

Report of the WOAHP Working Group on Wildlife

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1. Summary

The Working Group on Wildlife met from 15 to 18 April 2024 to review key outcomes of the wildlife health programme, to provide technical guidance on selected topics, and to guide on future strategy and programming.

The Working Group remarked on the high number of WOAHP partnerships related to wildlife health and recommended that WOAHP focus on top priority partnerships which best supported outputs and activities identified in the WOAHP Wildlife Health Framework. The Working Group was informed about continuing outcomes from partnerships with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).

The Working Group once again stressed their appreciation for the business plan for the development of a new information system for wildlife diseases in WOAHP and recommended its implementation. The Working Group suggested that WOAHP investigate the possibility of developing the data collection system in partnership with an international organisation that specialised in informatics and data management.

The Working Group continued to collaborate with the Terrestrial Animal Health Code Commission, and developed a generic framework for evaluating the potential impact of wildlife diseases on trade and the economy and tested it using six diseases recommended by WOAHP.

The Working Group was informed that the WOAHP Guidelines for Addressing Disease Risks in Wildlife Trade had been finalised and would be disseminated through WOAHP's networks.

The recent worldwide situation report on high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) was presented and discussed. The Working Group noted its contribution to technical communications material which aimed to alert, inform and support countries in facing the current situation. The Working Group pointed to delays in publishing some of this material and emphasised the importance of disseminating material related to a major health event in wildlife to Members in a timely manner.

The Working Group contributed to the WOAHP Foresight exercise by providing inputs on topics of relevance

The Working Group reviewed shortlist of applications for 3 new positions on the Working Group (replacing 2 members who had left and to fill a new position on aquatic animal wildlife). The Working Group made suggestions to the WOAHP Director General for the final selection.

Finally, a document on good practices in wildlife health communication was reviewed by the Working Group.

2. Opening

The WOAHP Working Group on Wildlife (the Working Group) meeting was held from 15th to 18th of April 2024 at WOAHP Headquarters, Paris, France, and was chaired by Dr William Karesh.

Dr Montserrat Arroyo, Deputy Director General of WOAHP, welcomed the members of the Working Group, recognizing that it had provided strong support for implementation of the Wildlife Health Framework and worked in close collaboration with the Specialist Commissions. Wildlife health was becoming integrated into WOAHP's core work programme. The pace of integration was slow and deliberate to optimize long term sustainability. She encouraged the Working Group to read the consultant-led review of WOAHP's 'basic texts' so that they would understand the current state of play and could advocate for inclusion of wildlife health if a revision of the basic texts took place. Finally, Dr Arroyo invited the Working Group to think about how to help Members prioritize investigation and management of wild animal health events.

3. Adoption of agenda and designation of the rapporteur

Dr Rupert Woods was appointed as the rapporteur for the meeting. The agenda and the list of participants are provided in Annexes I and II respectively.

4. Follow-up of the work plan (December 2023 to April 2024) of the Working Group on Wildlife

Progress against the work plan for the period December 2023 to April 2024 was tabled. The Working Group noted that a large number of activities were underway. They provided input, advice and encouragement.

5. Multisectoral coordination and collaboration

5.1. Strategic discussion about the different partnerships for wildlife

Ms Sophie Muset presented the draft strategy paper on the WOAHPartnerships for Wildlife Health. Objectives were to: (1) Identify and prioritize the most relevant partners for WOAHP to efficiently implement its Wildlife Health Framework; (2) Assess how these partnerships could be leveraged to support the WHF implementation; (3) Identify the appropriate course of action with each of the selected partners over the next 3 to 5 years, or based on the duration to the MoU; and (4) Actively engage with priority partners through concrete actions.

Comments:

- The Working Group was concerned that the extensive range of partnerships, which implied a large amount of work for limited resources, was overly ambitious. It recommended prioritisation on partnerships best supporting outputs and activities identified in the WOAHP Wildlife Health Framework i.e., partnerships that directly supported delivery of the WOAHP Wildlife Health Framework. All others were of secondary importance.

5.2. Partnership with CITES (update)

Dr François Diaz provided the Working Group with an update on the partnership with CITES and presented the work plan developed jointly with CITES.

Comment:

- The Working Group reviewed the work plan, highlighting priority activities and provided recommendations for its implementation.

6. Quality data collection, reporting, analysis and use improved

6.1. Discussion of the feedback from COMEX following presentation of the business case for the development of the new system

Dr Claire Cayol presented the feedback from COMEX (WOAHP Executive Committee) on the business case for the development of a new information system for wildlife health events.

