

## CHAPTER 4.4.

# ZONING AND COMPARTMENTALISATION

### Article 4.4.1.

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide recommendations on the principles of zoning and compartmentalisation to Member Countries wishing to establish and maintain different *subpopulations* with specific health status within their territory. These principles should be applied in accordance with the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*. This chapter also outlines a process by which trading partners may recognise such *subpopulations*.

Establishing and maintaining a disease-free status throughout the country should be the final goal for Member Countries. However, given the difficulty of achieving this goal, there may be benefits to a Member Country in establishing and maintaining a *subpopulation* with a specific health status within its territory for the purposes of *international trade* or disease prevention or control. *Subpopulations* may be separated by natural or artificial geographical barriers or by the application of appropriate *biosecurity* management.

While zoning applies to an animal *subpopulation* defined primarily on a geographical basis, compartmentalisation applies to an animal *subpopulation* defined primarily by management and husbandry practices related to *biosecurity*. In practice, spatial considerations and appropriate management, including *biosecurity plans*, play important roles in the application of both concepts.

Zoning may encourage the more efficient use of resources within certain parts of a country. Compartmentalisation may allow the functional separation of a *subpopulation* from other domestic or *wild animals* through *biosecurity*, which would not be achieved through geographical separation. In a country where a disease is endemic, establishment of *free zones* may assist in the progressive control and eradication of the disease. To facilitate disease control and the continuation of trade following a disease *outbreak* in a previously free country or *zone*, zoning may allow a Member Country to limit the extension of the disease to a defined restricted area, while preserving the status of the remaining territory. For the same reasons, the use of compartmentalisation may allow a Member Country to take advantage of epidemiological links among *subpopulations* or common practices relating to *biosecurity*, despite diverse geographical locations.

A Member Country may thus have more than one *zone* or *compartment* within its territory.

### Article 4.4.2.

#### General considerations

The *Veterinary Services* of a Member Country that is establishing a *zone* or *compartment* within its territory should clearly define the *subpopulation* in accordance with the recommendations in the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*, including those on *surveillance*, on *animal identification* and *animal traceability* and on *official control programmes*.

The procedures used to establish and maintain the specific *animal health status* of a *zone* or *compartment* depend on the epidemiology of the disease, including the presence and role of *vectors* and susceptible *wildlife* and environmental factors, on the animal production systems as well as on the application of *biosecurity* and *sanitary measures*, including movement control.

*Biosecurity* and *surveillance* are essential components of zoning and compartmentalisation, and should be developed through active cooperation between industry and *Veterinary Services*.

The *Veterinary Services*, including *laboratories*, should be established and should operate in accordance with Chapters 3.2. and 3.3., to provide confidence in the integrity of the *zone* or *compartment*. The final authority over the *zone* or *compartment*, for the purposes of domestic and *international trade*, lies with the *Veterinary Authority*. The *Veterinary Authority* should conduct an assessment of the resources needed and available to establish and maintain a *zone* or *compartment*. These include the human and financial resources and the technical capability of the *Veterinary*

Services and of the relevant industry and production system (especially in the case of a *compartment*), including for *surveillance*, diagnosis and, when appropriate, *vaccination*, treatment and protection against *vectors*.

In the context of maintaining the *animal health status* of a *population* or *subpopulation* of a country, *zone* or *compartment*, importations into the country as well as movements of *animals* and their products, and fomites, into the *zones* or *compartments* should be the subject of appropriate *sanitary measures* and *biosecurity*.

The *Veterinary Services* should provide movement certification, when necessary, and carry out documented periodic inspections of facilities, *biosecurity*, records and *surveillance* procedures. *Veterinary Services* should conduct or audit *surveillance*, reporting, *laboratory* diagnostic examinations and, when relevant, *vaccination*.

The production sector's responsibilities include, in consultation with the *Veterinary Services* if appropriate, the application of *biosecurity*, documenting and recording movements of *commodities* and personnel, managing quality assurance schemes, documenting the implementation of corrective actions, conducting *surveillance*, rapid reporting and maintenance of records in a readily accessible form.

#### Article 4.4.3.

##### Principles for defining and establishing a zone or compartment

The following principles apply when Member Countries define a *zone* or a *compartment*.

