

## *Overview of the 76<sup>th</sup> General Session*

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The annual General Session of the International Committee of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) provides for the adoption of resolutions guiding the administration and future work program for the organisation. Resolutions on the revisions to the *Aquatic Animal* and *Terrestrial Animal Health Codes* and their respective *Manuals of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines*, are also presented along with the adoption of resolutions on country sanitary status for four diseases: **foot and mouth disease, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, rinderpest, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy** that the OIE officially recognizes.

As such, the General Session is the conclusion of the annual work cycle for the development of international science-based standards for the protection of animal, public and ecosystem health and for the safe trade in animals and animal products in international commerce.

This year's General Session commenced with an Opening Ceremony on the afternoon of May 25th and had 8 plenary sessions running until May 30th. Approximately 600 participants representing the 172 OIE Members, intergovernmental (FAO, WHO, World Bank, WTO, etc.), regional and international organizations took part in the event.

### **The address by the OIE President to the International Committee**

The speech given by the President, Dr. Barry O'Neil, to the 172 Members of the OIE can be found at

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<http://www.oie.int/eng/session2008/presse-oneill.htm>

### **Guests, honours and international expertise**

For the Opening Session of the General Session, the OIE extends invitations to Ministers of Agriculture or Heads of Government of member countries to address the delegates and delegations of the member countries. The invitee list is generally restricted to ten Agricultural Ministers and/or Heads of State and are drawn from the 5 geographic regions of the OIE - the Americas; Europe; Africa; Asia, Far-East and Oceania; and the Middle East.

This year, Ministers of Agriculture from Belize, Laos, Mali, Uganda, Swaziland, Tanzania, Bulgaria, Cuba and France addressed the International Committee along with the Deputy Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Honourary awards to members of the veterinary community for outstanding services to veterinary science and to the OIE were presented. The recipient of the Gold Medal was Dr. Amadou Samba Sidibé (Mali), past- President of the OIE International Committee from 1991-1994 and OIE Regional Representative for Africa. Dr. Kazimieras Lukauskas (Lithuania) was presented with Meritorious Service Award.

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### **Technical Items**

Each year two *technical items* of general interest are presented. The topics are presented by leading international and regional experts in each field, and one of the topics includes responses to questionnaires received from OIE Members. At the conclusion of the presentations, a group drawn from the member country delegates is formed and tasked to develop a resolution outlining recommendations that are designed to direct the future work of the OIE.

The first technical item, entitled “***The Participation of Small Farmers in Animal Health Programs***”, was presented by Dr. Jeffery Mariner, International Livestock Research Institute.

The second technical item, entitled “***Implications of Private Standards in International Trade of Animals and Animal Products***” was presented jointly by Christian Wolff, World Trade Organisation and Michael Scannell, European Commission.

The technical item papers can be found in the Annex to this document.

The first technical item for future General Sessions are chosen two years in advance of each General Session. The first technical item for the 77<sup>th</sup> General Session in 2009 will be entitled, “***Impact of climate change and environmental changes on emerging and re-emerging animal disease and animal production***”.

At the 78<sup>th</sup> General Session in 2010, the first technical item will be entitled, “***The critical contribution of veterinary activities to the global security of food derived from terrestrial and aquatic animals***”.

The second technical items will be chosen by the Administrative Commission members (synonymous to the board of directors to the OIE) during their meetings in February 2009 and 2010 respectively.

As the first technical items require a questionnaire to be filled out, we may need your assistance in identifying experts to help out with completing the questionnaire...stay tuned!

### **Agreements signed**

Other highlights from the 76<sup>th</sup> General Session included the signing of agreements between the OIE and other international organisations to coordinate respective efforts in the control of animal diseases, safety of food, the promotion and improvement of veterinary public health, etc. This year, the OIE signed new agreements with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES); the International Air Transport Association (IATA); the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the International Poultry Council (IPC) and the International Council for Laboratory Animal Science (ICLAS).

