



# Investigative Interviews:

Guidelines for national Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement

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# 1. Introduction

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), in collaboration with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), has developed these guidelines to assist Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement to prepare for and conduct investigative interviews.

Veterinary Services undertake a wide variety of investigations across outbreak investigation, animal welfare, food safety and compliance. Law Enforcement may need to become involved in such investigations when potential legal violations or criminal activities are suspected (e.g. agro-crime and agro-terrorism). There may also be cases where Law Enforcement lead an existing investigation and require support from Veterinary Services.

Interviews are a core aspect of any type of investigation as they establish facts gathered from speaking with and listening to the people involved. To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the investigative process, it is crucial to plan for and know how to conduct investigative interviews. Despite the importance of structured communication in clinical and disease investigation settings, these skills are typically not included in veterinary curriculum training, and access to such training for working veterinarians is often limited. Veterinary Services can enhance their investigative capabilities by drawing on the extensive experience and good practices of Law Enforcement. In turn, Law Enforcement may lack experience of working with Veterinary Services or not be familiar with standard farming practices and animal health norms. Thus, fostering a mutual knowledge exchange can contribute to a more effective and well-rounded approach to investigations.

## 2. Definitions

<b>Agro-crime</b>	A deliberate or accidentally unlawful act or omission involving or impacting agricultural activities and products that violates applicable legislation. When deliberate, such crimes are motivated by financial or personal gain [1].
<b>Agro-terrorism</b>	The intentional release of biological agents or toxins for the purpose of harming or killing humans, animals or plants with the intent to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives [1].
<b>Interview</b>	A conversation with a purpose [2].
<b>Investigative interviewing</b>	Systematically questioning individuals in an investigation to gather pertinent details, establish facts and uncover the truth. It aims to elicit reliable and detailed information while minimising the risk of evidence contamination and distortion [3].
<b>Law Enforcement (agency)</b>	Any entity or body that is entrusted or contracted by a State with the prevention, detection and investigation of crime and the arrest and detention of criminal suspects and offenders [4].
<b>Veterinary Services</b>	The combination of governmental and non-governmental individuals and organisations that perform activities to implement the standards of the <i>Terrestrial Animal Health Code</i> [5].

## 3. Scope

These guidelines provide useful information for interviews across a multitude of animal health investigations and emergencies. For example, effective interviews are also a key aspect of routine epidemiological or outbreak investigations.

Effective investigative interviews are especially relevant in the changing landscape of biological threats, where there is a greater perceived likelihood of criminal or terrorist acts involving pathogens or toxins. WOH and INTERPOL have developed these guidelines to strengthen the capacity of Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement in their respective roles. Interviews are central to the overall investigative process, and interviewers must be proficiently trained and prepared.

### **Box 1: Investigation types that require investigative interviews**

1. Animal welfare investigations
2. Epidemiological outbreak investigations
3. Food safety investigations
4. Fraud investigations (e.g. pharmaceutical, food and feed related)
5. Product integrity, producer statement and traceability investigations
6. Zoonotic disease investigations
7. Biological crime or terrorism
8. Agro-crime or agro-terrorism

Veterinary Services are typically trained to recognise and respond to naturally occurring disease events. However, in some cases there may be indicators or triggers that signal unusual situations. This can include unusual and unexplained epidemiology or simultaneous disease events in two or more separate geographical locations (for more detail on indicators for assessing suspicious biothreat events, see [Annex 3](#)) [6]. Law Enforcement may also come across situations that raise their concern level, initiating early engage-

ment with the relevant Veterinary Services. In these cases, it is crucial for agencies to collaborate effectively or to carry out joint investigations and interviews. The power to conduct interviews and the rights of the interviewees and interviewers should be covered in appropriate legislation.

### **Example: When is a joint investigation necessary?**

Over the past month, unusual numbers of pig deaths have been reported on five free range commercial outdoor pig farms. The deaths are being investigated by private veterinarians who have contacted the government animal health department for assistance. The farms have no direct links between them. However, several have recently been targeted by animal rights activists who have broken into the farm buildings to take photos and videos.

The cause of pig deaths has not been determined but initial investigations suggest intoxication. Veterinary Services have contacted Law Enforcement to discuss the case. A joint investigation has been established with Law Enforcement taking the lead on investigating the animal rights group. Joint interviews are being planned.

