



Organisation
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Animal

25th Conference of the
OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee (Germany), 17-21 September 2012

FINAL REPORT

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List of Abbreviations

AFSCA	Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain
AHVLA	Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency
ASF	African swine fever
BT	Bluetongue
BTV	Bluetongue Virus
BVD	Bovine virus diarrhoea
CIC	Conseil International de la Chasse
CSF	Classical swine fever
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
CoE	Council of Europe
DG MARKT	Directorate-General Internal Market and Services
DG SANCO	Directorate General for 'Health and Consumers'
EC	European Commission
ECVPH	European College of Veterinary Public Health
EEAS	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
EuFMD	European Commission for the control of Foot-and-Mouth disease
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FESASS	European Federation for Animal Health and Sanitary Security
FMD	Foot and mouth disease
FVE	Federation of Veterinarians of Europe
GFSI	Global Food Safety Initiative
GF-TADs	Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases
EMA	European Medicines Agencies
IDF	International Dairy Federation
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
NGOs	Non-governmental organization

OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
PCP	Progressive control pathway
PPR	Peste des petits ruminants
PVS	OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services
RR-EE	OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe
SC	Steering Committee
SEACFMD	Sub-Commission for Foot and Mouth Disease Control in China and South-East Asia
SPS	Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the WTO
SRR	Sub-Regional Representation
SBV	Schmallenberg Virus
TB	Bovine tuberculosis
UECBV	European Livestock and Meat Trading Union
WAHIS	World Animal Health Information System
WAHWF	World Animal Health and Welfare Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO IHR	World Health Organization International Health Regulations
WSPA	World Society for Animal Protection
WTO	World Trade Organization
VEE	Veterinary Education Establishments
VS	Veterinary Services
VSF	Veterinary Statutory Bodies

Introduction

1. Following the kind invitation of the Government of Germany, the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe was held in Fleesensee from 17 to 21 September 2012.
2. A total of 119 participants, comprising OIE Delegates and/or nominees of 42 Members and senior officers from 8 regional and international organisations attended the Conference. In addition, representatives of the private sector as well as private veterinary organisations from the region and from the host country were present. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Germany; Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General; Dr Ago Pärtel, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe; Dr Prof Nikola Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe and Honorary President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe; Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels; Dr Alejandro Thiermann, President of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission; Dr François Caya, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department and Dr Manuel Sanchez, Deputy Head of the OIE Animal Health Information Department also participated to the Conference. The speakers presenting Technical Items I and II, namely, Dr Marc Artois, speaker of the Technical Item I and Dr Etienne Bonbon, speaker of the Technical Item II and Vice President of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission, honoured the Conference by their presence.

Tuesday 18 September 2012

Opening Ceremony

3. The opening ceremony was chaired by Dr Ago Pärtel, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, accompanied by the following personalities:
 - Prof. Nikola Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe
 - Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and President of the OIE
 - Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE
 - Mr Heiko Kärger, President of the District Mecklenburgische Seenplatte
4. Note: Due to time constraint, the Minister of Agriculture of Germany, the Honourable Mrs Ilse Aigner, was not able to attend the opening ceremony of the Conference. She provided the OIE Regional Commission for Europe with her speech during a dinner offered by Germany on Thursday 20 September.
5. Their speeches are annexed at the end of the report.

Election of the Conference Committee

6. The Conference Committee was elected as follows:

Chairperson:	Dr Karin Schwabenbauer (Germany)
Vice-Chairperson:	Dr Evgeny Nepoklonov (Russia)
Rapporteur General:	Dr Slobodan Šibalić (Serbia)

Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Timetable

7. The Provisional Agenda and Timetable were adopted.

Designation of Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs

8. Chairpersons and Rapporteurs were designated for the technical items as follows:

Item I:	Dr Nigel Gibbens (United Kingdom) (Chairperson) Dr Nurtazina Gulzhan (Kazakhstan) (Rapporteur)
Item II:	Dr Hans Wyss (Switzerland) (Chairperson) Dr Lucio Carbajo (Spain) (Rapporteur)
Animal Health Situation:	Dr Nihat Pakdil (Turkey) (Chairperson) Dr Ago Pärtel (Estonia) (Rapporteur)

Update on OIE vision

9. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General, to present an Update on the OIE Vision.
10. Dr Vallat started his presentation by providing background information on the OIE since its creation in 1924 until nowadays when the organization counts with 178 Member Countries.
11. Then, the Director General commented on the OIE Fifth Strategic Plan 2011-2015, highlighting the key concepts and tools to be used by the OIE during this period of activities. He reminded that the Fifth Strategic Plan was in line with the historic overall OIE objectives.
12. When referring to the key concepts applied on the OIE Strategic Plan, the Director General highlighted the 'Public Good' concept, the 'One Health' concept and Good Veterinary Governance. All those concepts are referred when it comes to the improvement of animal health worldwide while ensuring Animal Welfare, Food Security and Food Safety.
13. Dr Vallat also reminded the reference role of the OIE as the international Standard Setting Organisation for Animal Health issues in relation to the SPS WTO Agreement.
14. He pointed out that the role of the Organisation in the scientific management of animal welfare grew to the stage where the Organisation became recognised as the pre-eminent source of standards, guidelines, information and advice on animal welfare world-wide.
15. Dr Vallat reminded Delegates that another key element of the Fifth Strategic Plan is the strengthening Good Governance of the Veterinary Services which would be achieved through the improvement of legislation, supporting Members compliance with OIE international standards on the quality of Veterinary Services and the continuous strengthening of the capacities of Member Countries Veterinary Services.
16. He also highlighted the importance of the Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSBs) which, even if they are not part of Veterinary Authority, are vital in supporting the Good Governance of the overall Veterinary Services.
17. Referring to the current global context, the Director General started by showing trends on the growth of the population worldwide as well as demands for animal protein, indicating that the consumption would increase by 50% in the near future, mainly in developing and transition countries.
18. He highlighted the fact that the risk of diseases spreading around the world increases with globalisation, the unprecedented movement of people as well as animals and animal products, the evolution of farming systems and climate changes, among other factors.
19. Dr Vallat noted the growing importance of Veterinary Public health due to the zoonotic potential of animal pathogens, taking into account that 60% of human pathogens (infectious diseases) are zoonotic, 75% of emerging diseases are zoonotic and 80% of agents having a potential bioterrorist use are zoonotic pathogens.

20. When referring to the new concepts to be used for promoting protection of countries and regions from current and emerging threats for animals and humans, he started by highlighting the Global Public Good Concept. Global Public Goods are those which benefits extend to all countries, people and generations. Animal Health Systems are Global Public Goods, considering that controlling and eradicating animal infectious diseases, including zoonoses bring broad national, international and inter-generational benefits.
21. Regarding the Good Governance of Veterinary Services, Dr Vallat explained that the OIE keep working towards strengthening the technical capacities, management, and veterinary legislation thank to the OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund and in collaboration with global and regional partners.
22. He also made reference to the outcomes of the Ministerial Declaration of the Meeting of the G20 Agriculture Ministers held in June 2011 highlighting the importance of early detection of diseases and of relevant international standards and in which the OIE, FAO, WHO, Codex, IPPC and the WTO were encouraged to continue their efforts towards enhancing interagency cooperation.
23. On this regard, the Director General commented on the Tripartite concept note prepared by the OIE, FAO and WHO to ensure a stronger collaboration between the three organisations to share responsibilities and coordinating global activities to address health risks at the animal-human-ecosystems interfaces.
24. Dr Vallat also summarized the outcomes of the High Level Technical Meeting to Address Health Risks at the Human-Animal-Ecosystems Interfaces held in Mexico City in November 2011 and in which it was encouraged, among others, the establishment of strong governance structures and aligned legal frameworks; the use of intersectoral approaches to risk assessment and risk mitigation for health issues at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces; to joint training, simulation exercises, coordinated evaluation and gap analysis of national human and animal health systems.
25. He insisted on the 3 priority topics adopted by the 3 organisations: rabies, zoonotic influenza and antimicrobial resistance.
26. The Director General then explained the recent achievements of the OIE by highlighting the conclusions from the H5N1 crisis as well as the unprecedented efforts made by the veterinary community that lead to the official recognition of 198 countries of the world free of rinderpest as per declared at the 79th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates.
27. Dr Vallat pointed out that the Global rinderpest eradication programme demonstrated that the long term vision, the commitment of governments, the support of the international community and regional organizations and the dedicated international platforms for coordination, together with efficient tools for control and eradication, lead to the success of the eradication. He highlighted the importance of continuing the joint efforts in the post-eradication phase.
28. Dr Vallat then mentioned that disease control at source is key for a better animal health, improved food security and mitigating poverty, in particular through surveillance, early warning, reporting and effective response, the commitment to public-private partnerships, the investment in VS and disease control programs as 'global public goods' and the good governance of public and private components Veterinary Services and compliance with OIE standards.
29. He then added that sanitary crises, causing considerable economic losses, may be prevented at a reasonable cost by appropriate implementation of OIE standards on good governance by all those concerned.

30. Finally, Dr Vallat mentioned the OIE on-going activities highlighting the strengthening of Veterinary Services through capacity building such as regular seminars for newly assigned OIE Delegates; the establishment of topic-specific national Focal Points in each OIE Member country; network of OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres; laboratory twinning initiative; OIE Scientific and normative publications; and the OIE PVS Pathway, which is a continuous process aiming to sustainably improve the compliance of Veterinary Services with international standards.
31. Dr Vallat also commented on the important OIE initiatives highlighting the support to the implementation of the recommendations of the recent OIE/FAO Global Conference on FMD Control; the elaboration by the OIE of standards and recommendations aiming at a global control of other diseases such as rabies and PPR; the promotion of governments and donors consensus; the support from international donors including Foundations; New twinning projects for veterinary education establishments (VEE) and Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSB); OIE policy on disease surveillance and notification including in wildlife; among others.
32. The OIE Director General concluded his presentation pointing out that the OIE will continue supporting Members by setting internationally recognised standards and guidelines in animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare; disseminating scientific and animal health information; recognising disease free status of countries/zones; contributing to the Global control of FMD, rabies in dogs and PPR; providing technical and political support for good governance and Veterinary Services using PVS Pathway and other capacity building activities; providing support to Veterinary Education; supporting the improvement of the quality and organisation of the Veterinary profession and influencing governments for better recognition of the key role of veterinarians in society.

Discussion

33. The Conference Chairperson thanked Dr Vallat for the comprehensive presentation and open the floor to the discussion.
34. The representative from FVE, Dr Vaarten, asked precision regarding the dates of the upcoming conferences and seminars related to veterinary education and veterinary statutory bodies.
35. Dr Vallat indicated that the OIE was planning a Global Conference on Veterinary Education and Veterinary Statutory Bodies in December of 2013 in Brazil. He also informed that a regional seminar for Eastern Europe countries on the role of the veterinary statutory bodies would take place in December of the current year, the other Member Countries of the Region of Europe will be welcome. The precise dates would be communicated to the Regional Commission at the end of the week as a confirmation from the host country was still pending¹.
36. Following the presentation by Dr Vallat, Dr Marabelli, OIE Delegate of Italy, brought out the three following comments:
 - The growing demand for animal proteins, driven by the increase in human demography worldwide, may increase the risk of emergence and re-emergence of animal diseases, including zoonoses, at farm level ('sites of production'). This may also encourage the tendency from not-well-informed consumers to accept lower standards for food safety, as well as unfair competition among the various actors of the food chain production. Dr Marabelli proposed to assess the on-going work already carried on the subject and draw lessons from it;
 - Animal welfare is not covered by the SPS Agreement of WTO and as a consequence, countries that implement stringent animal welfare standards may face unfair competition from countries who do not. There may be a need to explore how WTO could become involved in animal welfare as well.

¹ The dates confirmed at the end of the week are from 12 to 14 December 2012 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

- There is also a need to ensure that private standards should not become the reference when it comes to international trade, and that only international standards produced by international standard setting organizations are opposable

37. Dr Vallat, Director General of the OIE, confirmed that the intensification of production at farm level, as a response to the increased demand for animal proteins, brings at the same time an intensification of risks related to pathogens in continuous evolution and to antibioresistance as well. OIE is very vigilant on this issue, and strongly relies on its worldwide network of Reference Centres to serve as a permanent scientific alert system at the service of Veterinary Services worldwide. OIE is aware that, for political and economic reasons, some countries may decide not to implement OIE international standards and Dr Vallat advised all Delegates to support OIE standards. On the topic of animal welfare, Dr Vallat confirmed that animal welfare is not in the mandate of WTO. OIE has an instrumental role to play in terms of influencing countries to implement animal welfare measures in line with standards adopted by OIE Members; to do so, OIE actually uses its capacity building programmes (focal point seminars for animal welfare) deployed worldwide and also strong communication policies in that field. OIE has recently engaged discussions with GFSI and ISO on the issue of private norms and has come to the agreement that these organisations will use OIE standards as a basis for their own work, in the domain of animal health; there are some good indications that this may also be possible for animal welfare (ISO).

Activities of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe

38. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Ago Partel, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to give a presentation on the Activities of the Commission.
39. Dr Partel gave a brief review on the activities covered by the Commission since his nomination as President of the OIE Regional Commission in May 2012.
40. He commented on the mission of the OIE Regional Commission highlighting the harmonisation and collaboration within the region facilitating trust, transparency and better mutual understanding, consolidating 53 opinions and experiences to European regional interest and representing regional interest worldwide as well as the close collaboration with the Regional and Sub Regional Representations and the Veterinary Services of all Member Countries.

Discussion

41. Dr Herzog, OIE Delegate of Austria, regretted that, during the OIE General Session and more generally during all the steps of the OIE standards setting process, Europe does not speak with one voice on behalf of the 53 countries of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, while a common position on proposed standards is established for the 27 EU Member countries only. He therefore proposed to explore a possible mechanism on how to better address this issue.
42. Dr Schwabenbauer strongly supported Dr Herzog's proposal and suggested to proceed step by step, starting with a small number of non-controversial subjects, where a consensus among the 53 countries could easily be reached. Several countries (United Kingdom, Netherlands, France and Russia) were also in favour of this common approach.

43. While Prof. Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe and former President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, mentioned that the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe has always considered the position of the 53 countries as a whole, Dr Vallat, Director General of the OIE, reiterated the value added for a Region to get a common position on standards under discussion. 'Procedures' for common regional positions are already in place in Africa and in America; however, for the latter, finding such common positions may sometimes be difficult when all the countries of the region do not face the same sanitary or commercial issues. While the OIE regional Representations cannot intervene in the process as they have by definition a neutral role to play, this is really up to the Regional Commission to defend the interest of a region and promote this process. However, OIE regional Commission do not have a budget to function, therefore, they should rely on regional organisations as well as regional custom unions to support the process and organize the dialogue among the OIE member countries within a same region.
44. Dr Angot, OIE Delegate of France, proposed to go even further by creating, during the Conference, a task-force in charge of identifying the 'candidate' topics for a common 'European position' to be presented during the 81th General Session in May 2013. Based on what Dr Vallat just said, he proposed that the Task-Force be composed of the Members of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, additional OIE member countries of the region that will volunteer, and the European Commission.
45. The Regional Commission endorsed the candidature of Russia, Serbia, and Turkey as non EU Members and Norway as an EFTA state to be part of the Task Force. Regarding the EU Members, the three (3) representatives would be decided during the next meeting of the EU CVOs scheduled in October 2012. This represents a major outcome of the 25th Conference.

Activities of the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe

46. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Prof Nikola Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe to give a presentation on the Activities of the OIE Regional Representation (RR-EE).
47. Dr Prof Belev started his presentation informing that, in the implementation of the OIE Capacity Building Program for 2012, two Regional Seminars were organized in Europe by the staff of the OIE RR-EE in close cooperation with the OIE Headquarters in Paris:
 - Seminar for OIE National Focal Points on Wildlife in Pravets, Bulgaria from 23 to 25 January 2012 with participants from 41 Members from Europe.
 - Seminar for OIE National Focal Points on Animal Welfare in Kiev, Ukraine, from 6 to 8 March 2012 with participants from 21 Members from Eastern Europe.
48. Among other activities, Prof Belev highlighted the participation in the Fourth Meeting of the Regional Steering Committee (SC4) of the GF-TADs for Europe in Brussels aiming at discussing the GF-TADs draft Action Plan (2012-2016) and providing an overview on the epidemiological situation in Europe.
49. He mentioned that the communication with the Governments of several Member Countries of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe was established and maintained during the reporting period
50. Finally, Prof Belev referred to the OIE Training for Newly appointed OIE Delegates from Europe held on 17 September just before the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and which was of great support for the new OIE Delegates.

Activities of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels

51. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, to describe the Activities of the OIE Sub-Regional representation.
52. Dr Leboucq started her presentation by commenting that, for the 53 OIE Member Countries in the Europe Region, 2012 proved to be an eventful year in terms of capacity building for national Veterinary Services as well as regional coordination in the field of animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare.
53. She also informed that, 2 OIE seminars for national Focal Points (wildlife/Sofia/January 2012; animal welfare/Kiev/March 2012) have been organised in the region so far this year. Another seminar dedicated to OIE National Focal Points on Veterinary Products to be held in Austria in November 2012, was under preparation. A seminar for the OIE National Focal Points for Animal Diseases Notification would also take place at the OIE Headquarters in this coming October. She highlighted the success of the Seminar for Newly Appointed OIE Delegates that took place before the start of the Conference.
54. Dr Leboucq commented on the highly positive and important outcomes of the Kiev seminar that would likely lead to the setting up of an OIE animal welfare platform in the region as to be discussed in the context of the Technical Item 2. She informed that a seminar is also due to be held in Kazakhstan in December 2012 on Veterinary Statutory Bodies, the role of which though essential for the good governance of the Veterinary Services was often inadequate or even non-existent.
55. She explained that, in addition to the fourth meeting of the GF-TADs Steering Committee for Europe (Brussels/January 2012), at which the Five-Year Action Plan for the initiative was presented and validated, the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe marked the culmination of regional coordination activities which highlighted two main topics, wildlife and animal welfare.
56. The Sub-Regional Representative added that, the situation with regard to Schmallenberg disease would also be dealt with – vigilance remaining the order of the day – as would the recommendations of the second global conference on FMD control, which was held in Bangkok in June 2012.
57. Regarding the months ahead, Dr Leboucq expressed that the implementation of the global strategy as it applied to Europe was a priority, as proposed in the Five-Year Action Plan of GF-TADs Europe.
58. To conclude, Dr Leboucq made reference to the activities planned for 2013, informing that the SRR-Brussels would work to further strengthen collaboration with its local partners, including the European Commission, and continue the capacity-building programme for Veterinary Services in Europe through the OIE PVS Pathway – comprising not only the ‘diagnosis’ and ‘prescription’ activities but also ‘treatment’ activities – and OIE seminars for Focal Points.

Discussion

59. Following the presentation made by Dr Leboucq, Dr Vallat, OIE Director General, reiterated his deep thanks on behalf of the OIE to AFSCA (Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain) to host, with no cost, the OIE sub-regional Representation based in Brussels as of January 1 2013 and personally thanked Dr Naassens, OIE Delegate of Belgium and the Belgian government, for all the efforts he deployed to do so. He also reinforced the fact that the setting up of an OIE regional Platform on animal welfare for the Eastern Europe countries would be upon the decision of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, to be decided during the Conference. Such a platform would only be possible with appropriate contributions from donors. Finally, he provided some details on the important work Dr De La Rocque, administratively positioned at the OIE sub-regional Representation in Brussels, who is conducting, on behalf of OIE, in WHO Headquarters in Geneva, work on how to best align the OIE PVS Pathway and WHO IHR in a One Health 'spirit'.