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A listing of the organizations with which the OIE has signed agreements can be found at [http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE/actes/en\\_accords.htm](http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE/actes/en_accords.htm) and [http://www.oie.int/fr/OIE/actes/fr\\_accords.htm](http://www.oie.int/fr/OIE/actes/fr_accords.htm)

### **News on OIE Members**

The complement of OIE Members is now 172 with the recent membership of Serbia-and-Montenegro, Liechtenstein and the Maldives.

Also on the membership front, the resolution that was adopted last year to provide for the active participation of both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China remains in effect. As expected, both Members were represented and participated in the General Session.

### **Official OIE sanitary status recognition of Member Countries**

During one of the plenary sessions, the *Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases* presented resolutions recognizing Members' animal health status for Foot and Mouth Disease, Rinderpest, Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia and BSE.

Canada and along with the other Members which were evaluated and categorized last year, were listed on Resolution XXI *Recognition of the BSE status of Members*. This resolution was unanimously adopted by the International Committee and included Members which were evaluated this year: 23 Member States of the European Union (EU) - *Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland,*

*Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom* along with *Mexico and Liechtenstein* were all categorized as controlled BSE risk countries.

Resolution XXI also lists other EU Member States, *Finland* and *Sweden*, as having negligible BSE risk, along with *Norway, Iceland* and *Paraguay*.

Canada's continued disease free status from Foot and Mouth Disease, and Rinderpest was reaffirmed in Resolutions XVIII and XIX respectively. The OIE maintains a list of Members, on their website, which have had their disease status, with respect to the four diseases, officially recognized.

Also of note, was the presentation and adoption of Resolution XXII *Update on the procedures for Members for the official recognition and maintenance of status of certain animal diseases*. This resolution is an amalgamation of separate resolutions that required Members which have received a particular disease status to submit information as per the relevant Terrestrial Code chapter each November to confirm the maintenance of a particular status. Resolution XXII goes further to stipulate that those Members which fail to comply with the conditions for the maintenance of their status will be removed from the official list of recognized countries or zones.

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### **Animal Welfare**

One of the most contentious issues raised during the standards adoption process this year was a definition of animal welfare that encompasses the reality of the diverse production systems of the developed, transition and developing countries of the 172 Members. Consensus was achieved with the adoption of the following definition for animal welfare:

*Animal welfare - means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress. Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane slaughter/killing. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment.*

This definition will be found the 2008 Edition of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, specifically in Chapter 1.1.1 - General Definitions and in the preamble for Appendix 3.7.1 – Introduction to the Guidelines for Animal Welfare.

Over the coming year, the Animal Welfare Working Group will continue with its work plan to develop guidelines with respect to laboratory animal welfare and animal welfare in livestock production and housing.

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### **Standard setting**

Between June 2007 and March 2008, the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission and the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission have proposed 49 new or revised disease specific texts for adoption the General Session. All of these texts were provided to Members for comments, once in September 2007 and again in December 2007. Through the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer, Canada undertook an inclusive consultative process involving several federal departments and agencies, provincial jurisdictions, national industry associations and non-governmental organizations to prepare and submit comments on a number of the chapters for adoption.

The revised texts presented for adoption can be found in the March 2008 reports.

The reports for the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission can be found at [http://www.oie.int/tahsc/eng/en\\_reports.htm](http://www.oie.int/tahsc/eng/en_reports.htm) and [http://www.oie.int/tahsc/fr/fr\\_reports.htm](http://www.oie.int/tahsc/fr/fr_reports.htm)

The reports for the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission can be found at [http://www.oie.int/aac/eng/commission/en\\_reports.htm](http://www.oie.int/aac/eng/commission/en_reports.htm)

The majority of the proposed texts were adopted as is or with minor changes. Any changes that were adopted during the General Session proceedings will be reflected in the 2008 editions of the Terrestrial

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Animal Health and Aquatic Animal Health Codes.

The next round of consultations on new or revised disease chapters, surveillance guidelines and/or general guidelines will commence in June and will run until the beginning of August 2008. Canada's comments, along with other Members' comments, will be considered during the Terrestrial and Aquatic Code Commission meetings this September.

