

TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL HEALTH STANDARDS COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 2013 REPORT

USER'S GUIDE

A. Introduction

- 1) The OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (hereafter referred to as the *Terrestrial Code*) sets out standards for the improvement of terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide. The purpose of this guide is to advise the Veterinary Authorities of OIE Member Countries on how to use the *Terrestrial Code*.
- 2) The standards in the *Terrestrial Code* should be used by the Veterinary Authorities of Member Countries to set up measures providing for early detection, reporting and control of pathogenic agents, including zoonotic, in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds and bees) and preventing their spread via international trade in animals and animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.
- 3) Correctly applied, the OIE standards provide for animal production and trade in animals and animal products to take place with an optimal level of animal and veterinary public health safety, based on the most recent scientific information and available techniques.

B. *Terrestrial Code* content

- 1) Key terms and expressions used more than once in the *Terrestrial Code* are defined in the Glossary. When reading and using the *Terrestrial Code*, the Veterinary Authorities of Member Countries should be aware of the definitions given in the Glossary. Defined terms appear in italics. In the on-line version of the *Terrestrial 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 yet been adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and the particular provisions are thus not yet part of the *Terrestrial Code*.
- 3) The standards in the chapters of Section 1 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for the implementation of measures for the diagnosis, surveillance and notification of pathogenic agents, including procedures for notification to the OIE, tests for international trade, and procedures for the assessment of the health status of a country or zone.
- 4) The standards in the chapters of Section 2 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for conducting import risk analysis used by an importing country in the absence of OIE trade standards or to justify import measures more stringent than existing OIE trade standards.
- 5) The standards in the chapters of Section 3 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for the establishment, maintenance and evaluation of quality Veterinary Services, including veterinary legislation. These standards are to assist the Veterinary Services of OIE Member Countries to meet their objectives of improving terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health, as well as to establish and maintain confidence in their international veterinary certificates.
- 6) The standards in the chapters of Section 4 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for the implementation of measures for the prevention and control of pathogenic agents, including through animal identification, traceability, zoning, compartmentalisation, disposal of dead animals, disinfection, disinsectisation and general hygiene precautions. Some chapters address the specific sanitary measures to be applied for the collection and processing of semen and embryos of animals.
- 7) The standards in the chapters of Section 5 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for the implementation of general sanitary measures for trade, in particular veterinary certification and the measures applicable by the exporting, transit and importing countries, especially Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It also includes a range of model veterinary certificates to be used as a harmonised basis for international trade.

- 8) The standards in the chapters of Section 6 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for the implementation of preventive measures in animal production systems, to assist OIE Member Countries in meeting their veterinary public health objectives. This includes ante- and post-mortem inspection, control of hazards in feed, biosecurity at the animal production level, and the control of antimicrobial resistance in animals.
- 9) The standards in the chapters of Section 7 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed for the implementation of animal welfare measures, including those at the level of production, transport, and slaughter or killing. Additional standards address the animal welfare aspects of stray dog population control and the use of animals in research and education.
- 10) The standards in each of the chapters of Sections 8 to 15 of the *Terrestrial Code* are designed to prevent the agents of OIE listed diseases, infections or infestations from being introduced into an importing country, taking into account the nature of the traded commodity, the 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 15 each relate to the host species of the pathogenic agent: multiple species or single species of the families apidae, aves, bovidae, equidae, leporidae, caprinae and suidae. Some chapters include specific measures to prevent and control the infections of global concern. Although the OIE aims to include a chapter for each OIE listed disease, not all OIE listed diseases have been covered yet by a specific chapter. This is work in progress, depending on available scientific knowledge and the priorities set by the World Assembly.

C. Specific issues

1) Notification

Chapter 1.1. describes Member Countries' obligations under the OIE Organic Statutes. Although only listed and emerging diseases, as prescribed in Chapter 1.1., are compulsorily notifiable, Member Countries are encouraged to provide information to the OIE on any animal health event of epidemiological significance.

Chapter 1.2. describes the criteria for the inclusion of a disease, infection or infestation in the OIE List and gives the updated list. Diseases are divided into nine categories, depending of the host species of the agents.