These guidelines present high-level concepts and a flexible framework for preparing, delivering and evaluating investigative interviews, addressing key considerations for various interview types. Principles of investigative interviews are described as well as a model to structure the entire interview process. An aide-mémoire ([Annex 2](#)) and [further resources](#) are available in the annexes. Designed to complement national investigative procedures and training, they emphasise collaboration between Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement, advocating for joint investigations, interviews and capacity building. The guidelines should always be adapted in consideration of national regulations and local contexts. While designed for veterinary regulatory, epidemiology and Law Enforcement investigations, many concepts also apply to clinical veterinary practice, particularly in taking clinical histories and conducting diagnostic work-ups.

## 4. Principles of investigative interviews

Interviewing is a central part of accurate information gathering, and is vital for any type of investigation undertaken by Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement.

Criminal investigative interview approaches have evolved significantly over time. Interviews are no longer aimed at simply confirming the interviewers existing assumptions and beliefs; in the past, this often involved using leading or suggestive questions. This flawed approach often led to cases being lost when examined in court (or never even reaching court). Not only did this failing have a negative impact on the public's confidence in the justice system and the investigating agencies, it was also costly in terms of investigative resources. Moreover, when cases are successfully prosecuted, they act as a deterrent to other future offenders. Thus, effective interviews are crucial to effective investigations.

To increase the reliability and accuracy of information obtained, interviewers should use **rappport-based, non-coercive techniques** [7,8]. This involves demonstrating genuine empathy towards the interviewee, seeking common ground and utilising active listening skills. By asking open and non-suggestive questions and allowing free recall from the interviewee, you can promote a more detailed and accurate reporting of events from memory.

To enable a comprehensive investigation, especially in the case of criminal and non-compliance investigations, it can be useful to interview multiple individuals to allow for cross-checking of statements and identification of any inconsistencies or corroborating evidence. The selection of who to interview should be guided by the nature of the investigation and the available evidence. The interview approach should also be adapted depending on whether the individual is a suspect, a witness or a victim, in accordance with human rights standards, national legislation and policing best practices [9].



Close up of interviewer-interviewee with open posture, leaning forward, eye contact, good engagement to model the rapport-building approach

### Principles of investigative interviews

- Investigators must be open-minded and approach interviews **without prejudice** or pre-conceived hypotheses.
- Investigators should always try to obtain **accurate and reliable information**.
- Investigators should ask **broad and open-ended questions** to build a better overall understanding of the situation and assist the investigation. Interviewers may need to **re-phrase** and ask a similar question several different ways before assessing and comparing responses.
- **Assume nothing** until there is reasonable/plausible evidence to do so.

## 5. Key considerations

### 5.1. Legislative considerations (national laws, mandates, responsibilities)

When conducting interviews for different types of investigations, national Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement agencies operate under their own legal authorities based on the respective powers they are working under. While they may have interviewing principles in common, their laws, policies and approaches to interviews may differ depending on their country or region.

Joint investigations often require close cross-sectoral collaboration, so it is crucial for all parties to clearly understand their respective mandates and mission. They must also be aware of all legislation, laws and confidentiality requirements to support these investigations.

#### **Example:**

Veterinary Services are expected to take the lead on animal disease outbreak investigations. However, if there is suspicion of criminal activity associated with the outbreak, this likely requires the involvement and support of Law Enforcement through a joint investigative approach with over-lapping responsibilities. Depending on the situation and national context, Law Enforcement may lead the investigation.



**Joint interview and a collaborative investigation**

## **5.2. Partnerships and intersectoral engagement**

There are many benefits for Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement to engage early and work together. In this way, they can be better prepared for joint investigations and interviews at the local, national and regional level.

For example, agencies can work together to:

- assess the likelihood of potential criminal involvement
- consider scene security
- ensure chain of custody for evidence collection
- consider wider intelligence-gathering opportunities.

In recent years, WOA and INTERPOL have undertaken a range of activities to champion intersectoral engagement at the international level. Overall, this develops better understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.

## 5.3. Training

Whether through simulated or actual interviews, training is critical to develop and maintain effective interview skills.

