

Report of the Meeting of the *ad hoc* Group on Veterinary Emergencies (Standards)

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10-13 June 2024
Paris

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1. Introduction

The *ad hoc* Group on Veterinary Emergencies (Standards) (hereafter “the Group”) was convened by the Director General following the request of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (hereafter “the Code Commission”) to develop standards on emergency management. This effort was initiated following Resolution No 28 from the 89th General Session of the World Assembly of WOAHA Delegates, which recommended integrating emergency management into WOAHA’s International Standards. This recommendation was further supported by the outcomes of the April 2023 WOAHA Global Conference on Emergency Management. The WOAHA Secretariat also presented this work to the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission to ensure consistency and complementarities with the potential need to develop or review content for the *Aquatic Animal Health Code*.

The Group was convened in person from 10-13 June 2024 and was tasked with reviewing the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (hereafter “the *Terrestrial Code*”) to identify references to emergency management, propose a new chapter or to expand existing chapters to include emergency management principles, define key emergency management terminology, recommend next steps, and begin drafting relevant text.

2. Welcome

Dr Montserrat Arroyo, the WOAHA Deputy Director General for International Standards and Science, welcomed the Members of the *ad hoc* Group and expressed her gratitude for their availability and contributions to this important work. She acknowledged that many WOAHA members have gaps in emergency management capabilities and that emergency management is currently not adequately covered by the *Terrestrial Code*. She noted the potential for inclusion to support capacity-building efforts among WOAHA Members. Dr Arroyo highlighted the careful selection of the Group’s composition to ensure regional representation and encouraged the Group Members to share their regional perspectives. She also noted the participation of Members from the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and Aquatic Animal Health Code Commissions in this effort. Finally, she urged the Group to consider how WOAHA members would implement emergency management standards, emphasising the importance of practical applicability and effective implementation.

3. Adoption of agenda, terms of reference and appointment of chair and rapporteur

Dr Cheryl Eia accepted to Chair the Group and the WOAHA Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur. The Group introduced themselves and highlighted their own experiences in emergency management.

The *ad hoc* Group adopted the agenda and terms of reference. The agenda, the list of participants and the terms of reference are presented in [Annex 1](#), [Annex 2](#) and [Annex 3](#), respectively.

4. WOAHA’s Emergency Management Programme Presentation

Dr Daniel Donachie, Programme Manager, WOAHA’s Preparedness and Resilience Department, presented an overview of WOAHA’s emergency management programme which supports Members and WOAHA in planning and responding to animal health emergencies. This includes developing guidelines and informing the development of standards based on the latest scientific evidence shared from WOAHA’s network of Reference Centres and Partners, overseeing initiatives with Partners to build capacities in Members for preparedness and resilience, and promoting the One Health approach. He also shared the outcomes of several projects and activities including the WOAHA Global Conference on Emergency Management and a joint WOAHA/FAO/INTERPOL international agro-terrorism simulation exercise.

He noted that within WOAHA’s Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway Evaluation Tool there are numerous critical competencies relevant to the generic capabilities of Veterinary Services. Specifically, there are two emergency management critical competencies: I-9 Emergency Funding and II-5 Emergency Preparedness and Response which are not supported by *Terrestrial Code* chapters when compared to other critical competencies.

5. Overview of WOAHA Standard Setting Process

Dr Francisco D’Alessio, Deputy Head, WOAHA’s Standards Department, introduced the WOAHA Standards and the standard-setting process, emphasising their role in enhancing global animal health, welfare and veterinary public health. WOAHA Standards facilitate safe international trade, support national animal health programmes and improve awareness and understanding of veterinary issues. He described the timeline for developing standards and the importance of the opinions of *ad hoc* Groups in supporting the decisions of the WOAHA Specialist Commissions. He also presented the typical structure of the *Terrestrial Code* chapters and recommended that any new chapter would need a title, purpose and scope and an introduction if required. Additionally, he recommended that the language used should be simple and accessible and chapters can also reference other relevant sections of the *Terrestrial Code*.

