



Regional Representation for the Middle East

REGIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

OIE Focal points Seminar

Beirut Lebanon 4-6 December 2012

Background

Animal welfare was first identified as a priority in the OIE Strategic Plan 2001-2005. OIE Member Countries mandated the organisation to take the lead on animal welfare and, as the international reference organisation for animal health, to elaborate recommendations and guidelines covering animal welfare practices, reaffirming that animal health is a key component of animal welfare.

The OIE Animal Welfare Working Group was created during the 70th General Session in February 2002 with the first recommendations of the group adopted one year after its creation. The general principles of animal welfare were included in the edition of the year 2004 of the Terrestrial Animals Health Code (Terrestrial Code).

The OIE convened a [First Global Conference on Animal Welfare](#) in February 2004. The main objective of the Conference was to raise awareness of, and to explain, the OIE's animal welfare initiative.

The [Second OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare](#) entitled "Putting the OIE Standards to Work" was held in October 2008 in Cairo, Egypt. The most important outcome of the conference was the identification of key needs and tools to help OIE Members to strengthen their capacities, including good governance and relevant infrastructure, to implement the OIE standards.

Since May 2005, the World Assembly of OIE Delegates (representing the 178 Member) has adopted eight animal welfare standards in the [Terrestrial Code](#), which cover:

- Transport of animals by land.
- Transport of animals by sea.
- Transport of animals by air.
- Animal slaughter for human consumption.
- Animal killing for disease control purposes.
- [The use of animals in research and education](#).
- [Animal welfare and beef cattle production systems](#).

The challenges

Animal welfare is a complex subject with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, religious and political dimensions. There is growing consumer interest in animal welfare worldwide, making it an economic and trade issue on the world market for animals and animal products.

The perception of animal welfare or of what does or does not constitute an act of cruelty to animals differs from one region and culture to another. The main challenge is to reach a consensus amongst all OIE Members, the sole common point being the exclusive use of a scientific basis to establish standards for adoption.

Recently, the OIE organised the [Third OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare](#), in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, (November 2012). The theme 'Implementing the OIE standards - addressing regional expectations' demonstrated the OIE's understanding of the challenges faced by Members when implementing the adopted animal welfare standards and the willingness of the OIE, working in collaboration with governments and donors, to provide support within the framework of its global capacity building initiatives.

As part of the Recommendations of the [Third OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare](#), the OIE was requested to support the development and implementation of OIE Regional Animal Welfare Strategies (RAWS). Within the current capacity building framework, the OIE is likely to be able to obtain funds to train in-country teams of trainers to deliver training/learning programmes in best practice in transport, and in pre slaughter and slaughter in specified eligible countries in the region.

The Regional Animal Welfare Strategy in the Middle East region.

The Scope of the RAWS in the Middle East

The priorities were identified at the OIE seminar for National Focal Points on Animal Welfare for Middle Eastern countries, held in Beirut Lebanon, 23 -25 November 2010.

In 4 – 6 December 2012, an OIE focal points seminar on animal welfare is organised to discuss the implementation of a regional strategy, identify challenges and constraints, and provides proposal for potential funding resources. (Annex 1: Agenda).

9 countries out of twelve participated in the seminar: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, KSA, Lebanon, Syria, UAE, and Yemen.

Summary of the meeting:

The meeting started, as scheduled, by a welcome address by Dr Yehia, OIE regional representative for the Middle East, who pointed on the necessity for countries in the region to adopt a harmonised regional strategy for animal welfare issues, complying with international standards and taking in consideration traditional and religious concerns. Dr Yehia mentioned in his speech that animal welfare activities are well respected in Islam and that is well considered in the OIE standards.

Dr Nabih Ghaouch, director of animal resources, delegate of Lebanon, addressed a warm welcome to the participants and wishes them an enjoyable stay in Beirut. He briefed the audience about the

activities of a national team working on establishing an animal welfare law to be included in the Lebanese legislation. The law is considering OIE standards as the basis of its regulation.

The Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, Dr Hussein Hajj Hassan, welcomed the participants and wishes that the seminar outcomes with beneficial results, as he outlined that countries in the region are very in need of establishing procedures for transport, slaughtering and handling of animals in respect of welfare and good care. He also addressed thanks to the working team who spent many efforts to achieve the promulgation of a draft law on animal welfare, to be adopted soon by the parliament.

