



# World information on animal diseases

One of the primary objectives of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is to ensure transparency of the global animal health situation by providing information on animal diseases worldwide. OIE Member Countries have a legal obligation to report their animal disease situation – including the zoonoses situation – in a timely and transparent manner. To help them fulfil this duty, the OIE has developed the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) with which the Organisation's 180 Member Countries are directly connected via the internet. This unique comprehensive database is a milestone in the OIE's efforts to improve the transparency, efficiency and speed with which information on the global animal health situation is disseminated throughout the world.

### KEY FACTS

- Transparency and reporting on their animal disease situation is a legal obligation for OIE Member Countries.
- The OIE strives to ensure transparency of the world animal health situation in order to better control diseases and prevent their spread.
- WAHIS is a unique database which provides highly reliable information on the presence of diseases in domestic animals and wildlife; 180 countries are connected to the database via the OIE server.
- There are currently 119 OIE-listed important terrestrial and aquatic diseases.

### ENSURING GLOBAL TRANSPARENCY ON ANIMAL HEALTH

In a globalised world and at a time of exponential growth in travel and trade, pathogens are constantly crossing borders, continents and oceans. 60% of the pathogens that affect humans are of animal origin. An effective early warning system when diseases are detected at their source is therefore crucial so that they can be quickly controlled. The OIE is, along with the World Health Organization (WHO), one of the two world organisations to have a global legal framework allowing them to collect and disseminate world health information.

By notifying the OIE of epidemiological events, a country helps to promote animal and public health worldwide, thereby gaining the trust of its trade partners and of the international community.

The [OIE-List](#) of terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases to be notified currently includes 119 diseases and is reviewed on a regular basis and adopted by the World Assembly of Delegates.

The World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department is entirely dedicated to processing and validating animal disease notifications and reports but also to actively searching for epidemiological events and for rumours found in the media, on the Internet or any other non-official sources. Unofficial information is evaluated and, when deemed relevant, is verified by the OIE with the veterinary authority concerned with a request for official confirmation or denial. Only official information is released by the OIE.

### Legal responsibility of Member Countries

On becoming an OIE Member, each country undertakes to report on the animal health situation within its territory in a timely and transparent manner, and regardless of whether disease events are naturally occurring or deliberate.

Withholding information from the OIE on relevant diseases, for whatever reasons, would constitute a violation of Member Countries' obligations under the Organic Statutes.

See also: [Global Legal Basis for Notification of Animal Diseases](#)

### THE WORLD ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM (WAHIS)

OIE Member Countries use the WAHIS web application to fulfil their obligation to supply information through official reports on any relevant domestic animal or wildlife disease, including zoonoses, detected within their territory. Some non-member countries (some small islands of the Pacific and the Caribbean) also provide information, on a voluntary basis, to contribute to the transparency of the world's sanitary situation.



Since 2005, all information on relevant epidemiological events and animal health reports from all Member Countries and some non-member countries are publicly available and can be found online, on the [WAHIS Interface](#). All available data

on terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases, including zoonoses, can be visualised by country, region, week, month and year.

[Learn more about WAHIS.](#)

### One Health

The OIE shares this work and verification results with its partners, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), on the joint FAO/OIE/WHO Global Early Warning and Response System (GLEWS) platform.

GLEWS combines the alert and relevant response mechanisms of the three organisations in order to coordinate the verification procedures for diseases worldwide.

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## DIFFERENT NOTIFICATION MODALITIES

WAHIS has two components:

### Early warning system

It provides information on relevant epidemiological events or emerging diseases, through 'alert messages' generated upon receipt of immediate notifications.

When an exceptional epidemiological event occurs, the affected Member Country must submit an immediate notification to the OIE. This country must then send weekly follow-up reports describing progress and the results of the applied control measures. Once the event has been brought under control a final report must be submitted.

If the disease becomes sufficiently stable, the country will officially declare it in a weekly follow-up report and will subsequently report any outbreaks of the disease in the six-monthly reports.

### Continuous surveillance system

This system monitors the presence or absence of the OIE-Listed diseases over time.

The six-monthly reports describe the animal health situation regarding all 119 OIE-Listed terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases, reporting the presence or absence of these diseases in a country, the control measures applied and also quantitative data on outbreaks.

Member Countries are also required to provide an annual report which covers: occurrences of zoonoses in humans, national animal population figures, the number of veterinary staff, the national Reference Laboratories and their diagnostic and, where appropriate, vaccine production capabilities.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF EPIDEMIOLOGICAL EVENTS TO BE NOTIFIED TO THE OIE

Whenever one of the following important epidemiological events occurs in an OIE Member Country, it must be notified through WAHIS or by fax or e-mail, within 24 hours, in order to inform the international community:

- first occurrence of a listed disease, infection or infestation in a country, a zone or a compartment;
- re-occurrence of a listed disease, infection or infestation in a country, a zone or a compartment following the final report that declared the previous outbreak(s) ended;
- first occurrence of a new strain of a pathogen of a listed disease, infection or infestation in a country, a zone or a compartment;
- a sudden and unexpected increase in morbidity or mortality caused by the aetiological agent of a listed disease, infection or infestation present within a country, a zone or a compartment;
- occurrence of a listed disease, infection or infestation in an unusual host species.

### Focus on emerging diseases

OIE Member Countries must report any emerging disease detected on their territory.

An emerging disease is defined as a new occurrence in an animal of a disease, infection or infestation, causing a significant impact on animal or public health resulting from either:

- a change of a known pathogenic agent
- its spread to a new geographical area or species
- a previously unrecognised pathogenic agent or disease diagnosed for the first time.

### WAHIS-*Wild* Interface



In December 2013, the OIE launched a newly developed web application named *WAHIS-Wild* Interface to make publicly available all the information collected on non OIE-Listed diseases of wildlife.

The OIE, through its mission to safeguard animal health and biodiversity, was a precursor in recognising the importance of having a global knowledge of the disease situation in wild animals, which have the potential to be reservoirs, hosts or victims of particular diseases.

Consequently, a specific surveillance procedure for wildlife was defined by a working group composed of experts from several Member Countries. Since 1993, the OIE has been collecting information on specific diseases of wildlife that do not meet the OIE's criteria to be listed. This information on 53 infectious or non-infectious diseases affecting wildlife is provided voluntarily and on an annual basis by OIE Member Countries.

These diseases have been selected by OIE's experts due to their importance for human health, wildlife health and environmental integrity and biodiversity.

## THE ROLE OF DELEGATES AND NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

Each OIE Member Country appoints a national Delegate, who represents his/her country within the OIE and nominates a national Focal Point for Animal Disease Notification to the OIE. The Focal Point is in charge of notifying animal diseases to the OIE Headquarters in Paris. The data provided by these Focal Points to WAHIS constitute the reference information source regarding their national terrestrial and aquatic health situation.

The OIE has therefore set up training programmes for national Focal Points. The aim of these programmes is to support the capacity building of the Veterinary Services by explaining and clarifying the role and responsibilities of Delegates and Focal Points and to facilitate networking and harmonised approaches amongst OIE Member Countries.

### For more information

- [WAHIS Interface](#)
- [WAHIS-\*Wild\* Interface](#)
- [OIE \*Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Notification of diseases, infections and infestations, and provision of epidemiological information\*](#)
- [OIE \*Aquatic Animal Health Code, Notification of diseases and epidemiological information\*](#)

World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department  
[information.dept@oie.int](mailto:information.dept@oie.int)