

Recommendation No. 1

**Sustainable strengthening of the epidemio-surveillance systems
in Middle East Member Countries**

GIVEN THAT:

1. OIE Member Countries have a responsibility to comply with the OIE standards and guidelines on animal disease surveillance and reporting;

CONSIDERING THAT:

2. Based on the responses to the questionnaire, filled in by the Member Countries of the Middle East region for the preparation of the Technical Item of the Conference, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), foot and mouth disease (FMD), brucellosis and bluetongue are the main diseases for which Member Countries perform surveillance;
3. The Veterinary Authority is the main body responsible for performing surveillance in Member Countries, which is of vital importance to manage global animal disease risks given the Middle East is at a geographical “crossroads” between three continents;
4. The Veterinary Authority use the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) for information on countries’ disease status;
5. Nine out of the 16 respondent Member Countries do not have an epidemiologist in their outbreak investigation teams, a situation that may adversely affect the quality of service provided and lead to the wrong decisions being taken by high officials;
6. Veterinary para-professionals have a major role in executing outbreak investigations;
7. The Veterinary Authority in the vast majority of Member Countries collaborates with other governmental agencies in the event of an outbreak, especially for diseases of public health importance such as brucellosis and infection with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS CoV);
8. Half of the respondent Member Countries do not have a regular programme of capacity-building activities in the field of surveillance and outbreak investigations for relevant staff;
9. The main challenges faced by the epidemio-surveillance systems of the Member Countries are: shortage of field support staff, shortage of laboratory technical staff, budgetary constraints, insufficient level of capacity building and difficulty in obtaining diagnostic materials;
10. Training of relevant OIE National Focal Points and facilitating communication are the most requested actions the OIE could undertake to support building and improving the epidemio-surveillance systems in the Member Countries.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Member Countries define their duties, develop relevant legislation and undertake surveillance planning, applying the general and disease-specific provisions of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* when developing and implementing their epidemio-surveillance systems, especially the Chapters on Animal Health Surveillance, Infection with Avian Influenza Viruses, Infection with Foot and Mouth Disease Virus, Infection with *Brucella spp.*, Infection with Bluetongue Virus, and Infection with peste-des-petits ruminants (PPR) virus;
2. Member Countries commit to enhancing surveillance, especially through better communication and collaboration between bordering countries, as well as in reporting disease occurrences;
3. Member Countries ensure they have the required number of suitably trained staff to perform epidemio-surveillance activities relevant to their animal health situation;
4. Member Countries nominate their relevant OIE National Focal Points, if not already undertaken, and ensure their participation in OIE capacity-building activities and any other training programme deemed necessary for the proper functioning of epidemio-surveillance systems;
5. Member Countries seek better understanding of surveillance and reporting challenges at field level, including incentives and disincentives to reporting by farmers, the private sector and private veterinarians, including the socio-economic impacts of response to disease;
6. Member Countries be actively involved in all relevant activities related to strengthening intersectoral collaboration, especially with regard to addressing zoonotic diseases;
7. Member Countries take advantage of the new proposed approaches of the PVS Pathway to better identify and address the challenges faced by their epidemio-surveillance systems including in advocacy for improved budgets, and relating to the surveillance and reporting chain of command;
8. Member Countries actively participate in existing initiatives, such as the OIE/FAO Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) and, when relevant, the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (REMESA), to strengthen the regional epidemiological network;
9. Member Countries take advantage of the veterinary education establishments in the Region, the network of OIE Collaborating Centres and other relevant academic institutes to help address continuing education needs in epidemiology and risk analysis, and also explore the opportunity of developing a regional epidemiological and risk analysis training centre;

AND THAT:

10. The OIE accelerate the modernisation of WAHIS (WAHIS +) to ensure the system remains a relevant tool for informing and analysing the animal health situation worldwide, including developing a longer term epidemio-surveillance analysis for presenting to its Members;
11. The OIE provide guidelines on the expected competencies of veterinary para-professionals involved in epidemio-surveillance activities;

12. The OIE continue to provide capacity-building activities for the benefit of relevant OIE National Focal Points;
 13. The OIE secure funds, through exploring with interested partners and donors, to support the implementation of PVS Pathway missions and related activities in the Region;
 14. The OIE, in collaboration with its partners, consider developing analysis of the economic and social costs of poor surveillance and delayed detection of animal diseases, including zoonoses, to promote advocacy to increase the budget allocations for improved surveillance activity.
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(Adopted by the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East on 6 October 2017 and endorsed by the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE on 24 May 2018)