

OIE Seminar on Communication for Veterinary Services

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman,
20 – 22 April 2010

Report



**Regional Representation
For the Middle East**

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Acronyms

AOAD	Arab Organisation for Agriculture Development
CVO:	Chief Veterinary Officer
ECTAD:	Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEI	Fédération Equestre Internationale
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GF-TADs:	FAO – OIE Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases
GIS	Geographic Information System
HPAI:	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
ICT	Information and Communication Tool
MZCP	Mediterranean Zoonosis Control Programme
OIE:	World Health Organisation for Animal Health
OWOH:	One World – One Health
NF:	National Federation
RAHC:	OIE-FAO Regional Animal Health Centre
RVF	Rift Valley Fever
SMS	Small Message Service
VS:	Veterinary Services
WHO:	World Health Organisation
WTO:	World Trade Organisation

Proceedings of the Workshop

National communication plans related to animal diseases, including zoonoses, generally do not address all specific and important issues related to animal health policies and management.

There is a need for a comprehensive communication strategy which is integral to a coherent prevention and response to major zoonotic disease outbreaks such as highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 or major animal diseases like foot and mouth disease.

Communication can augment and improve the effectiveness of the technical aspects of the prevention, preparedness, early detection, rapid response, and recovery phases of animal disease occurrences.

High level government officials must be sensitized and held accountable for properly communicating on animal health related issues to the relevant audiences. There is a need to ensure that strategic communication, as a science, is integrated into the veterinary infrastructure and policy response at country level, and to gain private sector and international support for this where required.

In view of this, the OIE has started a series of seminars on communication for the Delegates of its Regions and their press officers in order to stress the role of communication in supporting and strengthening the impact of the technical preparedness and responses to animal diseases.

A regional seminar for Middle Eastern countries was organized in Muscat, Oman, 20-22 April 2010.

The objectives of this seminar were:

- Identification, prioritisation and agreement on potential strategic communication;
- Interventions in the region, with an emphasis on animal health communication that can be implemented from the highest veterinary decision-making levels to the field;
- Identification, analysis and elaboration of a list of strategic communication issues;
- Constraints, information gaps, and best practices related to animal health and prevention/control of animal diseases in the region.

15 countries of the Middle East (Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, KSA, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Turkey, UAE and Yemen) were represented.

44 participants, including OIE Delegates and their communication officers, representatives of regional organisations and relevant representatives from the private sector of the region, as well as from the media, attended the meeting. Video conference slots with the OIE Headquarters in Paris were set up to benefit from the inputs of the OIE Director General and the Head of the OIE Communication Unit.

Active discussions between all participants lead to relevant conclusions and to the adoption of 12 appropriate recommendations.

The Inauguration Ceremony

The seminar was inaugurated by His Excellency Salem Bin Hilal Bin Ali Al Khalili, Minister of Agriculture of Oman. He welcomed all the participants of the seminar and said that it was a pleasure and honour for the Sultanate of Oman to host such a meeting. He also expressed his gratitude to the OIE for the strong support and assistance provided to his country. He also thanked the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East for its work to improve animal health in the region.



Eng. Ali Mohammad Al Kalbani, Director General of Animal Wealth of the Ministry of Agriculture welcomed all the participants and thanked the OIE Regional Representation for proposing that the Sultanate of Oman should hold this seminar. He explained that communication is a very important domain where VS should be involved, particularly in the Middle East. He wished to all participants a very good stay in Oman and a very profitable seminar.

Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, thanked the Omani authority for the extraordinary hospitality and cooperation in the organisation of this seminar. In order to achieve the control of transboundary animal diseases the region is facing, he reminded the necessity for Middle Eastern countries to strengthen the quality of veterinary services, complying with OIE standards. He underlined the need for veterinary services to implement relevant communication strategies through well drawn communication plans. He wished to all participants a very productive seminar.



A video conference from Paris with Dr Bernard Vallat, the OIE Director General, was set up. On behalf the 175 OIE Members, Dr Vallat expressed his gratitude to the government of Oman to host this seminar. He exposed that communication is a key element for veterinary services and mentioned that this is an important topic on which OIE is working in deep. He wished to all participants a very fruitful seminar.

