings;
3. Requesting WOA's Members' feedback and refining chapters accordingly;
4. Preparing a resolution for the proposal of the adoption of the revised chapters by WOA's Members during the General Session.

Mode of Operation

1. The *ad hoc* Group will meet four times per year in average. These are 1-2 days (3-4h) virtual meetings depending on the frequency of the meetings and the agenda.

2. Email exchanges are expected to occur in regular basis between meetings to complement the discussions and information exchange.
3. The *ad hoc* Group will provide a written report of its meetings to the Head of the AMR&VPD, and regular progress updates to the AAHSC and the AMRWG, in their biannual meetings (AAHSC: February and September; AMRWG: March-April and September-October), via the Secretariat.
4. The operating language of the AHG will be English.
5. The *ad hoc* Group will consider the AAHSC, AMRWG, and WOAH Members' feedback in further revision stages of all chapters.
6. The Secretariat will prepare a resolution for the proposal of the adoption of the revised chapters by WOAH Members during the General Session.

Deliverables

The *ad hoc* Group will be responsible for preparing the following deliverables with support from the Secretariat:

1. The revised draft of each chapter with track changes as per guidance from Secretariat, where new text in the chapter is to be double-underlined; text proposed to be removed, is to be crossed over. After each cycle of revision, any proposed new edits will be highlighted in yellow to differentiate from previous proposed edits already assessed by AAHSC/WOAH Members. The first draft will be prepared based on the mapping exercise (in particular for chapter 6.2) and subsequent versions will be informed by AMRWG, AAHSC and WOAH Members.
2. A rationale report explaining the changes proposed by the *ad hoc* Group for transparency and information of AAHSC and/or WOAH Members. This will be required for all the changes made and should be conducted by article and should identify sections and paragraphs and lines where changes were implemented and reasons why, supported by existing guidance where relevant.

Timelines

Provisional timelines for chapter 6.2:

- April 2025 – submission of ToRs by Secretariat for consideration of the AAHSC.
- April 2025 – adoption of ToRs by Director General
- May 2025 – recruitment and selection of members of *ad hoc* Group; WOAH Members are informed of the creation of *ad hoc* Group by AAHSC during General Session
- June 2025 – 1st virtual *ad hoc* Group meeting
- August 2025 – 2nd virtual *ad hoc* Group meeting
- September 2025 – drafted chapter 6.2 submitted to AAHSC if relevant and/or if input needed
- September - October 2025 – AMRWG updated on drafted chapter 6.2 if relevant and/or if input needed
- November 2025 – draft sent for comments to WOAH Members
- January 2026 – 3rd in-person *ad hoc* Group to address WOAH Members' comments
- February 2026 – revised draft submitted to AAHSC
- May 2026 – Drafted chapter 6.2 send to General Assembly for adoption or send draft to WOAH Members for a second round.

Other chapters from section 6 will follow a similar process, according to the provisional timelines indicated below:

Provisional timelines for other section 6 chapters		
Chapter	Revision Starts	Submission for Adoption
6.4 – AMR Surveillance	February 2026	May 2028
6.3 – Monitoring antimicrobial use	February 2027	May 2029
6.5 – Risk analysis	February 2028	May 2030
6.1 - Introduction	February 2029	May 2030