The value of high-quality training cannot be overstated. Training should be developed and delivered at either local, national or regional level, taking into account country-specific laws and procedures. Cross-sectoral training has the added benefits of fostering greater understanding, engagement and trust across different sectors. In fact, these benefits go well beyond the interview process; Law Enforcement, such as the police, can gain a broader understanding of livestock systems and the veterinary domain, while Veterinary Services can better understand the approaches and capabilities of Law Enforcement.

These guidelines cannot replace effective training and experience. However, they do provide key principles and approaches to consider when developing training. A key principle is the PEACE model, which provides a logical process to follow when preparing for and conducting investigative interviews. An example interview plan in [Annex 1](#) is available to assist anyone involved with investigative interviews. WOAAH and INTERPOL Members can use this to develop their own field handbooks and training curriculums, incorporating national-level approaches.

A useful framework for enhancing investigative interview techniques is **Dale's Cone of Learning** [10], which suggests that people retain information better when they actively engage in the learning process rather than passively receiving information. This approach can be applied to capacity building for Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services in investigative interviews:

- **Learning best practices:** Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services can read guidelines, review case studies, and attend lectures on effective investigative interview techniques.
- **Observing demonstrations and case reviews:** Watching recorded interviews (where permitted) or observing role-play scenarios will reinforce learnings through reading.
- **Participating in interactive training:** Joint workshops allow participants to discuss interview theory and practice in structured role-play exercises,

receiving peer and expert feedback. This is where active learning will reinforce the knowledge gained through reading, observing and discussion.

- **Applying skills in the field:** After formal training, new investigators can shadow experienced professionals and conduct supervised interviews before leading cases independently.

It is highly beneficial for Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement to conduct trainings together to learn from one another including through simulation exercises. This collaborative approach strengthens interagency relationships, ensures a shared understanding of investigative techniques, and ultimately leads to more effective and thorough investigations.

**After two weeks  
we tend to remember**

**Nature of involvement**

<b>10</b>	read	reading	<b>VERBAL RECEIVING</b>	<b>PASSIVE</b>
<b>20</b>	hear	hearing words		
<b>30</b>	see	looking at pictures		
<b>50</b>	hear & see	watching a movie	<b>VISUAL RECEIVING</b>	
		looking at an exhibit		
		watching and demonstration		
<b>70</b>	say	participating in a discussion	<b>RECEIVING/ PARTICIPATING</b>	<b>ACTIVE</b>
		giving a talk		
		doing a dramatic presentation		
<b>90</b>	say & do	simulating the real experience	<b>DOING</b>	
		doing the real thing		

**Figure 1: Dale's Cone of Learning**

## 5.4. Safety

The safety of both the interviewer and interviewee are key considerations during the planning process for conducting interviews. This includes understanding as much as possible about the person being interviewed such as their background, any history of violence or aggression, or specific vulnerability, and other relevant factors that could influence the interview.

The **location** of the interview is also important. Depending on the situation, it may be practical to conduct the interview at:

- the interviewee's workplace or home
- the interviewer's office
- a neutral location.

There are inherent **physical and emotional risks** associated with interviewing that must be assessed and continuously monitored. Despite the best efforts of the interviewer(s), interviews may be stressful or can lead to heightened emotions, especially when people relive traumatic events. In some situations, people may not wish to cooperate, may be fearful of the process or how their responses will be received. While it is important to approach such situations with sensitivity, interviewees should also be reminded that obstruction or refusal to cooperate with investigations may carry legal consequences.

The **safety of the interviewee** is a vital consideration. For example, the very act of talking to Veterinary Services or Law Enforcement may lead to them receiving unwanted attention from different parties. In these situations, they may prefer the interview to be conducted in a location away from their farm or business.

If there is a risk of threatening behaviour and even violence towards the interviewer, then it is especially important to involve Law Enforcement in the planning process, risk assessment and the interviews themselves. Location is crucial in these situations to ensure the safety of interviewers (e.g. having accessible exit routes).

Interviews with farmers are typically carried out on-farm, as other activities are likely to be involved (e.g. observation, animal examinations, taking samples). Although this is more convenient to the farmer, if there are any con-

cerns around safety, then an off-farm meeting point must be considered as a viable alternative.

Certain investigations require **biosafety** and **biosecurity**. Appropriate protective equipment may be required to mitigate the risk of animal disease spread or risks to human health. Alternative venues for the interview should be considered if these risks cannot be managed effectively.

## DEFINITIONS



INTERPOL

### **Biosafety**

The application of knowledge, techniques and equipment to prevent personnel, laboratory and environmental exposure to biological and other hazards.

