

Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission Report

September 2007

CHAPTER 1.3.5.

ZONING AND COMPARTMENTALISATION

Article 1.3.5.1.

Introduction

For the purposes of the *Terrestrial Code*, ‘zoning’ and ‘regionalisation’ have the same meaning.

Given the difficulty of establishing and maintaining a *disease* free status for an entire country, especially for *diseases* the entry of which is difficult to control through measures at national boundaries, there may be benefits to a Member in establishing and maintaining a *subpopulation* with a distinct health status within its territory. *Subpopulations* may be separated by natural or artificial geographical barriers or, in certain situations, by the application of appropriate management practices.

Zoning and compartmentalisation are procedures implemented by a country under the provisions of this chapter with a view to defining *subpopulations* of distinct health status within its territory for the purpose of *disease* control and/or *international trade*. While zoning applies to an animal *subpopulation* defined primarily on a geographical basis (using natural, artificial or legal boundaries), compartmentalisation applies to an animal *subpopulation* defined primarily by management and husbandry practices related to biosecurity. In practice, spatial considerations and good management including *biosecurity plans* play important roles in the application of both concepts.

A particular application of the concept of zoning is the establishment of a *containment zone*. In the event of a limited *outbreak* of a specified *disease* within an otherwise free country or *zone*, a single *containment zone*, which includes all *cases*, can be established for the purpose of minimizing the impact on the entire country or *zone*.

This chapter is to assist OIE Members wishing to establish and maintain different *subpopulations* within their territory using the principles of compartmentalisation and zoning. These principles should be applied in accordance with the measures recommended in the relevant *disease* chapter(s). This chapter also outlines a process through which trading partners may recognise such *subpopulations*. This process is best implemented by trading partners through establishing parameters and gaining agreement on the necessary measures prior to *disease outbreaks*.

Before trade in *animals* or their products may occur, an *importing country* needs to be satisfied that its *animal health status* will be appropriately protected. In most cases, the import regulations developed will rely in part on judgements made about the effectiveness of sanitary procedures undertaken by the *exporting country*, both at its borders and within its territory.

As well as contributing to the safety of *international trade*, zoning and compartmentalisation may assist *disease* control or eradication within Members' Countries. Zoning may encourage the more efficient use of resources within certain parts of a country and compartmentalisation may allow the functional separation of a *subpopulation* from other domestic or wild animals through biosecurity measures, which a *zone* (through geographical separation) would not achieve. Following a *disease outbreak*, the use of compartmentalization may allow a Member to take advantage of epidemiological links among *subpopulations* or common practices relating to biosecurity, despite diverse geographical locations, to facilitate *disease* control and/or the continuation of trade.

Zoning and compartmentalisation cannot be applied to all *diseases* but separate requirements will be developed for each *disease* for which the application of zoning or compartmentalisation is considered appropriate.

To regain free status following a *disease outbreak* in a *zone* or *compartment*, Members should follow the recommendations in the relevant *disease* chapter in the *Terrestrial Code*.

Article 1.3.5.2.

General considerations

The *Veterinary Services* of an *exporting country* which is establishing a *zone* or *compartment* within its territory for *international trade* purposes should clearly define the *subpopulation* in accordance with the recommendations in the relevant chapters in the *Terrestrial Code*, including those on surveillance, and the identification and traceability of live animals. The *Veterinary Services* of an *exporting country* should be able to explain to the *Veterinary Services* of an *importing country* the basis for its claim of a distinct *animal health status* for the *zone* or *compartment* in such terms.

The procedures used to establish and maintain the distinct *animal health status* of a *zone* or *compartment* should be appropriate to the particular circumstances, and will depend on the epidemiology of the *disease*, environmental factors and applicable biosecurity measures.

The authority, organisation and infrastructure of the *Veterinary Services*, including laboratories, must be clearly documented in accordance with the chapter on the evaluation of *Veterinary Services* of the *Terrestrial Code*, to provide confidence in the integrity of the *zone* or *compartment*. The final authority of the *zone* or *compartment*, for the purposes of domestic and *international trade*, lies with the *Veterinary Authority*.