6. Member experiences in emergency management

Members of the Group provided presentations with examples of emergency situations and actions taken, which underscored the importance of having fit-for-purpose emergency management systems to effectively handle emergencies. Key principles in emergency management highlighted included:

- The necessity for strong surveillance, situational awareness and early warning systems to enable rapid response;
- Defining what constitutes an emergency and setting clear objectives in a response, which may be in partnership with other actors;
- Effective and transparent communication to build and maintain trust with stakeholders and trading partners, as well as to reduce the risk of misinformation and disinformation;
- Preparedness as a crucial component of emergency management, which must include planning, training, adequate equipment and regular simulation exercises;
- Collaboration with other sectors and other WOAAH Members, including at regional level;
- Accounting for unintended consequences in emergencies, including the impacts on stakeholders
- Identifying lessons from training, exercises and real events to inform continuous improvement of emergency management systems.

Challenges noted included the changing hazard landscape with increasing consequences, severity and complexity of emergencies, insufficient resources including funding, gaps in legislation and the integration of Veterinary Services within broader emergency and disaster management frameworks.

7. Purpose of WOAAH International Standards on emergency management

The Group reflected on how emergency management standards would be useful to WOAAH Members. Emergency management standards could serve as a reference to WOAAH Members to develop their own emergency management systems by providing best practices and recommendations. The Group noted that WOAAH's mandate extends beyond international trade to encompass a broader focus on animal health and welfare. Therefore, emergency management standards could take an all-hazards approach, applicable to any hazards relevant to Veterinary Services. In meeting WOAAH's mission of solidarity, emergency management was highlighted as a global public good because if one WOAAH Member is able to implement an effective emergency response, it can reduce the risk of transboundary hazards to other Members, conversely an ineffective or delayed response increases risk for other Members. They could also support Veterinary Services in working with other agencies in emergency management either in a lead agency or supporting agency role. All of this could contribute to the collective efforts of Veterinary Services protecting animal health, welfare and veterinary public health, the core mission of WOAAH, at national, regional and international level. Finally, the Group noted that emergency management standards in the *Terrestrial Code* would complement the draft chapters on emergency preparedness and outbreak disease management in the *Aquatic Animal Health Code*.

8. Review of *Terrestrial Code* and identify areas which reference emergency management

The Group reviewed chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* that include references to emergency management, aiming to repurpose useful content for dedicated emergency management standards and identify gaps in existing chapters. The Group also noted areas for improvement for existing chapters both in terms of content and terminology in relation to emergency management. Key findings and recommendations are summarised below:

8.1. Chapter 4.19 Official control programmes for listed and emerging diseases

The Group noted that this chapter's introduction recommends that an official control programme includes emergency preparedness and response plans, and the chapter has an article (4.19.3) on emergency preparedness covering risk analysis, planning and simulation exercises. The chapter focuses on disease control, which is useful to reference in emergency management standards since infectious diseases can trigger national emergencies. The Group noted that this article lacks coverage of training and equipping of Veterinary Services, two key preparedness components. The Group also suggested adding the term "as appropriate" to where it states "emergency preparedness should be supported by risk analysis" as not all emergency preparedness activities require the full risk analysis process set out in the *Terrestrial Code*.

8.2. Chapter 1.4 Animal Health Surveillance

The Group noted this chapter's utility in mitigation and prevention in emergency management and that Article 1.4.5 on early warning systems mentions its importance in emergency preparedness. The Group noted that the target animal populations may not always be under the authority of Veterinary Services and proposed to change this to "Competent Authority" and consider this term for emergency management standards. It was also noted that early warning systems refers to laboratories for diagnosing and differentiating infections or infestations and that emergencies may require laboratories for other purposes such as chemical or radiological testing and this would need to be considered for all-hazards approach in emergency management standards. The Group also proposed changing "national chain of command" to "national chain of information" as the former is more commonly used in emergency management and this term could be used in new standards as part of defining incident management systems. Lastly, the Group recommended in general to consider One Health terminology from Quadripartite frameworks and initiatives.

