

Aquatic animal health standards: barriers to implementation

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) develops and updates international standards for the improvement of aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide. These standards support Members to prevent and control aquatic animal disease spread and contribute to ensuring safe trade of aquatic animals and their products. However, their effective implementation by Members remains challenging.

In 2021, WOAH launched its [Aquatic Animal Health Strategy](#) that aims to improve aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide. As part of this strategy, a survey was conducted to identify the barriers faced by Members in the implementation of WOAH standards, including those related to disease reporting.

65% Members answered the questionnaire



with regional variations ranging from

58% in the Middle East

and

75% in Asia and the Pacific

Lack of education and capacity building has a negative impact on the implementation of all standards

Among responding Members



indicated that **education for Aquatic Animal Health Services is inadequate**



reported **lacking initial education**



claimed that there is **no continuing education and access to training material is not available**

Strong statistical association

between reporting of inadequate education and the number of major barriers to the implementation of international standards

Capacity building for Aquatic Animal Health Services and education activities are key priorities to improve the implementation of standards, with important geographic variation.

Topics that need to be prioritised in capacity building:

Disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and reporting



Risk analysis



Disease prevention and control



Among the responding Members

<p>Aquatic Animal diseases are not reported enough</p>	<p>1/2</p> <p>Only half assessed that their notification of aquatic animal diseases to WOAHA was timely and comprehensive</p>	<p>Main barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources and capacity • Unjustified impact of notification on international/regional trade • Lack of prioritisation • Lack of knowledge on notification obligation or WOAHA notification procedures
<p>Targeted surveillance systems are rare</p>	<p>80%</p> <p>Almost 80% have a passive surveillance system</p> <p>Targeted surveillance systems are rare (from 28% to 4% depending on diseases)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of laboratory diagnostic capacity • Lack of national legislation
<p>Existence of national law or regulation consistent with WOAHA aquatic animal health standards is limited</p>	<p>1/3</p> <p>1/2</p> <p>2/3</p> <p>1/3 do not have national legislation on trade measures, import/export procedures and health certification equivalent to WOAHA standards</p> <p>Around half do not have any on disease prevention and control, surveillance and notification, diagnostic, risk analysis or use of antimicrobials</p> <p>Around 2/3 do not have any on welfare of farmed fish</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of political prioritisation • Lack of capacity and resources

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WOAH Members

Recommendations

- Promote and advocate for the use of [PVS Evaluations of the Aquatic Animal Health Services](#)
- Support diagnostic capacity through WOAHA network and Reference Centres.
- Promote regionally coordinated surveillance programmes through the establishment of regional networks for aquatic animal health.
- Strengthen and further develop WOAHA epidemic intelligence activities regarding aquatic animal diseases, including by assessing the completeness of WAHIS information regarding aquatic animal health.
- Develop and coordinate capacity building activities (e-learning modules, surveillance and surveillance systems, notification of aquatic animal diseases, tool-kit for Focal Points for Aquatic animals, webinars).
- Continue to support the scientifically sound development of new standards and the revision of the existing ones, in consultation with Members.
- Develop communication material to advocate for surveillance, detection and reporting of aquatic animal diseases.

- Strengthen national aquatic animal health legislation (e.g. development of a national list of notifiable aquatic animal diseases, identification of priority diseases).
- Strengthen national laboratory diagnostic capacity, performance and quality.
- Identify national laboratories that could be accredited as a WOAHA Reference Laboratory or partner in Laboratory Twinning projects.
- Invest more resources to improve the national surveillance capacity in aquatic animal diseases and strengthen coordination with neighbouring countries to improve regional surveillance and information sharing.
- Improve epidemic intelligence in the country with strong event-based surveillance and data collection and sharing with local communities, aquatic animal health workers, and local veterinarians.
- Invest in education and capacity building of Aquatic Animal Health Services.

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Founded in 1924

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