### **Biosecurity**

A set of preventive measures for the protection, control and accountability of biological materials. Includes measures to protect biological agents and material, expertise, information and technology from illegal access and use.



World Organisation  
for Animal Health

### **Laboratory biosafety**

Describes the principles and practices for the prevention of unintentional exposure to biological materials, or their accidental release.

### **Biosecurity**

A set of management and physical measures designed to reduce the risk of introduction, establishment and spread of animal diseases, infections or infestations to, from and within an animal population.

## 5.5. Vulnerability of interviewees

Being interviewed places people in a situation of vulnerability. Thus, when planning and preparing for interviews, interviewers must **constantly manage and be aware of vulnerabilities**. The wishes, rights and dignity of the interviewee must be respected at all times, and their safety and security must be treated with the utmost importance. Furthermore, it is crucial that the confidentiality of interviewees and information sources is always protected.

There is usually a **power imbalance** between the interviewer(s) (often representing government authorities) and the interviewee. Vulnerability can cause increased anxiety, fear and stress. In turn, these emotions can impact the quality and reliability of the accounts provided.

There are specific situations that result in increased vulnerability for the interviewee. These must be recognised and managed wherever possible, and they include:

- Communication or language barriers
- Cultural, religious or ethnic differences
- Physical impairments or health considerations (physical, intellectual or psychological)
- Gender or gender identity
- Age (particularly children or older people)
- Economic impacts (e.g. concern for loss of revenue or their business)
- Prior traumatic experiences
- The interviewer's use of personal protective clothing and equipment (e.g. masks and disposable overalls).

To reduce the vulnerability of the interviewee, some common approaches are:

- Presence of a support person such as a family member, colleague or social worker
- Use of an interpreter if language barriers exist
- Careful selection of interviewers to address gender imbalance
- Non-discrimination approaches, especially being mindful of cultural sensitivities and treating individuals fairly regardless of their background.

Interviewing children is a complex and challenging area, and beyond the scope of these guidelines. If the need arises to interview children, specialist

advice and support must be sought, recognising the laws and culture of the specific country [11]. Ultimately, the priority in such interviews is to protect the best interests of the child [12,13].

## 5.6. Joint investigations and joint interviews

In general, having **two interviewers** present will lead to more information being gathered. While one interviewer is doing the questioning, the other can observe, take notes or check other details. It can be beneficial to have interviewers from different backgrounds, as one or both can build better rapport with the interviewee or can address specific topics.

While interviews are a part of the core roles of Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement, **joint and cross-sector interviews require adequate planning and preparation time**. The sectors can also learn from each other how to improve their respective questioning techniques and overall approaches to interviews.

Although joint interviews can increase interviewee anxiety, they have multiple advantages:

- A single joint interview with both Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services present is less disruptive and more time efficient than separate interviews (that may feel repetitive to the interviewee).
- Joint interviews demonstrate a united stance as part of a collaborative investigation.
- They prevent potential conflicting statements from multiple interviews, which can jeopardise criminal investigations when they are examined in court.
- If appropriate under each agency's regulations, a joint report can be developed by both agencies in partnership.
- An initial interview may be a routine single agency interview, but findings from this interview or the wider investigation can raise the need for a joint interview.

Joint interviews can be conducted according to three models:

1. **Combined interviews** where two sectors interview together, in the same room. These offer flexibility for questioning and planning, but may be harder to coordinate between the two organisations.
2. Subject-matter experts **support the interviewing team from behind the scenes**. This may occur when Law Enforcement does not want to reveal the involvement of Veterinary Services.
3. Subject-matter experts **remotely support the interview planning** and question development. This is an ideal approach if there are geographical constraints or for very large investigations.

Each approach has its advantages and challenges.

**Table 1. Advantages and challenges of different joint approaches**

	<b>Combined interviews</b>	<b>Expert behind the scenes</b>	<b>Expert remote support</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Speed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Fewer personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More efficient for large investigations</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater preparation required</li> <li>• Some countries' legislation does not allow this approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater preparation required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not flexible</li> <li>• Greater preparation required</li> </ul>

## 6. The PEACE Model

### A 5-step approach to conducting interviews

There are several models that support the conduct of investigative interviews. One of the most used frameworks is the PEACE model [14], which is used by many Law Enforcement agencies as well as other government agencies and private entities.