2) Diagnostic tests and vaccines

The use of specified diagnostic tests and vaccines in *Terrestrial Code* chapters is recommended with a reference to the relevant section in the OIE *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (hereafter referred to as the *Terrestrial Manual*). Chapter 1.3. provides a table summarising the recommended diagnostic tests for OIE listed diseases. Facilities responsible for disease diagnosis and vaccine production should be fully conversant with the standards in the *Terrestrial Manual*.

3) Prevention and control

Chapters 4.5. to 4.11. describe the measures which should be implemented during collection and processing of semen and embryos of animals, including micromanipulation and cloning, in order to prevent animal health risks, especially when trading these commodities. Although this relates principally to OIE listed diseases or infections, general standards applies to all health risks. Moreover, in Chapter 4.7. diseases that are not listed diseases are mentioned for the information of OIE Member Countries.

Chapter 4.14. addresses the specific issue of the control of bee diseases and some of its trade implications. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the specific bee disease chapters in Section 9.

Chapter 6.4. is designed for the implementation of general biosecurity measures in intensive poultry production, whereas Chapter 6.5. gives an example of a specific on-farm prevention and control plan for the non-listed food borne pathogen *Salmonella* in poultry, including standards for introduction of live poultry and hatching eggs.

Chapter 6.11. deals specifically with the zoonotic risk associated with the movements of non-human primates and gives standards for certification, transportation and import conditions of these animals.

4) Trade requirements

An OIE Member Country may authorise the importation of animals or animal products into its territory under conditions more or less restrictive than those recommended by the *Terrestrial Code*. However, where the conditions are more restrictive, they should be scientifically justified by a risk analysis conducted in accordance with OIE standards, as described in Chapter 2.1. For Members of the WTO to meet their obligations under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), international trade animal health measures should be based on an OIE standard or an import risk analysis.

Chapters 5.1. to 5.3. describe the obligations and ethics in international trade. Veterinary Authorities and all veterinarians directly involved in international trade should be familiar with these chapters, which also provide guidance for informal mediation by the OIE.

The OIE aims to include, at the beginning of each chapter relating to a specific agent in Sections 8 to 15 an article listing the commodities that are considered safe for trade regardless of the status of the country or zone for the agent in question. This is a work in progress and some chapters do not yet contain articles listing safe commodities. Where such a list is present, there should be no trade restrictions applied to the listed commodity in relation to the agent in question.

5) International veterinary certificates

An international veterinary certificate is an official document drawn up by the Veterinary Authority of an exporting country in accordance with Chapter 5.1. and Chapter 5.2., describing the animal health requirements and, where appropriate, public health requirements for the exported commodity. The quality of the exporting country's Veterinary Services, including the ethical approach to the provision of veterinary certificates and their history in meeting their notification obligations, is essential in providing assurance to trading partners regarding the safety of exported animals and products.

International veterinary certificates underpin international trade and provide assurances to the importing country regarding the health status of the animals and products imported. The measures prescribed should take into account the health status of both exporting and importing countries and be based upon the standards in the *Terrestrial Code*.

The following steps should be taken when drafting international veterinary certificates:

- a) List the diseases for which the importing country is justified in seeking protection in regards to its own disease status. Importing countries should not impose measures in regards to diseases that occur in their own territory but are not subject to official control or eradication programmes;
- b) For commodities capable of transmitting these diseases through international trade, the importing country should apply the articles addressing the commodity in question in the relevant disease specific chapters, adapted to the disease status of the exporting country, zone or compartment. Such status should be established according to the articles of the relevant disease chapter, or to Chapter 1.4. when there are no such articles.
- c) When preparing international veterinary certificates, the importing country should endeavour to use terms and expressions in accordance with the definitions given in the Glossary. As stated in Article 5.2.2., international veterinary certificates should be kept as simple as possible and should be clearly worded, to avoid misunderstanding of the importing country's requirements.
- d) Chapters 5.10. to 5.12. contain model certificates as a further guidance to Member Countries and should be used as a baseline.

6) Guidance notes for importers and exporters

To provide a clear understanding of trade requirements, it is advisable that Veterinary Authorities of OIE Member Countries prepare 'guidance notes' to assist importers and exporters. These notes should identify and explain the trade conditions, including the measures to be applied before and after export, during transport and unloading, relevant legal obligations and operational procedures. Exporters should also be reminded of the International Air Transport Association rules governing air transport of animals and animal products. The guidance notes should advise on all details to be included in the health certification accompanying the consignment to its destination.