

MEETING OF THE FAO-OIE RINDERPEST JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

OIE Headquarters, Paris, 2 – 3 October 2012

The second meeting of the FAO-OIE Rinderpest Joint Advisory Committee (hereinafter the Committee) was held at OIE Headquarters, Paris, on 2-3 October 2012.

1. Opening

The representatives of FAO and OIE welcomed members of the Committee and an expert observer from the OIE Reference Centre for rinderpest and FAO reference center for Morbillivirus (Pirbright Institute, UK).

Following the declaration of global freedom from rinderpest infection, Resolutions adopted at the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and the FAO Conference in 2011 entrusted a set of oversight functions to FAO and OIE. This included the establishment of the Committee to provide advice on technical matters relating to rinderpest post eradication activities, in particular the approval of research proposals involving the manipulation of rinderpest virus (RPV) containing material (RVCM), the approval of a minimum number of high containment facilities world-wide to store RVCM.

The Committee was reminded of its mandate and objectives.

The Committee recalled that its first meeting the Committee took place in June 2012 at FAO Headquarters, Rome. At this meeting the Committee appointed a Chairman (Dr Junaidu Maina) and a Vice Chairman (Dr Gerrit Viljoen) and Committee members signed a declaration of interest and Internal Rules of the Committee. The final report of the first meeting was approved by Committee members before the second meeting.

The agenda and the list of participants are attached as Annexes 1 and 2.

2. Review of progress on action items

A number of action items were taken forward during the period between the first and second meetings.

The Committee approved a document, which had been drafted by the Committee entitled 'Reasons for not Maintaining and Storing Rinderpest Virus'. It was agreed that this document would form a useful basis for communications material advocating destruction and sequestration of RVCM; the OIE and FAO were encouraged to use this document for this purpose with minor adaptation if necessary. Any anticipated significant changes to the text would be submitted to the Committee for approval; in any case FAO and the OIE should send the identical message to countries.

The OIE representative reminded the Committee that the newly proposed rinderpest chapter of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (*the Code*) would require OIE Member Countries to report on an annual basis on their current inventory and status of RVCM in their country. These data would be presented to the OIE World Assembly of Delegates at the OIE General Session each year and used as a tool to encourage destruction and sequestration of RVCM. At the previous meeting of the Committee, members had requested the opportunity to comment on this draft chapter. The Committee comments had since been considered by the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases and the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission and were taken into account in the chapter revision process. The draft chapter was due to be sent to OIE Member Countries for comment before being proposed for adoption at the OIE General Session in May 2013.

The OIE representative presented an update on their plans to develop two databases which would support the implementation of the new provisions in the *Code* Chapter – 1) a database to hold official global information on the whereabouts of RVCM collected from OIE Member Countries annually, and 2) a more detailed inventory of RVCM stored in the minimum number of approved high containment facilities (HCFs) tracking receipt and subsequent use. The OIE would maintain these databases and provide open access to FAO. The Committee recommended that it should be a mandatory requirement for approved HCFs to participate in the inventory/tracking system for RVCM held in their possession. The Committee also advised that this inventory/tracking system should make best use of existing laboratory data management systems and should not create additional unnecessary burden for the institutes.

The FAO and OIE representatives informed the Committee on their efforts to communicate on post rinderpest activities, advocating for destruction and sequestration. This included a joint OIE-FAO press release (July 2012) entitled ‘Call for Countries to comply with Moratorium on Research Using Live rinderpest virus’. This press release had received extensive media coverage, and followed by a short article in *Nature News & Comment* section on the following month, entitled ‘Officials Act to Secure Cattle-plague virus’. One of the Committee members had contributed to this article. FAO also prepared an FAO-OIE joint short communication article to be submitted for publication in a scientific journal.

The Committee recommended that FAO and the OIE should do more to communicate on post rinderpest eradication activities, particularly in reminding Member Countries of their obligations to implement OIE and FAO Resolutions, notably destruction and sequestration of remaining stocks of RVCM.

The FAO representative presented draft guidance on developing national level contingency plans to assist countries in drawing up preparedness plans for possible reoccurrences of rinderpest. The Committee acknowledged the efforts that had gone into drafting this document and recommended some revisions including, expanding citations and references to include existing relevant OIE standards and guidance, and FAO guidance.

The Royal Veterinary College (UK) and AusVet Animal Health Service (Australia) risk assessment on the possible reoccurrence of rinderpest had been discussed at the previous Committee meeting. Since then the Committee had submitted written comments which had been referred to, and acknowledged by the authors. The Committee agreed on the value of this assessment in highlighting that there remained a risk of rinderpest reoccurrence through accidental or deliberate release whilst RVCM were still kept in an unacceptably high number of countries and institutes world-wide. The Committee also agreed that there was no further role for the Committee in commenting on the risk assessment.

3. Research and studies involving RPV

The Committee agreed that research involving the manipulation of RVCM should be limited to the minimum necessary; the Committee would therefore not be recommending a set of rinderpest research priorities as such.