Comments:

- The Working Group applauded the development of the business plan and recommended its implementation. The Working Group recognised that the business case had responded to the concerns raised by COMEX and that the information provided by this service would be of benefit to Members.
- Given the complexities, the Working Group recommended that WOAHP investigate the possibility of developing the data collection system in partnership with another international organisation that specialised in informatics and data management.
- The Working Group also recommended that the business plan be socialized broadly within WOAHP. Socializing the idea with Delegates in the regions was also recommended utilising a series of regional workshops in order to generate consensus and support for the initiative. Environmental and wildlife stakeholders should also be involved in these meetings. A clear vision of the future should also be shared.
- The Working Group highlighted the potential benefits of the new system in terms of capturing and managing more appropriately the reports on listed diseases sent to WAHIS. The Working Group also stressed that this would improve access to this information by WOAHP Delegates and the timeliness of these official reports.

6.2. Wildlife health data collection and the potential impacts on trade and economy

The Working Group developed a generic framework for evaluating the potential impact of wildlife diseases on trade and economy and tested it using six diseases recommended by WOAH (foot and mouth disease, African horse sickness, classical swine fever, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and peste des petits ruminants) as well as anthrax and high pathogenicity avian influenza.

Outcomes:

- The proposed framework was a significant output of the Working Group and potentially useful to WOAH and its Members. It can be found in Annex III;
- The framework was tested on 6 diseases with the intention of accommodating a much broader range of infectious diseases. The Working Group recommended that it also be tested on aquatic wild animal diseases.

7. Guidelines, standards, risk reduction strategies updated and developed

7.1. Terrestrial Animal Health Code: coordination with the Working Group in the development and review of the Terrestrial Code – TAHSC work programme

Dr Francisco D'Alessio, Deputy Head of WOAH Standards Department, presented an update of the work programme of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission [Code Commission] (updated at the last meeting of the Commission in February 2024), including the Terrestrial Code chapters circulated for comments and those that would be proposed for adoption at the next General Session (May 2024). Dr D'Alessio highlighted comments made by the Working Group on the Code Commission's current effort to improve how wildlife health is considered in WOAH Standards, noting some feedback requests from the Code Commission.

Comments:

- The Working Group provided clarification on the comments it provided, relating to the description of ducks referred to in the amendments proposed to the User's Guide. The Working Group recommended removing the definition of "duck". The Working Group pointed out that domestic ducks mean mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos domesticus*) and muscovy duck (*Cairina moschata*) and specified that Tayassuidae (Peccaries) should not be included in the family *suidae* but under the sub order *Suina*.

Actions proposed:

- Relevant chapters would be sent by the Code Commission secretariat to the Working Group for comments;
- The timetable for review of the *Terrestrial Code* Chapters, developed by the Standard Department, would be shared with the new members of the Working Group;
- The Working Group was informed of ongoing work between the Code Commission, the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (SCAD) and the Biological Standards Commission (BSC) to clarify how the concept of 'animal hosts' is dealt within the Terrestrial Code and Manual. The Working Group would be involved in this work;
- The Working Group would develop a proposal to amend the Code Chapter on high pathogenicity avian influenza to include mammals in animal species susceptible to HPAI, therefore encouraging the surveillance and the reporting of the disease in all animals and not only poultry. The paper would describe the issue, the desired outcome and the supporting rationale, for consideration by the SCAD and the TAHSC.

7.2. Guidelines for Addressing Disease Risks in Wildlife Trade (update) and briefing on workshop outcomes

The Working Group was updated on the finalisation of the Guidelines for Addressing Disease Risks in Wildlife Trade. A workshop to validate the guidelines was held at the end of March in Bangkok with an audience of regional representatives of the Veterinary Services and wildlife authorities. The meeting was facilitated by the WOAH sub-regional representation and several WOAH Collaborating Centres. The workshop was a success and the guidelines found to be fit for purpose. They would be published before the WOAH General session in May 2024.

Comments:

- The Working Group recommended that WOAHA circulate the guidelines utilising the WOAHA Collaborating Centres networks and also that a training program be developed and implemented targeting key end-users, for example National Focal Points for Wildlife.
- The Working Group recommended that WOAHA prioritise efforts in the area of wildlife trade in improving/managing emerging infectious diseases, wildlife trade and biodiversity conservation. There is an opportunity to explore ways to incorporate the guidelines and other wildlife health framework outputs into activities of Focal Points and Collaborating Centres training and other organisations.

