# Whole-of-government approach and veterinary emergency management

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World Organisation for Animal Health | Organisation mondiale de la santé animale | Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal

# A changing risk landscape for Veterinary Services



Article

## FMD: Managing the response amidst media chaos during a recent resurgence



Published on 13 June 2025




## Inside Spain's ASF crisis: how a top lab became the centre of a virus outbreak

In November 2025, Europe's largest pig producing country, Spain, discovered the ASF virus in its wild boar population. Research lab IRTA-CReSA, located close to Barcelona, found itself in the middle of that all. While playing a pivotal role in analysing blood and carcasses on the one hand, it became scrutinised on the other: what if the virus had escaped from that same lab? Three scientists look back to months of uncertainty.



Vincent ter Beek
Editor of Pig Progress / Topic: Pigs around the world | Mar 17 | Article



A wild boar, found dead in Collserola Natural Park, before being necropsied by IRTA-CReSA pathologists. Photo: IRTA-CReSA





NEWS > AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

## Bioterror? Hungary and Slovakia float unconfirmed theory on foot-and-mouth outbreaks

The two countries have culled more than 10,000 animals to contain the highly contagious disease.

# A changing risk landscape for Veterinary Services



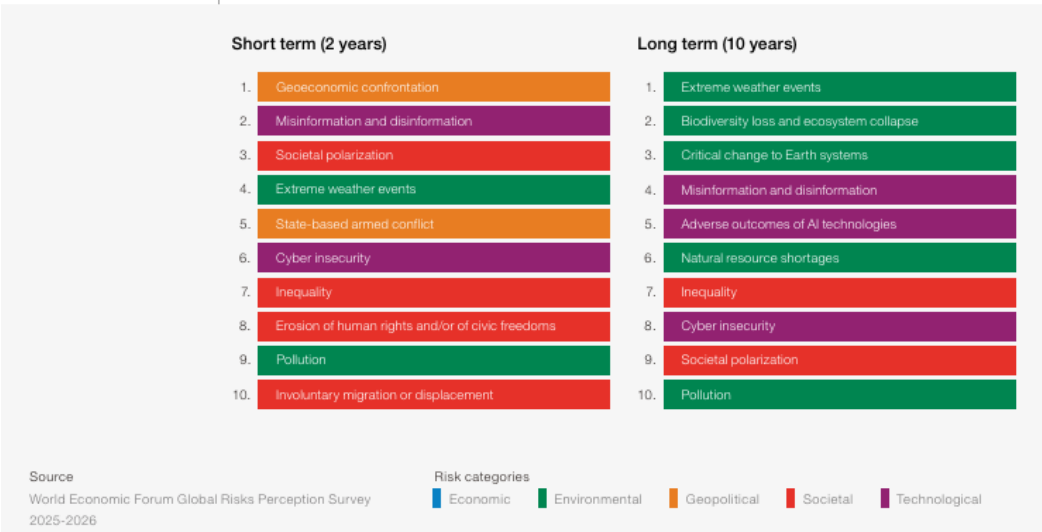
Animal health emergencies can rapidly become wider societal emergencies for :

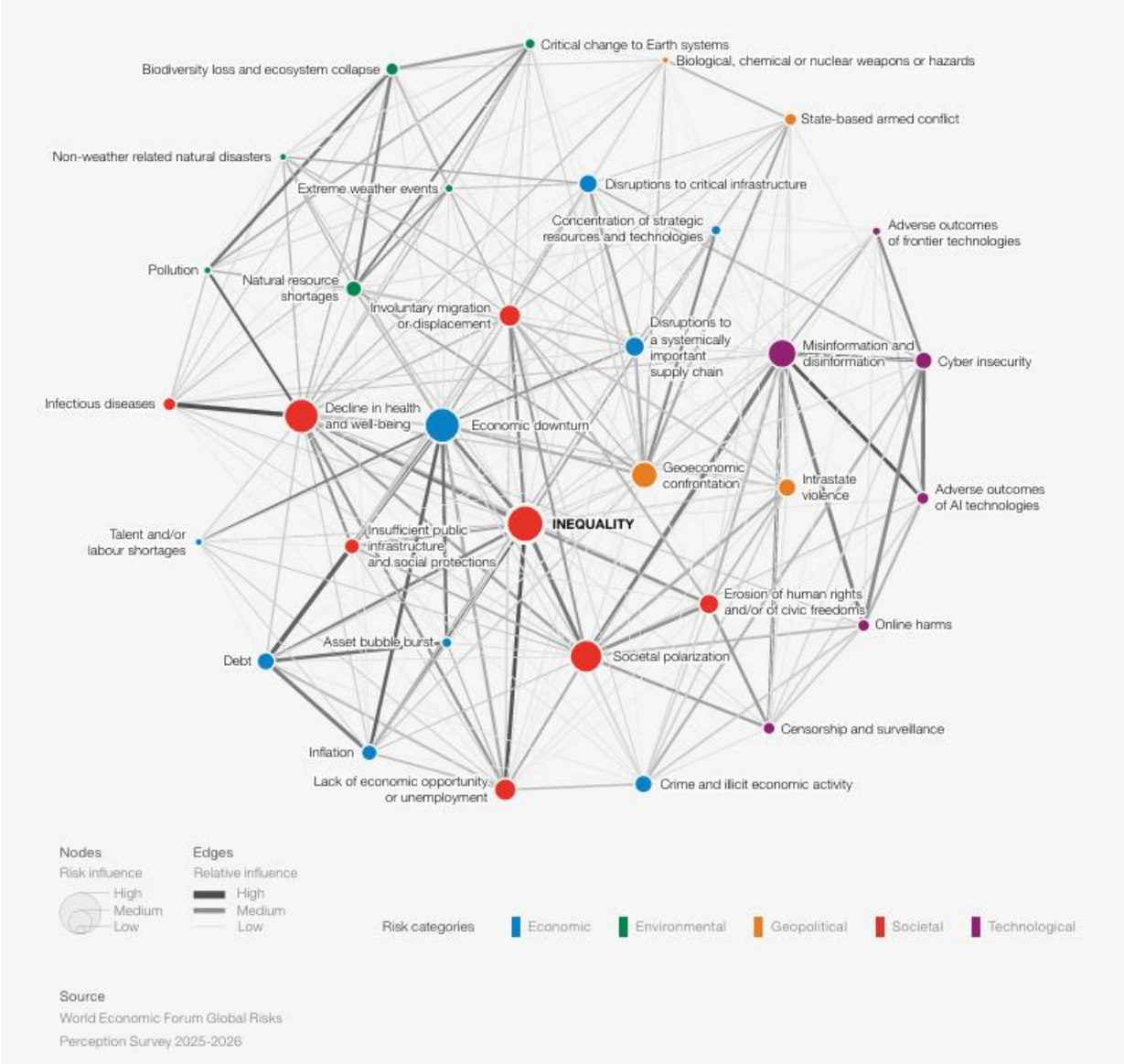
- Public health
- Food security
- Trade and economies
- Environmental
- National security