However the Committee acknowledged its role in reviewing any such research proposals submitted to the OIE and FAO for approval. A core criterion for approving such proposals would be whether the research ultimately aimed to improve food security in the context of animal health. The Committee agreed that, before its next meeting, a procedure for reviewing research proposals should be developed. It was noted that new research proposals would be submitted to the Committee for review through the FAO and OIE Secretariat. Communication with the applicants would be maintained through the Secretariat.

The Secretariat reminded the Committee of the importance for the Committee to take its decision in an impartial and transparent manner, including through appropriate management of potential conflicts of interest. In assessing future research proposals, the Committee would take due note of all views expressed by its members and non-members (observers) if any, but those in a conflict-of-interest situation would not participate in decision-making on specific topics involving an obvious or declared conflict of interest.

A concept note proposing to assess whether inoculation of livestock with PPR vaccine could protect against infection rinderpest virus was presented to the Committee by the expert from Pirbright Institute. Some members of the Committee indicated that similar studies had been conducted and the results were not conclusive. The Committee requested that Pirbright Institute submit a full and detailed proposal to the Secretariat, justifying the research in the context of food security, for its review before its next meeting. The Committee also agreed to review existing data on similar studies.

4. Sequestration and destruction

The Secretariat reiterated that a primary role of the Committee was to provide guidance on approving HCFs for storing RVCM. It was highlighted that there was an urgent need to move forward in approving a minimum necessary number of HCFs. This would first require an approval mechanism to be in place. Key elements in enabling this process would be provision of guidance for institutes wishing to apply for the status and a set of criteria to guide the Committee in reviewing applications.

In this connection, a draft document prepared by the Committee entitled ‘Categories for Institutes with a Valid Reason for Obtaining or Storing Rinderpest Virus’ was discussed. It was agreed that this document could provide a framework for developing criteria for approval of HCFs and that it would also be useful for informing policy on a minimum capacity of HCFs required at a global level. It was agreed that the Committee would revise the document to reflect these objectives, and that the Secretariat, in collaboration with IAEA, would develop guidance for applicant institutes and criteria for reviewing proposals objectively and consistently. One criterion for approval should be an agreement to maintain a virus inventory.

OIE and FAO Reference Centres for rinderpest should be encouraged to submit applications to OIE and FAO for approval as HCFs for storing RVCM, once an application form to this end had been finalised.

5. FAO-OIE Concept note ‘The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Organisation for Animal Health - Required Activities to Maintain Global Freedom from Rinderpest’

OIE and FAO had been active in seeking funds to support post rinderpest eradication activities. Acknowledging the potential threat from accidental or deliberate release of rinderpest virus and the considerable impact should a release occur, the G8 Global Partnership against Weapons of Mass Destruction had been supportive of providing funding to enable such activities. In this context FAO and OIE developed a concept note, highlighting key action that each organisation proposed to take forward, with an estimated budget for each activity. These activities were in accordance with the FAO-OIE Agreement on Joint Actions for Maintaining the World Free from Rinderpest, signed in June 2012 between the two Organisations. The Secretariat summarised the contents of the concept note and informed the Committee of its current status.

The Committee welcomed OIE and FAO’s efforts to seek much needed funding, including to maintain the activities of the Committee, and endorsed the principles in the concept note.

6. Preparedness

The Committee emphasised the importance of maintaining vigilance to reoccurrences of rinderpest, including through surveillance. Awareness about the signs of disease should be maintained through communication material, training, and the maintenance or inclusion of rinderpest in veterinary curricula.

The Committee recommended that strategic rinderpest vaccine stores should be maintained in selected locations so that countries would have access should the disease reoccur. The Committee suggested that FAO collate global information on the number of vaccine doses currently stored by countries and explore the possibility of conducting a modelling exercise (if not already done) to determine the required size and location of vaccine stores. The outcomes of the study on PPR vaccines described under agenda item 3 may lead to the modification of plans for vaccine stores.

7. Work plan

The Committee agreed on a work plan to be completed before the next meeting.

8. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would take place at FAO Headquarters in Rome on 26-27 February 2013.

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Agenda

1. Opening
 - a. Welcome and introductory remarks
 - b. Adoption of agenda

2. Review of progress on action items
 - a. Reasons for not maintaining stores of RPV
 - b. Communication/ awareness raising
 - c. Transparency and databases
 - d. Contingency plans
 - e. Risk assessment review
 - f. Research
 - g. Categories of institute with valid reason to store RPV
 - h. Destruction and sequestration

3. Research and studies involving RPV
 - a. Agree on priorities for RPV research
 - b. Develop criteria and a protocol for advising FAO and OIE on research proposals
 - c. PPR vaccine/RPV challenge study
 - d. Review any proposals that have been received

4. Sequestration and destruction
 - a. Annual reporting to OIE – update on Code Chapter
 - b. Develop criteria and protocol for approving high containment facilities (HCF)

5. OIE-FAO concept note for funding
 6. Preparedness
 - a. Guidelines on surveillance
 - b. Contingency plans
 - c. Vaccines
 7. Communication and advocacy
 - a. Press coverage
 - b. Scientific publications
 - c. Other communication
 8. Next meeting
 9. Any other business
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