8.3. Chapter 1.7-1.11 Application for Official Recognition by WOA of Free Status

These chapters describe the steps taken to apply for official free status and request Members to list their contingency plans and actions for disease prevention and re-occurrence in the application. The Group noted that these chapters could refer to the new emergency management standards for defined terminology. The term "contingency plan" is used here but different terminology is used in Chapter 4.19. It would be important to ensure that the terminology encompasses common language used by Veterinary Services as well as other sectors in emergency management to enable interoperability in emergency management systems.

8.4. Chapter 3.2 Quality of Veterinary Services

The Group observed that Article 3.2.3 covers policy and management of Veterinary Services but lacks specific reference specifically although point 7 includes a reference to "chain of command" which may better presented as "chain of information" in this context. They recommended incorporating a bullet point on emergency management systems and referring to new emergency management standards. In addition, the Group noted that the language used in second paragraph assumes Veterinary Services are the lead agency and coordinating other authorities which is not always the case. The Group recommended to add the word "with" for it to say, "the Veterinary Authority should coordinate with other relevant governmental authorities."

Articles 3.2.7 and 3.2.8 on Animal health and Animal production food safety both include a reference that these components should include emergency management. The Group recommended that in point 4 of Article 3.2.7 the word 'sanitary' should be removed (because it is trade and disease focused), and changed to "animal health emergencies". Article 3.2.11 on animal welfare should also include emergency management.

8.5. Chapter 3.3 Veterinary Legislation

Article 3.4.9 references legislation for emergency response plans and providing financing of response measures including compensation for destruction of animals. It was observed that this article is focused on listed diseases but in new emergency management standards, it may require referencing but with additional context that legislation would be required for taking an all-hazards approach to emergencies. The Group noted that some legislation relevant for emergencies may not be specific to the veterinary domain and may be part of wider cross-government emergency management mechanisms to address this.

8.6. Chapter 3.5 Communication

The Group emphasised the importance of communications in Veterinary Services and its criticality which should be referred to in the new emergency management standards. It uses the terms 'crisis' and 'crisis communication' which are not terms used in other parts of the *Terrestrial Code* and may require harmonisation with the new emergency management standards. The Group also recommended that this chapter could include references to disinformation and misinformation and the need for effective communication to combat these threats.

8.7. Chapter 7.6 Killing of Animals for Disease Control Purposes

The Group noted this chapter's importance for emergency management but suggested it be updated to apply to other hazards requiring killing of animals, such as natural disasters. The chapter does include references to disease control contingency plans and operational structures. The WOA Secretariat advised that it is currently being reviewed and

updated to cover animal welfare at the time of killing and would then be able to apply to other hazards where killing of animals is required such as in natural disasters.

The Group did recommend adding the word “finance” next to “logistics” in Article 7.6.2 to reflect the compensation process necessary for depopulation. The Group also noted that official veterinarians are required to provide overall guidance for depopulation operations however the glossary term of official veterinarians does not mention animal welfare. This chapter could also include references to working with other competent authorities. The WOAHS Secretariat will ensure linkages between the Groups in updating these chapters to ensure complementarities.

8.8. Glossary definitions

The Group also considered several glossary definitions and their applicability to emergency management. The term “hazard” was deemed as appropriate for covering all-hazards impacting animal health and welfare and veterinary public health. The Group noted that the term “risk” only referenced the biological and economic consequences of an adverse event when events may have broader consequences such as environmental and security.

The Group noted that there are other chapters which are relevant for emergency management that were not covered in the Group’s review such as the chapter on carcass disposal. The Group also noted the need to consider other resources of WOAHS and Partners such as guidelines when developing emergency management standards. Lastly, the Group recommended including synonyms where appropriate in existing and new content.

9. Proposed new work

9.1. Recommendation

Based on the review above, the Group then considered the options of either developing a new chapter on emergency management and/or expanding the content of an existing chapter to include the principles of emergency management. Noting the importance of the topic area, its transversal applicability to several chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*, the Group agreed that the best course of action is to propose a new chapter, with a title of “emergency management” and offer the recommendations as above to review and modify the other code chapters.