Veterinary Services and animal health are also vulnerable to other types of emergencies and external factors

FIGURE 3 **Global risks ranked by severity, short term (2 years) and long term (10 years)**

*"Please estimate the likely impact (severity) of the following risks over a 2-year and 10-year period."*

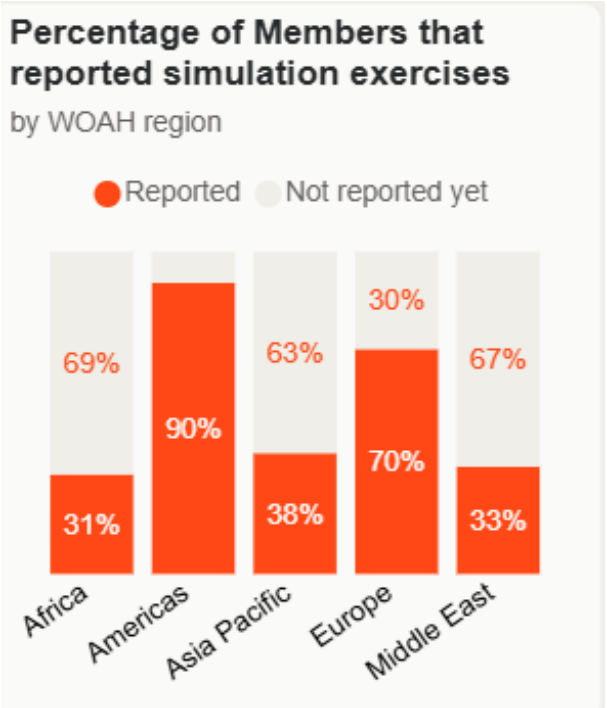


# WOAH Member Capacities and Needs



- Many WOAH Members face significant gaps in emergency management capacities (funding, resources both human and logistical, preparedness, interagency cooperation, political support)
- Only 54% of WOAH Members have reported a simulation exercise to WOAH since 2002
- A 2019 study from Georgetown University reviewed 86 National Emergency Management Plans:
  - Only a third mentioned Veterinary Services
  - 60% zoonotic and/or zootic diseases
  - Two-thirds mentioned animals to some extent




## Members' capacity regarding emergency preparedness is limited

Based on recent Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway missions, the percentage of Members which reached or exceeded the minimal capacity is as follows:

Source: WOAH Observatory Annual Report 2022

| Emergency funding | Emergency response | + Emergency funding Emergency response |
|---|---|---|
| 49% | 53% | 40% |

Source: PVS Evaluation or Follow-up missions for 43 Members, 2016-2021 – Analysis of the Level of Advancement for Critical Competencies II-9. and II.6. from the 6th edition of the PVS Tool

# WOAH STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

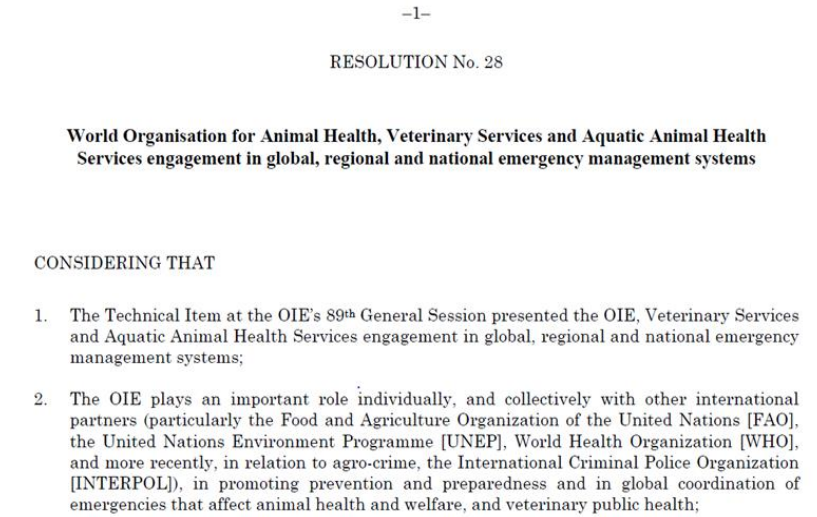
# Emergency Management Standards



- Resolution 28 from GS 2022 on WOAH, Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services engagement in global, regional, and national emergency management systems mandated to WOAH integrate emergency management into its core programming including in the standards

- The WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* does not adequately address emergency management

- Having emergency management standards:
  - Guide Members in developing their own emergency management systems
  - Support advocacy efforts to integrate Veterinary Services in whole of government frameworks for emergencies and enable cooperation with other agencies and sectors
  - Support resource mobilisation within Members but also from external partners
  - Provide a foundation for WOAH's emergency management programme including for capacity building



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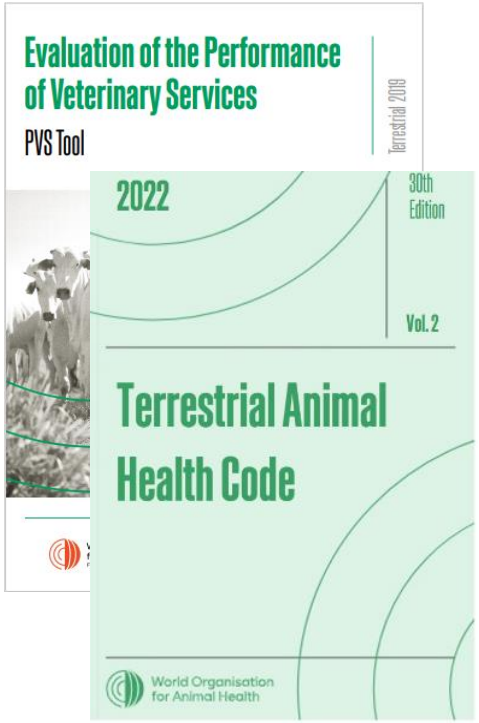
RESOLUTION No. 28