Technical Item I (with questionnaire) "The role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases"

60. The Session Chairperson, Dr Nigel Gibbens, Delegate of United Kingdom, briefly introduced the speaker for this Technical Item, Dr Marc Artois, Member of the OIE Working Group on Wildlife Diseases and Diplomat of the European College of Veterinary Public Health (ECVPH).
61. Dr Artois started his presentation mentioning that, the persistence or spread of transmissible pathogens in wildlife could sometimes complicate disease control in domestic animals quite considerably.
62. He highlighted that there were currently few prevention or control methods available to facilitate the management of wildlife diseases of veterinary importance.
63. In that context, Dr Artois explained that a questionnaire was used to assess the current state of knowledge and obtain the views of the Member Countries of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe on the role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases.
64. Dr Artois reported that an analysis of the responses received shows that, in Europe, nearly two thirds of the countries had a certain degree of epidemiological surveillance for diseases and pathogens in wildlife.
65. Rabies, trichinellosis, infection of wild birds with a highly pathogenic or low pathogenic avian influenza virus, alveolar echinococcosis, bovine tuberculosis, classical swine fever and African swine fever were the diseases considered to be the greatest cause for concern in Europe. Among the exotic diseases, Rift Valley fever and peste des petits ruminants were considered to present a potential risk of introduction into Europe.
66. He explained that, the OIE Delegates or Focal Points for Wildlife in the countries having responded to the questionnaire were aware of most of the sanitary or medical control methods for diseases transmissible from wildlife to domestic animals. The problems with implementing these methods stemmed from their technological complexity or difficulty in mobilising the necessary human or financial resources. Some methods, such as vector control, contraception or modification of the natural environment, would appear to be out of reach for the time being, either because of their deleterious effect, because they had not yet been perfected or because the Veterinary Services were unfamiliar with them.
67. Dr Artois noted that, most of the countries wished the OIE continue its involvement in this field and indicated the need to strengthen research and education, especially on the epidemiology, surveillance and control of wildlife pathogens.

68. Dr Artois concluded that infection in wildlife poses very real problems for breeding and rearing livestock, but in most cases, these problems were limited in time or space. The source of infection in wildlife was in most cases infection of domestic animals, which have a considerably higher biomass than that of wild animals. Controlling infection in its wildlife reservoir is very complex, involves the use of expensive technologies and requires a large workforce operating in often difficult terrain. Wherever possible, methods that enable production animals to be isolated from infectious wild animals by means of real or virtual barriers are clearly preferable.

Discussions

69. The Chairperson for this Technical Item congratulated Dr Artois for his interesting presentation and open the floor for discussion.
70. Dr Michel Courat, representative for EuroGroup for Animals asked the advice of Dr Artois regarding the efficacy of reducing wildlife animal population as a mean to control diseases such as applied by certain countries giving the example of badgers in United Kingdom.
71. Dr Artois, after providing some examples of success and failure with this method, confessed that he was not able to provide a clear advice on the efficacy or not of such a method. However, he highlighted that before undertaking such activities, the scientific community should ensure that they are undertaken with solid scientific justification and can provide informative feed-back.
72. Prof. Dr Nuno Vieira e Brito, Delegate of Portugal, requested some clarifications regarding contraception methods that can be used in the wildlife. He especially made reference to the deer control population in his country as part of tuberculosis disease control.
73. Dr Artois, after giving examples of some countries using vaccination as contraception mean for the control of wildlife, highlighted that, although being successful in certain species, he stressed the need for further research in order to improve contraception in wildlife. He mentioned that an alternative to contraception through vaccination was the use of chemical castration. However, this could lead to residues of chemical compounds in the wild.
74. Dr Jean Luc Angot, Delegate of France, thanked Dr Artois for the comprehensive presentation. He highlighted the difficulties related to dealing with wildlife issues as it involves many stakeholders. In that sense, the Veterinary Services should play an important coordination role.
75. Regarding vaccination, Dr Angot expressed that, even if this technique was expensive to apply, it was proven to be valuable in certain situation and it would be worth to pursue research on this matter. He indicated that in France, under the umbrella of the establishment of a platform for epidemiosurveillance, a specific network to monitor the tuberculosis in wildlife was created (Sylvatub).
76. Dr Artois explained that indeed, wildlife issues had to be addressed through a multidisciplinary approach. He stressed the need to recognize the expertise where it lays not being necessarily within the veterinary profession.
77. Regarding tuberculosis, Dr Artois highlighted that, the current technics to diagnose tuberculosis still lack of both sensitivity and specificity; diagnosis of infection poses problems and in most situations necessitates a careful risk analysis before management decisions be taken. The approach to its control had to be tackled on a case by case basis.
78. The Delegate of Spain, Dr Lucio Carbajo, recognized that wildlife animals were reservoir for tuberculosis and brucellosis. However, he mentioned that the dynamic of transmission between domestic and wild animals was also important to take into account while being different depending on the species. The reduction of the deer population as per applied in Spain had been proven to be often successful, he said.
79. He completed his intervention by reiterating the need for a multidisciplinary approach being ideally lead by the veterinary community.

80. Dr Artois provided some background for the difference in the success related to the reduction of population depending on the species and their related population growth rate, reduction policies being unsuccessful in many situations.
81. Dr Nigel Gibbens, Chairperson for the Technical Item 1, invited countries having participated into the discussion to be part of the working group responsible for the development of the recommendation. The following countries, with the contribution of Dr Artois and European Commission, participated into the development of the draft recommendation: Germany, Kazakhstan, Portugal, Spain, and United Kingdom.

OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission – Issues of interest to the Region- Challenges and proposals

82. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Alex Thiermann, President of the OIE Code Commission, to present on the issues of interest to the region, the challenges and proposals regarding the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission.
83. Dr Thiermann addressed the Regional Conference by emphasizing the importance for each Member to actively participate in the standard setting activities of the OIE. This is not to be viewed as a General Session event, but rather a year-long process that culminates with the adoption of well understood texts during the General Session.
84. He highlighted to more salient topics which were discussed by the Code Commission during the last two weeks, and whose recommendations will be published shortly in the Code Commission report, and which should be carefully reviewed and commented by all Members. Among the most important topics to the region he mentioned the experts report on diseases to be delisted on the basis of the newly adopted listing criteria. The Code Commission expects every Member to examine the report and the Code Commission recommendations and provide scientifically justified positions in order to be able to delist these diseases by a strong consensus in next May.
85. He described current efforts to harmonize the Aquatic and the Terrestrial Codes, restructuring the Code chapters while incorporating reference to wildlife species of epidemiological significance.
86. Among the various disease chapters being reviewed and developed he made specific attention to the newly developed text on trichinellosis, a novel approach to managing an important zoonotic pathogen that requires a different approach to preventing public health risks without unjustified trade restrictions. The chapter on avian influenza was reviewed and edited to more clearly reflect the uniqueness of the notification obligations and the status determinations.
87. Recognizing the importance of bees in agriculture worldwide, the Code Commission, assisted by the experts and the Scientific Commission revised all relevant bee disease chapters. The Code Commission also requested from the Director General to maintain a permanent expert group to monitor bee health worldwide and advice the OIE in response to new developments.
88. In the area of food safety, the various chapters on antimicrobial resistance were reviewed and will be provided for comment before submitting them for adoption in May.
89. On animal welfare, he highlighted the importance of providing comments on the chapters in broiler chicken production, beef cattle production, guidelines on livestock production systems, as well as the one on animal welfare on animals used in research and teaching, all updated chapters which will be presented next May for adoption.

Discussions

90. Dr Schwabenbauer expressed her surprise regarding the little contribution of the non-EU Member Countries into the OIE standard setting process. She emphasized even more the relevance of the proposed task force as per discussed earlier. To that end, she informed that form to recruit volunteers to this task force would be circulated during the week.

OIE policies on Veterinary Education in the region

91. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General, to present on the OIE policies on Veterinary Education.
92. Dr Vallat started his presentation mentioning that Veterinary Services of good quality, comprising both public and private sectors, that could implement the OIE standards, were recognised as ‘global public goods’ and there was an urgent need, particularly in the developing world, to strengthen their competence.
93. Dr Vallat explained that Veterinary Education of quality together with effective Veterinary Statutory Bodies were the cornerstones of good governance of Veterinary Services; quality and international harmonisation contribute to improving animal health and welfare globally. Therefore, the OIE had been mandated by Members to take a global leadership role in establishing basic Veterinary Education requirements for effective National Veterinary Services.
94. The Director General added that, in 2010, the OIE established an ad hoc group on Veterinary Education composed of veterinary Deans, academicians and other experts. Based on their work and supported by the conclusions of the 2nd Global Conference on Veterinary Education (Lyon 2011) the OIE published Recommendations on the Competencies of graduating veterinarians (‘Day 1 graduates’) in 2012. These recommendations are relevant to all Members, regardless of their prevailing societal, economic and political circumstances.
95. Dr Vallat pointed out that, certainly each region and each country had specific needs for Veterinary Education which must be respected. However, the competencies of Day 1 graduates should have a global minimum quality standard. Nevertheless, it is not the objective of the OIE to accredit Veterinary Education establishments or to enter into competition with accreditation bodies.
96. Based on the catalogue of day 1 competencies, the OIE currently develops recommendations on a core model veterinary curriculum relevant to the delivery of quality of public and private sector components of national Veterinary Services for consideration of the Assembly at the 81st General Session (May 2013);
97. Finally, the Director General commented that, by finalising the procedures for twinning between Veterinary Education establishments and also between Veterinary Statutory Bodies, the OIE hoped to convince governments, regional and international organisations and donors to support these initiatives and thereby promote the quality of Veterinary Services globally.
98. To conclude Dr Vallat announced to the audience that the 3rd Global Conference on Veterinary Education and Veterinary Statutory Bodies was scheduled for 3 to 5 December 2013 in Brazil.

Discussions

99. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer thanked the OIE Director General for his presentation on the role of the OIE in field of veterinary education and statutory bodies.
100. She explained that, following the publication of the OIE regarding the day-one competencies, the veterinary faculties of Germany were looking for clarifications on the role of the OIE on this matter in order to define responsibilities. After having provided the deans of the faculties with relevant background, deans were more positive about the OIE approach.
101. Dr Christianne Brusckke, OIE Delegate of the Netherlands, explained that the only veterinary faculty dean of her country was positive about the OIE work on veterinary education. However, she informed of his wish for the OIE to better involve the Veterinary School associations in the OIE consultation processes related to veterinary education.

102. Dr Marabelli, OIE Delegate of Italy reminded that in the EU, there are already rules governing veterinary faculties. He also criticized the fact that proper training in public health and food safety were neglected in the veterinary curriculum as veterinary establishments are mainly focused on animal health. This could lead to a situation in which public health would not be properly covered by the veterinary profession.
103. In response to the different comments, the OIE Director General first asked Dr Christianne Brusckke to send a letter to the OIE highlighting the need for a better consultation with veterinary education establishment associations.
104. Regarding the comments of the Delegate of Italy, Dr Vallat agreed with the importance of improving the veterinary curriculum on the public health and food safety while remembering the Conference that this issue was already addressed in the recommendations adopted by the OIE regarding veterinary education.
105. On that matter, Dr Vallat reiterated the role of the Delegates in ensuring a constant communication with the deans in order to consider OIE recommendations on veterinary education. Regarding the EU countries, Dr Vallat explained that it could be more difficult as veterinary education in the European Commission does not fall under the remit of the Directorate-General Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) but under the Directorate-General Internal Market and Services (DG MARKT). However, he emphasized that, as this is a public health issue, it could help to justify the importance of including a reference to OIE guidelines concerning veterinary education in the EU directive.

General overview of bee diseases in the world; predators, pathogenesis, epidemiology, world distribution

106. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer invited Dr Marc Schäfer from the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, National Reference Laboratory for Bee Diseases, to present a general overview of bee diseases in the world.
107. Dr Schäfer started his presentation mentioning the diseases of honey bees that were listed by the OIE in 2012, as follows: Acarapisosis, American foulbrood, European foulbrood, small hive beetle infestation, Tropilaelaps infestation and varroosis.
108. He commented that over recent years, high losses of managed honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, colonies had been reported for many countries in the world. The underlying reasons were only partly understood, thereby preventing efficient mitigation strategies. Among numerous factors that influence honey bee health, diseases of honey bees play a major role.
109. Dr Schäfer gave a report on the worldwide epidemiology of honey bee diseases and highlighted that most of the diseases, apart from small hive beetle and *Tropilaelaps* infestation, occurred in most areas throughout the world, where apiculture was practiced. But reliable current data was rare and presented in only a few scientific publications.
110. He concluded that, it seemed that most countries widely ignore honey bee diseases or consider them not important enough to submit information to the OIE through WAHIS. Because of the important role honey bees play in pollination and thus to food production, it would be beneficial for scientists, beekeepers and for trade in bees and bee products if honey bee diseases would attract more worldwide attention.

Discussions

111. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer thanked Dr Schäfer for his interesting presentation. She underlined that bee diseases are getting more attention from the Veterinary community and mentioned that this topic is now better addressed by the European Union.
112. The representative from FVE suggested that it would be good to improve the global access to expertise on bee diseases through the development of a network of Veterinary Education establishments that could provide training to students interested in this field.

113. On this matter, Dr Bernard Vallat reminded that the OIE Ad Hoc Group on Veterinary Education is working on a list of specialisations for veterinarians after the basic curriculum. He confirmed that bee diseases would be on such a list with fish diseases.
114. Making reference to the presentation of Dr Schäfer, a participant, requested clarification regarding the groups of bees that has been considered in the study presented.
115. Dr Schäfer explained that no particular groups were considered in the study.
116. Another participant requested clarification regarding pollination in greenhouses. Dr Schäfer explained that bumblebees were used to that effect.
117. Dr Lena Hellqvist Björnerot, representing Sweden, made reference to the fact that as per it was the case for aquatic animal diseases years ago, bee diseases did not have currently the level of attention that it may deserve. She also supported the statement of FVE regarding the need to provide better training for veterinarians not only in the field of bee diseases but also regarding aquatic animal diseases.
118. Dr Alain Cantaloube, representative from FESASS, referred to the wide range of both types of beekeepers and production methods leading to difficulties in harmonising bee diseases control approaches. Thus making very difficult to make recommendation that could apply to all beekeepers and implemented by the majority.
119. Dr Christianne Brusckhe, OIE Delegate of the Netherlands, making reference to research being done in her country in bee diseases wondered if it would be possible to promote information sharing between such research groups so to get a concerted approach to bee diseases issues.
120. Dr Schäfer agreed with the need expressed by the Netherlands regarding sharing information through networks while highlighting from previous experiences that this was not easy.
121. Dr Schäfer finally proposed that a network for bee diseases be created. Further comments, especially from the Netherlands, lead the Regional Commission to agree on this proposal.

Update on the activities of the OIE Laboratory Twinning process and perspective for twinning in other fields

122. Dr Francois Caya, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department, started his presentation by providing some background regarding the need for improving the geographical distribution of laboratory expertise by promoting partnership between OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres and laboratories of developing or in-transition countries, this being the basis for the creation of the Twinning concept.
123. He then provided a brief summary of the mandate, numbers, and geographical distribution of the OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres.
124. Dr Caya provided more details regarding the Twinning concept itself. Among others, he presented the main objectives of the concept when it comes to expertise and networking. In regards to the scope of the Twinning concept, he stressed the importance of Twinning activities being focussed on expertise transfer and highlighted that no funding for hardware to upgrade facilities should be planned through any Twinning activity. He explained that the ultimate aim of any Twinning activity should be to reach the OIE Reference Laboratory status while recognising that it was not always possible quickly.
125. The Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department then described the different steps after a Twinning by expressing that the most important was for the candidate laboratory to become an active partner for the international scientific community.

126. He provided the Regional Commission with an update regarding the Twinning activities worldwide and highlighted the great success of the OIE Laboratory Twinning Feedback Workshop that took place in March 2011 and where good ideas have been put forward for the improvement of the Twinning concept. He explained that, based on the outcomes of this workshop, an updated twinning guide has been developed.
127. Dr Caya also gave an update on the Twinning activities involving Europe Region by providing relevant information on projects approved and underway as well as project approved and due to commence soon.
128. He explained that, due to the fact that OIE has a larger number of proposals than funds at present, the OIE was currently working on securing more funds. He also mentioned that there were provisions for projects to be funded by the candidate laboratories from rich countries rather than by the OIE.
129. Dr Caya then provided the audience with relevant information on the work of the OIE regarding the development of twinning activities in other fields such as veterinary education and veterinary statutory bodies, these activities being still under pilot phase.
130. Dr Caya concluded by informing the audience that the OIE website provide a great source of information regarding capacity building activities in general and especially on the OIE twinning activities.

Discussions

131. The Delegate of the United Kingdom while highlighting the success if the OIE Twinning programme stressed that it was important to encourage a proper funding of such activities.
132. The OIE Director General reminded the audience the different steps in Twinning including the provision for funding.
133. He reiterated the possibility, under the new Laboratory Twinning manual, for the candidate laboratories to be self-funded.

Wednesday 19 September 2012

Technical Item II

“Regional steps towards common Animal Welfare approach in Europe”

134. The Session Chairperson, Dr Hans Wyss, Delegate of Switzerland, briefly introduced Dr Etienne Bonbon, Vice President of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission and the speaker for this Technical Item.
135. Dr Bonbon underlined that animal welfare had long been an important subject for the countries of Europe, which was the first region in the world to recognise its significance. The region has been responsible for the majority of initiatives to try and translate ideas and concepts into reality and concrete rules. Regional animal welfare was first handled by the Council of Europe (CoE), followed by the European Union (EU). The issue inevitably came onto the global agenda of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).
136. He explained that global animal welfare was no longer a new topic for the OIE, since it had been working in the field for nearly ten years. He pointed out that the OIE was now one of the major players, primarily through the adoption of international standards.

137. Dr Bonbon highlighted that this work would continue as long as necessary, given that various aspects had yet to be covered. The participation of OIE Members representing all parts of the world brings global field experience and best practice into the discussion and drafting of standards.
138. He stressed that, in parallel with standard setting, the OIE had put in place practical tools to help its Members to implement these standards effectively through nomination, in each Member Country, and capacity building programmes for National Focal Points on this matter.
139. Dr Bonbon noted that the EU supported OIE activities related to animal welfare, and that OIE Members in the Europe region had had the opportunity to send their Focal Points on Animal Welfare to regional workshops. However, the Europe region shows contrasting levels of implementation of animal welfare policies in national legislation. Though the region was the first in the world to tackle the issue of animal welfare at governmental level, recent decades have seen a growing disparity between countries with a high level of implementation of animal welfare policies and others that have not yet taken the issue into account.
140. Dr Bonbon explained that through the implementation of the PVS Pathway and other activities, the OIE was aware that many countries of Eastern Europe faced major challenges to implement effectively all the missions pertaining to good quality Veterinary Services. Moreover, the lack of organisation of stakeholders and representative associations limited the opportunities for the Veterinary Services to form the 'public-private partnerships' essential to achieving sustainable compliance with OIE standards on animal health and welfare. OIE Member Countries in the eastern part of the region had expressed the wish to achieve more in this respect.
141. He recalled that, considering the global leadership of the OIE in regard to animal health and welfare, participants at the EU-supported seminar for national Focal Points on Animal Welfare held in Kiev in March 2012, called on the OIE to develop a mechanism in the sub-region to facilitate better application of OIE animal welfare standards. There is indeed a need today for a concerted approach in order to build a bridge across the whole region as regards rules on animal welfare.
142. To conclude Dr Bonbon stressed that through the OIE PVS Pathway and other capacity-building tools, the OIE was already playing an important role in raising awareness of governments and donors, and supporting the Veterinary Services in Eastern European countries to meet international standards. The OIE and OIE standards have the necessary trans-regional legitimacy to be the foundation on which this bridge could be built, with the help of the natural partners, namely the EU, the Collaborating Centres located in the region and relevant nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

Discussions

143. The Chairperson for this Technical Item congratulated Dr Bonbon for his excellent presentation and the concrete steps forward proposed to put on track a possible OIE initiative on animal welfare in the region.
144. Dr Doudounakis, OIE Delegate of Greece, raised the issue on stray dogs, which represents a big issue in Greece, and asked OIE, in conjunction with EU, on how to best address the issue.
145. Dr Vallat responded that the OIE Terrestrial Code has provisions on the control of dog populations, and that the OIE regional mechanism which is currently discussed and aimed at all OIE Member Countries of Europe could also help address the issue, once operational.
146. Dr Mirjana Mataušić-Pišl, OIE Delegate of Croatia, strongly supported the regional initiative proposed by OIE as a mean to improve the implementation of OIE standards in Member countries. She underlined that animal welfare is not equally developed among countries of Europe. Such an initiative could become the foundation for a detailed Action Plan aiming at even further implement OIE standards in animal welfare, with a key role to play for the veterinarians.