8. Scientific knowledge developed and disseminated

8.1. Risk management at the domestic wild animal interface project

The Working Group was informed about the current WOAHA project on risk management practices at the domestic-wild animal interface, the aim of which is to provide Members with a set of practical science-based recommendations to effectively manage animal health risks at the domestic-wild animal interface.

Comments:

- The Working Group suggested names of experts to be involved in this project.

8.2. Simulation exercise (Operational national plan)

The Working Group noted the WOAHA Guidelines for Simulation Exercises and that the principles and approach could be used as a guide for wildlife simulations.

Comments:

The Working Group recognised the importance of rehearsal for emergency animal disease preparedness planning and recommended that the WOAHA National Wildlife Focal Points be approached to gauge their interest in wildlife emergency management and potential development of tools to assist with this planning.

9. High pathogenicity avian influenza

9.1. HPAI in wildlife – 2024: Discussion on the WOAHA management and communication strategy

The Working Group discussed the WOAHA communication campaign on HPAI including the spread of the disease to Antarctica. Recent contributions from the Working Group were highlighted and included the WOAHA statement "[Wildlife under threat as avian influenza reaches Antarctica](#)", [Practical guide for authorised field responders to HPAI outbreaks in marine mammals](#), and [Considerations for emergency vaccination of wild birds against high pathogenicity avian influenza in specific situations](#). These documents were finalised following the Working Group meeting in December 2023. However, there had been delays to publishing some guidance and the Working Group emphasised the importance of providing and disseminating documents related to a major health event in wildlife to Members in as timely manner as possible.

Comments:

- The Working Group recommended enlarging the target audience for communication on wildlife health events from Members, Veterinary Services and WOAHA National Focal points for Wildlife to include wildlife managers, international conventions (e.g. Convention for Migratory Species [CMS]), and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations working with wildlife (e.g. IUCN and WWF).
- The Working Group proposed to review the available [Guidelines for the Control and Prevention of Peste des Petits Ruminants \(PPR\) in Wildlife Populations](#) and to adapt them to the control and prevention of wildlife diseases in general the aim being to develop generic guidelines on emergency wildlife preparedness that could be used by Members. The timeline and next steps will be discussed at the next meeting of the Working Group.

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- As for other documents produced, the Working Group recommended that their dissemination and publication to the WOAHP website occur as rapidly as possible once they have been completed (and preferably within 1 month) so as to better support the needs of Members.

9.2. Avian influenza in Antarctica

HPAI was reported to WOAHP from wild birds in continental Antarctica in February 2024. The Working Group was asked what could be done by WOAHP as next steps to support Members, to promote wildlife health and to prevent HPAI spreading to other parts of the world or returning to regions already affected.

The Working Group recommended:

- the establishment of a Collaborating Centre on the health of Antarctic wildlife to assist in provision of support to researchers and to facilitate the collection of samples and research into the health of Antarctic wildlife and implementing the WOAHP Wildlife Framework in Antarctica;
- that WOAHP continue working with Members to reach out to their counterparts in Antarctic programs (especially countries parties of the Antarctic Treaty) so they improve surveillance and reporting of unusual mortality and suspect cases of HPAI in Antarctic wildlife; and
- that WOAHP explore if any of its partners could support provision of resources to support on-going research in Antarctica and coordinate with ongoing efforts such as those led by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research which would support surveillance, reporting, and risk assessment'

9.3. Guidelines on monitoring and surveillance of HPAI along migratory pathways

The Working Group was referred to the Resolution 28 on avian influenza adopted at the last WOAHP General Session (May 2023), in particular the recommendation number 4 stating *"Members, with the support of WOAHP, the WOAHP Working Group on Wildlife, WOAHP Reference Centres and OFFLU, conduct appropriate, risk-based, comprehensive and systematic monitoring and surveillance in domestic birds, wild birds (e.g., along flyways) and in other susceptible animal species to support early warning and risk management at the human–animal–environment interface"*. The Working Group discussed if there was a need to draft new guidelines on monitoring and surveillance of HPAI along migratory pathways to address this recommendation.

Comments:

- The Working Group highlighted that most countries were engaged in monitoring and surveillance of HPAI in wildlife primarily through passive surveillance. The Working Group noted that there were already international standards, guidance documents, publications and recorded webinars available on how to do surveillance including the management and control of HPAI in wild birds. Consequently, the Working Group proposed compiling a list of relevant references and suggested that it be posted and maintained on the WOAHP website, including the Avian Influenza portal, wildlife portal and the OFFLU website for Members to access.