**PEACE** is an acronym for the five key stages that ensure effective management of the interview process (Fig. 2).

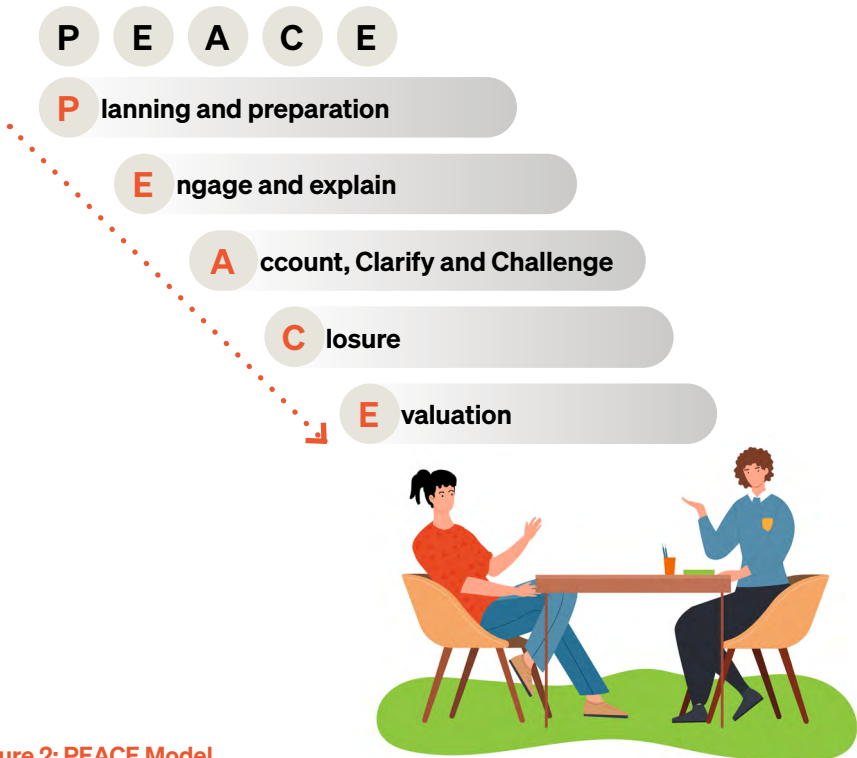


Figure 2: PEACE Model

## 6.1. Planning and preparation

Poor interview outcomes are usually caused by insufficient planning and preparation. It is crucial to gain as much background information as possible on the incident and interviewee under investigation before beginning the interview. In addition, the interview's purpose, aims and objectives must be defined.

For a joint interview, agencies must agree on a lead interviewer, and there should be a plan on who will conduct each different part of the interview. When representatives from different institutions or agencies are interviewing together for the first time, additional planning and preparation are crucial. However, do not fall into the trap of over-planning and thereby delaying the actual interview – a time lag can reduce people's recall or delay obtaining important information.

To prepare the interview's logistics, make decisions on the following:

- the interview location
- the interview date and time
- seating arrangements
- safety (including risk assessments to ensure the safety of the interviewer[s] and interviewee)
- privacy
- security.

For example, if the interview is taking place on a farm, interviewers may need to use personal protective equipment and will need to respect farm biosecurity practices.

It is good practice to **prepare and write down topics to raise, potential questions and secondary questions**. Interviewers can note down points that they aim to prove are related to the event and the potential offence. It can be useful to share draft interview plans and questions with legal experts, subject-matter experts or the prosecutor's office.

**Recording the interview** can be done through notes, a statement, audio and/or video equipment. The method used depends on the reason for the interview and the respective laws and policies around conducting interviews. Regardless of the method used, good records must be maintained for future reference, and for potential legal proceedings.

If the investigators do not speak the interviewee's primary language, an **interpreter** should be used. Interpreters must have the appropriate skills and should be briefed ahead of the interview, particularly in relation to any veterinary/technical jargon.

Depending on social or cultural contexts and legal frameworks, the presence of a support person, such as a family member, colleague or social worker, can also be used to reduce the vulnerability of the interviewee.

## 6.2. Engage and explain

Once everything is planned and prepared, the interview can commence. Now it is important to establish rapport with the interviewee and to explain the purpose and scope of the interview.

