

Report on the Webinar for the countries in the Eurasian Economic Union on the topic “WOAH standards and recommendations on bluetongue and Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Europe” (WOAH-EEC)

Date: 30 June 2025

Format: Virtual

Organized by: WOA Regional Representation for Europe in Moscow

In partnership with: Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)

Executive Summary

On June 30, 2025, the WOA Regional Representation for Europe and the Eurasian Economic Union co-hosted a virtual webinar addressing the escalating threats of Bluetongue (BT) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) in Europe and Central Asia. The event convened over 190 participants, including Chief Veterinary Officers, researchers, and animal health experts from the EAEU and beyond. The webinar focused on the evolving epidemiological landscape from 2023–2025, marked by the emergence of new BT serotypes (BTV-3, BTV-8) and the re-emergence of FMD (serotype O, SAT1). Key discussions centered on applying WOA international standards, sharing national response strategies, and leveraging scientific advancements from reference laboratories. The primary outcomes included a set of actionable recommendations to enhance regional surveillance, harmonize vaccination strategies, and strengthen cross-border collaboration to mitigate the impact of these critical transboundary animal diseases.



Background

The Regional Webinar on Bluetongue Disease (BT) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) was convened in response to the evolving epidemiological landscape and resurgence of these transboundary animal diseases (TADs) in the European region, including EU countries, Eastern and Southern Europe, the Mediterranean basin, and Central Asia. From 2023 to 2025, new serotypes of Bluetongue virus (notably BTV-3, BTV-8, and BTV-12) and the re-emergence of FMD (serotype O and exotic SAT1) have posed substantial challenges to animal health, trade, and veterinary preparedness.

The webinar, organized by the WOA Regional Representation for Europe in close collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Union, provided a platform for knowledge exchange and regional dialogue on BT and FMD prevention and control strategies. Webinar, chaired by Dr Budimir Plavsic, RR of WOA for Europe, provided

great opportunity to learn about implementation of international standards, and best practices of Members, related to prevention, control and eradication of BT and FMD.

Goal

To enhance understanding and foster coordinated regional approaches to address the current epidemiological threats of Bluetongue and Foot-and-Mouth Disease, while reinforcing international standards, improving preparedness, and identifying opportunities for regional cooperation.

Specific Objectives Included:

- Sharing up-to-date epidemiological data (2023–2025) on BT and FMD in the region.
- Discussing country experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in disease surveillance, control, and outbreak response.
- Reviewing WOAHP standards, international control measures, and regionalization principles.
- Strengthening collaboration among national veterinary authorities, laboratories, and international partners.
- Identifying priority areas for capacity building and joint initiatives.

Webinar Participants and Structure

The webinar attracted over 190 attendees, including WOAHP Delegates and Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) from the five EAEU member countries. The audience also included veterinary services staff from the broader European region, experts from WOAHP Collaborating Centers and Reference Laboratories (IZS Teramo, The Pirbright Institute, ARRIAH), representatives from FAO/EuFMD, and stakeholders from the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions.

The agenda was divided into two dedicated sessions:

- Session 1: Bluetongue Disease (BT)
- Session 2: Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)

Each session featured expert presentations on epidemiology, country-specific case studies, technical updates from reference laboratories, and interactive discussions.

Key Presentations and Speakers

The webinar featured a distinguished panel of speakers from national veterinary authorities, WOAHP, and world-renowned reference centers.

National Authorities:

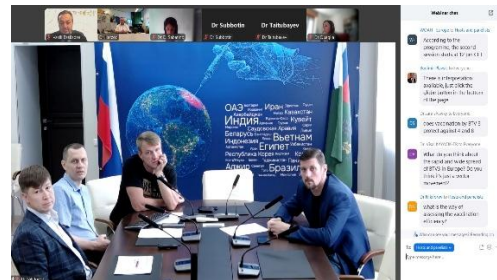
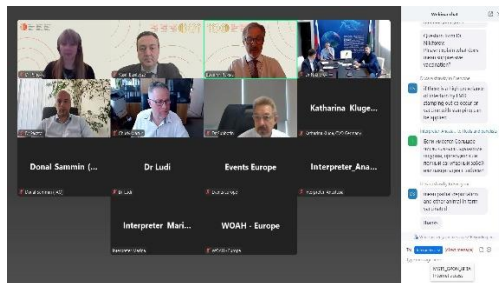
- **Dr. Ulrich Herzog** (WOAHP Delegate, CVO, Austria)
- **Dr. Katarina Kluge** (WOAHP Delegate, CVO, Germany)
- **Dr. Szabolcs Pásztor** (CVO, Hungary)
- **Dr. Martin Chudy** (WOAHP Delegate, CVO, Slovakia)
- **Dr. Ana Nunes** (Head of Epidemiology, Portugal)

Reference Laboratories & Research Centers:

- **Dr. Alexander Sprygin & Dr. Victor Nikiforov** (ARRIAH, Russia)
- **Dr. Anna Ludi** (The Pirbright Institute, UK)
- **Dr. Daria Di Sabatino & Dr. Michela Quaglia** (IZSAM, Italy)

International Organizations:

- **Dr. Donal Sammin** (Executive Secretary, EuFMD, FAO)
- **Dr. Mereke Taitubayev** (WOAH Subregional Representative for Central Asia)
- **Dr. Marija Popovic** (Status Department, WOAHH)
- **Dr. Vasili Basiladze** (WOAH Regional Representation for Europe)



Session Summaries

- **Opening Remarks** by Dr. Plavsic and Dr. Subbotin emphasized the urgency of addressing BT and FMD threats through regional collaboration.
- **WOAH experts** provided comprehensive overviews of Terrestrial Animal Health Code Chapters 8.3 (BT) and 8.8 (FMD), focusing on updated standards, surveillance, and trade implications.
- Presentations from Austria, Portugal, Hungary, Slovakia, and Germany highlighted field-level challenges, response strategies, and inter-country differences in managing BT and FMD outbreaks.
- **WOAH Reference Centers** (IZS Teramo, Pirbright Institute, ARRIAH) presented updates on virus characterization, vector competence, vaccine matching, and entomological surveillance.