Session – 1 Critical Thinking

Session – 1 ♦ Critical Thinking

The importance of communication for Veterinary Services worldwide

Maria Zampaglione, Head of the OIE communication unit

Recent years have seen increased public attention on animal diseases, their zoonotic potential and the measures used for their control. Avian influenza, FMD, Bluetongue and other emerging and re-emerging diseases have proven that there is an acknowledged need of the media and the general public for better understanding animal health issues which, in fact, are also social and economical issues.

There is still low awareness however that early detection of animal diseases and an immediate response are keys to effective prevention and control of natural or intentional animal health disasters. Again, there is an acknowledged need of decision and policy makers throughout the world for better defining animal health systems. It must be clearly communicated that investing in animal health mechanisms not only protects countries from disease occurrence, but also safeguards public health, reduces poverty and opens all possibilities for trading their agricultural products freely with the rest of the world.

Improving communication is therefore a major strategic element for the OIE. To be effective, this communication must be acknowledged and supported by the relevant stakeholders, first of all by national Veterinary Services. In many cases, a lack of adequate structure and expertise in communication has led to a loss of visibility and credibility of their actions in the face of scrutiny by the general public. Along with the ancient adage "Get the work done and let them know", the Veterinary Services must become fully aware of the overriding need for improved communication, in order to convince and influence policy makers and civil society of the economic and social worth of the missions these services perform every day.

Session – 1 ♦ Critical Thinking

Communication activities of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East

Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East

The OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East was established in 1999 in Beirut with the collaboration of the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture.

The main objective of the RR is to provide to regional Members adapted and relevant assistance with consideration to their specific situations in order to reinforce control and surveillance of animal diseases in their specific countries.

The communication strategy of the OIE RR relies mainly on information sharing through seminars and workshops, continuous contact with delegates, CVOs and focal points, networking and coordination actions with other International/Regional Organisations, such as FAO within the RAHC, MZCP and AOAD.

The website of the OIE RR is the main communication tool, where all relevant documents for the region are published and particularly those translated into Arabic language, in order to ease the understanding of OIE standards and recommendations by animal health professionals from Middle East regional Members.

Session – 1 ♦ Critical Thinking

Results of a questionnaire survey on communication of Veterinary Services, conducted in the participating countries

Dr Pierre Primot, OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East, Beirut, Lebanon

National communication plans related to animal diseases, including zoonoses, are an important component related to animal health policies and management. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that strategic communication, as a science, is integrated into the veterinary infrastructure worldwide.

The OIE has started a series of seminars on communication for the Delegates of its Regions and their press officers in order to stress the role of communication in supporting activities of VS.

In order to provide preliminary information on VS communication in the Middle East, to facilitate exchange and discussion during this seminar for the Middle Eastern countries, organized in Muscat, Oman, the OIE has undertaken the assessment of country situation using a detailed questionnaire.

The questionnaire took into consideration the following items:

- General Information
- Programme and Activities
- Competences, Qualification and Training
- Technique and media
- Financing

All the participating countries (16 on the 17 invited countries) answered to the questionnaire and they all recognised the importance of communication of VS, a key component to implement efficient and relevant strategies.

However, the situation in the region is very heterogeneous. Some countries (about half of them) are better organized, with dedicated services and staff, and use relevant tools: leaflet, radio and TV slots, and website.

Nevertheless, in the region the VS are not generally fully in control of communication actions. A hierarchical approval is needed.

And the budget allocated to VS communication is generally very small, less than 3 % of the VS total budget.

The communication of VS is mainly targeted to animal health (surveillance, control, vaccination, eradication...) and to promoting the role of VS by raising public awareness.

One of the main ways of communication of VS in the region is made through direct contact during field visit.

Session – 1 ♦ Critical Thinking

Extension activities with regard to veterinary services in the Middle East region, directly or indirectly implemented by the FAO

Dr George Khoury, FAO-ECTAD Regional Coordinator, Regional Animal Health Centre, Beirut, Lebanon

Extension is dissemination of relevant information and advice to personnel working in the field of agriculture and animal production and health sector. It is a significant social innovation, an important force in agriculture change, adapted and developed over the centuries.

Its evolution extends over nearly four thousand years, although its modern forms are largely a product of the past two centuries.

FAO and personnel engaged in agriculture extension encompass a diver range of information and extension activities which seek to enlarge and improve the abilities of veterinarians to adopt more appropriate and often new practices and to adjust to changing conditions and societal needs.