Day 1

- Drs Mariela Varas and Vincent Brioude gave a general presentation on the organisation and activities of the OIE, highlighting the expected role and mandate of the focal points for animal welfare.

They extended on the aims and objectives of the seminar summarised as follow:

1- To ensure the implementation of OIE Standards on animal welfare through a coordinated regional approach.

2- The development of a practical and applied Implementation Plan for the RAWS, and the ongoing support of governments, welfare organisations, practitioners, scientists and industry are necessary for the success of the RAWS for the Middle East.

3- For the elaboration of the RAWS Implementation Plan (IP), the creation of Coordination Group is proposed. The Coordination Group, under the authority of the OIE Regional Commission, will be held responsible for the formulation and supervision of an implementation Plan. This RAWS IP must be developed with the advice of the stakeholders.

4- To spread and promote animal welfare knowledge within the region by means of effective coordination, communication, education and capacity building.

5- To achieve sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on the development of regional and international research.

6- To develop sustainable mechanisms for the coordination and promotion of animal welfare programs in accordance with the regional priorities of the countries.

7- To establish alliances amongst key parties to facilitate the implementation of OIE standards.

- Professor Hassan Aidaros exposed in his presentation the recommendations of the 3rd OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare held in Kuala Lumpur, (Malaysia) in November 2012.

- In his presentation on Good governance and Evaluation of Veterinary Services, Vincent Brioude summarized the procedures implemented through the PVS tool and Gap Analysis missions. He encouraged regional countries to request these missions from the OIE in order to be assisted in upgrading the capacities and capabilities of their Veterinary Services.

- In his second presentation Prof H. Aidaros proposed an approach to include Animal Welfare standards and procedures in the National veterinary legislation.
- Prof. Saeb El Sukhon addressed the audience on the future work in the upgrading veterinary education issues including animal welfare in the region. He emphasises on the OIE day 1 competencies plan and the twinning process to be used in the veterinary schools in the region.
- M. Varas described the actual existing OIE Standards on Animal Welfare and the forward of a continuous update and standard Setting working program with broad consultation with industry and NGO's. She emphasized on the plans of engagement in the OIE twinning program to enhance Animal Welfare expertise and supporting the implementation of Standards.
- Dr Ghazi Yehia briefed the participants on the draft proposal for a regional animal welfare strategy which provides assistance to Middle East countries in achieving key outcomes for Animal Welfare such as developing modular regulations, improving awareness and animal handlings and transportation...
- Dr Yehia described the required goals and needed activities to be achieved:

Goal 1: An enhanced regional approach and commitment to ensure high standards of animal welfare based on a legislative framework and standards consistent with the OIE Animal Welfare Guidelines.

Goal 2: The provision of funding, coordination and evaluation to support improvements in animal handling systems.

Goal 3: The provision of training and development in animal handling, requirements for facilities, product quality and disease management, in both Government and private industry.

Goal 4: Sustainable improvements in animal welfare based on regional and international research and development.

Goal 5: Effective communication, education and training to promote an improved understanding of animal welfare.

- Yehia exposed a proceeding timetable for meetings and training on Animal Welfare issues for the next 3 years.

Day two

- The work of the Non- Governmental Organisations in support of the implementation of Animal Welfare Standards was presented by Dr Ian Dacre, for WSPA/Asia Pacific. He also described the formation of the International Coalition for Animal Welfare which provides related information, comment and opinion to the OIE. He mentioned that WSPA is currently developing a new five year strategy for several countries in the Middle East Region, especially in assisting to start plans of control of stray animals and pet shops.

- Dr Vincent Guyonnet described the work of the private sector organizations which have developed a number of training tools and resources to assist in the local implementation, monitoring and auditing of the current OIE AW standards; they also contribute in the development of new standards, promoting knowledge, research and field expertise to the new AW chapters;

- Prof. H. Aidaros made a very important presentation on the religious slaughtering procedures and the related controversial issues (Halal slaughter vs stunning).

- Aidaros highlighted on the progress to be achieved by taking the following measures.