147. Dr Herzog, OIE Delegate of Austria, referred to the proposed initiative as a 'very positive development' to progress all together within the region, as animal welfare is a very important issue in Austria. However, he disagrees with the composition of the governance/Steering Committee of the initiative as proposed in the OIE Concept Note, emphasizing the need for a more balanced composition of the governance between representatives of EU and non EU Member States.
148. The OIE national Focal Point for Animal Welfare in Germany, while supporting the OIE initiative, proposed to go even further with the development of a regional Strategy for Animal Welfare for Europe.
149. Dr Sibalic, OIE Delegate of Serbia, supported the proposal from Croatia. However, he underlined that while adoption of a comprehensive legislation on animal welfare is just a first step, there is a need for technical and financial support from the EU and other donors to facilitate the implementation of the legislation.
150. Dr Lena Hellqvist Björnerot, representative from Sweden, also expressed the need to reconsider the composition of the governance/Steering Committee, in line with what Dr Herzog said. She explained that Sweden was positive to the plan indicated to harmonise the approach and implementation of animal welfare in Europe. However, she remarked that Sweden sees it was important that also representatives from stakeholders and EU Member States with experience of implementing OIE standards and other animal welfare measures be included in the Steering group. The outlined work must be financed by other means than compulsory additional costs (e.g. membership fees) for the Members, she concluded.
151. Dr Keren Bar-Yaacov, OIE Delegate of Norway, brought her strong support to the OIE initiative. She requested to have time to look better in detail to the Concept Note and to the composition of the Governance. She also brought to the discussion the concept of twinning between Member countries of the region that have experience in the implementation of Animal Welfare standards and those that have not such experience (where Norway could be a 'parent'). She also mentioned that Norway would have development funds to support such twinings.
152. The representative of WSPA is totally in support of a regional strategy, to be taken forward by the OIE and the VS in the region. The concept of a Steering Committee is the correct way forward, however it should operate under the auspices of the OIE regional Commission for Europe, be better balanced among EU and non EU member States and also involved key animal welfare NGOs of the region. WSPA, experienced in developing the OIE Regional Animal Welfare Strategy (RAWS) in Asia, proposed its technical and financial support to the initiative.
153. Dr Gibbens, OIE Delegate of United Kingdom, also applauded the OIE initiative as a good way forward. He however proposed that all players (farmers and food chain professionals) should be involved in the initiative. He also proposed to add 'animal transport' to the list of possible topics to be addressed at first, as a subject of interest to all countries.
154. The Representative of Italy raised the issue of private standards in animal welfare, often more stringent than 'public' standards while not scientifically-based. private sector companies providing certification duplicate the roles of Veterinary Services in charge of official controls in animal welfare.
155. Dr Vaarten, representative of FVE, supported the OIE initiative for the whole Europe and offered FVE expertise in animal welfare.

156. Dr Vallat, OIE Director General, concluded the discussion by applauding the consensus reached on the need of an OIE regional initiative on animal welfare for the whole of Europe. The main point of divergence with the proposals in the Concept Note concerned the composition of the Governance of the initiative and the equilibrium to respect between EU and non EU Member States. As this point was mainly raised by EU member states, Dr Vallat proposed that the European Commission provide to the OIE an agreed position on the matter of participation. Finally, to include representative of the civil society in the Steering Committee, Dr Vallat proposed to differentiate 2 committees for the governance, one institutional and one professional which would encompass NGOs and private veterinarians. The Concept Note will be revised to accommodate the points raised on the governance.
157. The Delegates that intervened in the discussion were invited to join the drafting group for Recommendation 2 on animal welfare, together with the OIE Delegate of Spain appointed as rapporteur for the Technical item II.

Update on the Schmallenberg virus situation in Europe

158. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, invited Dr Thomas Mettenleiter from the Friedrich Loeffler Institute, Federal Research Institute for animal health, to present an update on the Schmallenberg virus situation in Europe.
159. Dr Mettenleiter started his presentation indicating that in late 2011 a new orthobunyavirus was discovered by next generation sequencing while examining episodes of mild clinical disease in dairy cattle including fever, reduction of milk production and diarrhea occurring in North-Rhine Westphalia (Germany) and the Netherlands. According to the location in Germany where the samples leading to identification of the new virus were taken, it was designated as 'Schmallenberg Virus' (SBV).
160. He explained that as the related Akabane and Aino viruses, SBV causes mild primary infections in cattle, sheep and goats, but can infect the fetus at a vulnerable time during pregnancy causing characteristic malformations (arthrogryposis - hydranencephaly syndrome). Sheep and goat lambs with these malformations were born from December 2011 followed by similarly malformed calves in spring 2012. Up to now (September 1, 2012) animals in 5722 holdings in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Switzerland and Germany tested positive for SBV.
161. Dr Mettenleiter added that phylogeny as well as cross neutralisation studies demonstrated closest relationship of SBV with viruses of the Sathuperi species like the Australian Douglas virus. These viruses had so far only been found in Africa, Asia and Australia but never in Europe. Viral genome was detected in biting midges, e.g. *Culicoides obsoletus*, caught in fall 2011 in Denmark, Belgium, Germany and Italy indicating vector-transmission.
162. He informed that the SBV could be isolated from blood samples of acutely infected cattle as well as organ samples of malformed lambs and calves. First animal trials with cattle and sheep resulted in a uniform but short viremic period of up to 5 days and no or only very mild clinical signs. However, viral RNA could be detected in some animals more than 28 days post inoculation in the mesenteric lymph nodes.
163. Dr Mettenleiter indicated that a zoonotic potential of SBV was excluded by serological studies performed by Dutch and German authorities on humans exposed to SBV.
164. Dr Mettenleiter commented that as of fall 2012, the virus continues to spread into new areas, although susceptible animals in regions which were hardest hit in 2011/early 2012 exhibit high seroprevalences presumably impairing virus circulation. Inactivated vaccine preparations are under development which protect from primary viremia and, presumably, fetal infection. However, none has gained market authorization so far.

165. Finally he explained that SBV is a new orthobunyavirus and the first Simbu group virus to appear in Europe. After its introduction, presumably in early 2011, it spread quickly over a wide geographical area resulting in the birth of characteristically malformed domestic ruminants reflecting acute infections in summer and fall 2011. The introduction occurred in a region which also experienced the first bluetongue virus serotype 8 (BTV-8) and BTV-6 cases in Europe in 2006.
166. To conclude, Dr Mettenleiter informed that the OIE has twice gathered an Ad-Hoc Group to discuss the issue which has produced a technical fact sheet as well as risk analysis for live animals, animal products, semen and embryos available on the OIE website (updated May 2012).

Discussions

167. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, congratulated Dr Mettenleiter for providing such a good picture of the situation regarding Schmallerberg virus.
168. The representative from FESASS commented on the great efficiency in the management of the Schmallerberg situation which required the involvement of all interested parties.
169. He stressed that although the situation was currently under control, it was important for all interested parties to keep alert and ensure good surveillance.
170. He finally stressed the need for research regarding risk factors that enabled the emergence of animal diseases that Europe has experienced in recent years.
171. Dr Jean Luc Angot, Delegate of France, provided recent updates on research activities undertaken in France (Maison Alfort) on Schmallerberg virus in semen. This research, although providing evidence of viral RNA presence in the sperm of one bull, did not lead to the identification of live virus in semen. Those results will be published in a near future.
172. Dr Mettenleiter showed interest in the results presented by France and indicated the need for further research.
173. A representative from Germany asked clarification regarding the OIE factsheet on this disease and especially when it comes to its possible use in trade. He asked also for clarification on the obligations to notify “emerging diseases”, especially on how long an emerging disease (that does not meet the criteria for a listed disease) should be considered as “emerging”.
174. The Vice chairperson of the Conference provided the Commission with the vision of his country regarding precautionary measures applied in trade by Russia during the Schmallerberg virus situation in Europe.
175. He explained that, following discussion with the European Commission, trade resumed on common ground.
176. He stressed the need for a better approach to emerging diseases as it is most likely we have to face similar situations again.
177. The Delegate of Belarus supported the comments made by Russia.
178. He insisted on being provided with clear information regarding transmission of Schmallerberg virus through semen.
179. Dr Mettenleiter emphasised on the drastic difference between Bluetongue virus and Schmallerberg virus so no assumption could be done without strong scientific evidences.
180. Dr Alex Thiermann, President of the OIE Code Commission, highlighted that the management of the Schmallerberg situation as an emerging disease in Europe was overall a success story as much as for notification as for trade.

181. He pointed out that transparency and notification could sometimes become a vicious circle and made it clear that when a country stops notifying it loses also credibility at the same time.
182. Dr Mettenleiter supported the comment of Dr Alex Thiermann. He explained that the OIE technical factsheet on Schmallenberg virus was based on scientific evidences and was comprised of recommendations from the OIE Scientific Commission and relevant Ad Hoc groups.
183. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer noted that even if Germany has been highly affected by the infection, losses at farm level were low and that no farmer asked for compensation.
184. Dr Bernard Vallat stressed the need for all Delegates to respect and follow the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and all OIE guidelines on risk analysis, e.g. the factsheets recommendations on risk analysis for Schmallenberg.
185. He concluded by ensuring the Regional Commission that the OIE would update the factsheet on Schmallenberg virus as soon as relevant new scientific information be available.

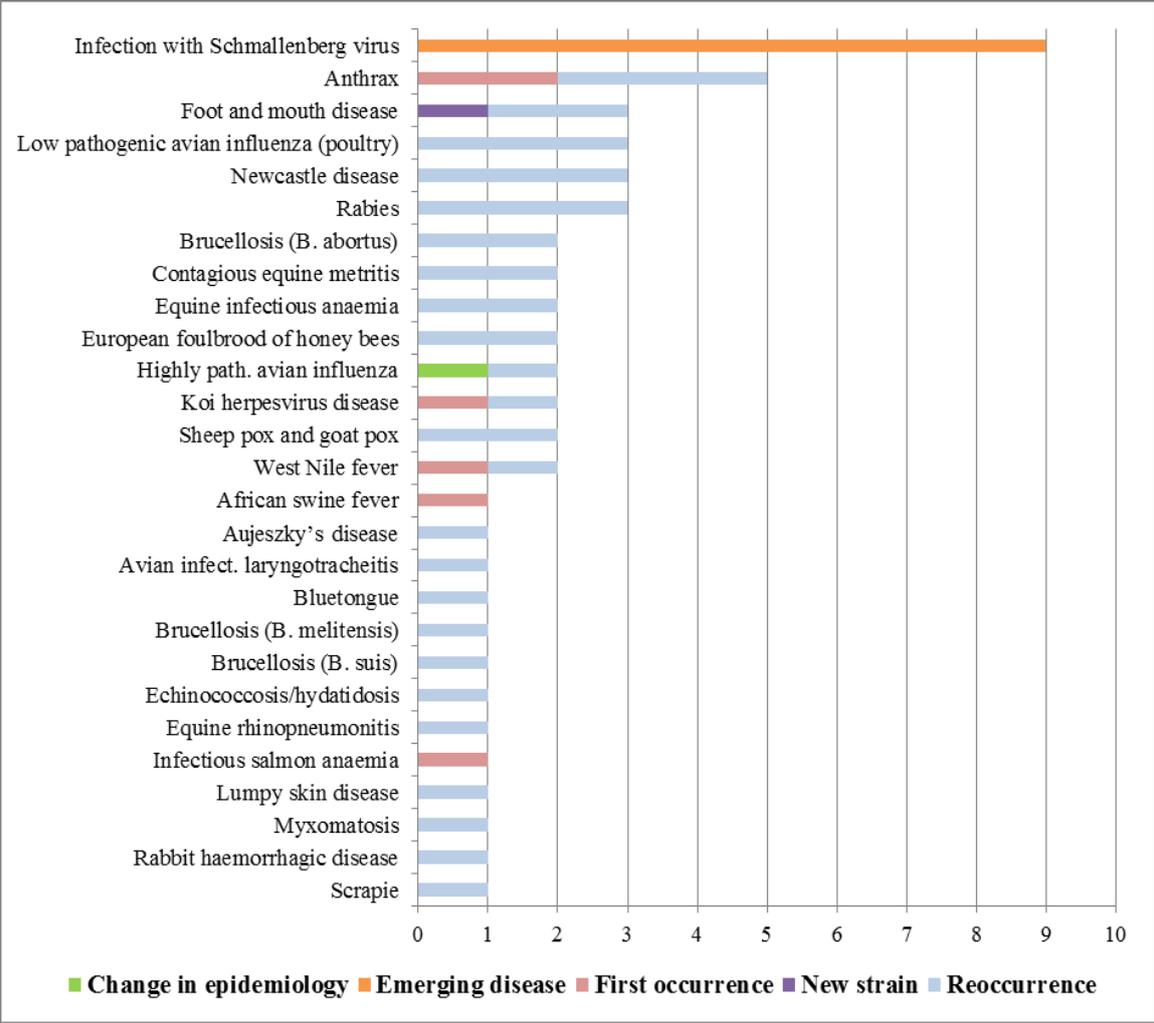
Animal health situation of Member Countries in the region during the first semester of 2012

186. The Session Chairperson, Dr Nihat Pakdil, Delegate of Turkey, invited Dr Manuel Sanchez, Deputy Head of the OIE Animal Health Information Department to present the Animal health situation of Member Countries in the region during the first semester of 2012.
187. This report is based on information obtained from national reports provided by Members of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe in preparation for the Regional Conference. Where necessary, this has been supplemented with relevant information extracted from immediate notifications and follow-up reports submitted by countries and other official data gathered as part of the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and from official national websites, when relevant.
188. This report will review the exceptional events reported to the OIE between 1 January 2012 and 23 August 2012 and the simulation exercises conducted in Europe in 2010–2012. Subsequently, it will present information on the reporting to the OIE based on first six-monthly reports for 2012 and review the recent animal health situation in Europe regarding rabies, classical swine fever (CSF), African swine fever (ASF), anthrax, brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*, *B. melitensis*, *B. suis* and *B. ovis*), Schmallenberg virus infection and infectious salmon anaemia.

Exceptional epidemiological events and diseases

189. A total of 55 immediate notifications have been submitted by Member Countries in Europe in 2012 (including events up to and including 23 August). Figure 1 below gives an overview of the exceptional epidemiological events notified during this period.
190. The diseases most frequently notified were infection with Schmallenberg virus (9 notifications), anthrax (5 notifications), foot and mouth disease (FMD), low pathogenic avian influenza in poultry, Newcastle disease and rabies (3 notifications for each).
191. Four countries notified the first occurrence of a disease: (Ukraine: anthrax in Cherkassy province; Ukraine: anthrax in Zaporozh'ye province; Ukraine: African swine fever; Norway: infectious salmon anaemia in More Og Romsdal province; Italy: koi herpesvirus disease; Croatia: West Nile fever). Nine countries notified the emergence of Schmallenberg virus infection (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom), Kazakhstan notified a new strain of FMD (serotype A), and Israel notified a change in the epidemiology of highly pathogenic avian influenza (serotype H5 found in cats). Finally, 21 countries notified the reoccurrence of 24 various diseases (Figure 1).
192. A more detailed analysis of selected diseases is provided in the following sections of the report.

Figure 1: Immediate notifications received from European countries in 2012, by disease



Simulation exercises

- 193. When a disease is absent, the simulation of a disease scenario is a good approach to review the emergency procedures of a country. A simulation exercise enables countries to evaluate their protocols for disease control and their contingency plans and carry out training programmes in a scenario close to that of a real disease event. Countries inform the OIE about their simulation exercises and the OIE distributes the information through the OIE mailing list. Simulation exercises usually relate to a single country but they can also involve a region or group of countries wishing to coordinate activities to deal with specific disease threats.
- 194. The table below lists the simulation exercises conducted in Europe between 2010 and 2012, details of which were distributed via the OIE mailing list (Table 1).

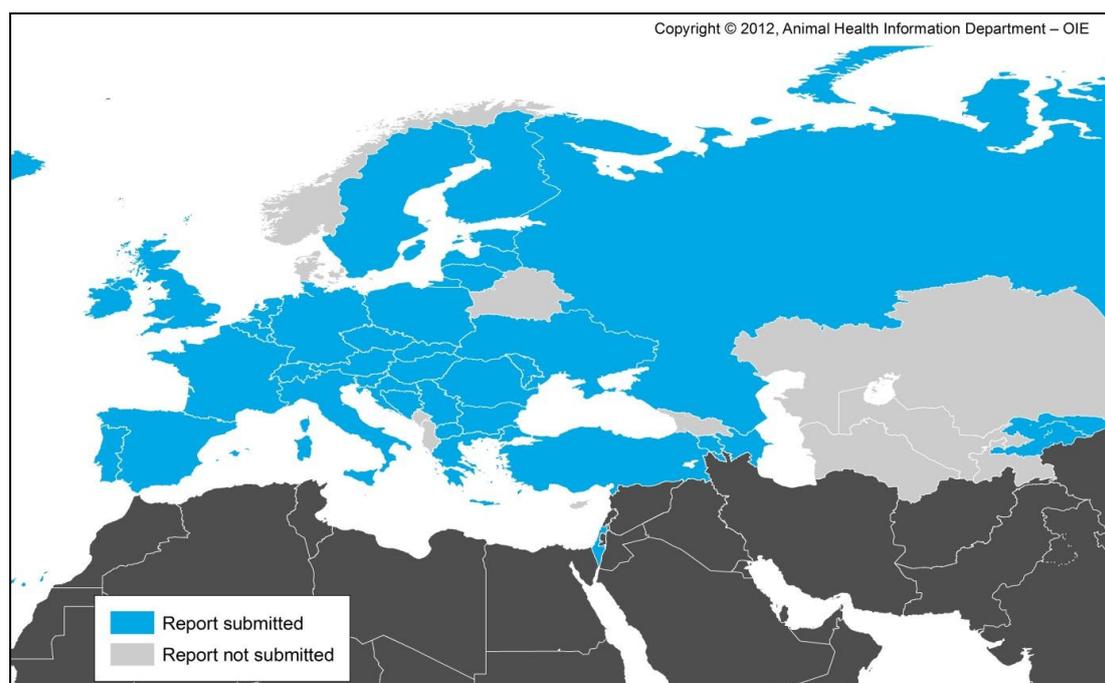
Table 1: Simulation exercises conducted in Europe in 2010–2012

European countries that informed the OIE of their simulation exercises undertaken between 2010 and 2012, details of which were disseminated by the OIE		
OIE Member	Disease	Date
Romania	Classical swine fever	June 2012
Czech Republic	Foot and mouth disease	June 2012
Romania	Selected OIE-Listed diseases	March 2012
Belarus	African swine fever	January 2012
Italy	Foot and mouth disease	December 2011
Croatia	African swine fever	December 2011
Czech Republic	African and classical swine fevers and highly pathogenic avian influenza	December 2011
Lithuania	Seven OIE-Listed diseases	November 2011
Spain	African swine fever	November 2011
Denmark, including the other Baltic and Nordic countries	African swine fever	October 2011
Turkey	Avian Influenza	October 2011
Switzerland	Foot and mouth disease	June 2011
Czech Republic	Foot and mouth disease	June 2011
Slovakia	Foot and mouth disease	June 2011
Slovenia	Transboundary diseases	June 2011
Croatia	Emerging diseases	June 2011
Germany	Classical swine fever	February 2011
United Kingdom	Foot and mouth disease	November 2010
Germany	Foot and mouth disease	November 2010
Sweden	Foot and mouth disease	October 2010
Finland	Foot and mouth disease	October 2010
Lithuania	Eight OIE-Listed diseases	September
Turkey	Highly pathogenic avian influenza	May 2010
Turkey	Foot and mouth disease	May 2010