10. WOAHP Wildlife Strategies

10.1. WOAHP Foresight effort

Dr Tianna Brand and Ms Muset presented the WOAHP foresighting effort and engaged the Working Group in preparing for the Horizon Scanning activity. The Working Group contributed to the mapping exercise by providing inputs on topic of relevance to focus scanning on changes that were most relevant to WOAHP and its Wildlife Health Framework. This framing work was expressed as a 'domain map' of the topic and its context and its various components. The exercise led to a discussion on the relevance of WOAHP in the current Global context, on the purpose of the Wildlife Health Programme and importance of taking into account the new global landscape (including increased global awareness amongst the young generation, the gap between country needs and global discussions, and the change of paradigm affecting diseases dynamic).

The Working Group supported the Horizon scanning exercise the next phase of which would start in June 2024. The results will inform review of the Wildlife Health strategy and planning of the second phase of the programme commencing in 2026.

The Working Group recommended:

- Bringing a Change Management expert on board to support the design and planning for the second phase of the Wildlife Health Programme;
- Review the theory of change for the program;
- Horizon scanning scenarios to better explore and justify any proposed changes for phase two; and
- As part of the process, to engage key WOAHA stakeholders who will support the programme.

11. Any other business

11.1. WGWA membership update on the call for new members

The Working Group reviewed a shortlist of applications received for its membership following a WOAHA call for experts opened from 8 February to 8 March 2024. The Working Group membership applications were open for two regions, Europe and Asia, and the scientific area of aquatic animal health (excluding marine mammals).

The Working Group used the following criteria for ranking the application received: technical skills, complementary expertise to the Working Group, levels of responsibility in their country (involved in a national authority or with the government) and at the international level (experience in international organisations working on wildlife), programme leadership, and geographic and gender diversity.

Recommendations

- The Working Group suggested to the WOAHA Director General a ranking of the applications they received for review. The names would be presented at the WOAHA General Session in May 2024.

11.2. Good practice for wildlife health communication

A draft document on good practices in wildlife health communication was reviewed by the Working Group, to provide high-level advice usable by WOAHA but also by Veterinary Services (namely, National Focal points for Wildlife and National focal points for Communication) when communicating on wildlife health events.

Comments and Recommendations:

- The Working Group recognised the importance and usefulness of the document but recommended its simplification.

12. Date of next meeting

The Working Group proposed the following dates for its next meeting from Tuesday 12 to Friday 15 November 2024.

13. Adoption of the report

The report was adopted by the Working Group

.../Annexes

Annex I.

Adopted Agenda

MEETING OF THE WOAHP WORKING GROUP ON WILDLIFE

Paris (France), 15 to 18 April 2024

1. **Opening**
 2. **Adoption of agenda and designation of the rapporteur**
 3. **Follow-up of the WGWP work plan**
 4. **Multisectoral coordination and collaboration**
 - 4.1. Strategic discussion about the different partnerships for wildlife
 - 4.2. Partnership with CITES (update)
 - 4.3. Partnership with CIC (update)
 5. **Quality data collection, reporting, analysis and use improved**
 - 5.1. Discussion on the business case for the development of a new information system
 - 5.2. Wildlife health data collection and the potential impacts on trade and economy
 6. **Guidelines, standards, risk reduction strategies updated & developed**
 - 6.1. Terrestrial Animal Health Code: coordination with the Working Group in the development and review of the Terrestrial Code - TAHSC work programme
 - 6.2. Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Disease Spillover Events at Markets Selling Wildlife and along the Wildlife Supply Chain (update) and briefing on workshop outcomes
 7. **Scientific knowledge developed and disseminated**
 - 7.1. Risk management at the domestic-wild animal interface project
 - 7.2. Simulation exercise (Operational national plan)
 8. **Highly pathogenic avian influenza**
 - 8.1. HPAI in wildlife – 2024: Discussion on the WOAHP management and communication strategy
 - 8.2. Avian Influenza in Antarctica
 - 8.3. Guidelines on monitoring and surveillance of HPAI along flyways
 9. **WOAHP Wildlife Strategies**
 - 9.1. WOAHP Foresighting effort
 10. **Any other business**
 - 10.1. WGWP membership update on the call for new members
 - 10.2. Good practice for wildlife health communication
 11. **Date of next meeting**
 12. **Adoption of the report**
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Annex II.

