**USER'S GUIDE**

**A. Introduction**

* The OIE *Aquatic Animal Health Code* (hereafter referred to as the *Aquatic Code*) establishes standards for the improvement of aquatic animal health worldwide. The *Aquatic Code* also includes standards for the welfare of farmed fish and use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals. The purpose of this guide is to advise the Competent Authorities in OIE Member Countries on how to use the *Aquatic Code*.
* Competent Authorities should use the standards in the *Aquatic Code* to develop measures for prevention including biosecurity at aquaculture establishments, early detection, ~~internal~~ reporting, ~~notification,~~ control or eradication of pathogenic agents in aquatic animals (amphibians, crustaceans, fish and molluscs) and preventing their spread via international trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.
* The ~~OIE~~ standards in the *Aquatic Code* are based on the most recent scientific and technical information and are adopted by the World Assembly of Delegates. Correctly applied, they protect aquatic animal health during the production and trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products as well as the welfare of farmed fish.
* The absence of chapters, articles or recommendations on particular pathogenic agents or aquatic animal products does not preclude the application of appropriate sanitary measures by the Competent Authorities, provided they are based on risk analyses conducted in accordance with the *Aquatic Code*.

5) The year that a chapter was first adopted and the year of last revision are noted at the end of each chapter.

6) The ~~complete text of the~~ *Aquatic Code* is available on the OIE website at ~~and individual chapters may be downloaded from~~[~~: http://~~www.oie.int.](http://www.oie.int/)

**B. *Aquatic Code* content**

1. Key terms and expressions used in more than one chapter in the *Aquatic Code* are defined in the Glossary, where common dictionary definitions are not deemed to be adequate. The reader should be aware of definitions given in the Glossary when reading and using the *Aquatic Code*. Defined terms appear in italics. In the online version of the *Aquatic Code*, a hyperlink leads to the relevant definition.
2. The term '(under study)' is found in some rare instances, with reference to an article or part of an article. This means that this part of the text has not been adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and the particular provisions are thus not part of the *Aquatic Code*.
3. The standards in the chapters of Section 1 are designed for the implementation of measures for the surveillance and notification of pathogenic agents. The section includes the criteria for listing aquatic animal diseases, the diseases which are listed by the OIE, procedures for notification to the OIE, and criteria for listing species as susceptible to infection with a specific ~~pathogen~~ pathogenic agent.
4. The standards in the chapters of Section 2 are designed to guide the importing country in conducting import risk analysis in the absence of OIE standards. The importing country should also use these standards to justify import measures which are more stringent than existing OIE standards.
5. The standards in the chapters of Section 3 are designed for the establishment, maintenance and evaluation of Aquatic Animal Health Services, including communication. These standards are intended to assist the Competent Authorities of Member Countries to meet their objectives of improving aquatic animal health and the welfare of farmed fish, as well as to establish and maintain confidence in their international aquatic animal health certificates.
6. The standards in the chapters of Section 4 are designed for the implementation of measures for the prevention and control of pathogenic agents. Measures in this section include biosecurity for aquaculture establishments, zoning, compartmentalisation, disinfection, contingency planning, fallowing, handling, disposal and treatment of aquatic animal waste and control of pathogenic agents in aquatic animal feed.
7. The standards in the chapters of Section 5 are designed for the implementation of general sanitary measures for trade. They address certification and the measures applicable by the exporting, transit and importing countries. A range of model international aquatic animal health certificates is provided to facilitate consistent documentation for international trade.
8. The standards in the chapters of Section 6 are designed to ensure the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals.
9. The standards in the chapters of Section 7 are designed for the implementation of welfare measures for farmed fish. The standards cover the general principles for welfare of farmed fish, including during transport, stunning and killing for human consumption, and when killing for disease control purposes.
10. The standards in each of the chapters of Sections 8 to 11 are designed to prevent the pathogenic agents of OIE listed diseases from being introduced into an importing country. Each disease chapter includes a list of currently known susceptible species. The standards take into account the nature of the traded commodity, the aquatic animal health status of the exporting country, zone or compartment, and the risk reduction measures applicable to each commodity.

These standards assume that the agent is either not present in the importing country or is the subject of a control or eradication programme. Sections 8 to 11 each relate to amphibian, crustacean, fish and molluscan hosts, respectively.

**C. Specific issues**

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