

Foreword

The World Organisation for Animal Health turns 100: reflections on the Organisation's role and evolution since 1924

On 25 January 1924, representatives of 28 countries met to sign an International Agreement on coordinated action to fight the spread of animal diseases by trade. This marked the founding of the *Office International des Epizooties*, now named the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Over the years, the historic mission of WOA's has been enriched and the scope of its mandate broadened to include new activities. The construction and development of WOA's can be mapped out across four main phases. The first phase began with the creation of WOA's as an organisation focusing on animal diseases. Its mandate was confined to two objectives: publishing the sanitary information notified by its Members and elaborating standards aimed at ensuring safer trade. This mandate remains central to the Organisation today. The second phase saw the diversification of the Organisation's fields of intervention with the development of standards for aquatic animals, the broadening of WOA's scope to include animal welfare, and a foray into the wildlife sector. In the third phase, the disease- or theme-based approach was complemented with the launch of the Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway, a capacity building programme monitoring the performance of Veterinary Services, making recommendations where needed. The fourth and last phase revolves around two strong objectives: 1) strengthening the Organisation's strategic approach to make the resulting actions more consistent, and 2) positioning the Organisation more firmly as a player at the intersection of critical global challenges, such as the One Health approach and the Sustainable Development Goals. This phase includes WOA's collaboration with the Quadripartite partners (the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme) as well as its publishing of high-visibility position papers, statements or vision papers on topics such as livestock production, animal welfare and the use of growth promoters.

In this special edition of the *Scientific and Technical Review*, which commemorates the centenary of the creation of WOA's, international experts on different aspects of WOA's mandate provide insights into the history, present and future perspective of such diverse topics as combatting transboundary infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare, the role of wildlife and the importance of aquatic animal health.

As WOAHA embarks on the next century of its existence, I am committed to building on the four phases of its development to date to continue developing the Organisation in the service of its Members. I would like to thank the authors of this special centenary issue for their state-of-the-art contributions. I also extend my gratitude to the Editorial Board of WOAHA's *Review*, to the Publications Unit for their editorial coordination, and in particular, to Professor Thomas C. Mettenleiter who, as guest scientific editor of this special edition, has led with great efficiency and insight.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of WOAHA's *Scientific and Technical Review*, and that it will inspire you to continue advocating for animal health and welfare on the global agenda.

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Director General

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