Extension plays a crucial role in the dissemination of the research results and without this tool research results will stay in the research institutions and veterinary services will not benefit from it.

FAO considers extension as a component of its technical assistance programs, developed information and communication tools (ICTs) and produced many books and guidelines in Arabic language for better dissemination of information to the target beneficiaries.

Session – 1 ♦ Critical Thinking

The communication experience of Oman on the new pandemic H1N1

Dr Idris Al-Abaidani, Ministry of Health, Oman

As most of countries in the world, the Sultanate of Oman declared cases of the new pandemic H1N1 2009.

The surveillance of human influenza belongs to the Communicable Disease Surveillance and Central Public Health Laboratory Surveillance Network, which was established in 1991.

Since 2001 a surveillance network dedicated to Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) was established, based on sentinel sites.

During the H1N1 crisis the MoH of Oman extended its public awareness strategy through coordinated actions with media (TV, newspaper, internet).

The H1N1 pandemic was a blessing in disguise. It helped in raising awareness on the importance of SARI surveillance.

Session – 2 Country Perspectives

Session – 2 ♦ Country Perspectives

A practical experience: Kuwait facing the AI outbreaks in falcons in 2007

M. Abdulaziz Ghuloum and Naseraldeen Asadallah, PAAF Kuwait

Avian Influenza outbreak among falcons manifested in 2007 in Kuwait: Wafra city and Kuwait zoo registered cases of HPAI which have made the officials prompt to confront the outbreak.

In addition to clinical, diagnostic, and preventative measures followed by the national veterinary authorities, communicative means was conducted.

This presentation shows the utilization of communications' means in confronting the outbreak.

The module implemented in Kuwait tried to facilitate the collaboration of the public with governmental bodies specialized in veterinary services.

Overviews and some suggestions were drawn to share knowledge honourable counterparts in the meeting organized by OIE.

Session – 2 ♦ Country Perspectives

Communication strategies for the control of FMD in Iran

Dr Vahid Otarod, IVO Iran

Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. Use of these processes is developmental and transfers to all areas of life: home, school, community, work, and beyond.

It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur. Communication finally reaches to awareness which is defined as the state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects or sensory patterns. In this level of consciousness, sense data can be confirmed by an observer without necessarily implying understanding.

To become aware of the status of the diseases and having well response to them there is needed to communicate in a way to cover all the targets globally.

In this way a modern GIS system for reporting and analyzing of the diseases data and a monitoring system based on flash board technology has been used to monitor the diseases for those who would like or should know about the animal diseases, their distribution, their impact and the best ways to control them.

Animal Disease Reporting System (GIS) installed in 3 levels: districts, provinces and GIS centre in IVO. Districts report the disease events. Provinces and GIS centre analyze, interpret, and provide information. GIS centre disseminate the data and information to those who should know such as National Authorities and International bodies (OIE, FAO) in statistical and imagery form.

Animal disease_ monitoring acts an Early Warning system by using flash board technology. Additionally, monitor activities of the provinces and districts as an administrative control, shows, and the time_trend of the diseases and instantly monitor the analyzed data. Moreover, if the no of outbreaks pass the expected values, sends the SMS (short message service) by mobile and e-mail the situation to related authorities.

Session – 2 ♦ Country Perspectives

Yemen experience during Rift Valley fever crisis

Dr Mansoor Al Qadasi, CVO Yemen

In 2000 – 2001 Yemen experienced several outbreaks of RVF. It was the first occurrence of this disease outside Africa.

An operation room was established for controlling the RVF disease with cooperation with Ministry of Health and all related ministries and authorities were represented including Information Ministry.

Efficient control measure (animal movement restriction, slaughter banning in infected areas, animal spraying...) were applied and a large surveillance programme was carried out.

The communication strategy was focused on two main targets:

- Health education - Public awareness:
 - Daily information through TV, Radio and newspapers;
 - Seminars including TV , Radio, schools and mosques;
 - Brochures, posters and leaflets.
- Health education - Farmers awareness:
 - Field visits to the villages by vets teams and direct communication;
 - Specific radio programmes;
 - Brochures, posters and leaflets in the live animal markets, village schools.

These two approaches had an essential role in raising the awareness and played a main role in overcoming the crisis in that time.