- 1) The extent of a *zone* and its geographical limits should be established by the *Veterinary Authority* on the basis of natural, artificial or legal boundaries, and made public through official channels.
- 2) The factors defining a *compartment* should be established by the *Veterinary Authority* on the basis of relevant criteria such as management and husbandry practices related to *biosecurity*, and communicated to the relevant operators through official channels.
- 3) *Animals* and *herds* or *flocks* belonging to *subpopulations* of *zones* or *compartments* should be recognisable as such through a clear epidemiological separation from other *animals* and all factors presenting a *risk*. The measures taken to ensure the identification of the *subpopulation* and to establish and maintain its health status through a *biosecurity plan* should be documented in detail. These measures should be appropriate to the particular circumstances, and depend on the epidemiology of the disease, environmental factors, the health status of *animals* in adjacent areas, applicable *biosecurity* (including movement controls, use of natural, artificial or legal boundaries, spatial separation of *animals*, control of fomites, and commercial management and husbandry practices), and *surveillance*.
- 4) Relevant *commodities* within the *zone* or *compartment* should be identified in such a way that their movements are traceable. Depending on the system of production, identification may be done at the *herd* or *flock* or individual animal level. Relevant movements of *commodities* into and out of the *zone* or *compartment* should be well documented and controlled. The existence of an *animal identification system* is a prerequisite to assess the integrity of the *zone* or *compartment*.
- 5) For a *compartment*, the *biosecurity plan* should describe the partnership between the relevant industry and the *Veterinary Authority*, and their respective responsibilities. It should also describe the standard operating procedures to provide clear evidence that the *surveillance* conducted, the *animal identification* and *traceability* system, and the management and husbandry practices are adequate to meet the definition of the *compartment*. In addition to information on controls of movements of relevant *commodities*, the plan should include *herd* or *flock* production records, *feed*, water and bedding sources, *surveillance* results, birth and *death* records, visitor logbook, morbidity and mortality history and investigations, medications, *vaccinations*, documentation of training of relevant personnel and any other criteria necessary for evaluation of *risk management*. The information required may vary in accordance with the species and diseases under consideration. The *biosecurity plan* should also describe how the measures will be audited to ensure that the *risks* are being managed and regularly reassessed, and the measures adjusted accordingly.

Articles 4.4.4. to 4.4.7. describe different types of *zones* that can be established by Member Countries. However, other types of *zones* may be established for the purposes of disease control or trade.

#### Article 4.4.4.

##### Free zone

A *free zone* is one in which the absence of a specific *infection* or *infestation* in an *animal population* has been demonstrated in accordance with the relevant requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*.

In conjunction with Articles 4.4.2. and 4.4.3., and depending on the prevailing epidemiological situation, the attainment or maintenance of free status may require past or ongoing specific *surveillance* and *vector surveillance*, as well as appropriate *biosecurity* and *sanitary measures*, within the *zone* and at its borders. The *surveillance* should be conducted in accordance with Chapter 1.4. and the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The free status can apply to one or more susceptible animal species populations, domestic or *wild*.

So long as an ongoing *surveillance* demonstrates there is no occurrence of the specific *infection* or *infestation*, and principles determined for its definition and establishment are respected, the *zone* maintains its free status.

#### Article 4.4.5.

##### **Infected zone**

An *infected zone* is one either in which an *infection* or *infestation* has been confirmed, or that is defined as such in the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*.

An *infected zone* in which an *infection* or *infestation* has been confirmed may be:

- 1) a *zone* of a country where the *infection* or *infestation* is present and has not yet been eradicated, while other *zones* of the country may be free; or
- 2) a *zone* of a previously free country or *zone*, in which the *infection* or *infestation* has been introduced or reintroduced, while the rest of the country or *zone* remains unaffected.

To gain free status in an *infected zone*, or regain free status following an *outbreak* in a previously *free zone*, Member Countries should follow the recommendations in the relevant chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*.

#### Article 4.4.6.

##### **Protection zone**

A *protection zone* may be established to preserve the *animal health status* of an *animal population* in a free country or a *free zone* by preventing the introduction of a pathogenic agent of a specific *infection* or *infestation* from neighbouring countries or *zones* of different *animal health status*.

A *protection zone* may be established as a temporary measure in response to an increased *risk* of disease. In such case, it may be maintained up to 24 months.

The *protection zone* can be established within or outside a *free zone* or within a free country. Based on the results of a *risk assessment*, more than one *protection zone* may be established.

*Biosecurity* and *sanitary measures* should be implemented in the *protection zone* on the basis of the animal management systems, the epidemiology of the disease under consideration and the epidemiological situation prevailing in the neighbouring infected countries or *zones*.

In addition to the general considerations in Article 4.4.2. and the principles in Article 4.4.3., these measures should include intensified movement control, *animal identification* and *animal traceability* to ensure that *animals* in the *protection zone* are clearly distinguishable from other populations. *Vaccination* of susceptible *animals* in accordance with Chapter 4.18. may also be applied.

Increased *surveillance*, in accordance with Chapter 1.4. and the relevant disease-specific chapter, should be implemented in the *protection zone* and the rest of the country or *zone*, including *surveillance* of *wildlife* and *vectors* as relevant.