In the context of maintaining the animal health status of a population, references to ‘import’, ‘importation’ and ‘imported animals/products’ found in the *Terrestrial Code* apply both to importation into a country and to the movement of animals and their products into *zones* and *compartments*. Such movements should be the subject of appropriate measures to preserve the health status of the *zone/compartment*.

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*.

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* certifies that this is the case.

The *exporting country* should conduct an assessment of the resources needed and available to establish and maintain a *zone* or *compartment* for *international trade* purposes. These include the human and financial resources, and the technical capability of the *Veterinary Services* (and of the relevant industry, in the case of a *compartment*) including *disease* surveillance and diagnosis.

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

Industry’s responsibilities include the application of biosecurity measures, documenting and recording movements of animals, quality assurance schemes, monitoring the efficacy of the measures, documenting corrective actions, conducting surveillance, rapid reporting and maintenance of records in a readily accessible form.

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

Article 1.3.5.3.

Principles for defining a zone or compartment, including containment zone

In conjunction with the above considerations, the following principles should apply when Members 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 and/or legal boundaries, and made public through official channels.

2. Establishment of a *containment zone* should be based on a rapid response including appropriate standstill of movement of animals and *commodities* upon notification of suspicion of the specified *disease* and the demonstration that the *outbreak* is contained within this *zone* through epidemiological investigation (trace-back, trace-forward) after confirmation of *infection*. The primary *outbreak* and likely source of the *outbreak* should be identified and all *cases* shown to be epidemiologically linked. For the effective establishment of a *containment zone*, it is necessary to demonstrate that there have been no new *cases* in the *containment zone* within a minimum of two *incubation periods* from the last detected *case*.

A *stamping-out policy* or another effective control strategy should be applied and the susceptible animal population within the *containment zones* should be clearly identifiable as belonging to the *containment zone*. Increased passive and targeted surveillance in accordance with Appendix 3.8.7. in the rest of the country or *zone* should be carried out and has not detected any evidence of *infection*. Measures to prevent spread of the *infection* from the *containment zone* to the rest of the country or *zone*, including ongoing surveillance in the *containment zone*, should be in place.

The free status of the areas outside the *containment zone* would be suspended pending the establishment of the *containment zone*. The suspension of free status of these areas could be lifted, once the *containment zone* is clearly established, irrespective of the provisions of the *disease* specific chapter.

The recovery of the free status of the *containment zone* should follow the provisions of the *disease* specific chapter.

23. 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 made public through official channels.
34. Animals and herds belonging to such *subpopulations* need to be recognisable as such through a clear epidemiological separation from other animals and all things presenting a *disease* risk. For a *zone* or *compartment*, the *Veterinary Authority* should document in detail the measures taken to ensure the identification of the *subpopulation* and the establishment and maintenance of its *animal health status* through a *biosecurity plan*. The measures used to establish and maintain the distinct *animal health status* of a *zone* or *compartment* should be appropriate to the particular circumstances, and will depend on the epidemiology of the *disease*, environmental factors, the health status of animals in adjacent areas, applicable biosecurity measures (including movement controls, use of natural and artificial boundaries, the spatial separation of animals, and commercial management and husbandry practices), and surveillance.
45. Relevant animals within the *zone* or *compartment* should be identified in such a way that their history can be audited. Depending on the system of production, identification may be done at the herd, flock lot or individual animal level. Relevant animal movements into

and out of the *zone* or *compartment* should be well documented, controlled and supervised. The existence of a valid animal identification system is a prerequisite to assess the integrity of the *zone* or *compartment*.

56. 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 routine operating procedures to provide clear evidence that the surveillance conducted, the live animal identification and traceability system, and the management practices are adequate to meet the definition of the *compartment*. In addition to information on animal movement controls, the plan should include herd or flock production records, feed sources, surveillance results, birth and death records, visitor logbook, morbidity and mortality history, medications, vaccinations, documentation of training of relevant personnel and any other criteria necessary for evaluation of risk mitigation. The information required may vary according to the species and *disease(s)* under consideration. The *biosecurity plan* should also describe how the measures will be audited to ensure that the risks are regularly re-assessed and the measures adjusted accordingly.

Article 1.3.5.4.

