

OIE CONSIDERATIONS ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY MEASURES FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE RELATED TO COVID-19 | 16 December 2020

CONTEXT

In December 2019, human cases of pneumonia of unknown origin were reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China (People's Rep. of). A new Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was identified as the causative agent by Chinese Authorities. Since then, human cases have been reported by most countries around the world and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) event was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be a pandemic.

In the context of COVID-19, the question of whether international trade in live animals and animal products¹ may pose a risk to the health of humans or animals must be considered by countries as they attempt to balance the protection of human health against maintenance of sustainable food supply chains and movements of companion animals. It is important that trade-related decisions are fully informed by science, are no more restrictive than is necessary to provide adequate sanitary protection, and consider other strategic imperatives and needs such as food security.

The International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee's statement regarding the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic recommended strengthening the global food supply chain and mitigating possible disruptions to the food supply, especially for vulnerable populations².

CONSIDERATIONS

- International trade in live animals and animal products is critical to the support of food security and economic activity.
- The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges that may affect the international trading environment, and may potentially impact the capacity of OIE Members' Competent Authorities to deliver veterinary services efficiently.
- OIE Members' Competent Authorities need to ensure that sanitary safety and veterinary certification continue consistently to be provided in accordance with International Standards, including OIE Standards.
- SARS-CoV-2 can be transmitted from humans to susceptible species³. In certain circumstances such as intensive mink farming, SARS-CoV-2 can circulate within the animals and be transmitted back to humans. Nevertheless, animals do not play a significant role in the epidemiology of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which is sustained by human-to-human transmission.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OIE MEMBERS

That Members work collaboratively and cooperatively during the COVID-19 pandemic to:

- continue to facilitate safe international movement of live animals and animal products in accordance with provisions of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, in particular Sections 2 (Risk Analysis), 4 (Disease Prevention and Control) and 5 (Trade Measures, Import/Export Procedures and Veterinary Certification)
- introduce no COVID-19-related sanitary measures unless and until these have been shown necessary to protect human or animal health, are scientifically justified by a risk analysis, and are fully in line with relevant International Standards
- continue implementing OIE standards under WTO SPS principles, and (where possible) apply administrative flexibility to minimize the impact that this pandemic may have on procedural aspects of trade.

¹ Here, 'animal products' means 'products of animal origin, animal genetic material and biological products'.

² [https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-05-2020-statement-on-the-third-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-05-2020-statement-on-the-third-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19))

³ OIE (2020). - Infection with SARS-CoV-2 in animals. OIE Technical Factsheet. OIE, Paris, France, 6 pp. Available at: www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/MM/EN_2_Factsheet_SARS-CoV-2_v8_final.pdf (accessed on 16 December 2020).