If the *animal health status* of an established *protection zone* changes owing to the occurrence of a *case*, the *animal health status* of the rest of the country or *zone* is not affected, provided the measures in place prevent the spread of disease and allow the subsequent establishment of a *containment zone* in accordance with the criteria in Article 4.4.7.

Unless otherwise specified in the relevant disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*, if the *animal health status* of an established *protection zone* changes because of *vaccination*, the *animal health status* of the rest of the country or *zone* is not affected.

Regarding diseases for which the OIE grants official recognition of *animal health status*:

- a *protection zone* is considered as effectively established when the conditions described in this article and in the relevant disease-specific chapters have been applied and documented evidence has been submitted to and accepted by the OIE;
- if a Member wishes to make the *protection zone* permanent, the process for official recognition by the OIE should be followed in accordance with Chapter 1.6. and the relevant disease-specific chapters.

#### Article 4.4.7.

##### Containment zone

- 1) In the event of *outbreaks* in a country or *zone* previously free from a disease, a *containment zone*, which includes all epidemiologically linked *outbreaks*, may be established to minimise the impact on the rest of the country or *zone*.
- 2) A *containment zone* is an *infected zone* that should be managed in such a way that *commodities* for *international trade* can be shown to have originated from either inside or outside the *containment zone*.
- 3) Establishment of a *containment zone* should be based on a rapid response, prepared in a contingency plan, that includes:
  - appropriate control of movement of *animals* and other *commodities* upon declaration of suspicion of the specified disease;
  - epidemiological investigation (trace-back, trace-forward) after confirmation of *infection* or *infestation*, demonstrating that the *outbreaks* are epidemiologically related and all are contained within the defined boundaries of the *containment zone*;
  - a *stamping-out policy* or another effective emergency control strategy aimed at eradicating the disease;
  - *animal identification* of the susceptible population within the *containment zone*, enabling its recognition as belonging to the *containment zone*;
  - increased passive and targeted *surveillance* in accordance with Chapter 1.4. in the rest of the country or *zone*, demonstrating no occurrence of *infection* or *infestation*;
  - *biosecurity* and *sanitary measures*, including ongoing *surveillance* and control of the movement of *animals*, other *commodities* and fomites within and from the *containment zone*, consistent with the *listed disease*-specific chapter, when there is one, to prevent spread of the *infection* or *infestation* from the *containment zone* to the rest of the country or *zone*.
- 4) A *containment zone* is considered to be effectively established when the following is demonstrated, unless otherwise specified in the disease-specific chapter:

EITHER

  - a) there have been no new *cases* in the *containment zone* within a minimum of two *incubation periods* from the disposal of the last detected *case*;

OR

  - b) it comprises an inner *zone* where *cases* may continue to occur and an outer *zone* where no *outbreaks* have occurred for at least two *incubation periods* after the control measures above have been put in place and which separates the inner *zone* from the rest of the country or *zone*.
- 5) The free status of the areas outside the *containment zone* is suspended pending the effective establishment of the *containment zone*. Once the *containment zone* has been established, the areas outside the *containment zone* regain free status.
- 6) The free status of the *containment zone* should be regained in accordance with the relevant *listed disease*-specific chapters or, if there are none, with Article 1.4.6.
- 7) In the event of an occurrence of a *case* of the *infection* or *infestation* for which the *containment zone* was established, either in the *containment zone* described in point 4(a) or in the outer *zone* where no *outbreaks* had occurred as described in point 4(b), the rest of the country or *zone* loses its free status.

#### Article 4.4.8.

##### Bilateral recognition of country or zone status by trading countries

While the OIE has procedures for official recognition of status for a number of *infections* (refer to Chapter 1.6.), for other *infections* or *infestations*, countries may recognise each other's status through a bilateral process. Trading partners should exchange information allowing the recognition of different *subpopulations* within their respective territories. This

recognition process is best implemented through establishing parameters and gaining agreement on the necessary measures prior to *outbreaks* of disease.

The *Veterinary Services* of an *exporting country* should be able to explain to the *Veterinary Services* of an *importing country* the basis for claiming a specific *animal health status* for a given *zone* or *compartment* under consideration.

The *exporting country* should be able to demonstrate, through detailed documentation provided to the *importing country*, that it has implemented the recommendations in the *Terrestrial Code* for establishing and maintaining such a *zone* or *compartment*.

In accordance with Chapter 5.3., an *importing country* should recognise the existence of this *zone* or *compartment* when the appropriate measures recommended in the *Terrestrial Code* are applied and the *Veterinary Authority* of the *exporting country* is able to demonstrate that this is the case.

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NB: FIRST ADOPTED IN 1998; MOST RECENT UPDATE ADOPTED IN 2021.