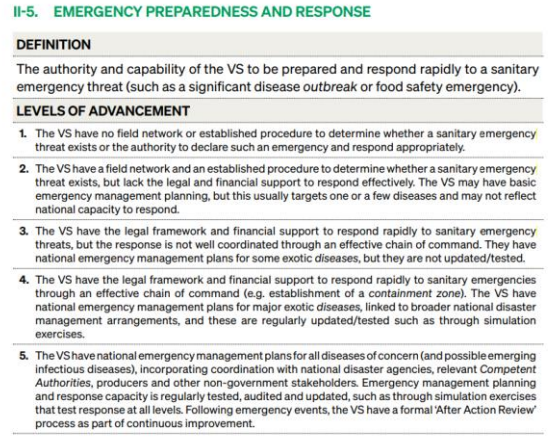
**World Organisation for Animal Health, Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services engagement in global, regional and national emergency management systems**

CONSIDERING THAT

1. The Technical Item at the OIE's 89th General Session presented the OIE, Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services engagement in global, regional and national emergency management systems;

2. The OIE plays an important role individually, and collectively with other international partners (particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], the United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], World Health Organization [WHO], and more recently, in relation to agro-crime, the International Criminal Police Organization [INTERPOL]), in promoting prevention and preparedness and in global coordination of emergencies that affect animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health;



II-5. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

**DEFINITION**

The authority and capability of the VS to be prepared and respond rapidly to a sanitary emergency threat (such as a significant disease *outbreak* or food safety emergency).

**LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT**

1. The VS have no field network or established procedure to determine whether a sanitary emergency threat exists or the authority to declare such an emergency and respond appropriately.
2. The VS have a field network and an established procedure to determine whether a sanitary emergency threat exists, but lack the legal and financial support to respond effectively. The VS may have basic emergency management planning, but this usually targets one or a few diseases and may not reflect national capacity to respond.
3. The VS have the legal framework and financial support to respond rapidly to sanitary emergency threats, but the response is not well coordinated through an effective chain of command. They have national emergency management plans for some exotic *diseases*, but they are not updated/tested.
4. The VS have the legal framework and financial support to respond rapidly to sanitary emergencies through an effective chain of command (e.g. establishment of a *containment zone*). The VS have national emergency management plans for major exotic *diseases*, linked to broader national disaster management arrangements, and these are regularly updated/tested such as through simulation exercises.
5. The VS have national emergency management plans for all diseases of concern (and possible emerging infectious diseases), incorporating coordination with national disaster agencies, relevant *Competent Authorities*, producers and other non-government stakeholders. Emergency management planning and response capacity is regularly tested, audited and updated, such as through simulation exercises that test response at all levels. Following emergency events, the VS have a formal 'After Action Review' process as part of continuous improvement.

# Emergency Management Standards



- Proposal accepted by Code commission in February 2024 to commence work on integrating emergency management into the *Terrestrial Code*
- *Ad hoc* Group convened in June 2024
  - *Terrestrial Code* reviewed
  - Recommended developing a **chapter on emergency management**
  - Chapter outline drafted
- Two further meetings held in December 2024 and June 2025 to refine chapter in response to Code Commission feedback
- Chapter has been shared for Member comments three times with comments addressed by the Code Commission thereafter.
- **Final round of review to take place this year and chapter will be reviewed in February 2027 by the Code Commission.**
- Chapter is scheduled to be put up for adoption in 2027.



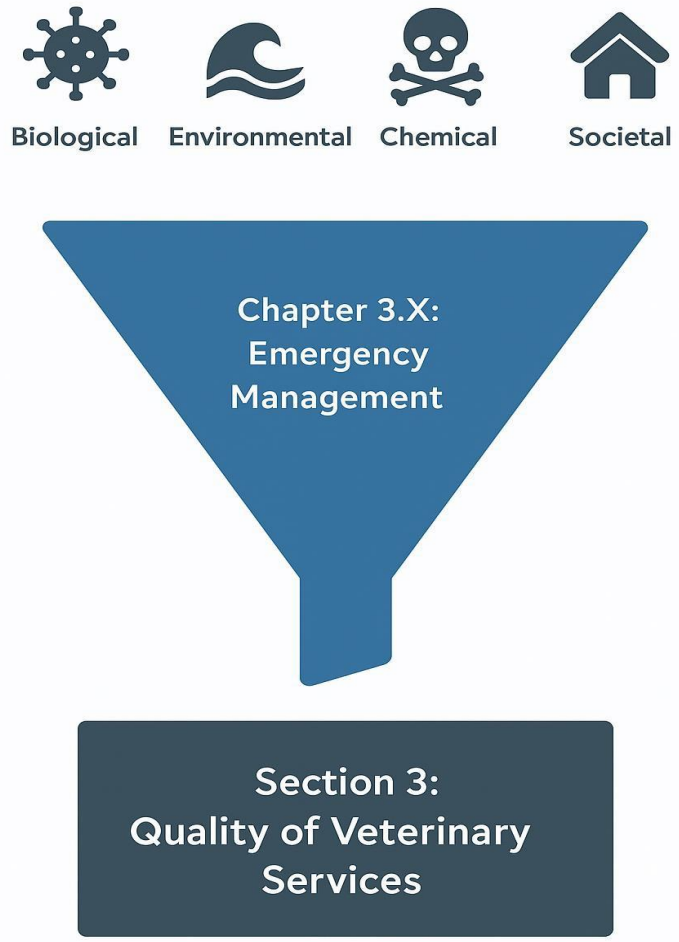
# CHAPTER 3.X: EMERGENCY MANAGEMNET

Location: Section 3 of the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (Quality of Veterinary Services)

Significance:

- It is the first WOAH chapter to adopt a formal **all-hazards** approach.
- It acknowledges Veterinary Services may be the **lead** OR **supporting** agency in an emergency.
- Promotes a **whole-of-government approach** to emergency management
- It complements disease-specific chapters throughout the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.
- It parallels the emergency disease preparedness and disease outbreak management chapters of the WOAH *Aquatic Animal Health Code*.