Reports

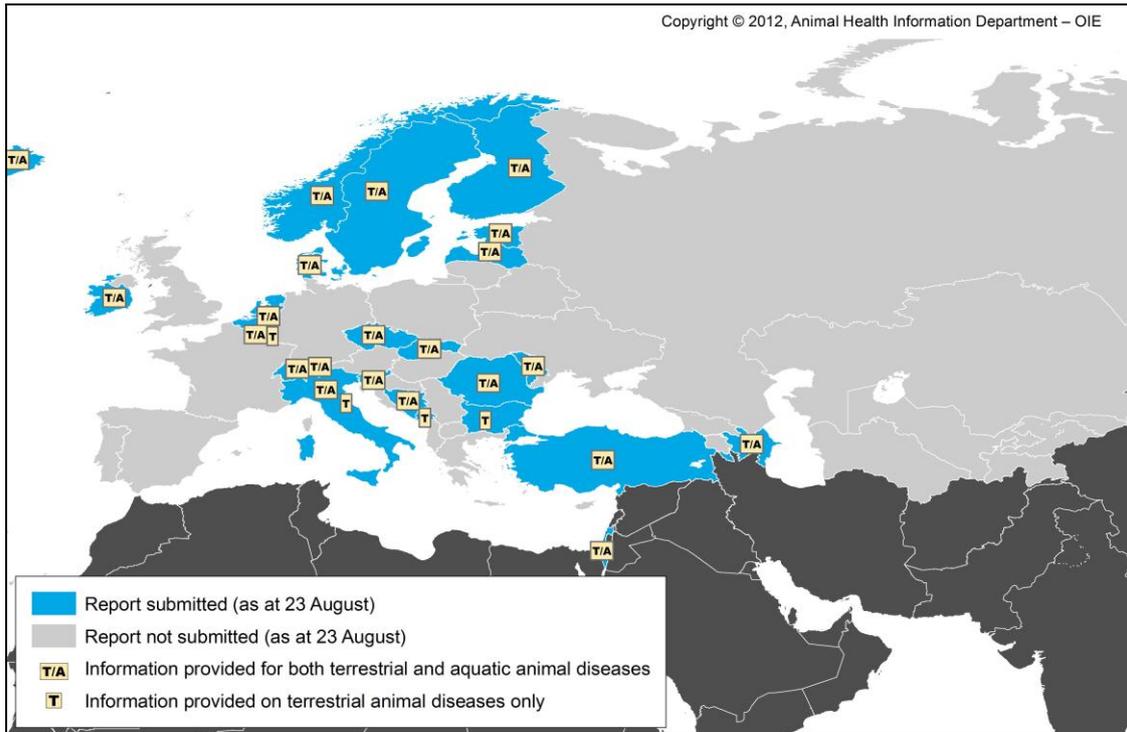
195. In preparation for the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, the OIE requested Members to submit a Report on the Animal Health Situation for 2012. The following 39 countries provided a report: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Animal Health Situation Reports submitted for the OIE Regional Conference by Members of the Regional Commission



196. One of the main missions of the OIE is to provide information on the global animal health situation. In order to fulfil its mandate in this respect, the OIE manages WAHIS, based on the commitment of OIE Members to notify the OIE of the main animal diseases, including zoonoses. By adopting Chapter 1.1.2. of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and Chapter 1.2.1. of the Aquatic Animal Health Code, OIE Members recognised their obligation to notify the OIE of their animal health situation in a timely manner.
197. OIE Members are required to provide the OIE with immediate notifications, six-monthly reports and annual reports documenting the evolution of their sanitary status. The following Members have submitted the first six-monthly report for 2012 (as of 23 August 2012): Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Norway, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. No animal health reports have been received for 2011 or 2012 from Andorra and Turkmenistan, and no reports have been received since 2008 from Uzbekistan. The OIE wishes to point out that it is ready to provide these Members with specific assistance in order to improve their notification situation.
198. Figure 3 shows the 26 countries that submitted six-monthly reports for the first semester of 2012. All the countries submitted the information directly via the WAHIS interface, 85% of the countries (22 countries) submitted information on both terrestrial and aquatic animals, and 15% (4 countries) provided only information on terrestrial animals.

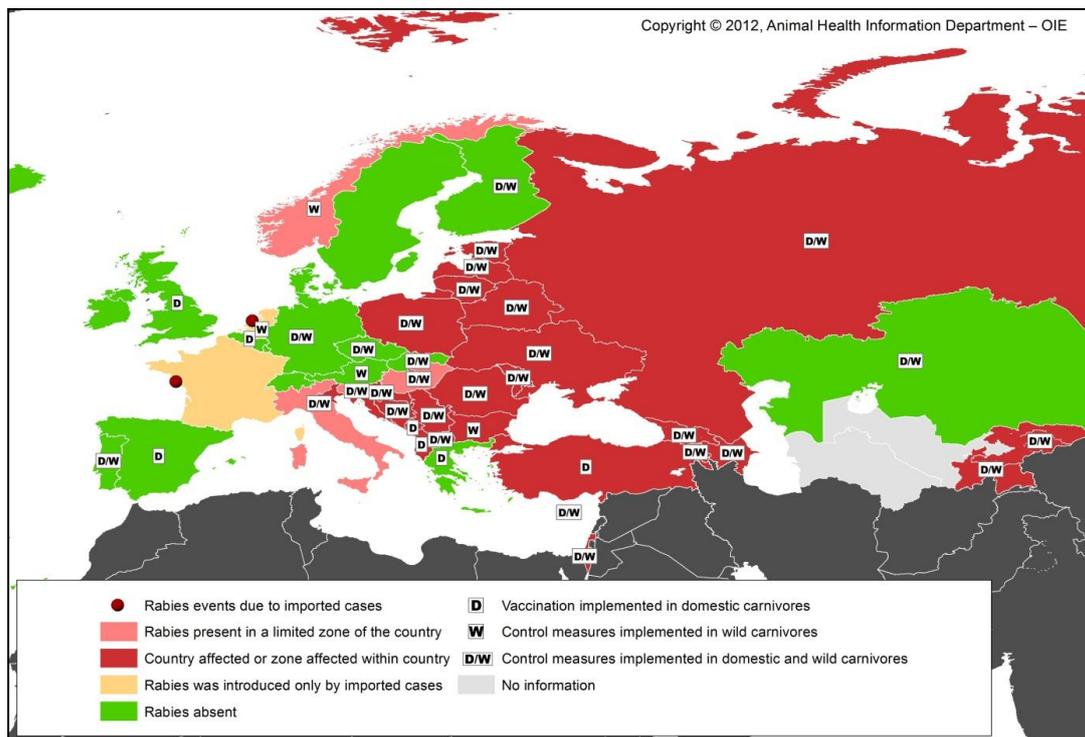
Figure 3: First six-monthly reports for 2012, by type of information (aquatic and/or terrestrial)



SITUATION RELATING TO SELECTED OIE-LISTED DISEASES

Rabies

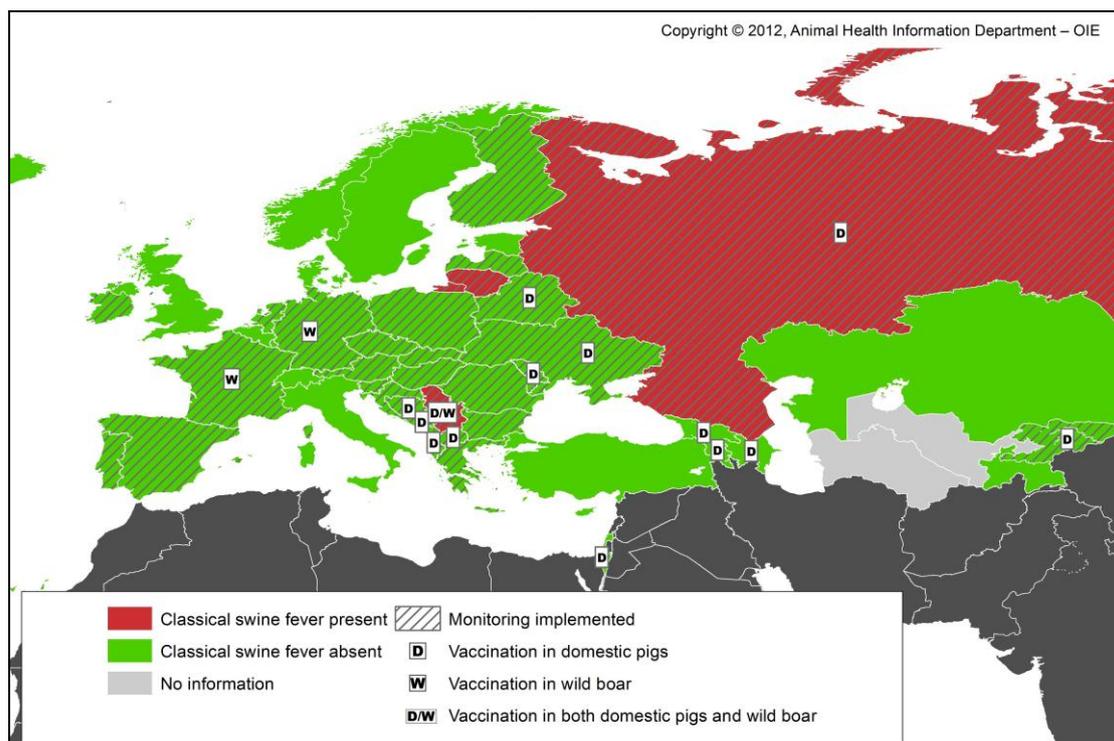
Figure 4: Rabies distribution and control measures reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012



199. Rabies is an important disease caused by a Lyssavirus (family Rhabdoviridae) affecting both animals and humans. The disease is considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be a neglected zoonosis in developing countries but it is also of high concern within the Europe region. This report highlights the overall situation of rabies in Europe, where some countries experience difficulties in controlling the disease as it appears maintained by domestic and wild/feral carnivores – mainly stray dogs and foxes, with occasional findings in bats. There are also sporadic reports of isolated cases due to the importation of domestic animals without complying with the relevant health requirements.
200. Sixty-one percent (24/39) of the countries that submitted a report on their Animal Health Situation for 2012 provided information on rabies. Several countries indicated the presence of the disease and the respective control plans, particularly in Eastern Europe which has historically been an endemic area for rabies. During the first semester of 2012, several countries were thus affected: Croatia (2 cases), Latvia (2 cases), Moldova (75 cases, in both domestic and wild animals), Poland (57 cases, most of them in foxes), Russia (595 cases, in both domestic and wild animals), Serbia (13 cases, in both domestic and wild animals), Slovenia (2 cases in red foxes) and Romania (87 cases in both domestic and wild animals). Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia and Albania submitted immediate notifications to the OIE in March and June 2012, respectively, reporting the reoccurrence of the disease. Other, contiguous countries, such as Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Slovakia, reported having specific surveillance/control plans for this disease. The control measures implemented in these countries include: vaccination of dogs/cats (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia); oral vaccination of foxes (Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, Poland and Serbia) and also vaccination of grazing animals in high risk areas (Croatia).
201. Hungary, Estonia and Latvia have reported the success of their control strategy in reducing the level of cases. In contrast, Azerbaijan has reported an increase in the number of cases over the last few years; this situation was also reported for the previous Conference of the Regional Commission (September 2010), illustrating the consistency and severity of this upward trend. This situation is attributed to an increase in the number of stray cats, an increase in the number of attacks by wild animals on domestic animals and also the fact that free annual vaccination is only performed in registered animals. Albania, after a two-and-a-half-year absence of rabies, reported the reoccurrence of the disease in Kukës province; villages in Albania with a history of rabies are located in close vicinity to natural environment areas where wildlife is abundant.
202. In Western Europe, episodes of rabies associated with wildlife occurred in Italy, in the Veneto region; with 277 cases between 2009 and 2010. A vaccination plan was implemented in response to these episodes. The number of cases fell dramatically in 2011 (1 case only) and no cases were reported in the first semester of 2012. France and The Netherlands reported, via immediate notifications, two events of rabies in dogs associated with importations from North Africa, in August 2011 and February 2012, respectively.

Classical swine fever

Figure 5: Classical swine fever distribution, monitoring and control measures reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012

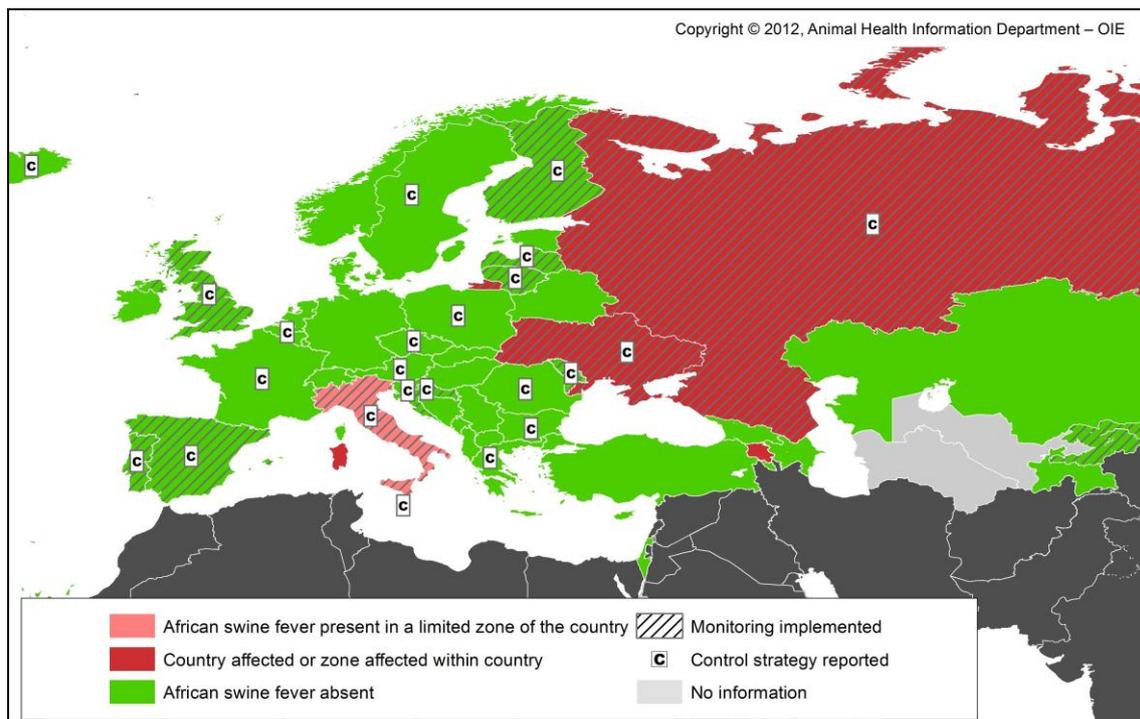


203. The virus of classical swine fever (CSF) is highly contagious, and transmission is mainly oral and oronasal. However, insufficiently cooked waste food fed to pigs is the most common means of entry into CSF-free countries. The disease can cause substantial economic losses since no treatment is possible and affected pigs must be slaughtered and the carcasses buried or incinerated. This report describes the situation of CSF in Europe, a top pig production region, where many countries have experienced events of the disease in the past and although its presence has been now reduced considerably, countries still monitor the situation and apply preventive measures. These measures include vaccination with attenuated live virus strains which is effective in preventing losses in countries where CSF is enzootic, but is unlikely, on its own, to eliminate infection entirely.
204. Seventy-five percent (29/39) of the countries that submitted their report on the Animal Health Situation for 2012 provided information on CSF. In recent years, the disease has been reported in several countries in Europe. However, it has progressively disappeared from most countries. In 2012, CSF has so far only been reported by Russia. The country has been reporting the disease as present for over 15 years in both domestic and wild species. An immediate notification was sent to the OIE indicating the reoccurrence of the disease in the western part of the country and this event has continued since January 2010. In 2012, up to 23 August, six new outbreaks had been notified, involving both domestic pigs and wild boar. A surveillance programme is on-going and control measures include stamping out, control at borders and movement control inside the country. Routine vaccination of domestic pigs has also been reported.

205. Some other countries in Eastern Europe have experienced CSF events in recent years. The most recent cases were reported between 2007 and 2011 by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia and Lithuania. Monitoring is on-going in all these countries. Both domestic pigs and wild boar are under surveillance in Serbia, Hungary and Croatia. This monitoring is risk-based in some countries, such as Serbia and Hungary. Hungary stepped up surveillance in the area where the cases had been reported (Nógrád county and a part of Pest county) and observed that seropositivity in wild boar had declined to less than 2% in those zones. Slovakia highlighted the presence of high-risk zones in the south of the country, near the border with Hungary.
206. In some countries, additional activities have been implemented to achieve better control of the disease. Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia has started to improve animal waste disposal systems, communication on prevention measures and training of the Veterinary Inspection Service. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an analysis of CSF virus circulation in domestic and wild populations is being conducted, so that vaccination programmes can be better adapted to the situation.
207. Most of the countries have prepared contingency plans and several initiatives have been implemented to prepare regional cooperation in the event of new outbreaks. Serbia participated with Croatia in a regional initiative aimed at coordinating common strategies between various countries and territories (e.g. Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania) to improve prevention of diseases such as CSF and rabies and to take part in joint training workshops and simulation exercises.
208. Vaccination programmes have been reported by several countries of the region. Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine have all reported using vaccination in domestic pigs. At present, Serbia controls the disease via mass vaccination but the country has decided to gradually phase out vaccination of domestic pigs, even though a possible spread of the disease after stopping vaccination is feared. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, domestic pigs are now all identified and vaccinated, while oral vaccination of wild boar is being considered as an option that could be implemented. Routine vaccination of domestic pigs is also on-going in Israel, Armenia and Azerbaijan.
209. In Western Europe, only Germany and France have reported cases of CSF during the past five years (in 2009 and 2007, respectively). Monitoring in domestic and wild populations is on-going in most countries and contingency plans have been prepared. France and Germany are the only West European countries reporting vaccination. These vaccination programmes are targeted at wild boar in some regions. In Germany the vaccination of wild boars stopped in Spring 2012.
210. Some initiatives are also being conducted by countries to improve their preparedness for any occurrence or reoccurrence of the disease, such as the simulation exercise that will take place in 2013 in the United Kingdom and the programme undertaken by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), which includes simulation exercises in Wales, Scotland and the four English regions.

African swine fever

Figure 6: African swine fever distribution, monitoring and control strategies measures reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012

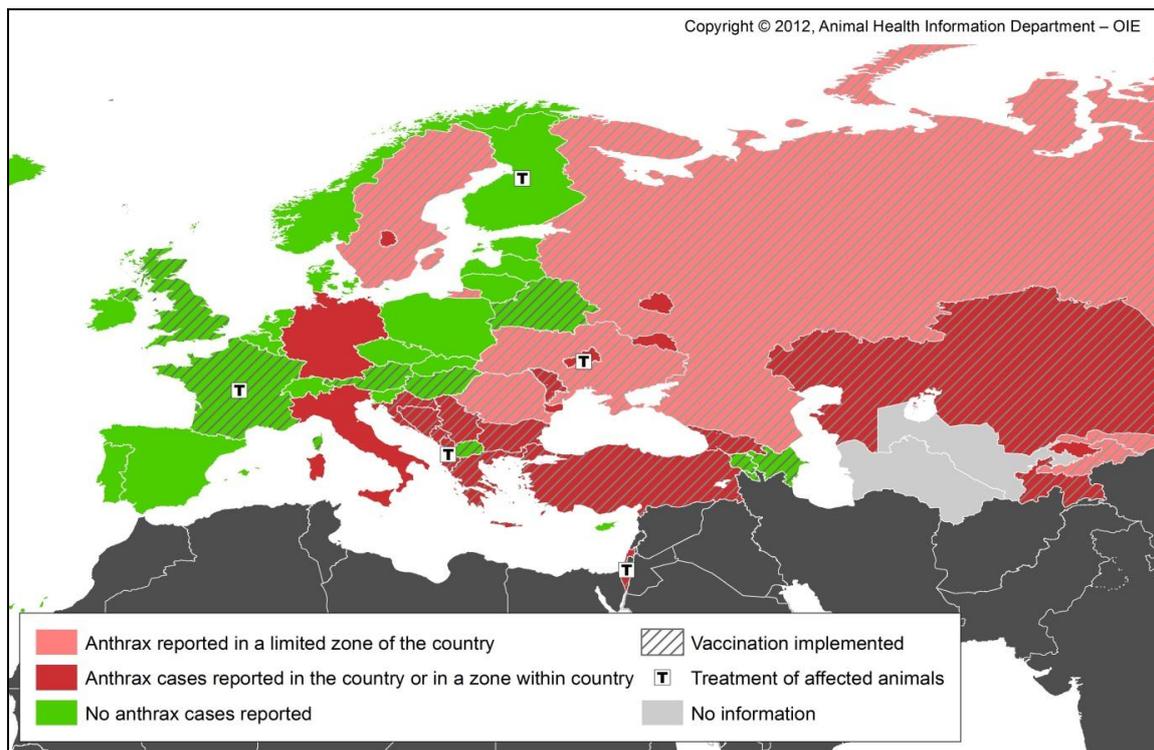


211. ASF virus first appeared in the Caucasus area, in Georgia, in 2007. The source of the virus appeared to have been the introduction of contaminated products of animal origin arriving in the port of Poti on the Black Sea. The virus spread beyond the national borders of Georgia and neighbouring Armenia reported the first occurrence of this disease (2007). Also in 2007, ASF spread northwards into Russia, where the disease is continuing with the majority of outbreaks occurring in the southern part of Russia (near the border with Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Georgia). This disease has recently become a topic of concern within Europe, due to the introduction of the disease in Ukraine over the last summer. European domestic pigs and wild boar are highly susceptible to the virus of African swine fever (ASF). Transmission between pigs can be direct, indirect and by tick vectors (genus *Ornithodoros*). The impact of the disease can be considerable since, in the acute form of the disease, the mortality rate often approaches 100%, and there are no treatments or vaccines to date. Controlling the disease is difficult, since animals that have recovered from previous infections often become persistently infected and act as virus carriers. In outbreaks, rapid slaughtering of all pigs and proper disposal of cadavers and litter are essential. ASF-free countries must implement a careful import policy for animals and animal products, and ensure proper disposal of waste food from aircraft or ships coming from infected countries and sterilisation of garbage, where appropriate.
212. Forty percent (16/39) of the countries that submitted their report on the Animal Health Situation for 2012 provided information on ASF. In Europe, the disease was reported in and successfully eradicated from the Iberian Peninsula in 1999, but has continued to occur in Sardinia since 1978. In 2007/2008, it appeared in the Caucasus and Russia. Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia reported the last cases between 2008 and 2011, while Russia is still reporting the disease as present. However, the disease is still spreading in Europe, since Ukraine reported the first occurrence of ASF on 31 July 2012.