List of Participants

MEETING OF THE WOAHP WORKING GROUP ON WILDLIFE

Paris, 15 to 18 April 2024

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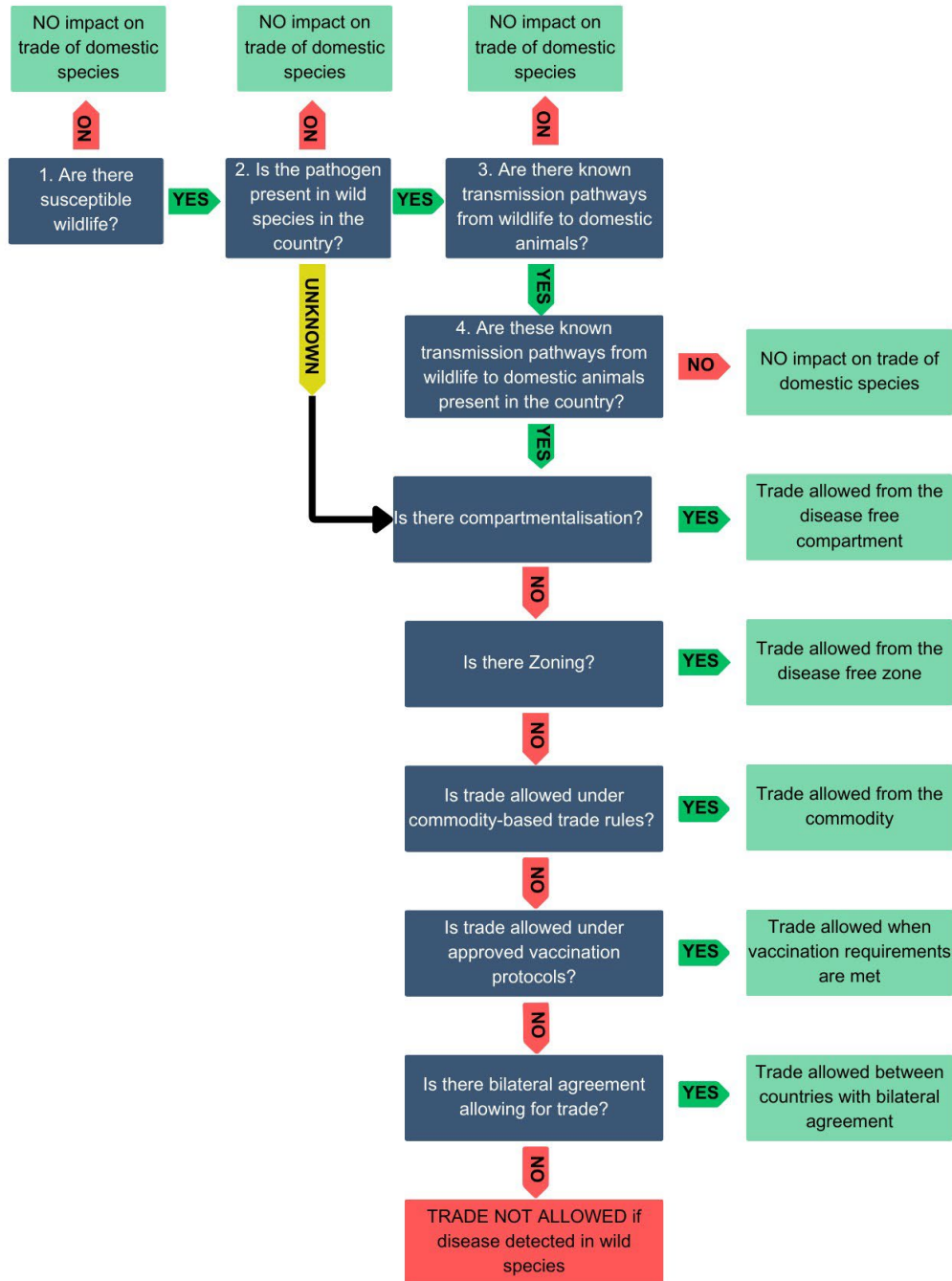
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Annex III.

General framework for assessing the impact of wildlife disease on the international trade of domestic animal developed by the Working Group on Wildlife



GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF WILDLIFE DISEASE ON THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS DEVELOPED BY THE WORKING GROUP ON WILDLIFE.

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