Session – 3 Media and Stakeholders Perspectives

Session – 3 ♦ Media and Stakeholders Perspectives

A Media Perspective: Bloomberg News Agency

Jason Gale, Bloomberg

Dealing with the media is something most of us would rather not do because it's perceived that the risk outweighs the reward. "Reporters always get it wrong", "the media always have an agenda", "you will make me look silly in front of my colleagues" are some of the reasons I hear from people who refuse to give interviews.

To some extent, I think we get the quality of journalism that we deserve. If we're not willing to invest in a well-informed, credible, accurate media, we can't expect clear, balanced, timely reporting!

Look at each interaction with a journalist as a learning opportunity -- for you and the reporter. Learn what the reporter needs and how you can assist, and help them learn more about what you do.

A crisis is NOT the time to be cultivating a trusting, fruitful relationship with the media. You need to start NOW.

Unless a reporter has a background in science, it's likely he/she won't know the difference between a virus and a bacteria, an antibiotic or a vaccine! When you're trying to communicate the complexities of an epizootic in the early stages of an outbreak, explaining very basic science to journalists may not be a good use of your time. So it's important to lay the groundwork now by:

- Identifying journalists who will mostly efficiently and reliably convey your messages;
- Giving them an overview of the basic science related to animal health (for example -- why you vaccinate, what vaccination does, how a vaccine is made). Do this frequently and informally;
- Encouraging the relationship by helping the reporter to break news;
- Having a media focal point who can act as a conduit between the reporter and technical experts.

Over the past five years, I have been fortunate to have learned from scientists who willingly and freely explained highly technical information to me - sometimes a few times! If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be as well-informed and knowledgeable as I am today.

Tackling Plummeting Sales of Poultry during AI Crisis

M. Musa Freiji, President, Tanmia Agricultural Development Co., Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanon and Egypt faced an AI scare crisis during the period November 2005 to April 2006. This came upon news in the media that Turkey has been hit with HPAI. Media got very active hosting ill informed commentators who exaggerated the fears amongst farmers and consumers. Farmers in Egypt cancelled their orders of day-old chicks. Consumers in Lebanon almost stopped eating chicken meat.

Our company Tanmia in Lebanon which produces fresh and further processed broiler meat resorted to freezing and storing in own and rented freezers all non-sold fresh dressed broilers and broiler meat which amounted to 90 days of full production. The market suddenly came back to normality by early May 2006 but with close to 50 % supply. This gave Tanmia the chance to sell its stock at prices that exceeded its cost of production plus storage.

Wadi Poultry in Egypt only sold day-old chicks (D.O.C.). It resorted during the period November 2005 to February 2006 to selling them at 25 % of their cost. At the same time it moulted 50 % of its parent flocks. When HPAI hit Egypt in February 2006, Wadi Poultry kept following the same policy while placing new parent flocks as scheduled. This policy was based on its ability to exercise strict bio-security measures on its farms and on the fact that more than 50 % of the broiler parent population was wiped out. Prices of D.O.C. tripled the cost of production starting May 2006.

In both situations recovery of losses as a result of the AI scare or outbreak as well as profiting by the end of 2006 came about from appropriate policies of handling production more than communicating with farmers and consumers.

Session – 3 ♦ Media and Stakeholders Perspectives

Valuable assets of a corporate Identity.

General Sami Nagm El Din and Dr. Ghazi Yehia, FEI

The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), founded in 1921, is the international body governing equestrian sport recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The FEI is based on the principle of equality and mutual respect between all 134 affiliated National Federations, without prejudice to race, religion or internal politics.

It is the sole controlling authority for all international events in Dressage & Para-Equestrian Dressage, Jumping, Eventing, Driving & Para-Equestrian Driving, Endurance, Vaulting, and Reining. We establish the regulations and approve equestrian programmes at Championships, Continental and Regional Games as well as the Olympic Games.

The Communication process of the FEI is based mainly on the website: www.fei.org with other media issues such as press Release, FEI TV , FEI Daily Communication, and other Publications.

Member NFs can apply for development assistance through the NF Liaison Office which is the point of contact for National Federations. It ensures that dialogue with NFs occurs as to their needs and requirements and identifies the scope and nature of challenges faced by NFs in order to best determine the approach that can be taken and the resources that can be allocated to any given project within the various FEI departments.