213. In Italy, ASF is present only in the Sardinia Region since 1978. A long series of factors, including the peculiar and deeply traditional system of rearing pigs, the presence of feral pigs and wild boars, the intermingling of free-ranging livestock and the persistence of illegal movements in some cases, have created a scenario which, together with various socioeconomic problems, has resulted in the disease becoming endemic. Efforts to contain the spread throughout the island have so far proved unsuccessful. Periodic serological testing of pigs and wild boar has been implemented since the 1980s. During the first semester of 2012, 71 outbreaks were detected in domestic pigs in small farms (including backyard and free-ranging pigs), and 298 cases in wild boar were reported. A new epidemic wave started in June 2011 and, in addition to the historical high-risk area of Nuoro province in the east, also involved other provinces of the island.
214. Russia has been reporting the disease as present for the past six years in both domestic and wild species. An immediate notification was sent to the OIE to report the reoccurrence of the disease in the western part of the country in September 2009. In 2012 (up to 23 August), 50 new outbreaks with 3144 cases have been notified, involving both domestic pigs and wild boar. In response to the outbreaks, 171 267 animals have been destroyed. During the first semester of 2012, monthly seminars on control measures for ASF were held in Russia.
215. Ukraine sent the OIE an immediate notification on 31 July 2012, reporting the first occurrence of the disease in the country. One outbreak was reported in backyard pigs in a village of the south-east of the country. The source of the outbreak has not yet been identified. Affected animals died rapidly and the disease was diagnosed post-mortem. Control measures included a combination of quarantine and stamping out of susceptible animals as well as movement control. The event is continuing and further information will be communicated to the OIE in due course.
216. Many European countries have reported that monitoring activities in both domestic and wild populations are carried out and that contingency plans have been prepared. Furthermore, regional cooperation has been observed: the Swedish Board of Agriculture organised an ASF simulation exercise in October 2011 which involved all Nordic-Baltic countries. Romania also organised a simulation exercise in March 2012.

Anthrax

Figure 7: Anthrax cases and control measures reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012



217. Anthrax is a disease caused by the spore-forming bacteria *Bacillus anthracis*. There are endemic areas with more frequent outbreaks and other areas that are subject to sporadic events in response to unusual weather patterns which can cause spores that were dormant in the soil to come to the surface. On this regard, there was an apparently increase in the number of events reported to the OIE by European countries over this late summer. These spores are extremely resistant and survive for years. Typically, animals become infected by ingesting spores that are in the soil or in feed. In humans, the most common form of anthrax is a skin infection, but people may also die by consuming meat from an animal that died of the disease. Potentially the most deadly form is by inhalation, which is rare in nature, but spores have been used as a biological weapon. Although vaccination will prevent outbreaks in livestock, the Veterinary Services sometimes fail to vaccinate when the disease has not appeared for several years. Though anthrax is quite susceptible to antibiotic therapy, the clinical course is often so rapid that there may not be the opportunity to treat affected animals. Early detection of outbreaks, quarantine of affected premises, destruction of diseased animals and fomites, and implementation of appropriate sanitary procedures at abattoirs and dairy factories will ensure the safety of products of animal origin intended for human consumption.
218. Twenty percent (8/39) of the countries that submitted their report on the Animal Health Situation for 2012 provided information on this disease.

219. Ukraine, Croatia, Germany and Israel reported exceptional epidemiological events of anthrax to the OIE between May 2012 and August 2012. In Ukraine, during the event that occurred in May, an animal owner did not follow the official requirements, and a non-vaccinated animal was slaughtered without the permission of the Veterinary Services. In Croatia and Germany, the animals involved had not been vaccinated and all the contaminated cows (probably infected at pasture) died. In Israel, anthrax had been diagnosed in the same area in 1983. Responses to the outbreaks varied: Croatia and Ukraine (for the outbreak in August 2012) vaccinated all susceptible animals at the affected location, while Germany only implemented quarantine and disinfection measures. In Israel, the herd was moved to another area and treated with penicillin. Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova also reported outbreaks in cattle in the first semester of 2012.
220. Anthrax is widespread in Europe, and 26 countries reported using vaccination in grazing animals to control the disease, while only five (Albania, Finland, France, Israel and Ukraine) reported using antibiotic treatment for affected animals. The impact on human health is not negligible since ten countries in the Region (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Georgia, Greece, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Spain and Turkey) had reported human cases and two countries (Georgia and Romania) had reported human deaths in the annual report for 2011.

Brucellosis

Figure 8: Brucellosis distribution by species (*B. abortus*, *B. melitensis* and *B. suis*) reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012

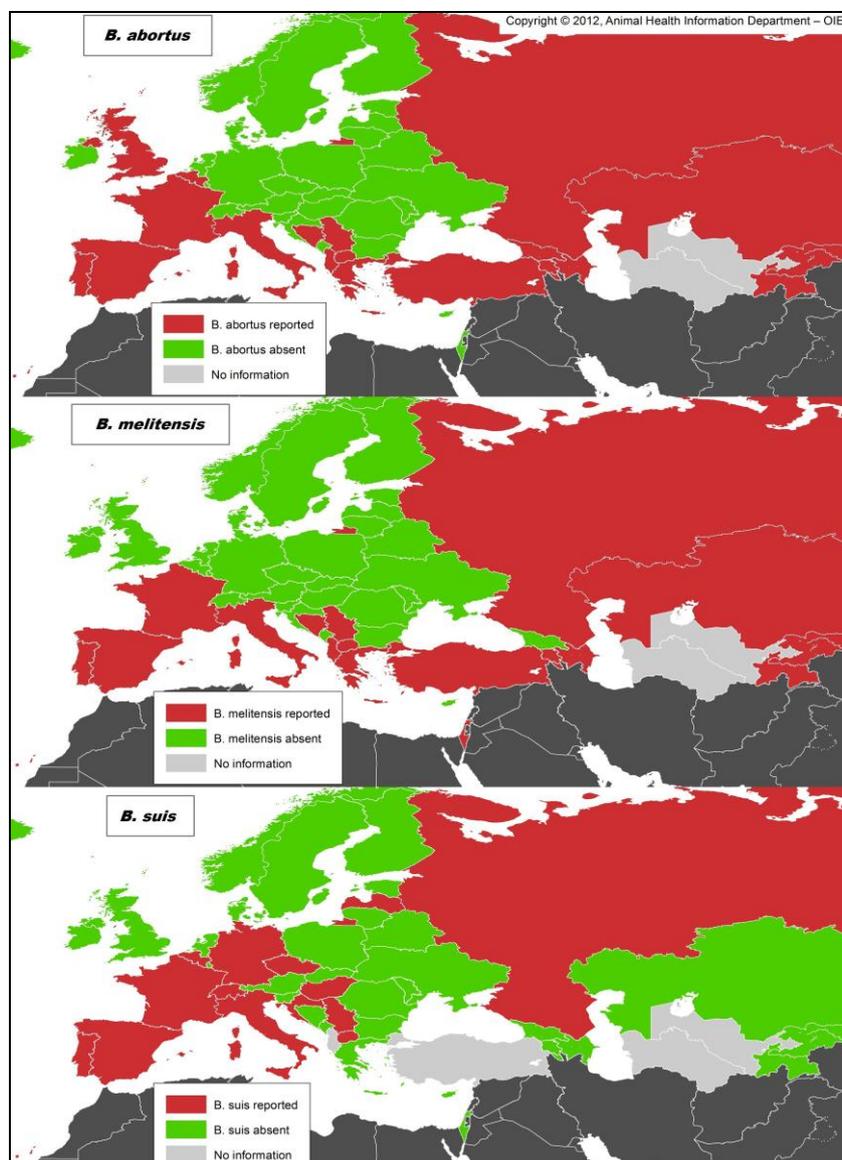
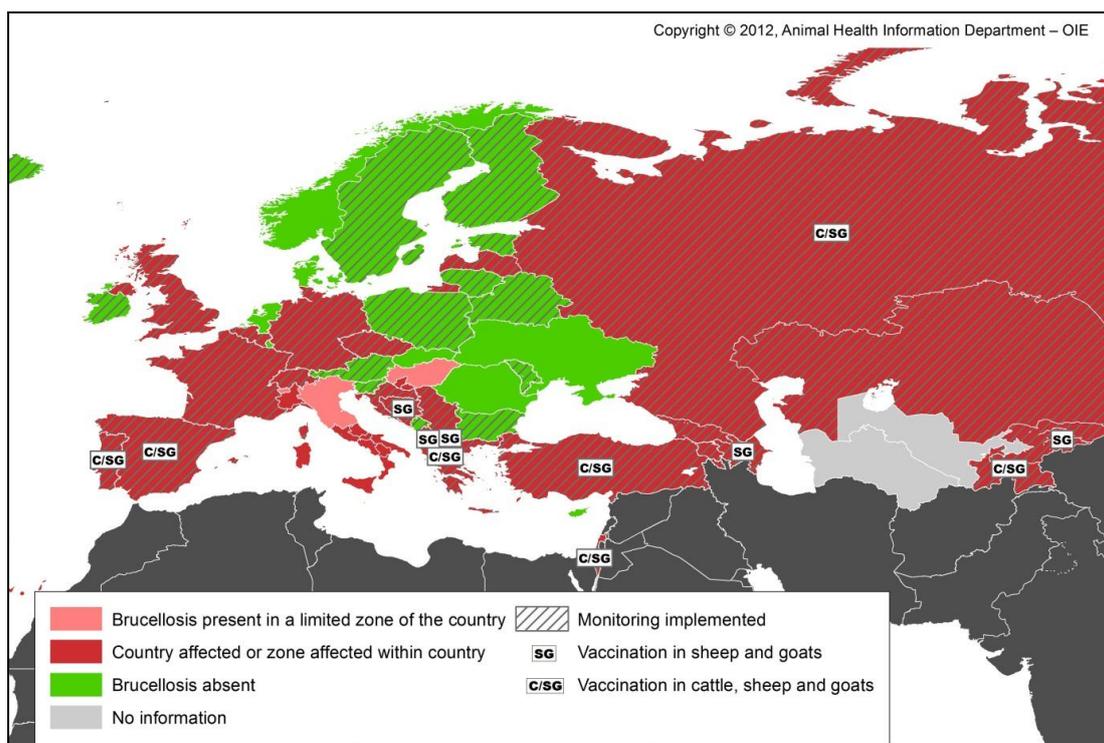


Figure 9: Brucellosis distribution, monitoring and control measures reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012



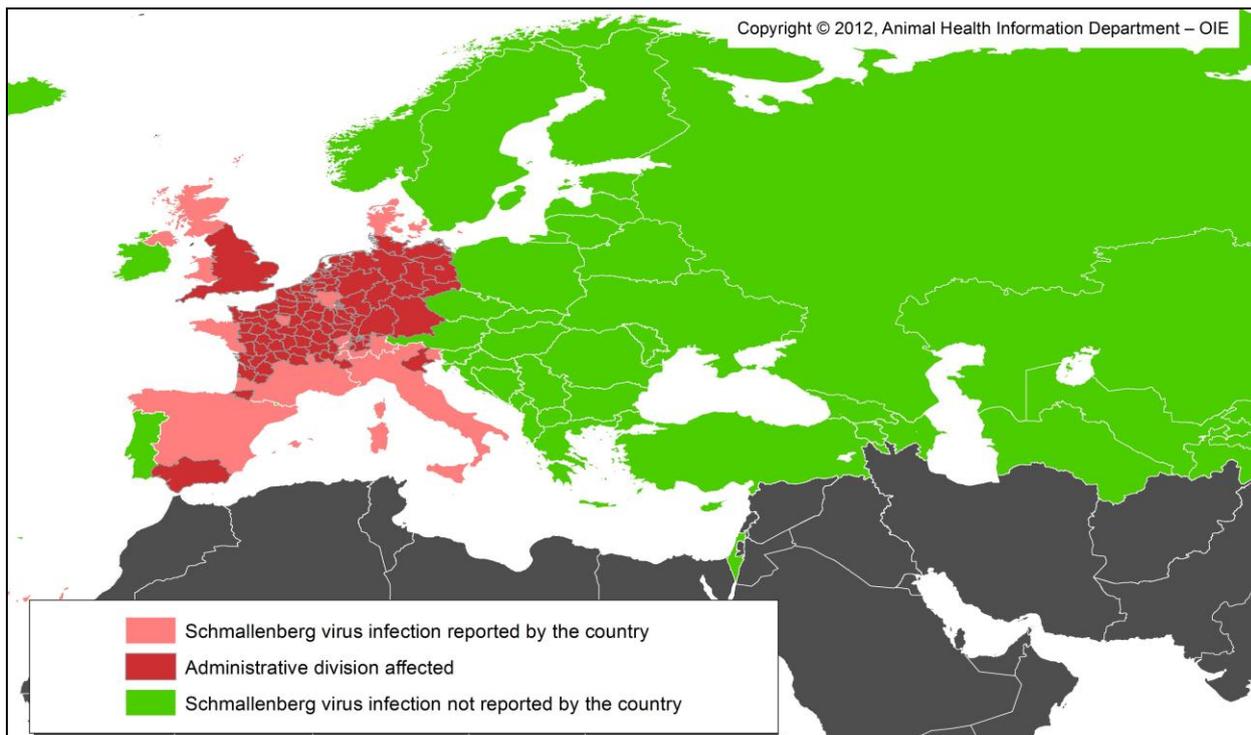
221. *Brucella* spp. is considered one of the most important zoonoses in the world. Four species are notifiable to the OIE: *Brucella abortus*, *B. melitensis*, *B. suis* and *B. ovis*. Bovine brucellosis is usually associated with *B. abortus* or *B. melitensis* and the disease is characterised by the presence of abortion, retained placenta and/or orchitis. *B. ovis* produces a clinical or subclinical disease in sheep that is characterised by genital lesions in rams, typically epididymitis, reducing fertility in rams. The species *B. suis* consists of five biovars, but the infection in pigs is caused by biovars 1, 2 or 3. Signs of disease in sows include infertility and abortion at any stage of gestation, and birth of dead or weak piglets. In boars, the most prominent sign is orchitis. In some areas, *B. suis* infection has become established in wild pigs.
222. Seventy percent (28/39) of the countries that submitted their report on the Animal Health Situation for 2012 provided information on brucellosis.
223. During the first semester of 2012, several countries reported the presence of the disease accompanied by their respective control plans: Azerbaijan (1% of the cattle and 2% of the sheep sampled tested positive); Belgium reported (through immediate notifications) two events involving brucellosis (one associated with *B. abortus* and the other with *B. suis*, both in cattle); Bosnia and Herzegovina reported 24 outbreaks (16 associated with *B. abortus* and eight with *B. melitensis*); Czech Republic reported three outbreaks associated with *B. suis* in wildlife; France had two isolated outbreaks after more than 8 years of disease absence (one outbreak associated with *B. abortus* and the other with *B. melitensis*, both reported via immediate notifications); Israel reported five outbreaks associated with *B. melitensis*; Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia (0.15% of the cattle and 0.03% of the sheep sampled tested positive); Russia notified 45 events; Serbia reported two outbreaks (one associated with *B. abortus* and the other with *B. ovis*); Spain, where recent data indicates reduction in the occurrence (prevalence of 0.28% in cattle and 0.04% in sheep); Turkey did not report specific data for brucellosis but is planning to reduce the prevalence of brucellosis below 1%; and the United Kingdom, where the results over time appear optimistic in the process of eradicating bovine brucellosis, with only one confirmed breakdown in the first semester of 2012.

224. Other European countries, such as Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Switzerland, reported having surveillance/control plans in place. The surveillance strategy varies across countries according to their disease status. Typically, positive countries utilise blood sampling and apply a stamping-out policy for herds testing positive (Azerbaijan, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, Greece, Israel, Serbia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom) and other countries focus on a screening programme based on risk-based sampling plans to maintain low or free status (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Poland, Sweden). Bulk milk sampling is also implemented by some countries (Czech Republic, Malta) as well as post-mortem examinations (Sweden). Control measures such as vaccination are implemented by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, although in the last named country the absence of an animal identification system makes it difficult to control brucellosis.

Schmallenberg virus infection

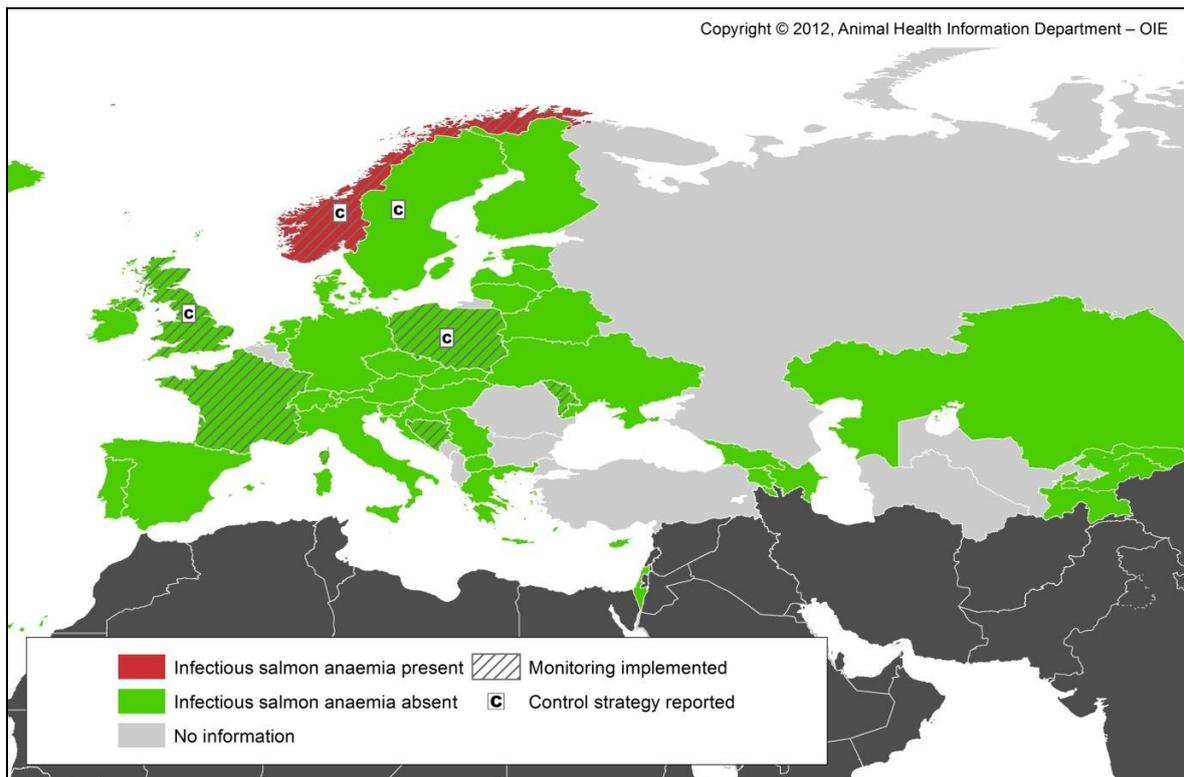
225. In December 2011, reports from a number of European countries alerted the OIE to the occurrence of this new, previously unknown disease. Reporting to the OIE on Schmallenberg virus infection was done through immediate notifications, stating “emerging disease” as the reason for notification. The Netherlands was the first country to notify the disease through WAHIS Mechanism, with episodes of Schmallenberg virus infection starting on 19 December 2011. Belgium was the second country to notify Schmallenberg virus infection, with outbreaks starting on 14 December 2011. Germany was the third country to notify the disease with the use of WAHIS (the country being the first to notify using an official letter to OIE Headquarters in November 2011 immediately when the virus was first identified), the first cases having started on 27 December 2011. On 14 January 2012, the United Kingdom had its first outbreaks of Schmallenberg virus infection, which occurred on the south-east coast of England. In France, the first outbreak started on 20 January 2012 in the north-east of the country. On 6 February 2012, Italy had a case of Schmallenberg virus infection, in the Veneto region in the north of the country. Luxembourg (7 February 2012) joined the list of affected countries. On 6 March 2012, Schmallenberg virus infection was detected in Spain, in Andalucía region (south of the country). Switzerland reported the presence of outbreaks of Schmallenberg virus infection detected as part of the early detection surveillance strategy. According to the website of the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and European Food Safety Authority, the virus is also detected in Denmark: in May 2012, antibodies against Schmallenberg virus were detected in adult Danish bovines, and the virus was also isolated in a calf born with malformations.