**Key innovation: This chapter provides transversal principles applicable to ANY emergency involving animals, moving beyond specific diseases.**



# Purpose and scope



## Scope:

Applies to all **emergencies** involving **Veterinary Services** and **animals, including wildlife.** The Chapter takes an all-hazards approach covering biological as well as chemical or physical hazards, which may arise from technological, environmental (geological, hydrological, meteorological), or even societal causes.

## Objectives:

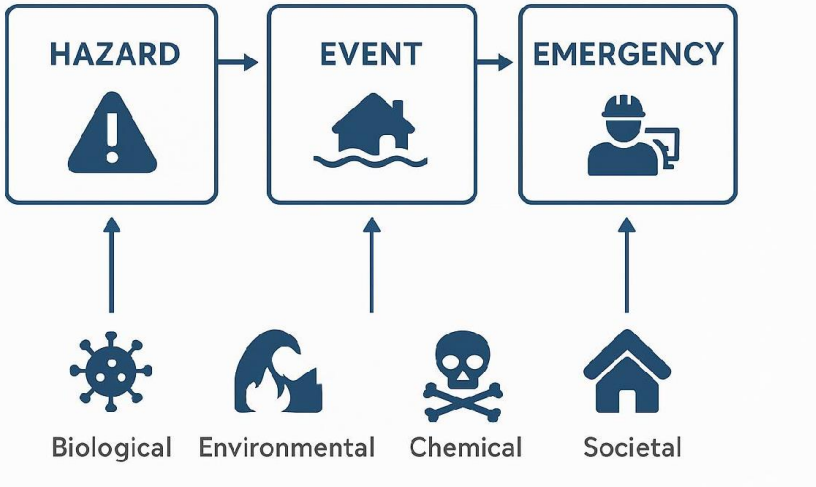
1) Guide Members in developing emergency management structures, processes and supporting systems;

2) Define essential capacities and capabilities required to respond effectively;

3) Emphasise the need for sustainable resourcing to increase the resilience of Veterinary Services;

4) Advocate for planning, training and simulation exercises to improve readiness for emergencies;

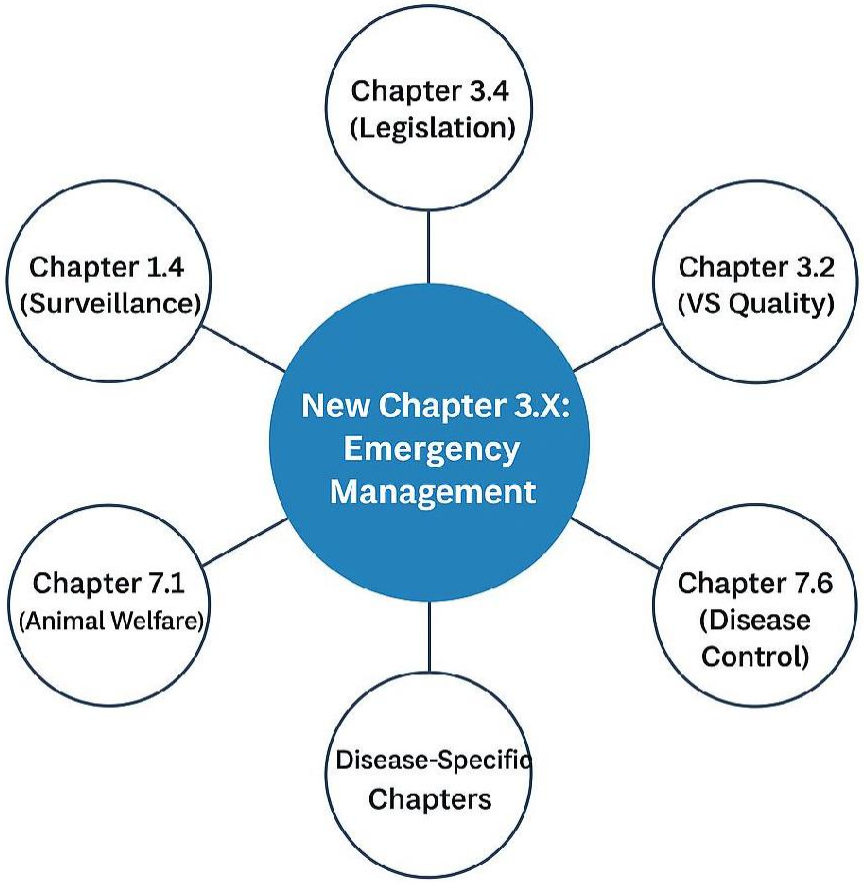
5) Encourage a commitment to continuous improvement in emergency management.




## Definitions:

- **'Hazard'** means a natural or human-induced process or phenomenon with the potential to negatively affect animal health, *animal welfare* or veterinary public health.
- **'Event'** means the manifestation of a hazard at a particular location and time, which has consequences on animal health, *animal welfare* or veterinary public health.
- **'Risk'** means the likelihood of an event and the likely magnitude of its consequences.
- **'Emergency'** means a state triggered by an event that creates significant disruption, requiring immediate and coordinated extraordinary measures due to its scale, complexity, or likelihood of further impact.

# INTEGRATION: CONNECTING TO THE EXISTING CHAPTERS OF THE *TERRESTRIAL CODE*




**Complementary References:**

- Chapter 1.4 (Surveillance): Detection and early warning data.
- Chapter 3.2 (Quality of VS): Emergency management as a quality component.
- Chapter 3.4 (Veterinary Legislation): Legal frameworks for powers.
- Chapter 7.1 (Animal Welfare): Introduction to animal welfare recommendations
- Chapter 7.6 (Animal Welfare): Killing for disease control purposes (Under revision to enlarge the scope)
- Disease-specific chapters: Providing the 'what' (e.g., technical response) for the 'how' (this chapter's structure).