For the **Terrestrial Code Commission**, the following texts are available for comment:

- Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia
- Scrapie
- Guidelines on the detection, control and prevention of Salmonella Enteritidis and S. Typhimurium in poultry producing eggs for human consumption
- Hygiene and disease security procedures in poultry breeding flocks and hatcheries

The following reports and documents are available for information:

- Ad hoc group on laboratory animal welfare
- Ad hoc group on animal identification and traceability
- Ad hoc group on model veterinary certificates
- Ad hoc group on Salmonellosis

- Future work programme for the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission

For the **Aquatic Commission**, the following texts are available for comment:

- Report of the meeting of the OIE *ad hoc* group on the OIE list of aquatic animal diseases - mollusc team - for the OIE *Aquatic Animal Health Code*

The following texts are available for information:

- Report of the *ad hoc* Group on Aquatic Animal Surveillance
- Summary of Dr Hill's presentation on "Update on developments in aquatic animal health" at the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, 2007
- Work Plan

### **Future work programme for the OIE**

The Delegates to the OIE have been requested by the Director General, Dr. Bernard Vallat to prepare proposals in preparation for the 5<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan (2011-2015). The Strategic Plan outlines the future direction for the OIE's priorities and tasks to meet its objectives.

Although the priorities and tasks of the 5<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan have yet to be elaborated on, it is expected that there will be a consolidation of the 4<sup>th</sup>

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Strategic Plan activities which includes:

- Maintaining and improving the provision of timely and accurate animal disease information.
- Maintaining and strengthening the role of the OIE as a reference organisation for scientifically-based standards on matters concerning animal health and zoonoses, animal welfare, diagnosis and control of diseases, and sanitary safety in international trade.
- The provision of scientifically-based recommendations on measures for the prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases including zoonoses.
- In cooperation with partners, strengthening the capacity of OIE Members to participate in the development of and the application of international standards and guidelines for animal health, including zoonoses, and animal welfare.
- Strengthening OIE's involvement in policy design and governance related to decision making in animal health and welfare including capacity building, policy research, effective communication and the mediation of potential disputes.

It is also expected that the OIE will consider new directions such as the role of veterinary public health in food security particularly in recognition of the link between the

fight against hunger and the fight against animal disease. In addition, the OIE plans on focussing on the implications of climate change on emerging and re-emerging diseases. The OIE has recently set up an ad hoc group to examine the implications of climate change on OIE programs and objectives. The report of the report of the ad hoc group can be found in the Scientific Commission's Report of February 2008. The report can be downloaded from the OIE website, [http://www.oie.int/scad/eng/en\\_reports.htm](http://www.oie.int/scad/eng/en_reports.htm)

Also, keep an eye out for the upcoming OIE publication of the *Scientific and Technical Review* which will cover climate change and its impact on animal health.

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### **A Big Thank You**

A big thank you goes to all those who participated in the comment and consultation process on the revised texts. Your assistance in providing science-based rationale and justification as part of Canada's comments on revised texts and guidelines contributes a great deal to the standard setting process. Keep up the good work!

Another big thank you goes to the Canadian delegation that participated in the 76<sup>th</sup> General Session. It is our sincere hope that your participation increased your understanding of the standard setting process and the expertise needed to support the OIE's strategic objectives to protect animal and public health.

Thanks again!

### **Final Report**

The OIE's report of the General Session and List of Participants has been published and is available on the OIE website. [http://www.oie.int/eng/oie/actes/en\\_rf\\_inal.htm](http://www.oie.int/eng/oie/actes/en_rf_inal.htm)

### **Contact information**

For copies of Canada's comments on the revised disease chapters of the 2008 Terrestrial Animal Health and Aquatic Animal Health Codes, the technical items and the resulting resolutions passed by the International Committee, please contact: Tianna MacInnes, International Standards Officer, Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer, [macinnest@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:macinnest@inspection.gc.ca)

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