Figure 10: Schmallenberg virus infection distribution reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012



Infectious salmon anaemia

Figure 11: Infectious salmon anaemia distribution, monitoring and control strategies reported between 1 January 2011 and 23 August 2012



226. Infectious salmon anaemia is an emerging animal disease which appears only where fish are raised in aquaculture. Risk factors for the spread of infectious salmon anaemia are proximity to infected fish and transfer of fish from infected to clean areas, and research has also shown that boats servicing the aquaculture industry have spread the disease between aquaculture sites. Infected fish may transmit the disease weeks before they show apparent signs of infection and the transfer of smolts (young fish) from one site to another has therefore led to the transfer of disease. Moreover, fish that survive outbreaks may continue to shed viral particles for more than a month into the surrounding water. Sea lice, a common parasite of farmed salmon have also been shown capable of spreading the disease. Mortality during an outbreak is variable but the disease can kill up to 90% of fish in a tank. The disease usually starts in one net pen and it may take many months before the disease develops in neighbouring net pens.
227. Five percent (2/39) of the countries that submitted their report on the Animal Health Situation for 2012 provided information on infectious salmon anaemia.
228. The disease was first described in Norway in 1984 and was found in the United Kingdom (Scotland) in 1998. In Scotland the disease was eliminated in 2000, but it reappeared in late 2009/2010. It remains present in Norway.
229. Norway had reported the disease absent in the second six-monthly report for 2011, but the country submitted an immediate notification in May 2012, to notify the occurrence of infectious salmon anaemia in the zone of More Romsdal (south-west of the country). The species affected was Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in a semi-open farm and the source of the outbreak was reported as unknown. The event is still open and further investigations have been implemented.
230. Twelve countries (representing 23% of the Members of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe) have not provided any information about this disease in 2011 and 2012. Out of the 40 countries that reported the disease as absent, only five have implemented monitoring programmes, and only four have developed control strategies, according to the information reported to the OIE. It is important to remember that this disease is a threat to all countries raising salmon and trout by aquaculture.

Outcomes of the Second OIE/FAO Global Conference on foot and mouth disease control and impacts

231. The Session Chairperson, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer invited Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Europe, to present on the Outcomes of the Second OIE/FAO Global Conference on foot and mouth disease control and impacts.
232. Dr Leboucq gave details of the 2nd Global Conference on Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Control, which was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 27 to 29 June 2012. She mentioned that nearly forty recommendations were issued, aimed at countries, regional and international technical organisations and development partners, as well as FAO and the OIE, the joint organisers of the Conference.
233. She commented that, participants at the Conference expressed strong support for the OIE / FAO Global FMD Control Strategy, which was presented at the Conference, and the two flagship tools, namely the OIE PVS Pathway and the FMD-PCP, on which the Global Strategy is based.
234. Dr Leboucq underlined the fact that Europe is a two-tier region requiring a differentiated implementation of the Global Strategy: the 11 European countries with enzootic status (for reference, there are currently no countries at PCP-FMD stage 0 and 6 countries at stage 1) with regard to FMD were expected to advance by two (2) PCP-FMD stages during the coming 15 years, while simultaneously developing/strengthening their Veterinary Services – and animal health systems based on strong partnerships between public and private operators – to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the control actions implemented (Component 2 of the Global Strategy).

235. She then highlighted that, by 2027, all countries in the Europe region should all have defined and implemented an effective FMD control programme, based on a robust analysis of risk in the relevant livestock production sectors.
236. She explained that the role of wildlife in the epidemiology of FMD was discussed at great length and the experts confirmed that, in Europe – in contrast to Africa – wildlife was not implicated in the persistence of the disease, a factor that facilitates control and opens up prospects of eradication in the longer term.
237. She added that, the Conference also highlighted how important the transparency of the FMD situation was and countries were encouraged to notify their situation in accordance with the procedures of WAHIS, the OIE's World Animal Health Information System.
238. Another issue commented during the conference was the progressive control of the disease which should, as far as possible, be undertaken within the framework of existing initiatives, such as the West Eurasia FMD Control Roadmap. Moreover, countries that were not FMD free were encouraged to take advantage of the various OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code articles designed to enable international trade to take place even in an enzootic situation. FMD control measures should wherever possible be combined with control measures for other priority diseases (Component 3 of the Global Strategy) to optimise animal health actions. The other countries in the region, which have an officially or historically acquired FMD free status or have had their status temporarily suspended, must endeavour to maintain or, if appropriate, recover their status by ensuring irreproachable veterinary governance in total compliance with OIE standards of quality of Veterinary Services.
239. She also pointed out the fact that regional and international technical partners would need to support regional laboratory and epidemiological networks, especially since FMD control is largely based on vaccination. Lastly, those European countries that are also development partners (donors) were strongly encouraged to fund the Global Strategy.
240. To conclude Dr Leboucq referred to the 3rd Global Conference on FMD, which was due to take place in Africa and that could therefore be of a more financial nature, taking into account the results of the first years of implementing the Global Strategy and the inclusion as components of the Global Strategy of new initiatives for the control of priority diseases, with peste des petits ruminants and rabies as potential candidates.

Discussions

241. The Delegate of Russia, Dr Nepoklonov, reminded that the Second OIE/FAO Global Conference on foot and mouth disease control was showing the leadership of the international veterinary community and especially the OIE on this matter. He expressed the wish for positive outcomes of the recommendations of the recent global conference
242. Making reference to the morning session related to Schmallenberg virus, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Chairperson of the Conference, proposed to come back to a pending answer to a question from Germany regarding the meaning of emerging disease for the OIE and asked clarification to the OIE Director General.
243. Dr Vallat explained that the management of the obligation of the countries to notify in case of an emerging disease was a topic of concern for both the Delegates and the OIE Headquarters. He mentioned that it is necessary to continue to define with more details what an emerging disease is, under which circumstances should it be notified and how the notification as well as follow ups and final reports, should be pursued.

244. He highlighted that, according to the provisions of the current Terrestrial Code, Schmallenberg virus, which is an emerging disease, should be notified when it first occurs in a country. After the initial notification, the countries could decide to stop the notification when the disease became endemic. He proposed to the Delegates that the OIE convene again an ad hoc group to address emerging diseases issues. The work of this ad hoc group could lead to proposal to the relevant Commission and to the World Assembly of Delegates providing clarifications to the Members on the concept of emerging disease and its notifications requirements.

Presentations by international and regional organisations

World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

245. Dr David Wilkins, Senior Veterinary Consultant from WSPA started his presentation informing that WSPA is an international animal welfare NGO with offices in 17 countries around the world.
246. He highlighted that WSPA had an observer status with the United Nations and the Council of Europe and held a formal agreement with the OIE.
247. Regarding the WSPA's projects in Europe, Dr Wilkins mentioned that they included slaughter training courses, the maintenance of a website on welfare in farm animals and the organization of workshops on the "concepts in Animal Welfare" and the provision of educational aid directed at veterinary and other natural-science students.
248. To conclude Dr Wilkins pointed out that WSPA is a strong advocate of the OIE Europe Region on developing an animal welfare strategy.

International Dairy Federation (IDF)

249. Dr Seifert, IDF Technical Director, presented an overview of the International Dairy Federation (IDF) with focus on its activities in the field of animal health and animal welfare. Global milk production is expected to continue to grow by 2-3 % (+/- 15 mill tons) annually. Animal health and welfare is a central part of the IDF sustainability agenda. The IDF Standing Committee on Animal Health comprises 79 experts of 28 IDF Member countries and representation of OIE and FAO. Current work is focused on the areas of mastitis, infectious diseases and animal welfare. Fruitful collaboration with the OIE has resulted in an IDF Guide to Good Animal Welfare in Dairy Production, published in 2008. The document builds a solid foundation for the up-coming OIE work on elaboration of an animal welfare standard for dairy cattle production systems. New IDF-OIE collaboration relates to on-going work on animal feeding in the dairy sector and its consequences for animal welfare, animal health and productivity. The next IDF World Dairy Summit in Cape Town (ZA), 4-8 November 2012, will also include a conference on Animal Health and Welfare at the Interface, organised in collaboration with the OIE.

European Federation for Animal Health and Sanitary Security (FESASS)

250. Mr Didier Delmotte, President of FESASS, explained that his organisation works primarily for the development of a strategy preventive and agreed with all the stakeholders. Indeed, FESASS make sure of everyone's involvement to succeed. The continued improvement in the health status of European farms, the increase on the vigilance and the adaptation to the risks are the priority areas for FESASS actions and its members. In the coming months, a technical seminar on BVD and a seminar on TB are planned.

Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)

251. The FVE represented by its executive director, Jan Vaarten, asked the delegates' attention for three issues. First he highlighted the work the Federation undertakes in the field of the responsible use of antimicrobials. In order to raise awareness on this important matter a poster and leaflet were developed. They are available in English; translations in other languages will follow. He then went on about the on-line survey FVE has carried out together with the heads of the European Medicines Agencies (EMA) about the prescription behavior of veterinarians. Over 3000 responses were received, which are being analyzed. Results will be published in the near future.
252. The second issue was the lack of a definition of a veterinarian in the animal health legislation. When speaking about responsibilities, expectations of the society, education, statutory bodies, etc. it should be clear who a veterinarian is. The definition he proposed is: "well educated, science based professional, licensed by the legal authority, to carry out, in an independent, ethical and personally responsible capacity, all aspects of veterinary medicine, in the interest of the animals, the client and society".
253. Last but not least a conference on the import and keeping of exotic animals was announced.

International Federation for Animal Health-Europe (IFAH-Europe)

254. The revision of the EU legislation concerning the licensing of veterinary medicines scheduled for 2013 provides an opportunity to increase the availability of medicines, improve the functioning of the single market in the EU and decrease the administrative burden in the licensing process.
255. Concerning availability, the number of medicines on individual country markets varies greatly – smaller countries have very few medicines. In addition, there are very few medicines available for minor species such as bees and fish.
256. The administrative burden is estimated to be 13% of the turnover of the industry or €538m. This is very high given that the administrative burden of industries is normally 4 to 6%.
257. In order to address availability, the functioning of the single market and to decrease the administrative burden, IFAH-Europe is advocating the "1-1-1 Concept". This involves the submission of one (1) dossier to a coordination body, one (1) scientific assessment carried out by a team appointed by the Member States on their behalf leading to one (1) decision leading to European marketing authorisation valid across the EU.
258. As part of the process of reducing administrative burden, the greatest cost (€184m) and barrier to availability in smaller countries – packaging & labelling – needs to be rationalised. By minimising the data on the label to that which is vital, labels based on pictograms can be developed that do not need translation. All data can be in the package insert in the relevant language. This will greatly boost availability by enabling the cost efficient movement of products between countries.
259. To boost innovation, especially the extension of products to additional species, appropriate data protection needs to be provided. The formula proposed by the HMAv appears appropriate granting up to 20 years protection but needs to include the 'market protection' period of 2 years in the 20 year formula.

European Commission (EC)

260. The European Commission (Commission) enjoys a status of observer at the OIE. The increasingly close cooperation between the Commission and the OIE goes back many years, an important step forward having been done at the occasion of the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme in the 1970s and 1980s. These special relations between the Commission and the OIE were formalised through an exchange of letters of 2004 between the then Commissioner for Health and the Director General of the OIE. Since then, the Commission has increasingly collaborated with the OIE, both in terms of technical expertise and financial support.
261. In recent years the OIE formally engaged in the promotion of good governance of veterinary services, along the OIE PVS Pathway. These activities, amongst others, are supported by the Commission, through the OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund (WAHWF), to which the European Union (EU) and the Commission in particular, is currently the main contributor.
262. Examples of the collaboration of the two organisations are the co-financing by the Commission of OIE regional and global conferences and workshops for the OIE focal points, as well as OIE participation in important regional animal health programmes co-funded by the Commission, in particular in Africa and Asia.
263. In order to facilitate these contributions and as a token of their mutual trust, the Commission and the OIE signed in June 2010 a long-term Framework Agreement laying down the administrative and financial arrangements for their cooperation, through which the process of funding OIE activities by the Commission is mainstreamed.
264. It was found to be beneficial to foster even closer cooperation between the two organisations. A Memorandum of Understanding, which creates a contact point in the Commission for the technical and scientific relations with the OIE, was concluded in 2011 and now facilitates the day to day relations between the Commission and the OIE.
265. It has to be noted that, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty end of 2009, under which the previous responsibilities for External Relations of the European Commission were transferred to the newly-created European External Action Service (EEAS), this new Service is also closely associated to this exemplary cooperation process between the EU and the OIE.
266. Among various positive developments of late, the Commission and the EEAS fully participate in the WAHWF and the Regional and Global Steering Committees of the FAO/OIE Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs); and the OIE in the EU Animal Health Advisory Committee of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

267. Dr Andriy Rozstalnyy, FAO Animal Production and Health Officer, informed the audience on three strategic areas of the FAO assistance to veterinary services of Europe and Central Asia Countries which are as follows: (1) prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases including zoonoses; (2) good governance and capacity building of Veterinary Services (VS), and (3) Provision of animal disease and zoonoses information.

Activities of EuFMD - Commission

268. Dr Ulrich Herzog, President of the EuFMD Executive Committee, reported about the EuFMD Strategic Plan 2009 to 2013 and presented the defined priorities for action.
269. He informed the audience that the next General Session (Assembly) of the EuFMD will take place in April 2013.

270. Dr Herzog also pointed out that there is a need for discussion on the future strategy of EuFMD. Discussion with the FAO on the impact of their decentralisation and the evaluation of the Article 14 Commissions has shown that clarification about the interaction between FAO and self-governing bodies such as the EuFMD is needed. Following the outcome of the 2nd FAO/OIE Global FMD Conference in Bangkok it is necessary to reassess the priorities of EuFMD in relation to the work of GF-TADs, FAO and OIE.
271. The European Livestock and Meat Trading Union (UECBV) also provided the Regional Commission with a presentation of their activities and collaboration with the OIE.

Intervention from the Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan

272. Dr Schwabenbauer, Chairperson of the Conference, then invited the recently nominated Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan to provide the audience with background information as a good model, regarding the work her country is doing in the improvement of its Veterinary Services in collaboration with the OIE.
273. The Vice Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan first express her gratitude to the OIE for the permanent support the OIE brings to her country through the OIE PVS Pathway leading to the rapid modernization of the Veterinary Services.
274. The missions undertake so far in Kazakhstan under the OIE PVS Pathway lead to the development of a National Strategic Action Plan for the improvement of the Veterinary Services of this country in accordance with international standards.
275. The Vice-Minister then explained that the Veterinary Services of Kazakhstan realised that it was impossible to control diseases within the framework of one country especially when considering the transboundary character of some diseases.
276. She highlighted the crucial role the OIE could play in Central Asia Region for the coordination of the efforts of the Veterinary Services of several countries for a better control of diseases such as FMD, rabies, and brucellosis.
277. According to Kazakhstan, it is indeed necessary to strengthen the cooperation of the Veterinary Services of Central Asia Region for a successful control of FMD in collaboration with the OIE.
278. In that context, the Vice- Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan proposed, to the Regional Commission, the creation of a new OIE FMD Coordinating Centre that would be hosted by Kazakhstan. This Centre would be located in the capital, Astana, and would cover OIE Member Countries located in central Asia following the same approach as per successfully implemented in South East Asia with the SEACFMD.
279. The OIE Director General thanked the Vice Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan for the trust her country has into the OIE. He confirmed the wish of the OIE to provide support to this future member of the WTO.
280. Dr Vallat appreciated the proposal of Kazakhstan to host an OIE FMD Coordinating Centre and informed the Regional Commission that he will discuss this proposal with the Council at its upcoming meeting in early October.

Discussions of Recommendations Nos 1 and 2

281. Draft Recommendations Nos 1 and 2 on the two technical items of the Conference were presented to the participants and put forward for discussion. Both draft Recommendations will be presented for adoption at the Friday session with some minor amendments as per suggestions and discussions from participants.
282. Regarding the recommendation related to the Technical Item 2, the Regional Commission requested that the draft concept note annexed to the text of this technical item be circulated among Member Countries of the Region for a month of consultation starting on 15 October, 2012. Then, the OIE will prepare a new document with the Commission of the European Union which will be submitted for adoption in May 2013 in the OIE Regional Commission meeting in Paris.

Date, venue and selection of the technical item for the 26th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe

283. The Delegate of Switzerland confirmed the wish of his country to host the 26th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe in Bern in 2014. He reminded that in 2014, it will be the 100 anniversary of the Swiss Veterinary Services.
284. The proposal was unanimously accepted.
285. The precise dates of the Conference will be decided during the Regional Commission meeting to be held during the General Session in 2013. This conference should be held during the end of September 2014.
286. This proposal was also unanimously confirmed.
287. As usual, two technical items will be discussed during the Conferences of the Regional Commission.
288. One technical item will include the response of Members of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to a questionnaire that will be prepared on the specific subject. This item will be decided during the next meeting of the Regional Commission during OIE General Session in Paris in May 2013. The other technical item will deal with a subject of current interest that will be proposed by the Regional Commission during the meeting of the Region during the General Session preceding the Conference, i.e. in May 2014. This Item will not include a questionnaire.
289. Prof. Dr Nuno Vieira e Brito, Delegate of Portugal, proposed that his country be the host of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe. The Commission supported this proposal.

Intervention of the Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe

290. Dr Lucio Carbajo, Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, reminded the importance of Spanish as one the three OIE official languages. He asked to the OIE Director General that the use of Spanish be facilitated in the meetings of the OIE including the Conferences of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.
291. The OIE Director General commented that, even if up to now the languages used during the regional conferences were English, French, and Russian, he would seriously consider the proposal made by the Delegate of Spain while indicating that the resource issue will need to be solved.

Thursday 20 September 2012

Professional and Cultural Visit

292. Participants and their guests highly appreciated the professional and cultural visit organised for the day by the host country. Sincere thanks to the organisers for their kind hospitality were presented.