**Key Message: This new chapter is a bridge connecting disease-specific responses to the broader, all-hazards emergency management framework.**

# Summary



**Article 3.X.4 – General Principles**

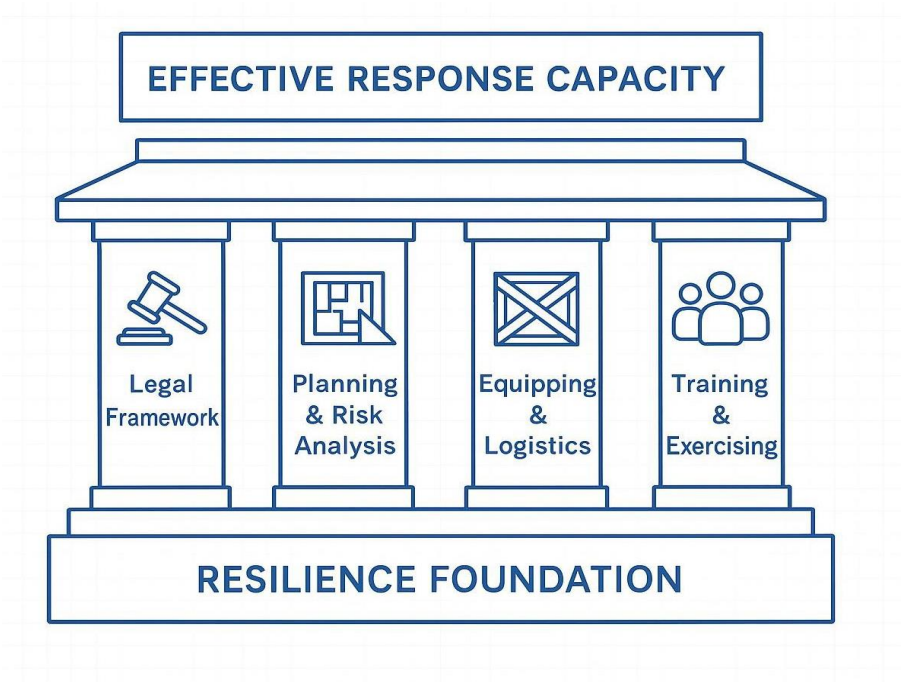
- Integration of Veterinary Services into national systems and defined functions depending on the type of emergency.
- Importance of data, information management and communication.
- Human and financial resources.
- Continuous improvement through after-action reviews and simulation exercises. Learning from other sectors.
- Accountability through strong records management.

**Article 3.X.5 – Prevention**

Avoiding or reducing the likelihood of the occurrence of events that may trigger emergencies or mitigating their impact so that they do not trigger emergencies.

**Article 3.X.6 – Preparedness**

Continuous cycle of planning, equipping, training, and exercising and should be supported by political commitment, dedicated funding and resourcing as well as inter-institutional coordination mechanisms.






# Summary (continued)

**Article 3.X.7 – Detection**
Process of the timely identification and analysis of the occurrence of events that might trigger an emergency, requiring action by the Veterinary Authority, Competent Authorities and other relevant authorities and stakeholders.

**Article 3.X. 8 – Response**
Series of coordinated actions taken to manage an event that triggers an emergency. These actions should be described in principle in the emergency response plans, and be adapted to the event's nature, scale and complexity. Introduces emergency response coordination mechanisms, such as IMS.

**Article 3.X.9 – Recovery**
Set of actions required to support affected communities, industries and animal populations, restore livelihoods and habitats and to rebuild infrastructure, and to reduce long-term emergency impacts.




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# PREPAREDNESS: Guidelines for Simulation Exercises




https://www.woah.org/en/document/guidelines-for-simulation-exercises/

- WOAH has developed these guidelines for **simulation exercises** with the goal of strengthening the capacity of Veterinary Services for preparedness against all hazards that affect animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health.
- Designed to be scalable to all levels of capacity and resources.