Session 1: Bluetongue Disease (BT)

The first session focused on the evolving epidemiological situation of Bluetongue disease in Europe, with particular attention to the emergence and spread of BTV-3, BTV-8, and BTV-12 serotypes. The session provided insights into international standards, national experiences, and scientific perspectives, highlighting the challenges posed by vector-borne transmission, climate influences, and the need for harmonized surveillance, vaccination, and vector control strategies across the region.



- **WOAH International Standards:** Dr. Vasili Basiladze presented an overview of international standards for Bluetongue virus under the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Chapter 8.3), emphasizing the importance of surveillance, vaccination, vector control, and regionalization as key measures to support countries in maintaining trade compliance during outbreaks.

- **Epidemiological Overview:** Dr. Nikiforov and Dr. Di Sabatino emphasized the growing complexity of BT spread, including the emergence of BTV-3 and BTV-12 in new regions, emphasized region-specific responses and entomological surveillance.
- **Country Experiences:** Austria and Portugal reported significant outbreaks requiring coordinated vaccination and movement control efforts.
- **Vector Studies:** Dr. Quaglia explained the behavior and distribution of *Culicoides* vectors, and offered support for entomological training.

Session 2: Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)

The second session focused on the global and regional Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) situation, highlighting the re-emergence of serotype O in Europe and the incursion of SAT1 and SAT2 serotypes in the Near East. Discussions covered the GF-TADs regional approach, including coordination mechanisms, capacity building efforts, and the FMD roadmap for Western Asia. Presentations also reviewed FMD control strategies in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), including the establishment of vaccination zones and the progression toward official FMD-free status in Russia. The importance of vaccine testing and matching was emphasized, particularly in the face of emerging serotypes, underscoring the need for ongoing evaluation of vaccine efficacy. A key highlight was Germany's experience in responding to an FMD outbreak in 2025, successfully regaining its FMD-free status within three months. The session also addressed the official WOA requirements and procedures for the recovery of FMD-free status without vaccination.



- **Epidemiological Update:** Included re-emergence of serotype O in Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, and new SAT1 incursions in the Near East.
- **Country Reports:** Hungary and Slovakia shared their emergency response measures, vaccination efforts, and surveillance challenges. Germany presented its successful case in regaining FMD-free status without vaccination within 3 months.
- **Global Framework (GF-TADs):** Dr. Mereke Tubaev and Dr. Sammin outlined regional coordination mechanisms, FMD roadmaps, and ongoing expert group efforts.
- **Vaccine Matching & Diagnostics:** Dr. Ludi (Pirbright Institute) highlighted the challenges of testing vaccine efficacy against emerging serotypes (SAT1/SAT2), and the importance of cross-sector partnerships.
- **Status Regaining Procedure:** WOA's Dr. Popovic explained official pathways for regaining FMD-free status and the associated trade implications.
- **Dr. Ulrich Herzog** from Austria contributed valuable insights on preparedness planning, including the implementation of FMD zones, enhanced wildlife monitoring, and effective communication with livestock owners. He also discussed the financial consequences of FMD outbreaks and the importance of cross-border collaboration, particularly in disease containment and trade continuity.

Conclusions

- The dynamic epidemiological trends of BT and FMD demand strengthened regional cooperation and information sharing.
- Vaccination remains a cornerstone for control, but vector monitoring, biosecurity, and diagnostic preparedness are equally vital.
- Inter-country collaboration, guided by WOAHS standards and supported by FAO and EuFMD, can effectively mitigate the risks of TADs.
- Continued investment in capacity building, entomological surveillance, and harmonized emergency response frameworks is essential.

Recommendations:

The webinar successfully highlighted the shared challenges and underscored the need for a unified regional response to BT and FMD. The dynamic nature of these diseases requires constant vigilance and adaptation.

The following key recommendations were formulated based on the discussions:

1. **Enhance Surveillance Systems:** Implement robust, integrated surveillance for early detection of new BT and FMD serotypes, incorporating vector monitoring and tracking of animal movements.
2. **Strengthen Regional Laboratories:** Provide sustained support to reference centers (IZS Teramo, Pirbright, ARRIAH) to advance diagnostics, vaccine testing, and regional training programs.
3. **Implement Coordinated Vaccination Strategies:** Develop harmonized vaccination plans, including vaccine matching and the establishment of regional vaccine banks, particularly for high-risk border zones.
4. **Promote Adherence to WOAHS Standards:** Encourage the use of WOAHS guidelines to help members maintain or regain disease-free status, ensuring alignment with international trade requirements.
5. **Increase Capacity-Building Efforts:** Invest in training programs focused on vector identification, biosecurity protocols, and emergency outbreak response.
6. **Foster Cross-Border Collaboration:** Establish formal channels for rapid information exchange and coordination on disease control among neighboring countries.
7. **Leverage Global and Regional Networks:** Utilize platforms like GF-TADs and EuFMD to support risk assessments, contingency planning, and the implementation of regional roadmaps.

The event was a testament to the effective collaboration between WOAHS and the EAEU and generated significant global interest, particularly regarding the successful FMD control strategies shared by Germany, Slovakia, and Hungary.

Further Information: A post about the event can be found on X (formerly Twitter):

<https://x.com/BudimirPlavsic/status/1940336964105810295>