First, the interviewers must introduce themselves, including their credentials and authority to ask questions. Next, it is important that the following items are covered before the formal interview can commence:

- Explanation of their objectives.
- Explanation of the types of questions they will be asking.
- The level of confidentiality that the interviewee can expect for any information they share.
- Emphasise that the interviewee should report as much as they can and avoid leaving anything out.
- Remind interviewees to advise the investigators if they do not understand or do not know the answer to a question.
- Recorded informed consent from the interviewee.
- Explanation of how the interview will be documented (e.g. written notes and/or audio/video recording).
- If the interview is part of recording a formal statement, explain this process to the interviewee (e.g. that the statement will be provided at the end of the interview for the person to confirm its accuracy with a signature).
- During this stage, confirm and clarify the person's involvement or relationship to the investigation or event. This should involve their role, position, contact details, their background and level of expertise, if relevant to the case.

Throughout the process, empathise with possible suspects and help them understand that early and full cooperation with the investigation will be acknowledged and taken into consideration if they are found to be criminally liable.

When people are stressed, their ability to remember and recall information is reduced. It is worthwhile taking the time to properly engage and build rapport with the interviewee at the start of and throughout the interview. Body language is key: for example, maintaining an open posture, appropriate eye contact, nodding or leaving appropriate silences can build rapport and convey sincerity.

Important note: norms for non-verbal communication can differ across cultures. It is important to adapt your approach to the cultural context.

### 6.3. Account, Clarify and Challenge:

At this stage, the interviewer obtains the interviewee's full account of events.

This is broken down into three parts:

1. Obtaining the interviewee's own uninterrupted **account**.
2. Expanding and **clarifying** their account.
3. If necessary, **challenging** the interviewee's account.

It is vital for the interviewer to take accurate notes as the interview moves through these stages. To avoid interrupting the flow, the interviewer can record bullet point notes on key items to follow up on. These bullet points can then be expanded into comprehensive notes later in the interview.

When interviewees are cooperative, **free recall** can be used. This is elicited through open questions. A good mnemonic for this is **TED**:

- 'Tell me about such an event'.
- 'Explain what you remember'.
- 'Describe to me what happened'.

## START OF CONVERSATION

To gather information through uninterrupted account

T

E

D

Tell me...

Explain to me...

Describe to me...



To probe for further information...



WHO



WHAT



WHERE



WHEN



WHY



HOW

To clarify and confirm...

## END OF CONVERSATION

Figure 3. TED: Tell, Explain, Describe

Open questions provide more information about the person's feelings and attitudes around the event, as well as their potential motivations or interests, which are important to understand.

Keep in mind that in good interviews, the interviewee typically talks for 80% of the time. It is important to allow the interviewee to speak freely and avoid interruptions at this stage.

**Examples of open questions used in an on-farm outbreak investigation:**

- Can you tell how long you have been farming?
- Can you explain to me how your farming system operates?
- Can you describe to me what alerted you to a possible problem?
- Can you tell me more about the suspicious things you have noticed happening in the area?

During the **'clarify'** part of the interview, more detail can be sought about specific areas of interest. To guide the conversation, interviewers may use what is known as the flow of **5Ws & 1H:**

**'Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.'**

Another useful model is to clarify **people, locations, actions, and time (PLAT)**. During the clarification stage, avoid moving back and forth between topics as this is confusing for the interviewee and interrupts the flow.

The final stage is to explore any **inconsistencies that may require prolonging the interview depending on the responses shared**. While often described as the 'challenge stage', it can be less confrontational to ask a witness to help clarify details that do not seem consistent, either from this interview, previous interviews or other sources of information. Remember that there may be reasons why the interviewee chooses not to provide a truthful response (e.g. self-preservation or to protect others). At this point, the priority is to record their responses and not to judge their truthfulness.

Before moving on, the second interviewer should be invited to ask if they have any remaining questions.

## **6.4. Closure**

At the closure stage, the interviewer summarises the account and invites the interviewee to clarify or change anything that has been incorrectly recorded.

At this point, the interviewee can raise questions for the interviewers. It is good practice to always prompt the interviewee if there is anything else they would like to add to their account. The interviewer then explains what will happen next, both regarding the investigation and whether any related actions are required (e.g. if this was part of a disease outbreak investigation).