Friday 21 September 2012

Adoption of final report and Recommendations

293. Dr Bernard Vallat explained the procedures to adopt the report of the Conference as well as the recommendations. The Delegates are allowed to comment or make suggestions which are taken into account during the Conference, but additional comments on the report, received by 5 October 2012 at the OIE Headquarters, will also be considered. However, the recommendations need to be adopted during the session and cannot be changed later on.
294. The report was adopted with few minor amendments.
295. The two recommendations were also adopted.
296. The traditional motion of thanks for the host country was read by Dr Nikola Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe and Honorary President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

Closing ceremony

297. Mr Bernhard Kühnle, Head of the Directorate Food, Food Security and Animal Health, thanked all participants, including speakers and the OIE Secretariat for a most fruitful conference. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the Secretariat of the host country and of the OIE for the excellent work carried out to ensure the success of the Conference. He thought that the Conference agenda was very relevant to the region necessities.
298. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer thanked the participants for their attendance to the Conference. She hoped that they had a fruitful stay in Fleesensee.
299. Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General, stated that the Conference provided a good opportunity for Members of the region to raise issues of mutual interest but also those of concern. He noted that the technical presentations were of a very high level. He expressed his appreciation to the Conference Secretariat and the OIE staff from the Headquarters and the Regional offices for their active and fruitful participation. He invited all participants to be present in the next Regional Commission Conference. Dr Vallat thanked Dr Karin Schwabenbauer and all colleagues from the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for their contribution in making the Conference a real success.
300. Dr Karin Schwabenbauer officially declared the Conference closed at 11.30 a.m.

Speech by Dr Ago Pärtel
President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee, Germany – 17-21 September 2012

Honourable Ms President,
Director General,
Delegates,
Colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you at the opening of the 25-th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

I would like to thank the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for hosting the conference and especially, Dr Karin Schwabenbauer and her team. It is nice and significant to meet in the country of the newly elected President of the OIE.

We experienced warm hospitality last night and I am sure these exceptionally beautiful surroundings and nice weather will contribute to our technical issues as well as informal communication.

Once again, I wish you all a most fruitful week.

Speech by Prof Nikola Belev
OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe
25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee, Germany – 17-21 September 2012

Mr President,
Director General,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen!!

On behalf of the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe, as well as Honorary President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), let me to welcome all of you to the opening of the twenty-fifth Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

The purpose of this meeting is to summarize our activities in the region, to discuss our progress and future prospects. The Conference will bring to your attention the reports on the highlights of the OIE activities in the region, direction for the cooperation and achievements.

In the reports of the Regional and Sub-regional OIE Representations to your attention will be provided information on the activities, directed toward capacity building of the Veterinary Services, not only to help them in carrying out of their traditional role, animal health protection, but also enable them to enhance communication with their Governments in order to create a model of veterinary services, which is ready to protect the health of all humanity.

During our discussions, special attention will be drawn to these traditional but vital (actual) topics as epizootic situation in the Region, as well as the OIE activities in the field of the standards development for the proper control the products of animal origin during the international trade. In the context of the discussion of the epizootic situation will be considered with regard to the spread of disease caused by the Schmallenberg virus.

You will be provided with information concerning the role of wildlife in prevention the epizootic diseases, the issue of harmonization the regional approach on animal welfare in Europe, detailed information will be provided on the activities of the OIE concerning the veterinary education, which is critical in terms of receiving highly qualified specialists.

I want to stress that the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe is a reliable and connecting bridge of understanding between Eastern and Western countries.

In addition, an important place in the international community belongs to the cooperation and relations with international organizations such as the WHO, WTO, FAO, EC, FVE, CIC, and others, as well as the participation of the OIE in partnership programs with international organizations, the most important of which is the GF -TADs initiative.

Our colleagues, representatives of these organizations, will share their opinion of that matter.

I'd like to emphasize the fact, that effective control and eradication of diseases, with high epizootic and epidemic potential, is impossible without close cooperation between the Veterinary Services of the different countries, relevant professional organizations within countries, such as Public Health Service, Hunter Associations, Custom Services and other institutions.

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude to the President of the OIE, to Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, to the Government of Germany for their hospitality in terms of organization the twenty-fifth Conference of the OIE Regional Commission in Germany in Fleesensee.

Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the Director General of the OIE Doctor Bernard Vallat and the personnel of the Headquarter for their continuous support and cooperation in the organization of the Conference.

I wish all participants a fruitful work, heated discussions, debates, successes and active cooperation during the Conference.

Thank you.

Speech by Dr Karin Schwabenbauer
Delegate of Germany and President of the OIE
25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee, Germany – 17-21 September 2012

Minister
District Administrator,
Chairman,
Director-General,
Delegates,
Representatives of international organisations,
Friends,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you to Fleesensee on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection.

Federal Minister Aigner is unfortunately unable to be here today, but she will join us for dinner on Thursday.

I hope that you all had a pleasant journey.

Germany is honoured to host this important conference. In Germany we are particularly aware of the importance of close international cooperation in veterinary affairs: We have a major animal production industry, we are a transit country for many products and boast large border inspection posts such as the port of Hamburg and Frankfurt airport.

We have also learned from our own past to highly appreciate the work of the World Organisation for Animal Health. During the separation into East and West, the German veterinary services were nonetheless able to cooperate well thanks to the continuous technical cooperation within the OIE. We will always be grateful for that.

Today, the regional conferences and the work of the Regional Commission for Europe are still of major importance. This is where veterinarians from countries across Europe meet on a regular basis and where they can get to know each other better and jointly work towards solving problems. In the age of globalisation and in light of the financial crisis with all the insecurities it entails, this is of particular importance for our field as well.

The mission of our World Organisation for Animal Health has been significantly broadened since its foundation: in addition to animal health in the strict sense of the term, it now also covers animal welfare and food safety at the level of primary production. What is more, the Organisation has been working to promote veterinary services across the world for some years now. The PVS is an instrument that facilitates a (self-)assessment of veterinary services. The Organisation is now also focusing on veterinary legislation and more recently on veterinary training in order to improve the basis for this evaluation. We will hear a presentation on the latter from our General Director.

This year's topics will once again provide a good platform to exchange expertise. The role of game animals in animal disease control varies in our respective countries, but I assume that veterinary services face very similar challenges everywhere. I am very much looking forward to the presentation by Professor Artois that will be dealing with the results of the questionnaire campaign. And I am particularly pleased that after the experts' meeting in Kiev we are now working on joint steps in animal welfare. I am convinced that, in addition to the traditional concerns regarding animal health, animal welfare issues will become more important in all countries. I am confident that we as experts will be able to draw up and represent joint positions.

In addition to the above, we will also be discussing two technical issues at this conference which are of great importance for our region: the losses of bees over the last decade have shaken those responsible for this area into action and put this issue at the top of the European agenda. The occurrence of the Schmallenberg virus last year served as a reminder to us all that new diseases can occur unexpectedly in our part of the world. The pathogen was comparatively harmless this time, but it may well be different next time. This incident has once again reminded us that we must not restrict our monitoring mechanisms to what is familiar to us but that we must remain prepared for everything by using modern diagnostic technologies. I am also looking forward to the presentations on these subjects.

Looking back at the 24th Regional Conference in Astana, we must unfortunately note that despite our efforts we have to-date not been able to stop the African Swine Fever in the Caucasus and Russia. Instead, the disease has spread further and reached Ukraine now. It may be appropriate to look once again at the recommendations made at the time during the presentation on animal health in the region. This disease is a threat for our farming sector in the entire region and it takes major concerted efforts to stop it. I would be delighted if we could once again acknowledge this during the course of the conference.

Allow me to say one more thing as the newly elected President of the OIE Council. Since only a few months have passed since my election in May, I am not yet able to refer to any specific activities. With respect to transparency, which is one item of my "programme", WAHIS 2 will play a major role. It has just been newly set up and we are all excited about how this new software will impact on our work.

Of the four points I presented in Paris, there is one that I will be tackling here in Fleesensee. I have invited all female participants in this conference for a cocktail. We will meet tonight at 7 p.m. before dinner. This is not about excluding our male colleagues, but rather to give the women a chance to get to know each other and to discuss ways to step up involvement in our organisation. I hope for a good turnout and support from the delegations.

I would now like to wish us all a productive conference, with many interesting discussions and plenty of new findings. But let us also enjoy the more informal part of the conference; I hope that you will find the time to talk to colleagues who you do not see that often. And please don't forget to enjoy the scenic beauty and the cuisine of the Land of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Speech of Dr Bernard Vallat
Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee, Germany – 17-21 September 2012

President of the OIE and Delegate of Germany,
President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe,
Members of the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe,
Delegates of Member Countries of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe,
Representatives of international and regional organisations,
OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe,
OIE Sub Regional Representative,
Distinguished guests,

It is a great honour and a privilege for me to welcome each of you, on behalf of the Members of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), to attend the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

I would like to first express my gratitude, on behalf of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, to the Government of Germany for agreeing to host its 25th Conference and inviting us to Fleesensee. This wonderful venue is a beacon of nature and peace and an important witness of your country's regional values.

I would also like to express my gratitude, in particular to Ms. Ilse Aigner, Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, to Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and first woman being nominated as President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, to our colleagues from the Federal Ministry of Food Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany, to the regional and local authorities, to the OIE staff and to our Regional and Sub Regional Representatives for all the efforts made in preparing this event.

Our world is changing very rapidly, the human population is steadily rising and so is the demand for food, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and in particular for animal protein, especially in the emerging countries where over a billion of persons are overcoming poverty and joining the middle classes.

Concurrently to these changes, unprecedented movements of animals and people enable pathogens to colonise the entire planet and to move faster than ever. Health risks for humans, domestic animals and wildlife are changing very quickly accordingly and, at the same time, the awareness of the need to safeguard biodiversity is, fortunately, increased on all continents.

Faced with these challenges, global, regional and national health and environmental policies must be reconsidered, and new tools, as well as new ways of cooperation and synergies between stakeholders and governments, must be found. Veterinary Services must be ready to face those key changes.

In this context, OIE Regional Conferences are held every two years in Europe and other regions, with the purpose to bring together the National Delegates of the OIE Member Countries of the Region, the Director General of the OIE and relevant team from the OIE Headquarters, the OIE Regional and Sub Regional Representatives, the representatives of governmental and non-governmental international and regional organisations as well as experts from the region and the world, providing a unique opportunity to express our willingness to work together to face these new challenges and to promote international cooperation and coordination in the prevention and control of animal diseases worldwide.

In the current era of globalisation, the core mandate of the Organisation is “the improvement of animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare worldwide”.

It is with great honour that I will accompany you through this important week of activities dedicated to the Regional Commission. Indeed, the OIE considers the Regional Conferences to be of utmost significance and value, and heralds them as one of the key links with our Member Countries. They testify the OIE's desire to bring together all of its Members in order to tackle animal health issues globally and contribute to resolve all issues facing Veterinary Services worldwide.

Global control of animal diseases is impossible without strong alliances, starting at international agencies level: the OIE, the United Nations represented by FAO, the community of international donors supporting animal health programmes such as EU and the World Bank, regional organisations and all Member Countries.

Global control of animal diseases is also impossible without Good Governance of national Veterinary Services. Good governance includes appropriate legislation, appropriate veterinary education programmes, appropriate human and financial resources allocated to Veterinary and Livestock Services, and finally relevant public-private partnerships applicable to the overall veterinary domain.

When talking about Good governance, we also need to mention the importance of the Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSBs) on that matter. Indeed, although VSBs are not part of Veterinary Authority as per indicated in OIE standards, they are vital in supporting the Good Governance of the overall Veterinary Services. Indeed, they play a crucial role in the registration of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals, as well as in setting minimum standards for the initial and continuing education of such personnel and the code of conduct for the veterinary profession. OIE standards on the quality and on the evaluation of Veterinary Services include specific provisions relating to VSBs.

In that regard, the OIE is planning to hold a regional seminar on the role of VSBs in the Good Governance of Veterinary Services in December 2012. It will be a good opportunity, to raise awareness among the countries regarding the importance of VSBs. Although the seminar is aimed primarily at Eastern European countries, it will be open to other countries of the region wishing to participate.

As you already know, the OIE work programme is dictated by five-year strategic plans developed in collaboration with the OIE Members and partners and adopted by the World Assembly of Delegates. We are currently half-way through the 5th Strategic Plan and I can assure you that the OIE is fully respecting the implementation of this plan.

The OIE Fifth Strategic Plan includes important elements such the contribution of Veterinary Services to food security and the application of the 'One Health' concept for reducing the risk of certain diseases at the animal-human interface. The relationship between animal production and the environment, including the contribution of climate and environmental changes to the occurrence and geographical spread of diseases, disease vectors and invasive species, as well as the contribution of animal production practices to environmental and climate changes, are also included as priorities of the Fifth Strategic Plan.

Under this five-year Plan, the OIE is working towards strengthening Good Governance of the Veterinary Services, to be achieved through the improvement of legislation, supporting Members compliance with OIE international standards on the quality of Veterinary Services and the continuous strengthening of the capacities of Member Countries Veterinary Services. I invite all Members of the region to continue to work together to accomplish the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

The OIE Global Programme for strengthening Veterinary Services, mainly based on the OIE PVS Tool for the evaluation of performance of Veterinary Services, has advanced significantly and had largely passed the symbolic number of 110 OIE Members involved in the process. Thus, it is now of paramount importance that countries take ownership of PVS Pathway outcomes, as reflected in the reports of OIE PVS initial, follow-up, Gap Analysis and Legislation missions.

Great efforts have been made by the OIE, thanks to the support of donors, to support Member Countries in building the capacity of their Veterinary Services. The OIE's goal of building the capacity of Veterinary Services with appropriate legislation and the necessary human, physical and financial resources could be achieved only by countries taking ownership of PVS Pathway outcomes and by international solidarity.

Since the OIE PVS Tool was introduced in 2006, the OIE, with the permission of the countries, had been distributing PVS Pathway mission reports to donors and other partners. The OIE also currently assigns experts to assist countries in organising roundtables with senior officials in their governments involved in budget allocations to Veterinary Services. Donors and international and regional organisations interested in supporting Veterinary Service capacity-building are also invited to attend these roundtables.

During these roundtables, the OIE experts assist the Veterinary Services in explaining, to potential donors, the PVS Pathway outcomes and their possible use in the improvement of the Veterinary Services. Recently, the OIE had also been assisting countries in distributing the reports through diplomatic channels to senior officials able to support Veterinary Service capacity-building. Also, the OIE would soon be drafting a guide on the ownership and use of the PVS Pathway reports for advocacy on financing the compliance with OIE standards on quality of Veterinary Services.

The OIE has also established, since many year now, a continuous information and training programme for new OIE Delegates, as well as for their nominees as national Focal Points for animal diseases notification, wildlife, aquatic animals, food safety, veterinary products, animal welfare and communication. This programme is being implemented successfully in all regions in collaboration with all the OIE Regional and Sub-Regional Representations, under the coordination of OIE Headquarters. Pilot seminars are currently being organised for national laboratories Focal Points.

The support provided to our Regional and Sub Regional Representations will also have an important impact on the development of OIE activities and the success of the Strategic Plan in the region and thus, in the harmonisation of the work done in the region. The OIE Representations need your permanent support in order to provide regionally adapted services to OIE Members so that they may strengthen the compliance with OIE standards. The expansion of our regional network of representations is currently being strongly evaluated as another way for the OIE to be closer to its Members. In May 2012, the World Assembly voted a resolution encouraging Russia to have an OIE office.

Referring to the agenda of the Conference, the particular interest of the technical items presented during this Conference will undoubtedly contribute to the success of this important event for the region.

Two technical items will be presented, the technical item one (1) regarding “The role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases” covering issues related to the persistence or spread of transmissible pathogens in wildlife which can sometimes complicate disease control in domestic animals quite considerably. There are currently few prevention or control methods available to facilitate the management of wildlife diseases of veterinary importance. This technical item, prepared based on the response to a questionnaire sent to all Members of the region, will assess the current state of knowledge and obtain the views of Member Countries of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

The technical item two (2) is related to “Regional steps towards common Animal Welfare approach in Europe”.

A concept note on “Proposed action to support OIE Member Countries in Eastern Europe in the implementation of the OIE standards on animal health and welfare” will be presented as part of the technical item 2. This note seeks to assist Veterinary Services in the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly with respect to effective implementation of OIE standards for Good Governance of Veterinary Services; animal health and animal welfare by promoting development and adoption of legislation, capacity building, improvement of awareness of the value of implementation of OIE standards through engagement and partnership with stakeholders, development of an electronic platform for dialogue and exchange on best practices in animal welfare, animal health and veterinary public health, among others.

The technical item 2 will hopefully lead to recommendation building bridge in the overall Region for a concerted approach to Animal Welfare and animal health, health being a key component of animal welfare.

The animal welfare as you know is not only a regional concern, but also a global one. I take thus this opportunity to invite each of you to the 3rd OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 6-8 November 2012.

As usual, in addition to these two technical items, an updated general overview of the current animal disease situation in this region will be presented.

This year, we will also discuss of Schmallenberg virus which is at the origin of an emerging animal disease that has been found in several European countries since the second half of 2011. OIE has been collecting available epidemiological and scientific information, thanks to the notification from Member Countries, and is regularly updating guidance to its Members and public on this emerging disease.

On the fringe of the programme, two topics of current and major importance are also included, namely, a General overview of bee diseases in the world and the OIE policies on Veterinary Education in the region.

The quality of veterinary education is not optimal in many countries of the world. Veterinary education needs thus to be strengthened globally and to do so, the OIE has recently published “recommendations on the competencies of graduating veterinarians (Day 1 graduates) to assure national Veterinary Services of quality”.

I am pleased to announce you that, the OIE is planning to organise a Global Conference on Veterinary Education and Veterinary Statutory Bodies in Brazil in December of 2013.

As you can realise, the following days will be thus quite busy and I am sure that the results of your recommendations will be of great importance for the region and for the 178 OIE Member Countries.

To conclude, I would like to once again express, on behalf of all participants, my most sincere gratitude to the German authorities for having invited us to Fleesensee and to all our Veterinary colleagues of the country for the very warm welcome we received. I am confident that this twenty-fifth Conference of the Regional Commission will be a success.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Dr Bernard Vallat
OIE Director General

Speech of Mr Heiko Kärgner
President of the District Mecklenburgische Seenplatte
25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee, Germany – 17-21 September 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear guests from home and abroad,

I would like to welcome you all very warmly to the Mecklenburg Lakes.

You are witnessing a premiere today: this is the first OIE Regional Conference and it is taking place in one of Germany's largest and also youngest rural districts.

Your conference venue, the Radisson Blue Hotel Schloss Fleesensee, is located right in the heart of the Mecklenburg Lakes.

I am delighted that you have chosen Fleesensee for your conference and I hope that you will also find the time to go outside and take a look around.

I am the district administrative officer of this large rural district, am 52 years old and have been active in municipal politics and administration for more than 20 years.

Before that I studied agriculture and for 12 years I was a dedicated farmer myself.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I feel honoured to be speaking to you, the participants, who have travelled from 56 western and eastern European states.

It is a compliment that all of you, including members of the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, scientists and representatives of umbrella organisations, have come to the rural district of the Mecklenburg Lakes.

As district administrative officer I would like to use this opportunity to tell you a bit about our region, a region which I personally love very much.

The rural district of Mecklenburg Lakes was created under the administrative reform of the federal state of Mecklenburg- Western Pomerania on 4th September last year.

In the course of this reform, the former rural districts of Demmin, Müritz, Mecklenburg-Strelitz and the then urban district of Neubrandenburg were merged.

Situated between Berlin in the south and the Baltic Sea in the North it covers a total of 5,465 square kilometres.

This makes it the largest district of the Federal Republic with regard to its area.

To put this in perspective: Saarland, our smallest federal state, covers 2,570 square kilometres.

Approximately 270,000 people live in our rural district - most of them in villages or small towns with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants.

The terrain was shaped by the last ice age and agriculture and forestry cover much of the land. The Müritz National Park and the Serrahner beech forest are listed as UNESCO World Natural Heritage sites.

Altogether the rural district of Mecklenburg Lakes has 62 nature conservation areas, 21 landscape conservation areas, 63 areas of conservation for flora and fauna, 15 bird sanctuaries and 4 large nature parks. Nature and landscape conservation areas alone cover an area of 1,984 square kilometres.

Tourism is a strong economic factor around the Müritzer See, Germany's largest inland lake, at the many other lakes and along the pretty rivers such as, for example, the Peene.

Water bodies cover an area of 412 square kilometres in our rural district.

The Mecklenburg Lakes are the second most popular holidaying region in Mecklenburg- Western Pomerania after the Baltic Sea coast of Mecklenburg.

Last year there were more than 3.4 million overnight stays in our rural district. There are many ways to spend your holidays in our region. Farm holidays and riding holidays are popular activities, especially for families with children.

The rural district is actively participating in the marketing of the region. Currently we are drawing up a concept on district riding, cycle and hiking trails.