Member NFs shall receive or have access to current information relevant to Equestrian sport and the management of it as outlined by the FEI.

The veterinary section of the FEI site is designed to give advice relevant to competing in FEI events, to answer specific questions, and direct athletes and veterinarians towards the relevant information they need to ensure that the welfare and health of the horse are kept, as it should be, at the heart of horse sport.

It is the partnership between the athlete and the horse that makes horsesport so unique. The health and welfare of horses is the paramount responsibility of all those involved in horsesport.

Veterinary health professionals who support equestrianism worldwide have a wide variety of key responsibilities, from the maintenance of the health and welfare of the horse, through to being a Veterinary Official who ensures that rules and regulations are followed and that fair play is assured.

The Omani Equestrian Federation Communication Plan is:

To involve the different sectors of the governmental bodies and the society in its activities.

The media is considered as a close partner of its communication with the different stakeholders.

Session – 4 Communication capacity of the Veterinary Services in the Region

Session – 4 ♦ Communication capacity of the Veterinary Services in the Region

The case of Qatar

Mr Ahmed Abdulrahman, Communication Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Qatar

Communication is the key to success. It is a two-way process of transferring information from one entity to another and is commonly defined as " the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs "

The Epidemiology and Communication Unit from the Animal Department Resources of the Ministry of Environment is in charge of all the communication activities and programmes for the VS of Qatar, both at internal and external levels.

During the evaluation of the veterinary services (VS) of Qatar using OIE-PVS methodology carried out in November 2008, an assessment of communication activities of the VS of Qatar was made.

The objective of the VS of Qatar in terms of communication and according to the recommendations of the OIE PVS evaluation are to achieve effective communication, with a specific focus on TADs, zoonotics and diseases of economical importance that are prevailing in the Middle East region.

The recent HPAI crisis gave the opportunity to the VS to improve its communication strategy particularly by using several types of media (TV, radio, press) and publishing many documents (leaflets, booklets...) in order to enhance public awareness on this issue.

Session – 4 ♦ Communication capacity of the Veterinary Services in the Region

The case of Jordan

Dr Asma Al-Sadouni, Ministry of Agriculture, Jordan

Even if the VS of Jordan do not have a dedicated Communication Unit, several communication actions are carried out particularly in the following domains:

- Daily Veterinary Clinics Report
- Notifiable Infectious diseases reports
- Diagnostic Laboratories reports
- Slaughter-houses reports
- Early warning devices
- Data collection and analysis.
- regular surveillance for some diseases in addition to many case studies conducted upon request and needs

A specific focus is made on the situation of Avian Influenza and FMD and the actions implemented by the VS to prevent or control these diseases.

Communication actions and awareness campaigns used different communication tools such as press releases, TV and radio slots.

There is currently a ministerial interest to upgrade the Agricultural Communication System and setting up a communication plan by enhancing the Communication/Information Unit within the MOA.

The gaps and challenges faced by the VS are as following:

- Absence of Communication unit for VS.
- Shortage of Financial resources'.
- Lack of specialized knowledge for Veterinary communication.
- No enough administrative support.

Session – 4 ♦ Communication capacity of the Veterinary Services in the Region

The case of UAE

Ms Sumaia Al Rais, Director of Plant and Animal Health, Ministry of Environment and Water, UAE

Under the authority of the Executive director of agriculture & animal affairs of the Ministry of Environment and Wealth, a communication unit is in charge of the implementation of communication and awareness actions.

A common logo is used as a symbol on all material information for every campaign and to build credibility.

Communication actions relies on the participation of all relevant actors such as relevant ministries, local authorities, farmers, companies, laboratories, communication media and veterinary doctors.

The communication actions are implemented on a multi-level basis and mainly focused on risk awareness, with regular updates. The level and stage of disease can change with time, and therefore the communication plan must constantly evolve to keep pace with the change, to address the identified risks and fill gaps.

The AI crisis was the opportunity to develop communications actions using several tools such as the national press, the national television and radio, brochures or leaflets, electronic mailing and field visits.

The major gaps identified of VS communication are:

- Lack of communication between some of the relevant actors;
- a lack of resources allocated to the field of communications.