9.2. Placement in the Code

The Group discussed the options of where to insert an emergency management chapter and agreed it would fit best in Volume 1 General Provisions Section 3 on Quality of Veterinary Services noting again the cross-cutting aspect of Veterinary Services, that the chapter would improve the quality of Veterinary Services and it would support the lead into Section 4 on disease prevention and control. The chapter would take an all-hazards approach to emergency management and thus not fit in the other sections of Volume 1.

9.3. Purpose of a new chapter

The Group discussed the purpose of a new chapter on emergency management and agreed that it would provide guidance for WOAHS Members on managing emergencies impacting animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health. Its objectives could include:

- Assisting Members in developing their own emergency management systems and contributing to ‘whole of government’ national emergency management systems and plans either in a lead agency or supporting agency role depending on the nature of the emergency.
- Enhancing the quality of Veterinary Services in emergency management.
- Facilitating collaboration and communication between different actors in emergency management.
- Supporting regional and international agreements impacting animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health.
- Promoting cooperation among WOAHS Members, including at a regional level.
- Improving recovery efforts from emergencies.
- Protecting animal welfare during emergencies.
- Serve as a reference to other sections within the Code.
- Support WOAHS’s capacity building efforts.

9.4. Scope of a new chapter

The Group defined the scope could include setting out recommendations to manage emergencies affecting animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health. It covers emergencies arising from a broad range of hazards, which may be due to natural, accidental or deliberate events.

This chapter applies to all terrestrial animals and provides general principles of emergency management and is not specific for individual hazards.

9.5. Content

The Group were then able to propose a draft outline of a new chapter on emergency management, with a list of key terminology to be defined, to be reviewed by the Code Commission and used as a basis for writing content at a future meeting of this Group.

10. Next steps

The Secretariat informed the *ad hoc* Group that once validated by the WOAAH Director General, the report will be presented to the Code Commission for consideration at its next meeting in September 2024.

Following the approval of the report and at the request of the Code Commission and WOAAH Director General, the Group will convene in 2-5 December 2024.

.../Annexes

Annex 1. Adopted Agenda

AD HOC GROUP ON VETERINARY EMERGENCIES (STANDARDS)

Paris, 10 to 13 June 2024

Date	Time	Activity
Monday, 10 June	14:00-14:30	Welcome from Dr Montserrat Arroyo, WOAHA Deputy Director General for International Standards and Science Adoption of the agenda, Chair, introductions and appointment of Rapporteur Adoption of the terms of reference
	14:30-14:45	WOAH's Emergency Management Programme presentation
	14:45-15:00	Overview of WOAHA Standard Setting Process presentation
	15:00-15:15	Refreshment break
	15:15-17:00	Member experiences in emergency management
Tuesday, 11 June	9:00-11:00	Purpose of emergency management standards
	11:00-11:30	Refreshment break
	11:30-13:30	Review of <i>Terrestrial Code</i> and identify areas which reference emergency management principles
	13:30-14:30	Lunch
	14:30-17:00	Review of <i>Terrestrial Code</i> and identify areas which reference emergency management principles
Wednesday, 12 June	9:00-11:00	Terminology and principles to be defined
	11:00-11:30	Refreshment break
	11:30-13:30	Terminology and principles to be defined
	13:30-14:30	Lunch
	14:30-17:00	Terminology and principles to be defined
	16:30-17:00	Stocktake of progress
	19:30	Group dinner
Thursday, 13 June	9:00-11:00	Final review
	11:00-11:30	Refreshment break
	11:30-12:00	Propose and agree next steps
	12:00-13:00	Summary of meeting Presentation of report to Dr Montserrat Arroyo Meeting closure

Annex 2. List of Participants

AD HOC GROUP ON VETERINARY EMERGENCIES (STANDARDS)

Paris, 10 to 13 June 2024

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Annex 3. Terms of Reference

AD HOC GROUP ON VETERINARY EMERGENCIES (STANDARDS)

Paris, 10 to 13 June 2024

Purpose

The purpose of the *ad hoc* Group on Standards for Veterinary Emergencies is to develop standards on emergency management for the *Terrestrial Code* by proposing a new chapter and/or to expand the content of an existing chapter. It also aims to review existing chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* in terms of emergency management and to recommend other amendments required to integrate a consistent approach to emergency management, including reviewing or proposing new glossary definitions if deemed necessary.