Depending on the situation, this is a good time to check whether there are any welfare concerns for the interviewee. This includes their family or colleagues being affected by an event, and whether the interviewee requires specific support.

Lastly, discuss preferences for any future contact or follow up. Then close the interview in a courteous and professional manner.

## **6.5. Evaluation**

Once the interview has finished, it is useful to evaluate how any new information impacts the overall investigation.

Helpful questions to think about:

- **Is the new information consistent with other accounts?**
- **Did the witness have specific knowledge that was not completely obtained?**
- **Is there a need to involve another interviewer, perhaps with more specialist knowledge?**

It is also important at this point to do a self-evaluation. How was the interview managed?

Lastly, make time to finish writing up any interview notes while the discussions are fresh in your mind. If it was a joint interview, ensure the notes made by both agencies are consistent.

## Conclusion

Investigative interviews are essential to the success of investigations for both Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement and offer a valuable opportunity for collaboration between the two sectors. By working together and sharing experiences and best practices, both agencies can significantly improve the effectiveness of their investigations, particularly through joint interviews. Veterinary Services can gain new skills from Law Enforcement, while Law Enforcement can deepen their understanding of agriculture and animal health. Successful interviews require careful planning, building rapport with interviewees, and ensuring the safety and security of all parties involved. Only by working together can the two sectors address the threats of agro-crime and agro-terrorism and other security threats around animal health.

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## Further resources

WOAH Guidelines for Investigation of Suspicious Biological Events for National Veterinary Services:

<https://doi.org/10.20506/woah.3446>

WOAH Biological Threat Reduction webpage:

<https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/global-initiatives/biological-threat-reduction>

INTERPOL Animal agrocrime and agro-terrorism webpage:

<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Terrorism/Bioterrorism/Animal-agrocrime-and-agroterrorism>

INTERPOL Bio-terrorism expertise webpage:

<https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Terrorism/Bioterrorism/BioTerrorism-Expertise>

# Annex 1

## Example interview plan

<b>INTERVIEW PLAN</b>		
<b>Case number:</b>	<b>Date and time:</b>	<b>Interviewee:</b>
<b>Interview location:</b>	<b>Support person/ interpreter:</b>	<b>Interviewer(s):</b>
<b>Background/summary of case:</b>		
<b>Aims and objectives of the interview:</b>		
<b>Points to prove:</b>	<b>Defences:</b>	
<b>Facts already established:</b>	<b>Facts to be determined:</b>	

## Annex 2

### Aide-mémoire

Adapted from  
*Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI) Guidance*

#### **Interviewing skills: essential tips**

1. Seek truth and accept it even if it contradicts your investigation theory.
2. Keep an objective mindset.
3. Avoid agenda-driven investigations.
4. Leave the ego at home.
5. Be curious and patient.
6. Good people sometimes lie.
7. Cooperative people can be mistaken.
8. Innocent people may withhold information.



# P E A C E

## **P**lanning and preparation – I

1. Relationship to the investigation – why are you doing this interview?
2. Do you know the full background information for the incidents that you are interviewing the witness about?
3. Points to prove/topics to raise.
4. Information about the interviewee.
5. Written interview plan:
  - a. Prepared lines of questioning
  - b. Documents to present to witness
  - c. Possible defences to address.
6. Visual aids: maps/sketches, pictures of badges/vehicles/weapons.
7. Location:
  - a. Set up of the interview space (triangle of chairs, tables)
  - b. Accessibility
  - c. Privacy and security (possible outside distractions).

# P E A C E

## **P**lanning and preparation – II

8. Recording (audio, video, written).
9. If the interviewee wishes to be supported during the interview:
  - a. Support person should not be a witness
  - b. Emphasise need to be discreet and not reveal information
  - c. This may include legal support/counsel.
10. Cultural considerations:
  - a. Interpretation of behaviour
  - b. Prejudices
  - c. Influence of culture on language, experience, privacy, etc.
  - d. Community structure/Hierarchy
  - e. Personal space (eye contact, hand shaking, etc.)
  - f. Terminology differences.
11. Language considerations:
  - a. Interpreter for language differences between interviewer/interviewee
    - i. Verify proficiency of interpreter
    - ii. Interpreter is briefed on key terminology
    - iii. Interpreter may also provide social/cultural support.