Session – 5 Policy Advocacy and Political Commitment

Session – 5 ♦ Policy Advocacy and Political Commitment

Policy advocacy and gaining political support: best practices in Oman

Dr Ali Abdullah Al Sahmi, OIE Delegate of Oman,

Animal diseases have a severe impact not only on the health of animals but also on the all society.

Political commitments are essential to implement correctly the designated tasks of Veterinary Services in terms of control of animal diseases and protection of consumers.

In order to gain political commitment in Oman different support are used to sensitized decision makers, such as national meetings, workshops and committees, lobbying, visits by international consultants...

A budget is proposed each year to the Minister's approval

The VS of Oman are benefiting actually from financial support from the Ministry of Finance, from the Agro-Fund, from the FAO and from the Diwan.

It is crucial to sustain advocacy particularly by lobbying for political support, maintaining of public awareness and engagement of stakeholders

Efficiency of VS actions shall depend on adequate funding to maintain capacity building. This has to be backed and supported by the politicians, stakeholders and the general public

Session – 5 ♦ Policy Advocacy and Political Commitment

Policy advocacy and gaining political support: best practices in Turkey

Dr Alp Arkaç, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Turkey

Veterinary services in Turkey are rendered by the General Directorate of Protection and Control under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

In its programme of Control and Eradication of Diseases, VS benefit also of the assistance of EU funded project, particularly on FMD, PPR and rabies.

Communication activities are an important support of each programme implemented by the VS, particularly using spot Films, radio awareness, posters, leaflets and brochures, web portal.

A particular focus is made on the awareness of people who lives in rural area.

This was particularly efficient during the HPAI crisis in Turkey in 2006: the VS immediately launched a professional public information campaign, including television spots and a 24-hour hotline, billboards, posters, brochures with the help of the private sector.

Government web sites became an important source of current information, with daily postings of alerts and clinical management information for health practitioners.

Turkey understood the necessity of panic management through establishment of trust between the governmental authorities and the public.

Session – 5 ♦ Policy Advocacy and Political Commitment

Veterinary extension in Syria

Dr Ziad Namour, Director, Animal Health Services - Animal Health Directorate

Dr Mohammed Abdullah, Director of Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Syria

At the administrative level, Syria is divided into 14 provinces. In each province, there is a department for animal health services and Department of Extension. The contribution of livestock production in the total agriculture production value is more than 28%. Animal production in Syria covers 80% of the need of meat, and 85% of milk.

The Directorate of Animal Health is composed of different services and unit but none dedicated specifically to communication and extension.

According to the national legislations, a well organized reporting system is in place from village level up to central directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Extension services are provided at the farmers level through more than 11000 well trained extension personnel (veterinarians and agronomists) working in 111 Supporting Extension Units and 1075 Extension Units at Village levels.

Extension services are taking into account a participatory approach planned and implemented at village level with representatives of farmers and other stakeholders.

Several communication tools are used such as weekly TV extension programme, daily Radio programs, daily official newspapers and TV strip in emergency cases.

Discussions and Conclusions

More than 40 representatives from 15 countries of the Middle East attended and actively participated during this seminar. Discussions were very productive and participants appreciated also the use of videoconference to benefit from the analysis of Dr Vallat and the expertise of the Head of the OIE Communication Unit.

All the participants recognised the absolute necessity to strengthen capacity building of Veterinary Services in communication as an additional tool in the control of all the sanitary challenges they are facing.

It was agreed that a relevant and coherent communication strategy is an essential tool to raise visibility on the work of VS and that it can also contribute efficiently to the achievement of their tasks.

The presence of private stakeholders and media was also a good opportunity to share experiences, raise and discuss problems.

Participants highlighted the necessity for journalism to interview the relevant person in order to deliver the right message to the public.

The example of the over reaction of certain countries due to uncontrolled press messages during the beginning of the H1N1 crisis was quoted as an example.

It was underlined that collaboration between national media and the national VS must be developed, especially during "peace time" in order to provide correct messages in crisis period. This was also mentioned to fill the lack of communication in some countries between the VS and the private sector, such as private producers.

OIE communication messages and press releases were recognized by all participants as the most relevant source of information because based on the OIE scientific expertise.

Most of the country representatives highlighted the lack of competencies of VS in this domain and the need to have education and training on this matter. Resorting to well trained and specialized staff in the VS was perceived as the best solution but difficult to implement in most of countries due to lack of resources.

