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CURRENT SITUATION OF NEW AND EMERGING ANIMAL DISEASES— THE INTERNATIONAL ZOOSANITARY CODE AS A BASIS FOR POLICY AND TRADE

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1. Multi-host nature of diseases

60% of human pathogens are zoonotic

80% of animal pathogens are multi-host

75% of emerging diseases are zoonotic

80% of agents having a potential bioterrorist use are zoonotic pathogens.

Current important sanitary events are to be managed in collaboration between medical and veterinary authorities.

2. Food borne diseases

Codex Alimentarius is responsible for developing international standards on food safety and public health while OIE is responsible for standards on animal health and zoonosis.

3. An increased collaboration between OIE and Codex in ensuring new standards that bridge public and animal interests in the “production to consumption” continuum.

4. Within the framework of this collaboration, the OIE food safety goals are to reduce food borne risks to human health by preventing, eliminating or controlling hazards arising from animals:

- Prior to slaughter of the animals or primary processing of the products.
- With primary focus on food safety measures applicable at farm level.

5. The OIE food safety work is coordinated by a permanent Food Safety Working Group on animal production. This WG includes high level representatives of Codex Alimentarius (President, General Secretary), WHO, FAO and Chief Veterinary Officers from all continents. The priorities of this WG are:

- Good farming practices in order to minimize hazards at farm level.
- Food borne zoonosis standards covering public health hazards not up to date in the OIE Code (e.g. Tuberculosis), and pathogens of public health relevance not always affecting animals (e.g. listeria, trichenella)
- Antimicrobial resistance, mainly conditions of prudent use.
- Traceability of animals, with a technical link with traceability of products procedures.
- Review of OIE and Codex existing standards of common interest and identification of gaps and duplications
- OIE involvement in work of various Codex Committees.
- Clarification and promotion of dual roles and functionalities of Veterinary Services through the food chain dealing with both public and animal health objectives. For example, the duality of objectives at ante and post mortem inspection in slaughterhouses is one of the areas for integration and inspection.

6. The collaboration and interdependence between public health and animal health authorities at international, regional and mainly national level are crucial in the control of the food safety risks of today. But they are also essential for confronting the emerging food borne and epidemic diseases of the future.

Zoonosis

OIE work on avian influenza

7. Significant outbreaks occurred since last 1990's especially in Asia. Unprecedented situation from the beginning of 2004, with considerable losses in rural areas, industry, external markets and national economies in 10 countries. Potential risk of human pandemic, but nobody can establish the scientific probability of the occurrence of this pandemic situation linked with a possible reassortment of the animal virus.

8. The OIE and FAO are working together providing expertise and control methods to infected countries. They organize international and regional scientific conferences involving the better specialists with the participation of relevant risk managers.

9. The main recommendations are:

- the relevancy of the classical control measures in animals to reduce viral spread (stamping out, quarantine, movements control)
- vaccination of poultry to greatly reduce virus levels when application of classical control measures failed because of lack of resources of veterinary services.
- Minimizing possible contacts with infected birds at live poultry markets.

10. OIE and FAO launched a worldwide network of expertise on AI (OFFLu):

- to develop research and offer veterinary expertise to countries to assist in the control of AI
- to collaborate with the WHO human influenza network on issues relating to the animal-human interface providing animal virus strains in order to prepare soon human vaccines
- to avoid duplication of works

11. The OIE is developing new international standards on AI

- for the safety of international trade of poultry and poultry products, addressing better the risks presented by different commodities, and making differentiation between likelihood of transmission of highly pathogenic and low pathogenic influenza.
- For surveillance strategies and methods to be used to improve early detection and response and national and international notification and transparency.

12. It is evident that the better policy for control of avian influenza in animals and human is to stop the virus at its source.

13. It is more cost effective to invest on animal control, e.g. reinforcing the veterinary services of poor countries facing this disease without appropriate skills and infrastructures.

OIE work on BSE

14. The current OIE standards include:

- a complex five category of sanitary status of countries or zones established on a prevalence based approach
- guidelines for surveillance established many years ago, lacking appropriate guidance for the optimal use of the new rapid tests for screening
- it is important to note that the current chapter allow always trade of fresh meat under certain conditions even for countries classified as high risk category.

15. The current OIE chapter is not respected by many countries which give priority to political issues.

16. Is why the OIE will propose this year a new chapter:

- with three category approach:
- risk based (not prevalence based)
- negligible BSE risk without commodity-specific risk mitigation measures
- negligible BSE risk with commodity-specific risk mitigation measures
- undetermined risk

17. The new chapter concentrates on:

- commodity-specific measures
- assessment of risk factors and when appropriate measures have been taken to address them
- surveillance important, but funding one case does not unnecessarily change trade measures.

18. The Code commission of the OIE is proposing additions in the existing list of safe commodities, regardless the BSE exporting country (milk, semen, embryos, hide and skins, etc)

- deboned skeletal muscle meat (under certain conditions and excluding mechanically separated meat)
- blood and blood by products (under certain conditions, e.g. slaughtering methods).

19. These additions resulted of the lack of evidence of transmission.

- for other commodities, the conditions are linked with the status of the cattle population of the exporting country or zone.
20. Perspectives on vCJD:
- Many past models predicted likelihood of severe vCJD epidemic
 - BSE now appears to be minor compared to other public health concerns
 - An article published by the Royal Society in UK makes a “best estimate” of 70 future deaths in additions to 150 to date.

Animal public health: need for collaboration

21. This collaboration is gaining momentum at national and global levels. It is unfortunate that as these efforts are going on, the WHO is preparing a new International Health Regulation (IHR) in total isolation.

22. The current IHR text fails to recognize any need for specific collaboration with its own Codex Alimentarius and with the OIE. The current IHR draft do not makes clear mention also to the collaboration between national medical and veterinary services in the field of zoonosis.

23. It is why the OIE is proposing an amendment in the IHR proposed text:

24. Article 12:

25. WHO shall cooperate and coordinate its activities, as appropriate, with other competent intergovernmental organizations or bodies, such as the FAO and OIE, in the implementation of these regulations, including through the conclusion of agreements and other similar arrangements.