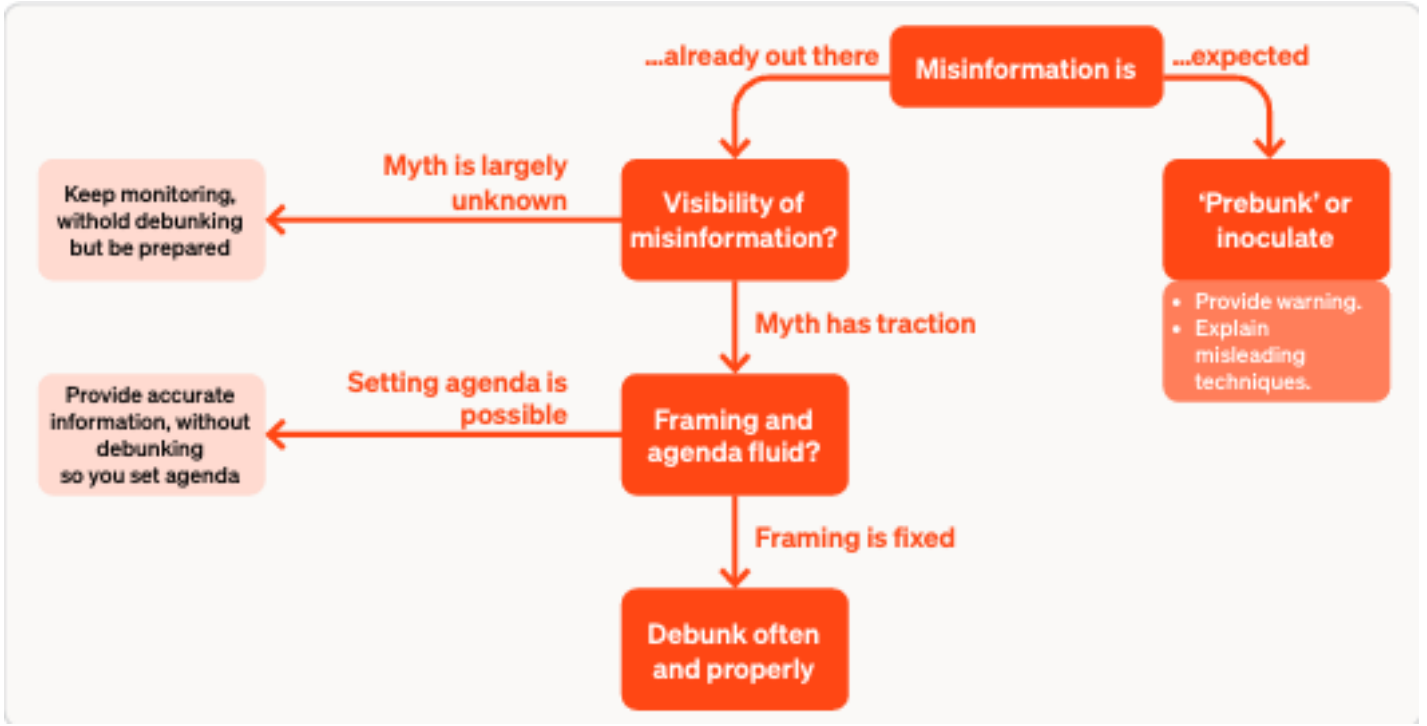



**Figure 1.**
**Benefits of simulation exercises**




https://www.woah.org/en/document/countering-disinformation-and-misinformation-in-animal-health-emergencies/

- Misinformation is inaccurate information, usually spread **without harmful intent**. Disinformation is inaccurate or misleading information, **deliberately created and spread** to cause harm to target governments, organisations or people.
- WOAH partnered with INTERPOL to develop these guidelines to orient Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement to these issues and introduce some key strategies to manage disinformation and misinformation.



# PREPAREDNESS: Guidelines for Investigation of Suspicious Biological Events






https://www.woah.org/app/uploads/2021/03/suspicious-biological-events-veng-revised-1st-edition.pdf

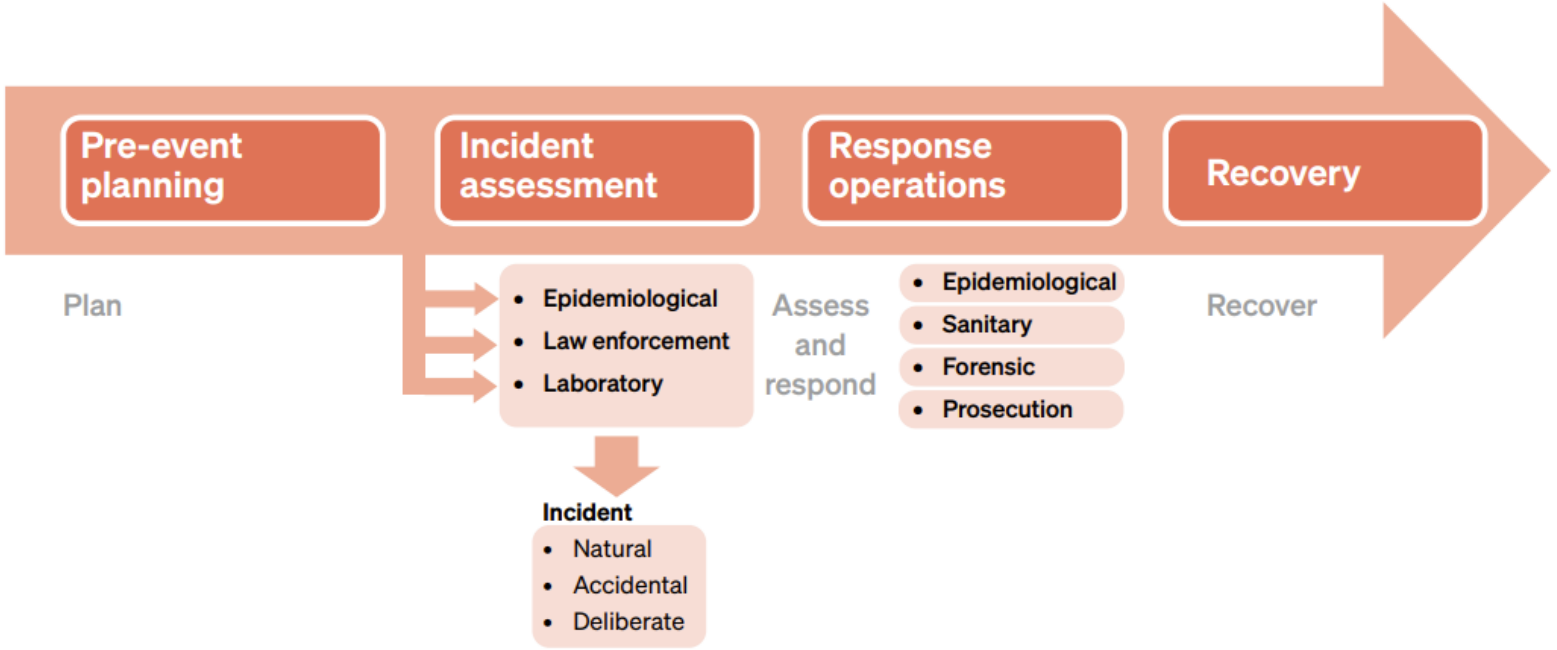



**Figure 1**
**Response flow**

## Operational guidelines

- Veterinary Services planning - pre-plan, train and exercise capabilities in preparation for a biothreat event
- Incident assessment – Veterinary Services in conjunction with law enforcement will assist in the joint assessment of biothreat events with evaluation of potential intentional activities
- Response operations – as described above

# PREPAREDNESS: Investigative Interview Guidelines





**Investigative Interviews:**

Guidelines for national Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement

World Organisation for Animal Health | INTERPOL | Biological threat reduction

https://www.woah.org/app/uploads/2026/02/investigativeinterviews-en-20260223.pdf

**Box 1: Investigation types that require investigative interviews**

1. Animal welfare investigations
2. Epidemiological outbreak investigations
3. Food safety investigations
4. Fraud investigations (e.g. pharmaceutical, food and feed related)
5. Product integrity, producer statement and traceability investigations
6. Zoonotic disease investigations
7. Biological crime or terrorism
8. Agro-crime or agro-terrorism