Sequence of steps to be taken in establishing a zone/compartment and having it recognised for international trade purposes

There is no single sequence of steps which should be followed in establishing a *zone* or a *compartment*. The steps that the *Veterinary Services* of the *importing country* and the *exporting country* choose and implement will generally depend on the circumstances existing within the countries and at their borders, and their trading history. The recommended steps are:

1. For zoning
 - a) The *exporting country* identifies a geographical area within its territory, which it considers to contain an animal *subpopulation* with a distinct health status with respect to a specific *disease/specific diseases*, based on surveillance.
 - b) The *exporting country* describes in the *biosecurity plan* for the *zone* the measures which are being, or will be, applied to distinguish such an area epidemiologically from other parts of its territory, in accordance with the recommendations in the *Terrestrial Code*.
 - c) The *exporting country* provides:

- i) the above information to the *importing country*, with an explanation of why the area can be treated as an epidemiologically separate *zone* for *international trade* purposes;
 - ii) access to enable the procedures or systems that establish the *zone* to be examined and evaluated upon request by the *importing country*.
- d) The *importing country* determines whether it accepts such an area as a *zone* for the importation of *animals* and animal products, taking into account:
- i) an evaluation of the *exporting country's Veterinary Services*;
 - ii) the result of a *risk assessment* based on the information provided by the *exporting country* and its own research;
 - iii) its own animal health situation with respect to the *disease(s)* concerned; and
 - iv) other relevant OIE standards.
- e) The *importing country* notifies the *exporting country* of its determination and the underlying reasons, within a reasonable period of time, being:
- i) recognition of the *zone*; or
 - ii) request for further information; or
 - iii) rejection of the area as a *zone* for *international trade* purposes.
- f) An attempt should be made to resolve any differences over recognition of the *zone*, either in the interim or finally, by using an agreed mechanism to reach consensus such as the OIE in-house procedure for settlement of disputes (Article 1.3.1.3.)
- g) The *Veterinary Authorities* of the *importing* and *exporting countries* should enter into a formal agreement recognizing the *zone*.

2. For compartmentalisation

- a) Based on discussions with the relevant industry, the *exporting country* identifies within its territory a *compartment* of one or more *establishments* or other premises which

operates under common management practices related to biosecurity and which contains an identifiable animal *subpopulation* with a distinct health status with respect to a specific *disease/specific diseases*; the *exporting country* describes how this status is maintained through a partnership between the relevant industry and the *Veterinary Authority* of the *exporting country*.

- b) The *exporting country* examines the *compartment's biosecurity plan* and confirms through an audit that:
 - i) the *compartment* is epidemiologically closed throughout its routine operating procedures as a result of effective implementation of its *biosecurity plan*; and
 - ii) the surveillance and monitoring programme in place is appropriate to verify the status of such *establishment(s)* with respect to such *disease(s)*.
- c) The *exporting country* describes the *compartment*, in accordance with the recommendations in the *Terrestrial Code*.

The exporting country provides:

- i) the above information to the *importing country*, with an explanation of why such an *establishment(s)* can be treated as an epidemiologically separate *compartment* for *international trade* purposes; and
 - ii) access to enable the procedures or systems that establish the *compartment* to be examined and evaluated upon request by the *importing country*.
- d) The *importing country* determines whether it accepts such *establishment(s)* as a *compartment* for the importation of *animals* and animal products, taking into account:
 - i) an evaluation of the *exporting country's Veterinary Services*;
 - ii) the result of a *risk assessment* based on the information provided by the *exporting country* and its own research;
 - iii) its own animal health situation with respect to the *disease(s)* concerned; and
 - iv) other relevant OIE standards.

- e) The *importing country* notifies the *exporting country* of its determination and the underlying reasons, within a reasonable period of time, being:
 - i) recognition of the *compartment*; or
 - ii) request for further information; or
 - iii) rejection of such *establishment(s)* as a *compartment* for international trade purposes.
- f) An attempt should be made to resolve any differences over recognition of the *compartment*, either in the interim or finally, by using an agreed mechanism to reach consensus such as the OIE in-house procedure for settlement of disputes (Article 1.3.1.3.).
- g) The *Veterinary Authorities* of the *importing* and *exporting countries* should enter into a formal agreement recognizing the *compartment*.