- 1- *A campaign is needed to apprise religious leaders of the current cruelty which occurs during transport and slaughter. This should be done by competent and knowledgeable individuals who are also aware of the Islamic principles of animal welfare.*

- 2- *The creation of animal welfare legislation, including animal transport and slaughter, according to the OIE standards and Islamic principles.*

- 3- *Government officials in charge of livestock, especially at abattoirs, should be sensitised to the concepts of animal welfare and how these relate to Islamic principles.*

- Mrs. Lana Al Khalil Basha, president of “Animals Lebanon” after presenting the draft proposal done in collaboration with the official team, on the animal welfare law, with its different chapters, concluded that:

- 1- *Responsibility for improved animal welfare must remain with the government*

- 2- *NGO’s, representing civil society, should play an active role in supporting government efforts as well as encouraging improvements*

- 3- *Difficulties should be expected and accepted*
- 4- *Stakeholder involvement is vital, but not all stakeholders are vital for all parts of the project.*

- Dr Yehia briefly summarised articles of the OIE code chapter on killing for animal disease control purposes, its objectives and procedures of humane killing.
- Dr Ali El Romeh from the Ministry of Agriculture exposed a case study on measures taken in Lebanon to stop spread of glanders disease in horses, all in compliance with the related OIE chapter.

Working session and outcomes

(Day 2 afternoon and Day 3 morning)

Two working groups have been formed to discuss and report on:

- 1- *for the Focal Points to identify key players*
- 2- *to define the membership of the RAWs coordination group*
- 3- *to discuss the possible constraints, particularly the budget*
- 4- *to engage the Focal Points in this initiative*
- 5- *to reach endorsement of the RAWs proposal, by the Focal Points for further submission to the Regional Commission for the Middle East*

Key targeted issues identified to ensure the success of the implementation of the RAWs include:

- 1- Political and high-level leadership support within OIE Member Countries.
- 2- Appointment of an OIE animal welfare focal point (i.e., contact person) under the overall authority of the OIE Delegate in each country.
- 3- Resources and access to technical expertise and scientific information are available, and partnerships and collaborating activities with stakeholder and partner organisations are developed.
- 4- Stakeholders, including farmers, industry, NGOs, academia, and the veterinary profession actively involved in the process.
- 5- Implementation approaches consistent with the general policies and standards of the OIE, as well as the outcomes of the 3rd Global Conference on Animal Welfare held in Malaysia.
- 6- Demonstration of the social and commercial benefit of improving animal welfare in the region.
- 7- Effective and professional coordination and communication between countries in the region via the RAWSCG.
- 8- Endorsement of the RAWs implementation plan by the OIE Regional Commission as well as the OIE World Assembly of Delegates.

General Goals of the RAWs

The RAWS will provide OIE Member Countries with general guidance to help improve the welfare of animals through a range of activities such as education (notably of veterinarians), regulation, research, and development. The strategy also recognises the current activities of governments, industry and NGOs to improve animal welfare and develop sustainable production

The goals identified in Dr Yehia presentation were endorsed by the groups.

Identified key players

- 1- Governmental authorities, CVO, etc.
- 2- Industries
- 3- NGO
- 4- Research centres or experts in the field of AW
- 5- Other stakeholders

Membership of the RAWS coordination group (CG)

- 1- Coordinator: Prof Hassan Aidaros
- 2- Secretariat: Dr Ghazi Yehia
- 3- Representative from NGO: WSPA
- 4- Representatives from industry: transport, slaughter, livestock and meat importers / exporters... + Islamic bank, EU + contacts by the secretariat of the CG (OIE regional representation for ME)
- 5- OIE National Focal Points: Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait, Egypt and Jordan

Possible constrains

- 1- Budget: it is the responsibility of the Secretariat, in conjunction with the RAWS CG to find suitable financing for this initiative (contacts with national, regional and international organisations, NGOs, and foundations)
- 2- Human resources: availability and competencies
- 3- Sustainability of activities
- 4- Turnover of the FP: transfer of information should be ensured

Follow up activities:

- 1- Under the authority of the OIE Delegate, the FP will have clear duties, the OIE will provide clear Terms of references for their role in the RAWS.
- 2- FP will be asked to prepare a short report about their activities every 3 months.
- 3- The RAWS CG will propose schedule for next meetings and training activities, identify members to join the CG, all to be endorsed by the OIE regional commission next meeting in Paris 2013.
- 4- The OIE ME website will host, coordinate and update all activities related to the RAWS.

Evaluation of OIE Seminar on Animal Welfare 4 - 6 December 2012 - Lebanon