*bulletin*

#2020-2

# PANORAMA

*Thematic portfolio*

## Strengthening preparedness and resilience to emergencies



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**# PERSPECTIVES | # DOSSIER | # AROUND THE WORLD**

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*With the spectre of bioterrorism looming larger, due to major disruptions caused by recent infectious disease outbreaks [1], we must make plans and develop strategies to prevent and respond to the deliberate spread of disease now. The impact of disease on both human and animal health makes it crucial for governments to adopt a One Health approach in all aspects of prevention, preparedness and response to such events [2]. Yet, to date, few countries have looked at how prepared their Veterinary Services are to monitor and identify disease events linked to agro-crime and agro-terrorism or to coordinate with law enforcement agencies on their response.*

Steps have already been taken with public health services to make this cooperation a priority and the same should be done with Veterinary Services. Thus, there is a serious lack of integration of veterinarians into the law enforcement-led response and in the ability of all agencies to cooperate effectively in the emergency management cycle of such events.

## Major challenges to cooperation between law enforcement and animal health services

Building resilience to a deliberate disease outbreak means fully integrating veterinarians into the disease response, whether or not animals are directly involved in the incident.

While some degree of cooperation exists between the law enforcement and veterinary sectors in relation to criminal behaviour, they are guided by very different perspectives. As such, cooperation is often hindered by a lack of understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities and constraints, combined with poor awareness of how both sectors can support each other in fulfilling a common goal: 'to protect the health and safety of the public'. This overarching goal is a powerful inducement to overcome these obstacles and bring both communities together (Figs. 1, 2, 3).

## Initiating dialogue between veterinary and law enforcement agencies

Project RHINO (an INTERPOL project to strengthen its member countries' capacity to combat biological threats) in Guinea [3] began the necessary conversation between veterinary and law enforcement agencies to collaborate in an 'all-hazards strategy' to control disease outbreaks.

An understanding of each other's mandates and of the benefits of cooperation formed the cornerstone of mutual trust required to increase resilience to animal disease emergencies. Joint training, training across sectors, and participating in joint exercises to demonstrate the value of a multi-agency approach, even in smaller incidents, have strengthened this process (Figs. 4, 5). However, resilience, in the form of continuing the sustainable networks developed through this project, also depends on strong political support. This can only be guaranteed by governments who are well informed of the One Health approach, understand its importance and are committed to its implementation.

Watch INTERPOL video on Project RHINO




*Fig. 1. Roles and responsibilities of law enforcement and animal health services in a biological incident. © INTERPOL*

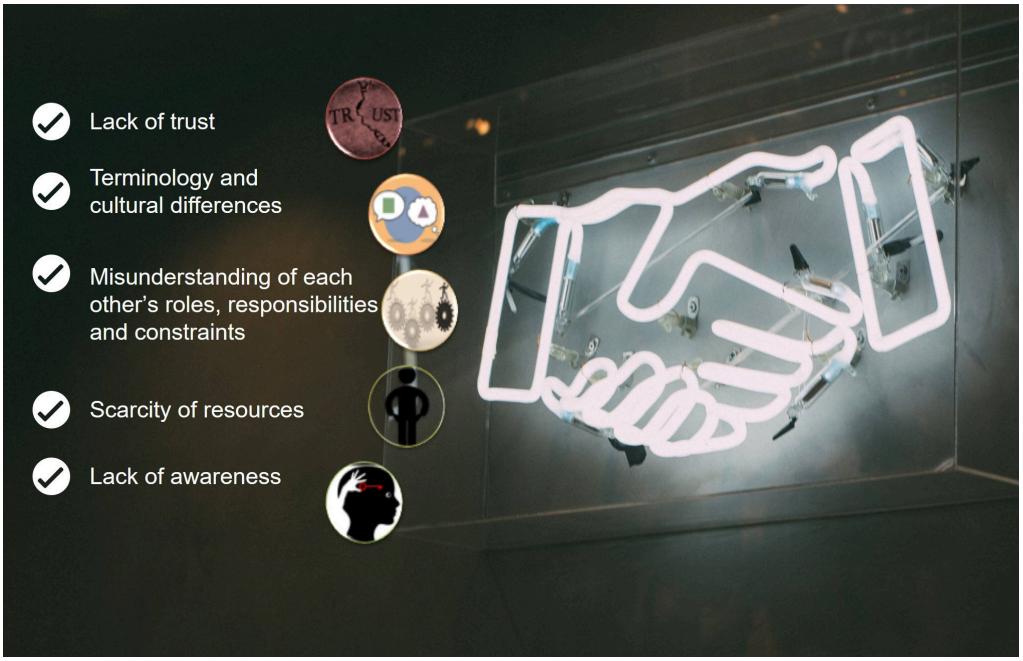



*Fig. 2. Challenges to law enforcement and veterinary services cooperation. © INTERPOL*




*Fig. 3. Addressing law enforcement–veterinary services cooperation challenges. © INTERPOL | Photo on the right by CDC on Unsplash*




*Fig. 4. Law enforcement and veterinary services joint training on use and limitation of personal protective equipment for emergency response. © INTERPOL*




*Fig. 5. Joint exercising to deliberate incidents involving biological substances affecting animals. © INTERPOL*

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PERSPECTIVES

OPINIONS AND STRATEGIES

# Including veterinarians in preventing and preparing for bioterrorism

## Law enforcement and veterinary cooperation to combat deliberate biological attacks

**KEYWORDS**

#agroterrorism, #bioterrorism, #emergency management, #emergency preparedness, #Guinea, #International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), #One Health, #resilience, #Veterinary Services.

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*Project RHINO on strengthening multi-agency preparedness to biological risks. © INTERPOL*

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