The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (the Code Commission) requested that an *ad hoc* Group be convened to undertake this work, which was approved by the WOAHA Director General.

Background

At the 89th General Session of the World Assembly of WOAHA Delegates, Resolution No.28 was passed following the presentation of the Technical Item on emergency management, which recommended that WOAHA ensures its International Standards further integrate emergency management. In April 2023, WOAHA hosted a Global Conference on Emergency Management which rallied support through a diverse multi-sectoral audience to further support efforts to strengthen capacities of Veterinary Services in emergency management through training, partnerships, networks, improved access to data and scientific evidence and adequate resource mobilisation. WOAHA is taking forward the outputs of the Conference and its previous work to further integrate emergency management into its work programme.

In September 2023, the Code Commission reviewed and endorsed an initial proposal, submitted by WOAHA's Preparedness and Resilience Department, to convene an *ad hoc* Group to draft standards on emergency management. The Department was then asked to prepare these terms of reference for endorsement at the February 2024 meeting of the Code Commission.

Specific issues to be addressed

To support Members to prepare and respond to emergencies, a common understanding of emergency management is required by providing Standards. This includes the need to define the foundations of emergency management such as common terminology and key principles. The principles defined for emergency management should take an all-hazards approach, so that they are transversal and transferable to different types of incidents (e.g. disease outbreaks, natural disasters, deliberate events). The standards must be applicable to all WOAHA Members and to all components of the veterinary domain. This takes into account that what constitutes an emergency may differ depending on national contexts.

Actions to deliver

The *ad hoc* group will be asked to:

1. review existing *Terrestrial Code* and identify areas which reference emergency management principles;
2. propose to develop either a new chapter on emergency management and/or expand the content of an existing chapter to include the principles of emergency management;
3. identify key emergency management terminology to define in the context of animal health and welfare e.g. emergency, disaster, crisis, contingency plan;
4. propose next steps based on the recommendations from items 1-3;
5. begin drafting text based on the above decision.

Consideration

Prior to the meeting, *ad hoc* Group members should:

- be familiar with the structure and content of the *Terrestrial Code* including the current references to emergency management (Article 1.4.5, Chapters 1.7. to 1.12, Article 3.2.7, Article 4.19.3);
- consider existing international guidance on emergency management such as FAO's Good Emergency Management Practice "GEMP" Guide, the International Health Regulations, the SENDAI Framework and other relevant initiatives;
- familiarise themselves with existing WOAHA guidance on emergency management (e.g. WOAHA Guidance on Simulation Exercises, Animal Welfare in Disasters, Biological Threat Reduction).

Expectations [or prerequisite]

Ad hoc Group members should:

- sign off the WOAHA Undertaking on Confidentiality of information (if not done already);
- complete the Declaration of Interest Form;
- read and study in detail all dossiers provided by the WOAHA prior to the meeting;
- agree on the appointment of the chair and rapporteur of the meeting;
- contribute to discussions;
- contribute to drafting text or assessment;
- understand that the membership of the Group may be retained between *ad hoc* Group meetings to ensure continuity of the work.

Deliverables

The *ad hoc* Group will produce a report that contains recommendations for:

- development of a new chapter and/or expansion of an existing chapter(s) to include emergency management;
- proposed emergency management terminology;
- the outline of new content for inclusion in the *Terrestrial Code*.

Reporting / timeline

The *ad hoc* Group will draft its report/complete the above actions by 15 July 2024 in time for review during the September 2024 meeting of the Code Commission.

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