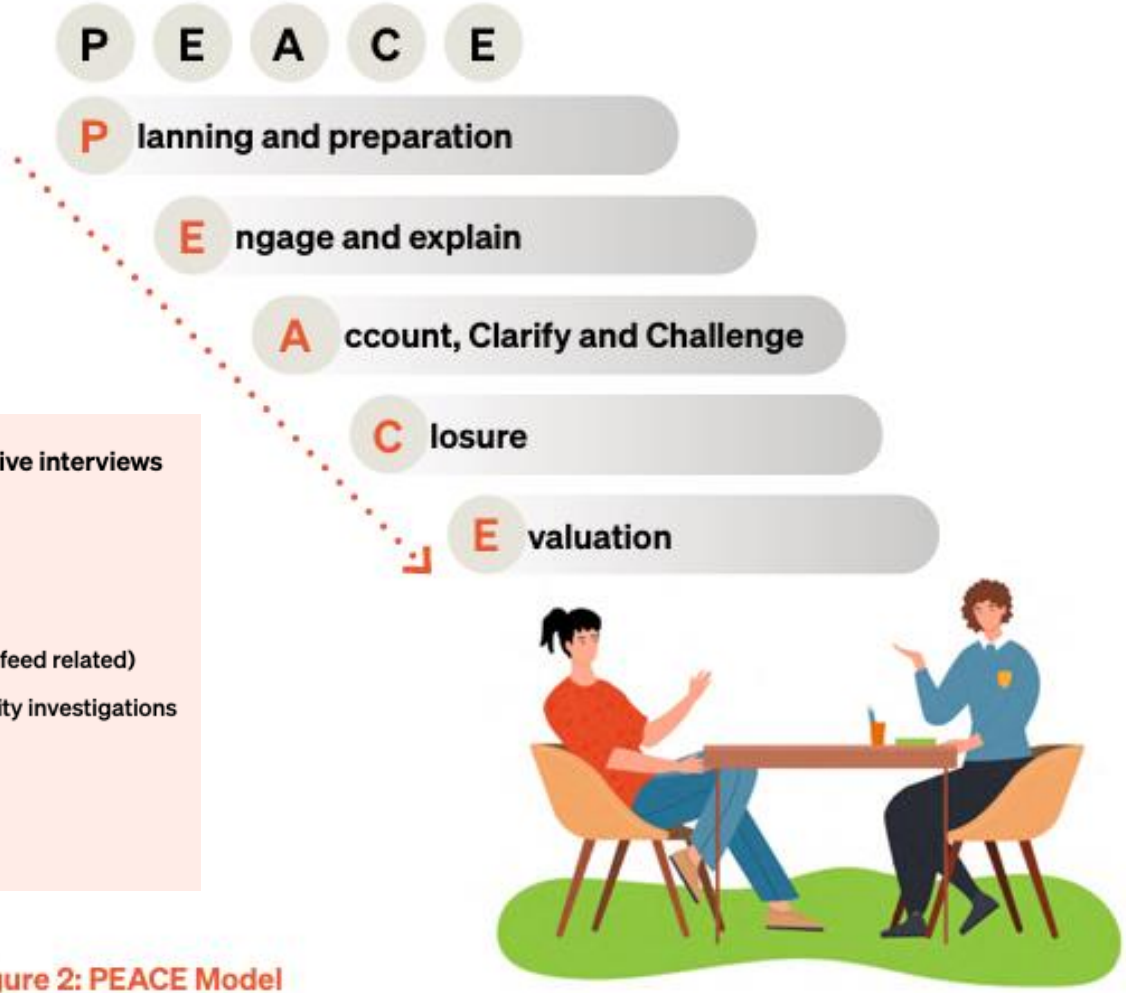



Figure 2: PEACE Model

**Investigative interviewing:** Systematically questioning individuals in an investigation to gather pertinent details, establish facts and uncover the truth. It aims to elicit reliable and detailed information while minimising the risk of evidence contamination and distortion