The country idyll is one aspect of the district.

On the other hand we also have to deal with demographic change, as do practically all regions in Germany. By 2030 the total population will probably decrease by 60,000 inhabitants to approx. 210,000 inhabitants. This will mean we will have a population density of fewer than 40 inhabitants per square kilometre.

We will have to consider how we deal with these changes. The 20-65-year-old age group will dwindle particularly dramatically.

The demographic decline and its frightening consequences are nowhere more visible than in rural areas.

This development is accompanied by a lack of skilled labour and young people.

Due to the difficult economic situation that has pertained in our rural district for a number of years, many skilled workers have moved away and we are today already facing an urgent need for skilled labour.

There are already many open positions that cannot be filled.

In this context we want to, and indeed must, strengthen existing companies in all areas, provide our young people with a good education and promote attractive working conditions in respect of a the work-life-balance.

To this end we are cooperating with an agricultural and a biotechnology company.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear participants,

The World Organisation for Animal Health/OIE in Paris selected the conference venue in Fleesensee.

I wish to thank you for this.

During this conference you will deal with the establishment of standards for the areas of livestock trade and animal products.

For Germany, OIE membership is indispensable due to its wide-ranging agricultural exports.

Dealing with these topics in our rural district of Mecklenburg Lakes has been a good choice: our district town of Neubrandenburg is not only located in a region characterised by farming activities; it also offers higher education courses in agriculture and food science.

Every year we welcome numerous new students and see those off that have successfully finished their studies.

Their projects and internships are carried out in the region. The Neubrandenburg University of Applied Sciences is a young and modern university. As it states in the information brochure for the course on agriculture, it offers students the chance to "study between 4 city gates and a beach".

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that you will also find the time to take a look around.

I wish you every success for your conference this week, I hope that the discussions are productive and that you have an enjoyable time with your fellow participants .

I have heard that you will also be meeting Minister Backhaus in Schwerin tomorrow and that the day after that Federal Minister Aigner will be welcoming you to the Ozeaneum in Stralsund.

I hope that you will return home with fond memories of your time here.

I hope the conference runs smoothly.

And if you ever come back to our rural district please do not hesitate to contact me.

All the best for you and thank you very much for your attention

Speech of Mrs Ilse Aigner
Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection
25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
Fleesensee, Germany – 17-21 September 2012

President Schwabenbauer,
President Pärtel,
[President of the OIE Regional Commission]
Dr Vallat,
Professor Belev,
Representatives of the Commission,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be able to welcome you here this evening to the Ozeaneum in Stralsund.

Whether it is

- penguins,
- corals or
- the giants of the ocean with which we are surrounded,

the Ozeaneum allows us to experience the diversity of the underwater animal kingdom in a unique atmosphere.

However, your work, ladies and gentlemen, involves not only aquatic animals, but terrestrial animals in particular.

You work hard to ensure the health of all these animals on a daily basis.

As pre-eminent scientists and experts for the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), you are constantly enhancing global standards for healthy animals.

This invitation is my way of paying special tribute to the work you do in promoting

- a healthy environment,
- healthy animals and
- as a result, healthy people too.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The hosting of the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe here in Germany is a particular honour for the Federal Government as well as for me personally.

It is an honour for me to be able to bring you together here, in your capacity as experts from across Europe with a wealth of specialised knowledge on animal health.

The Regional Commission is the only specialist veterinary group in which EU and non-EU countries work together.

We should look on this as an opportunity – not only for the area of animal health itself, but for other areas too.

I am particularly pleased that Dr Schwabenbauer,

a high-ranking official from my own ministry, was this year elected President of the OIE Council.

She therefore becomes the first female to head the OIE since its creation in 1924.

Dr Schwabenbauer,

I would like to once again warmly congratulate you on your election and wish you much success during your term of office.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Animal health is a key component of the German government's food, agriculture and consumer policy.

German farmers are only able to operate successfully if their animals are healthy.

And consumers, who enjoy milk, eggs and meat, trust that their food comes from healthy animals.

Animal health is therefore not only an area where the health of the animals themselves is important. No.

Healthy animals, healthy people and healthy, financially sound farms all go hand in hand.

This is why the German government will introduce animal health legislation before the end of the current electoral term.

The Animal Health Act will provide a modern legal basis on which to control animal diseases.

As well as providing effective measures to control animal diseases, the legislation strengthens in particular those instruments designed to prevent animal diseases.

We are therefore also assuming responsibility for animal health at European and international level.

After all, animal diseases do not stop at national boundaries.

The earlier they are contained in the country in which they originate, the better!

And it is precisely because the problem of animal diseases are not confined to a single country during times of open markets that it is so important for the OIE to achieve success in the work it does.

In this regard, you can count on the continued support of the German government.

In addition to animal health, animal welfare is another key pillar of our responsibility towards animals.

Animal health is an integral component of animal welfare as only healthy animals can be happy animals!

For this reason, it is only logical for you to focus on the issue of animal welfare and to develop appropriate standards.

With the adoption of the OIE standards for the raising of fattening cattle, we have this year, for the first time, succeeded in reaching an understanding at international level regarding the husbandry of farm animals.

In view of the critical discussion at international level, this marks an important step towards the acceptance of agricultural livestock breeding on the whole.

I trust in you all that further steps will follow.

Germany has supported the OIE's work in terms of animal welfare from the outset.

This year will see us make a financial contribution to the OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare for the third time.

These conferences are important for raising global awareness of what can be done as regards animal welfare.

We are committed to this, having enshrined animal welfare as a constitutional goal in Germany for a decade now.

Indeed, animal welfare is an area in which we are instilling a real sense of value.

Part of this commitment involves revising the Animal Welfare Act through which we intend to

- phase out the practice of castrating piglets without anaesthesia by 2017,
- increase the level of personal responsibility among livestock farmers,
- and provide a more precise wording of the ban on agony breeding.

However, we are amending not only the Animal Welfare Act. This amendment is embedded in a comprehensive strategy on the future of animal husbandry.

In particular, our aim is to minimise the use of antibiotics in livestock farming.

To this end, we have this week introduced an amendment to the German Drug Act.

Given these circumstances, I am delighted that this conference in Germany has succeeded in agreeing joint measures to be taken in the area of animal welfare – and indeed in countries beyond the borders of the EU and EFTA.

- Coordinating animal welfare campaigns,
- offering mutual support in applying the OIE's animal welfare standards,
- but also introducing more standardised animal welfare legislation

are all key elements for improving animal welfare in the participating regions.

Germany is willing to do all that it can to support the OIE in the implementation of this programme. On this you have my word.

I am convinced that in a globalised world, animal welfare needs to be implemented primarily on a global scale.

Germany is therefore prepared to fulfil its leadership role and to assume responsibility.

This is also important to me personally.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Some of you have already visited the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut on the Baltic Sea island of Riems this morning – this is a site of world-class German research in the area of animal health.

Later on, you then saw the famous chalk cliffs of the “Königsstuhl”.

Meanwhile, others amongst you visited the German National Stud at Redefin where you were able to enjoy the parades.

Of course, all of this fresh sea and country air can give you an appetite!

So let me end my speech by wishing you:

Guten Appetit! I hope you enjoy your meal and have constructive talks.

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AGENDA

1. Update on OIE vision.
2. Activities of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.
3. Activities of the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe.
4. Activities of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels.
5. Technical Item I (with questionnaire): « *The role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases* ».
6. OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission – Issues of interest to the Region- Challenges and proposals.
7. OIE policies on Veterinary Education.
8. Technical Item II (without questionnaire): « *Regional steps towards common Animal Welfare approach in Europe* ».
9. Update on the Schmallenberg virus situation in Europe.
10. Animal health situation of Member Countries in the region during the first semester of 2012.
11. General overview of bee diseases in the world; predators, pathogenesis, epidemiology, world distribution.
12. Outcomes of the Second OIE/FAO Global Conference on foot and mouth disease control and impacts.
13. Presentations by international and regional organisations.
14. Update on the activities of the OIE Laboratory Twinning process and perspective for twinning in other fields.
15. Other matters:
 - Date, venue and agenda items for the 26th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

TIMETABLE

MONDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2012

- 10:00-4:00 p.m. Seminar for Newly appointed OIE Delegates
- 4:00 p.m. Registration and distribution of documents regarding the Conference
- 7:00 p.m. Welcome reception at the Radisson Blu Resort Schloß Fleesensee

TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2012

- 08:30 a.m. Registration and distribution of documents (cont.)
- 09:00 a.m. Opening ceremony
- Dr Ago Pärtel, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
 - Prof. Nikola Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe
 - Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and President of the OIE
 - Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE
 - Political Authority from Germany
- 09:45 a.m. Break
- 10:15 a.m. * Election of the Conference Committee
(Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur General)
- * Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
- * Election of Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs for Technical Items and Animal Health Situation
- 10:45 a.m. Update on OIE vision (Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General)
- 11:45 a.m. Activities of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe (Dr Ago Pärtel, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe)
- 12:00 p.m. Activities of the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe (Prof. Nikola Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe)
- 12:15 p.m. Activities of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels (Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub Regional Representative in Brussels)
- 12:30 p.m. Group photo
- 12:45 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. Technical Item I (with questionnaire): “The role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases”. (Dr Marc Artois, Member of the OIE Working Group on Wildlife Diseases)
- 3:00 p.m. Discussion
- 3:30 p.m. OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission – Issues of interest to the Region- Challenges and proposals (Dr Alex Thiermann, President of the OIE Code Commission)

- 4:00 p.m. Break
(Preparation of Recommendation No. 1 by designated small group)
- 4:30 p.m. OIE policies on Veterinary Education in the region (Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General)
- 5:00 p.m. General overview of bee diseases in the world; predators, pathogenesis, epidemiology, world distribution (Dr Marc Schäfer, Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Reference Laboratory for Bee Diseases)
- 5:30 p.m. Update on the activities of the OIE Laboratory Twinning process and perspective for twinning in other fields. (Dr François Caya, Head, OIE Regional Activities Department)
- 6:00 p.m. End of the session
- 8:00 p.m. Reception (dinner) offered by OIE

WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2012

- 09:00 a.m. Technical Item II (without questionnaire): “Regional steps towards common Animal Welfare approach in Europe” (Dr Etienne Bonbon)
- 10:00 a.m. Discussion
- 10:30 a.m. Break
(Preparation of Recommendation No. 2 by designated small group)
- 11:00 a.m. Update on the Schmallenberg virus situation in Europe (Dr Thomas C. Mettenleiter, Friedrich Loeffler Federal Research Institute for Animal Health)
- 11:30 a.m. Animal health situation of Member Countries in the region during the first semester of 2012 (Dr Manuel Sanchez, Deputy Head, OIE Animal Health Information Department)
- 12:15 p.m. Discussion
- 12:45 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. Outcomes of the Second OIE/FAO Global Conference on foot and mouth disease control and impacts (Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels)
- 2:30 p.m. Presentations by international and regional organisations
- 3:30 p.m. Discussions of Recommendations Nos 1 and 2
- 4:00 p.m. Date, venue and selection of the technical item for the 26th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
- 4:30 p.m. End of the session
- 5:30 p.m. Transfer by coach to Schwerin
- 7:30 p.m. Reception (dinner) offered by Germany

THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2012

07:30 a.m. Professional and cultural guided visit (for head of Delegation or one participant per Delegation)

08:00 a.m. Professional and cultural guided visit (for all other Delegations' members)

FRIDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2012

09:00 a.m. Adoption of the Final Report and Recommendations

10:30 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. Closing ceremony

Recommendation No. 1

The role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. The transmission of pathogens between domestic and wild animals is a significant factor to address in controlling diseases;
2. The Veterinary Services continue to experience difficulty in controlling livestock diseases that can persist in wildlife populations;
3. There is sometimes insufficient scientific knowledge and surveillance data, including those related to emerging diseases, to make a balanced assessment of the risks to livestock production posed by the spread of pathogens in wildlife populations;
4. Understanding of veterinary professionals on wildlife pathology and the implications of wildlife diseases for veterinary public health is not optimal;
5. Vaccination of foxes against rabies and of wild boar against classical swine fever has been successfully carried out in Europe;
6. The Veterinary Services can advocate the implementation of suitable biosecurity measures in particular when zoning or compartmentalisation policies for animal production sectors are being put in place.

THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. OIE Member Countries organise surveillance for wildlife pathogens and diseases in Europe in a more coordinated and regular manner, with particular emphasis on pathogens and diseases having an actual or potential impact on livestock and public health;
2. Through the WAHIS system, OIE Member Countries strengthen their official notification to the OIE of listed and emerging diseases when they affect wildlife, in particular when they are transmissible to livestock and have a zoonotic impact;
3. OIE Member Countries cooperate, especially when they have common borders, by sharing relevant information collected by their Veterinary Services on the spread of wildlife disease or infections,;
4. The Member Countries recognise that a country should not suffer any prejudice if it declares infection of wild animals with OIE-listed pathogens or their exposure to them (i.e. presence of antibodies), insofar as the disease in question has not been notified in susceptible livestock species;
5. The Member Countries foster the development of biosecurity measures designed to prevent direct or indirect contact with wildlife, within the framework of a zoning or compartmentalisation policy, when applicable;
6. The Member Countries encourage scientific research in their respective country on the spread of pathogens in wildlife and on effective methods for controlling transmission to livestock;

7. The OIE consider the setting up of a Collaborating Centre in the Europe region on the role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases, to give Member Countries in the Region easier access to a source of capacity building in this field;
8. The OIE, within the framework of the *Ad hoc* Group on Veterinary Education, recommend incorporating concepts of management of wildlife pathogens and diseases having an impact on domestic animals and public health in the development of the basic core curriculum and in continuing education programmes aimed at the Veterinary Services, the veterinary profession, and other relevant stakeholders;
9. The OIE continue to develop guidelines and standards relating to the role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases taking into account the range of relevant stakeholders' interests.

Recommendation No. 2

Steps towards a common animal welfare approach in Europe

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. Animal welfare is a complex, multi-faceted, national and international public policy issue with important scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, political and commercial dimensions;
2. Following the Conventions drawn up by the Council of Europe, the Member States of the European Union and associated countries have, over the last few decades, adopted various harmonised rules on animal welfare and equipped themselves with a strategy, whereas many other contracting parties to the Council of Europe have not yet implemented all of the measures advocated in the Conventions;
3. The OIE has a mandate to improve animal health and welfare worldwide, that standards on animal welfare were first adopted at the General Session in May 2005 and that they have been regularly updated ever since;
4. Animal health is a key dimension of animal welfare and that the subject of animal welfare is included in the OIE PVS Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services and is also taken into account in the OIE initiative on veterinary legislation;
5. Regional animal welfare strategies or approaches, adapted to the situation in each region and accompanied by a suitable implementation plan, make a major contribution to enabling the OIE to carry out its mandate with respect to improving animal health and welfare worldwide;
6. Through PVS evaluations and other activities, the OIE has been able to assess the challenges faced by some countries in the Region of Europe in trying to fulfil the missions inherent in good quality of Veterinary Services;
7. The lack of organisation of the various involved parties in the sector prevents the creation of public-private partnerships essential for the sustainable implementation of OIE recommendations and standards in the field of animal health and welfare;
8. The regional seminars on animal welfare in Europe, which were successfully held in Istanbul (Turkey) in July 2009 and in Kiev (Ukraine) in March 2012 with the support of the European Union, have confirmed the prominent regional role of the OIE in animal welfare and the importance of appointing and strengthening the capacities of Focal Points for Animal Welfare;
9. It is important to continue these capacity-building activities and to improve and develop them, both for the exchange of information and for their contribution to the overall strengthening of the capacities of the Veterinary Services using all the components of the OIE PVS Tool;
10. It is important for the European Union and other potential donors active in the Region of Europe to be associated with these capacity-building activities, and for these activities to systematically include all the relevant parties;
11. The OIE has prepared a draft concept note describing the problems encountered in some European countries and proposing solutions to resolve them in partnership with all involved parties seeking to promote animal welfare in the region.

THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. The Veterinary Services of all OIE Member Countries in the Region of Europe take all necessary measures to apply the standards on animal welfare adopted by the OIE;
2. The Delegates of OIE Member Countries in the Region of Europe take all necessary measures to ensure that, if a national Focal Point for Animal Welfare has not yet been appointed, one be appointed as quickly as possible and that the Focal Points take part in regional capacity-building programmes organised by the OIE;
3. The OIE use the results of evaluations performed using the OIE PVS Evaluation Tool and Gap Analysis Tool to propose suitably adapted continuing training programmes and twinning actions using OIE Collaborating Centres (CC) specialised in animal welfare and between Veterinary Education Establishments (VEE), or other relevant twinning activities between OIE Members of the Region;
4. The draft concept note developed by the OIE, aimed at achieving greater coordination among the Members of the Regional Commission for Europe on the subject of animal welfare, be transmitted to the Members of the Region in order to finalise its content particularly the balanced representation of the proposed steering group and any other associated committee, so the Concept note be adopted at the next meeting of the Regional Commission in May 2013;
5. The concept note, once adopted by the Regional Commission, be implemented by the OIE with the unfailing commitment of all the concerned countries and with the support of the European Union and other potential donors;
6. The European Union participate actively in these activities, including through financial support, sharing of regulatory and field experience, training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns, jointly with the OIE;
7. Within the framework outlined in recommendation paragraphs number 4 and 5, the permanent need to involve all interested parties including consumer, animal protection, producer, veterinarians and industry organisations, be taken into account.
8. As an outcome of the work to be done, a Regional OIE Animal Welfare strategy be considered.

PRESS RELEASE

Fleesensee, 18 September 2012 – High-ranking officials from OIE Member Countries in Europe and from international, regional and national governmental and non-governmental organisations discussed several key issues in the field of animal health and animal welfare, including the animal welfare approach and the role of wildlife in animal disease control in the region at the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, held in Fleesensee (Germany) from 17 to 21 September 2012.

Common animal welfare approach in Europe

During the Conference, the participants discussed the need for western and eastern European countries to work together and share best practices to achieve the progressive and harmonious implementation of OIE animal welfare standards at regional level.

“Animal welfare has long been an important subject for countries of Europe, which was the first region in the world to recognize its significance. However, the 51 Member Countries of the European region, as per defined by the OIE, shows contrasting levels of implementation of animal welfare policies in national legislation,” said Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE.

At the previous OIE Seminar for national focal points on Animal Welfare held in Kiev in March 2012, the participants expressed the wish to achieve sustainable compliance with OIE standards on animal health and welfare, and called on the OIE to develop a mechanism in the sub-region to facilitate better implementation of OIE animal welfare standards.

A recommendation was made during the Conference to implement a new effective cooperation among Members of the Regional Commission for Europe on the subject of animal welfare.

“Success lies in the empowerment of national Veterinary Services, which need appropriate tools, such as legislation, capacity building and adequate financial and human resources in the field of animal welfare implementation. The OIE pledged to bring support to all of its Members through the engagement of its Regional Representations, the PVS Pathway and the support of the European Union”, emphasised Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, President of the OIE Council.

The role of wildlife in the control of domestic animal diseases

The Conference also addressed the persistence of pathogens transmissible from wildlife as it makes it very hard to control some diseases in domestic animals. “The role played by wildlife in the world epidemiological situation is more and more demonstrated. We want to better manage risks in wildlife for the control of disease in domestic animals and for preservation of biodiversity but this brings many challenges,” OIE Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat said.

The Conference reached a consensus that recognises the great complexity of the transmission of infectious diseases between domestic animals and wildlife populations. It also assessed the need for further studies on how to put efficient monitoring systems in place, taking into account that support to national Veterinary Services is pivotal especially when it applies to strengthening their surveillance and response capacities.

The need for implementing biosecurity measures to reduce contact between wild and domestic animals was also considered as a priority.

The Conference was kindly hosted by the Government of Germany. The Honourable Ilse Aigner, Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, opened the Conference, which was chaired by Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Director of the Veterinary Services of Germany, OIE Delegate of Germany and elected chairperson of the OIE with the support of the OIE Headquarters and the OIE Regional Representation for Europe.

MOTION OF THANKS

The OIE Regional Commission for Europe, the Director General of the OIE, members of delegations, observers and representatives of countries and international organisations, wish to express their gratitude to the Government of Germany, the Host Country of the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission, for the excellent welcome accorded to the participants and for all facilities made available to them during their stay in Fleesensee from 17 to 21 September 2012.