Some representatives of certain countries explained that the access to media (press, TV or internet) is in their country costly and they cannot afford it easily.

It was also recognized the under use of documents edited or published by international organisations, such as the OIE or the FAO, and accessible most of the time free of charge on their relevant websites.

Discussions concerned also extension services provided to farmers, which is most of the time more focus on agricultural issues than on veterinary or animal productions ones.

Despite a real improvement of communication capacities of most of VS since the HPAI crisis, providing access to media and to a lot of didactic materials, communication of VS is still weak in the region. The part for communication in the total budget of VS is generally less than 3 %.

Creation of dedicated unit with well trained staff inside the VS will be an important step of improvement.

Regional collaboration could be also a mean of improvement since most of the countries in the Region face the same situation.

Recommendations

**OIE REGIONAL SEMINAR ON COMMUNICATION
MUSCAT, OMAN 20-21 APRIL 2010**

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONSIDERING THAT

- The OIE international Committee voted in May 2001 Resolution n° XXI on the "role of communication management in assisting Veterinary Services",
- This Resolution recommends on its article 7 that the OIE provide support to Members,
- This resolution refers to communication, beyond extension or education activities,
- The outcomes of several OIE PVS evaluations so far conducted in the Middle East region,
- The worldwide focus on animal health issues leads to an increased demand for accurate and scientifically-based opinion and information on animal diseases, including zoonoses,
- The responsibility of national Veterinary services to help ensure animal disease control, food safety, food security thus contributing to poverty alleviation,
- The regulation for the control of animal diseases and zoonoses including in international trade of animals and animal products calls for accountability of national veterinary services and competent authorities, towards the general public and other stakeholders,
- Permanent accurate and timely communication between animal health authorities and public health authorities is a key factor for preventing and controlling zoonoses, such as promoted by the "One Health" concept,
- The transparency and quality of communication and information management, in particular in crisis situations are issues of national, sub-regional, regional and global strategic significance,
- The development of information and communication strategies contributes to improving the functioning and the acceptance of the scientific, technical and operational output of Veterinary Services,
- The major role and responsibilities of media in disseminating information as well as in raising public awareness,

- Members must have access to adequate human, technical and financial resources in order to manage information and communication at the national, regional , sub regional and global level and methodological training in this field is indispensable,

PARTICIPANTS OF THE SEMINAR

RECOMMEND THAT

1. An improved global, regional, sub-regional and national veterinary governance must encompass communication policies, strategies and resources directed to the stakeholders and the general public;
2. The importance of the process of communication and extension must be among the priorities of OIE Regional Representation and national Veterinary Services, particularly for disseminating information;
3. The OIE continue to provide technical support to all Members, including training of trainers, to strengthen the communication capacities in the Veterinary Services in order to continuously respond to national and international demands and to help Members to comply with OIE standards, guidelines and recommendations;
4. Members should assess their needs taking into account the relevant criteria of the OIE PVS Tool to develop information and communication strategies within Veterinary Services to respond to both crisis situations and routine/long term requirements;
5. Communication teams, including professional communicators, should be fully integrated as a component of the Veterinary Services and under the direct authority of the Veterinary Authorities;
6. Chief Veterinary Officers should request Government authorities to provide adequate organisational and budgetary support for the communication objectives of Veterinary Services, including communication training, in accordance with Resolution XXI of May 2001 voted by all OIE Members;
7. National Veterinary Services communication teams liaise closely and on a regular basis with OIE and other relevant international organisations, on specific events requiring coordination in information, dissemination and/or communication management;
8. National Veterinary Services communication teams liaise with their counterparts within the public health services and other relevant national partners for the coordination in information, dissemination and/or communication strategy and management on the prevention and control of animal diseases and zoonoses;

9. National Veterinary Services must communicate with other relevant stakeholders (private sector, producers, consumers, etc...),
10. OIE Members are urged to proactively make transparent and science based information available to the media and the general public, thereby strengthening Veterinary Service's public image as an accountable and authoritative source of information on any relevant event relating to animal health and public health;
11. Media training sessions on relevant animal health issues should be organised on a regular basis by the national Veterinary Services, with the assistance of the OIE – FAO Regional Animal Health Centre for the Middle East;
12. OIE standards, guidelines and recommendations on animal health and welfare and the relevant OIE press releases and editorials be considered as an appropriate basis for the communication of national Veterinary Services.