# PREPAREDNESS: Guidelines for National Incident Management Systems (upcoming)

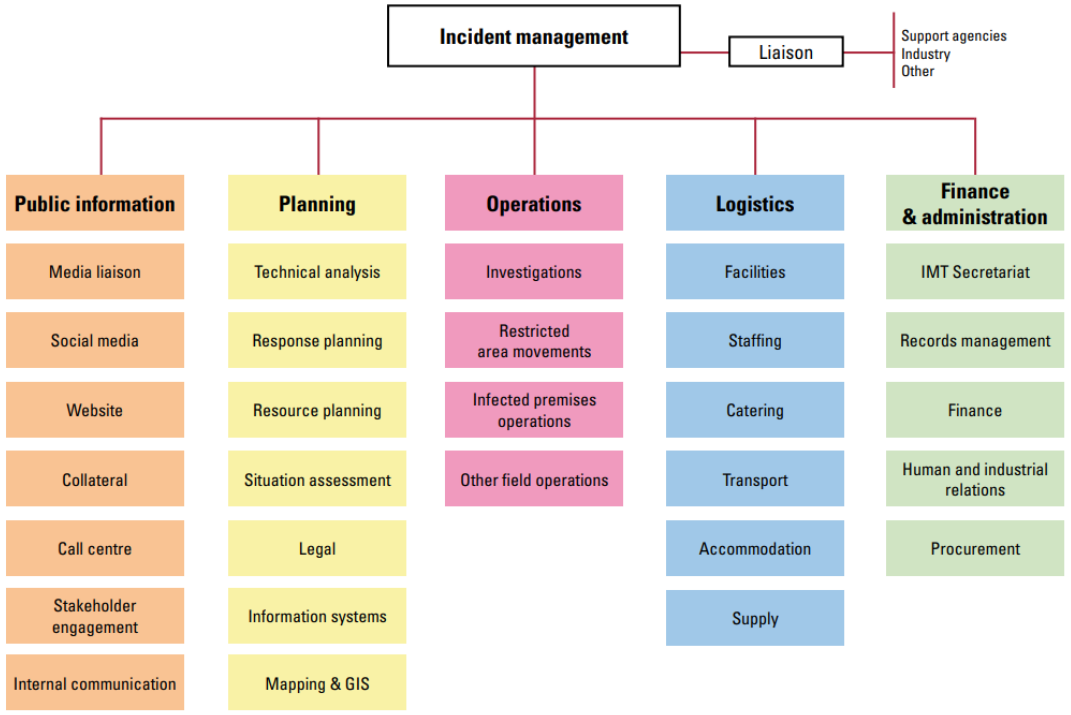



- Nature of the evolving landscape demands agile, scalable and adaptable response structures.
- WOAH convened the WOAH *ad hoc* Group on Veterinary Emergencies to develop high-level guidelines on national incident management systems for Veterinary Services.
- Objectives:
  - Promote coordination through the use of IMS or equivalent structures
  - Describe high-level principals and core functions of IMS
  - Support interoperability between Veterinary Services, other relevant authorities and stakeholders in emergency response and as part of a **whole-of-government approach**
- Guidelines will support the implementation of the ***Terrestrial Code*** emergency management chapter.
- Contributes to the **PVS Evaluation** Critical Competency on Emergency Preparedness and Response (II-2) and aligns with **FAO's Good Emergency Management Practice (GEMP): The Essentials** and the **Progressive Pathway for Emergency Preparedness (PPEP).**

**'Incident management system' (IMS)** means an emergency response coordination mechanism that brings together people, resources, and specific systems and tools, enabling effective collaboration between sectors to support interoperability, situational awareness and efficient decision-making. (definition from WOAH ad hoc Group on Veterinary Emergencies)

**Guiding Principles of an IMS**:

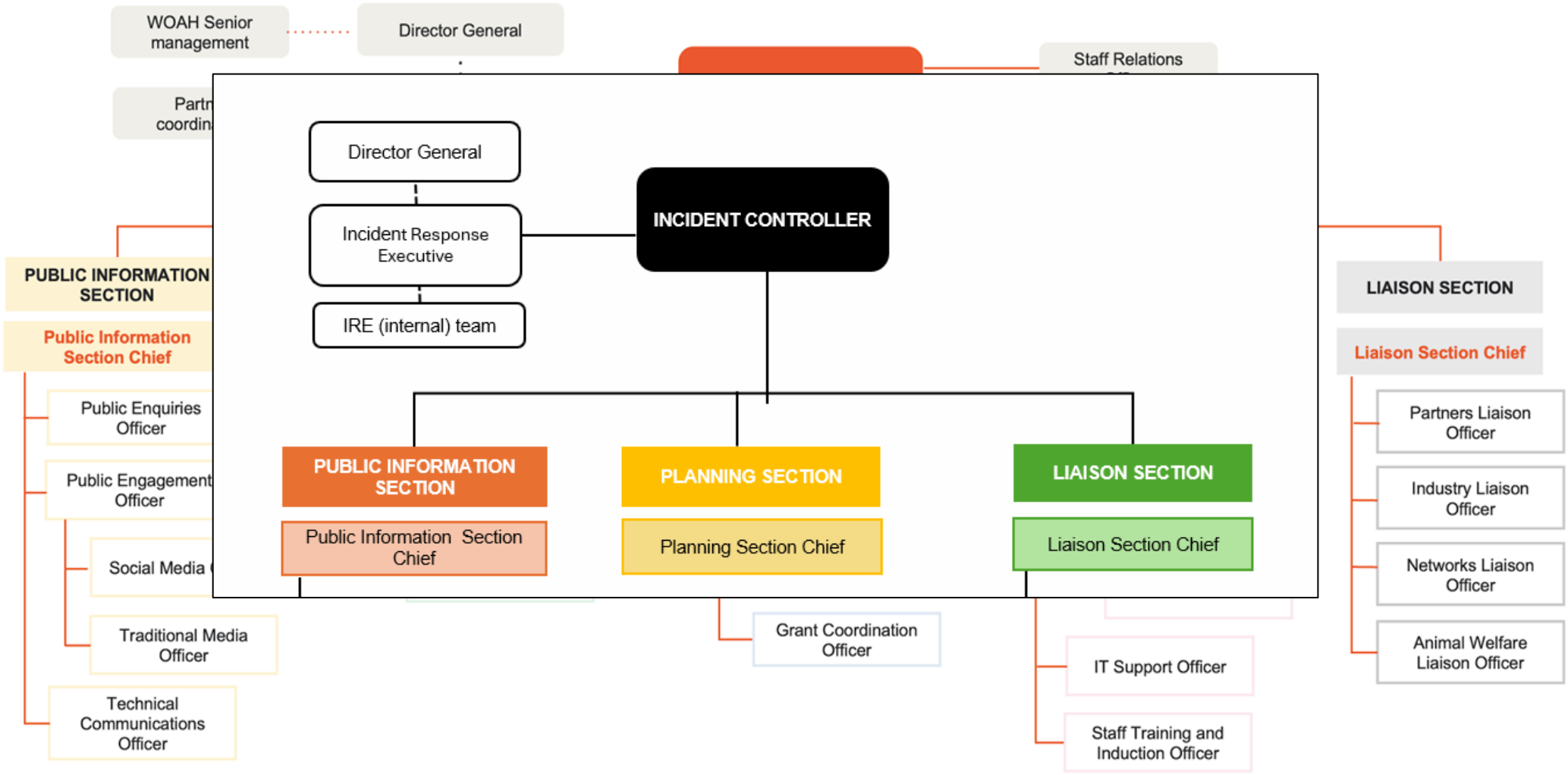
- Scalable and modular based on complexity and size of an incident.
- Risk-based activation and deactivation.
- Clear leadership, roles and accountability during incidents.
- Improved information flow and situational awareness.
- Faster, coordinated and evidence-based decision making.
- Interoperability within whole-of-government emergency management arrangements.
- Continuous improvement: preparedness, simulation exercises, lessons management.




© *Callan, T. (2020), WOAH Scientific and Technical Review on Disaster Prevention and Preparedness*

# WOAH's Incident Management System





# Discussion Points





- What aspects of incident management are most challenging to implement within your Veterinary Services?
- Where can the draft guidelines on IMS add value for you?
- How can WOAH better support integration of Veterinary Services into whole-of-government frameworks for emergency management?

# Thank you

# Merci

# Paldies

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