

Conclusions and Recommendations of the OIE Regional Workshop on Communication, Singapore, 26-27 October 2009

Considering that

1. Improving animal health through the strengthening of Veterinary Services is of vital importance to address growing global risks to animal and human health from transboundary and emerging infectious diseases, and to contribute strongly towards sustainable agricultural livestock development by reducing economic losses caused by animal diseases, and to enhance food security, food safety, animal welfare and human livelihoods.
2. The circumstances surrounding animal health have been changing predominantly due to globalization, an increase of transportation of humans and animals and animal products, climate change, etc., causing transboundary and emerging animal diseases.
3. Activities of Veterinary Services as a public good are of increasing importance for the effective implementation of animal health measures with high quality communication and information management, and also with the concept of importance of evaluation of Veterinary Services and gap analysis, and of One World One Health, at national, regional and international levels.
4. Capacity building of Veterinary Services is crucial for the control and prevention of animal diseases at source, including good communication. Good communication is increasingly becoming recognized for its power to influence animal health outcomes; Veterinary Services must be able to share and receive relevant information by communicating and consulting effectively with all their stakeholders, including the public.
5. Countries and territories within the region are communicating on a wide range of animal health issues. The current communications approaches reflect the existing communications expertise, planning and infrastructure, which is highly variable between different countries.

6. The OIE Regional Seminar on Communication held in Bangkok, October 2008 recommended the development of sub-regional and regional communication strategy for Veterinary Services.
7. The OIE/AusAID Programme for Strengthening Veterinary Services in South East Asia (PSVS) held a Workshop on Animal Health Communications in Cambodia on 19-20 March 2009 and has finalised a Sub –Regional Animal Health Communication Strategy for South East Asia (sub-regional strategy).
8. In May 2009, the Regional Commission meeting in Paris reviewed the draft sub-regional strategy and noted that it would be submitted for consideration at the Conference of the Regional Commission in Shanghai in November 2009.
9. The Philippines is preparing a national action plan as a pilot model for discussion at a second sub-regional workshop in Manila (Philippines) on 30 November – 1 December 2009.
10. Whilst the participants from the OIE sub-regional workshop in Cambodia were not in attendance, their sub-regional strategy was used as a basis for the further development of a similar regional strategy for the whole Asia and the Pacific region.

The Workshop in Singapore recommends that

The regional strategy (attached) provides an important framework for the enhancement of communication capabilities for all countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific.

1. The regional strategy be presented to chief executives and OIE Delegates/Chief Veterinary Officers for their consideration.
2. The development of a communications action plan be considered for the country, that outlines activities that will be undertaken to move toward the 5 goals articulated in the regional strategy.
3. The relevant items of the regional communication strategy and resulting national action plans be included within PVS and PVS Gap Analysis criteria.

4. National Veterinary Services should recognize and address the increasing importance of communication strategies for animal disease control and prevention, in particular in cases of emerging and re-emerging diseases.
5. The importance of communication should be one of the priorities of National Veterinary Services, particularly for disseminating information on any issue under the competence of the Veterinary Services.
6. National Veterinary Services should review their current national communication mechanisms including policies on and delivery of communication for animal health, at an early stage to provide a common communication vision and goals, and to develop communication strategies for animal health.
7. The National Veterinary authorities of the Region for Asia and the Pacific should nominate their communication contact points, who work under the general direction of the OIE Delegate/Chief Veterinary Officer and for effective communication between National Veterinary Services and OIE, as well as for regional communication. The National Veterinary Authorities in the Region should report the nomination to OIE (HQ through the Regional Representation) by the end of December 2009.
8. The regional strategy should include the following 5 goals; namely (1) ensuring communication strategies and approaches be built, continue to evolve, and are fully integrated with policy development and programme delivery of the Veterinary Services, (2) improving risk communication approaches both prior to and during an emergency event, (3) improving and strengthening communication resourcing (including capacity building of relevant staff and capability) and improving the quality of systems, (4) improving national coordination across jurisdictions, sectors and stakeholder groups, and (5) sharing of information about internationally-relevant animal health issues (and communication approaches) within the region and globally.
9. Technical supports from OIE should be continually provided for further development of Communication strategies at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels.

10. OIE Delegates/Chief Veterinary Officers of the OIE Members should encourage policy makers to mobilize resources (human and financial) for communication development of Veterinary Services at a national level, and donors including national, sub-regional, regional and international organizations should also be encouraged to support effective communication on animal health.
11. Risk communication approaches should be taken into consideration prior to, during and after an emergency event for appropriate preparedness and response including timely and evidence-based animal health messages for reaching out to target groups, which include a risk management plan and a risk communication plan.
12. Training of the nominated contact points of National Veterinary Services on the development and implementation of communication strategies including risk analysis, in particular for items mentioned above, should be considered at the regional level.
13. Conclusions and Recommendations of both Regional and Sub-Regional Workshops should be well coordinated and broadly consistent especially regarding regional and sub-regional communication strategies within Asia and the Pacific in the field of animal health.
14. All countries and territories in the region should be included in finalizing the regional communication strategy.