**P****E****A****C****E****E** ngage and explain

1. Rapport – build from the first introduction to the very end.
2. Introduce yourself and others in the room.
3. Advise witness of interview purpose and what will happen.
4. Advise of any legal considerations.
5. Explain your authority to investigate and the interview objectives.
6. Reduce the subject's anxiety (security, confidentiality, etc.).
7. Secure informed consent before commencing formal interview (special considerations for children/vulnerable adults).
8. Explain types of questions and reasons for asking; check understanding.
9. Reassure witness of safety within the interview location.
10. Assess witness expectations: the process, your role, disclosure, assistance.
11. Record full information on the witness (e.g. full name, date of birth, gender, nationality, ethnicity, long-term means for contact).

**P****E****A****C****E****A**ccount, Clarify and Challenge

1. Free narrative – obtain an uninterrupted account from the witness.
2. Follow with open-ended questions:
  - a. 5Ws & 1H: (Who, What, When, Where, Why & How)
  - b. TED: Tell me... Explain to me... Describe to me...
  - c. Expand and clarify the account: PLAT (People, Locations, Actions and Time).
3. How do they know what they know?
  - a. Check their level of technical knowledge/expertise
  - b. Confirm identifications of people, their management relationships within the business/equipment
  - c. Ensure they understand what you are talking about/referring to (visual aids can be helpful, e.g. maps and photographs).
4. Challenge inconsistencies, when appropriate:
  - a. From previous interviews (be aware of confidentiality issues)
  - b. Between details recorded in current interview
  - c. Gaps in details may be due to self-preservation or protecting others for reasons not associated with the incident/ investigation itself.
5. Invite second interviewer (if present) to ask questions.

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## **C**losure

1. Summarise the account and invite witness to add/change/delete/clarify.
2. Ask them whether they have any questions/immediate concerns.
3. Ask them whether they have any additional information to add.
4. Discuss what will happen next (who will be the future contact, referral, etc.).
5. Allay immediate concerns, e.g. regarding arrest, court, etc. You are just gathering information at this stage.
6. Discuss preference for future contact and provide contact information.
7. Close the interview in a courteous and professional manner.

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## **E** valuation

1. Assess what impact any new information has on the investigation.
2. Assess if the new information is consistent with what is already known.
3. Evaluate how the interview affects the investigation and how it was conducted.
4. Does the witness have 'specialist' knowledge that you could not fully exploit?
  - Think about involving another interviewer who does.
5. Write down your notes as soon as possible.
6. For a joint interview, ensure the notes are consistent.
7. Self-evaluation of yourself, your colleague and interpreter.

## Annex 3

# Indicators for assessing suspicious biotreat events

Adapted from *WOAH Guidelines for Investigation of Suspicious Biological Events* [6] and INTERPOL Guidelines

<b>Indicators for assessing suspicious biotreat events</b>
<b>Epidemiological</b>
Cases of an eradicated disease
Cases of an emerging/new/novel disease
Cases of a disease that is exotic to the country or the geographic region
Expansion of the geographical range of a disease
Change of host range
Suspicious location (e.g. around a laboratory, port or airport)
Novel or changed agent characteristics (e.g. changes in pathogenicity, transmissibility, stability)
Sudden decreased susceptibility to antimicrobials/antivirals/vaccines/other countermeasures
Changed or unusual epidemiology (e.g. lack of traceability between index properties)
Multiple disease events (or serotypes/strains) presented at once (where unusual)
Simultaneous disease events at two or more separate geographic locations
Changed or unusual vector-borne disease patterns (e.g. vectors in new geographic locations, agents in previously unrecognised vectors)
Multiple unusual disease events in wild animals, animals at the domestic–wildlife interface or companion animals.
<b>Laboratory</b>
Missing high-consequence pathogens or toxins
Breach (or attempted breach) of laboratory security, including cybersecurity
Disappearance of personal protective equipment, biological materials, equipment, etc.
Change in submission numbers/requests or increase in the proportion of positive test results.
<b>Law Enforcement</b>
Credible threats
Online chatter pertaining to biotreats or unusual outbreaks
Accidental findings related to other investigations
Identification of evidence (e.g. in laboratory)
Suspicious behaviour
Rumour tracking
Whistle-blower
Cybersecurity breach
Findings from darknet monitoring.



# Investigative Interviews:

## Guidelines for national Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement

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World Organisation  
for Animal Health



Biological threat reduction