Agenda



OIE Seminar on Communication
for Veterinary Services
Muscat (Sultanate of Oman)
20-22 April 2010

Agenda

Tuesday, 20 April 2010

Inaugural session

09h00 – 09h30 Registration of participants

09h30 – 10h00 Opening Ceremony

- Official opening by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture of Oman
- Welcome address by Eng. Ali Mohammad Al Kalbani, DG Directorate of Animal Wealth - Ministry of Agriculture
- Welcome address by the OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, Dr Ghazi Yehia
- Opening statement by the OIE Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat (by video conference)

10h00 – 10h30 Group photograph and coffee break

10h30 – 10h40 Welcome address of Dr Ali Abdullah Al Sahmi, OIE Delegate of Oman

Session – 1 ♦ Critical Thinking

Chair: Dr Rached Al Suleimani, Oman Chief Veterinary Officer

10h40 – 11h00 The importance of communication for Veterinary Services worldwide
Mrs Maria Zampaglione, Head, OIE Communication (by video conference)

11h00 – 11h20 Communication activities of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East and presentation of a film on the OIE
Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East

11h20 – 11h40 Results of a questionnaire survey on communication of Veterinary Services conducted in participating countries
Dr Pierre Primot, OIE RR Middle East, Lebanon

- 11h40 – 12h00** Extension activities with regard to veterinary services in the Middle East Region, directly or indirectly implemented by the FAO
Dr G. Khoury FAO/RAHC for the Middle East
- 12h00 – 12h20** The communication experience of Oman on the new pandemic H1N1
Dr Idris Al-Abaidani, Ministry of Health, Oman
- 12h20 – 13h00** Questions and answers
- 13h00 – 14h30** **Lunch**

Session – 2 ♦ Country Perspectives

Chair: Dr Ali Abdullah Al Sahmi, OIE Delegate for Oman

- 14h30– 15h00** A practical experience: Kuwait facing the AI outbreaks in falcons in 2007
M. Abdulaziz Ghuloum, PAAF Kuwait
- 15h00 – 15h30** FMD in Iran: which communication strategy?
Dr Vahid Otarod, IVO Iran
- 15h30 – 15h45** Yemen experience during Rift Valley Fever crisis
Dr Mansoor Al Qadasi, CVO Yemen
- 15h45 – 16h00** **Coffee Break**

Session – 3 ♦ Media and Stakeholders Perspectives

- 16h00 – 16h20** A Media Perspective: Bloomberg News Agency
Mr. Jason Gale
- 16h20 – 16h50** Tackling plummeting sales of poultry and addressing consumers concerns during the AI crisis
M. Musa Freiji, Tanmia
- 16h50 – 17h10** Valuable assets of a corporate identity
General Samy Nagm El Din, Oman Equestrian Federation, representing FEI and Dr Ghazi Yehia
- 17h10 – 17h30** Questions and Answers
- 19h00** Welcome reception hosted by the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East

Wednesday, 21 April, 2010

Session – 4 ♦ Communication capacity of the Veterinary Services in the Region

Chair: Dr George Khoury, FAO coordinator of the RAHC

09h00 – 09h30 Presentations from Qatar, Jordan, UAE

09h30 – 10h00 Questions and answers

10h00 – 10h30 **Coffee Break**

Session – 5 ♦ Policy Advocacy and Political Commitment

Chair: Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East

10h30 – 10h50 Policy advocacy and gaining political support: best practices in Oman
Dr Ali Abdullah Al Sahmi, OIE Delegate of Oman,

10h50 – 11h10 Policy advocacy and gaining political support: best practices in Turkey
Dr Alp Arkaç, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Turkey

11h10 – 11h30 Veterinary extension in Syria
Dr Ziad Namour, Director, Animal Health Services - Animal Health Directorate
Dr Mohammed Abdullah, Director of Extension
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Syria

11h30 – 12h30 Panel discussion

12h30 – 13h00 Adoption of recommendations

13h00 – 13h15 Closing remarks

13h15 **Lunch**

Thursday 22 April, 2010

Cultural and professional field visit

List of participants



**OIE Regional Seminar on Communication
Muscat, Oman, 20-21 April 2010**

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