

18th Conference of the
Regional Commission for the Middle East
Larnaca, Cyprus, 24 to 28 November 2025

FINAL REPORT

1 Introduction

Following the kind invitation of the Government of Cyprus, the 18th Conference of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Regional Commission for the Middle East was held in Larnaca, Cyprus, from 24 to 28 November 2025.

A total of 73 participants, comprising WOAHA Delegates and representatives of 9 Members of the Region and senior officers from 3 regional and international organisations, attended the Conference. In addition, representatives of the private sector as well as private veterinary organisations from the Region and from the host country were present.

Members of the Commission: Bahrain, Cyprus, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

International/regional organisations: European Commission (EC), The European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD), International Coalition for Animal Welfare (ICFAW).

Mr Michael Damianos, Minister of Health of Cyprus and Dr Saeb Khreisat, Minister of Agriculture of Jordan, honoured the Conference with their presence during the official opening ceremony.

Dr Christodoulos Pipis, WOAHA Delegate of Cyprus, Dr Susana Pombo, President of the World Assembly of Delegates, Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, Director General, Dr François Caya, Deputy Director General for Institutional Affairs and Governance, Dr Baba Soumare, Deputy Director General for Global Framework and Capacity Building, Dr Ahmad Almajali, Regional Representative for the Middle East, Dr Mohamed Alhosani, Sub Regional Representative for the Arabian Gulf, also participated in the Conference. The speakers presenting the two main Technical Items, namely Dr Theodore Knight-Jones, Technical expert from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) for the Technical Item I, and Dr Savvas Savva, Senior veterinary officer from Cyprus for the Technical Item II, also honoured the Conference with their presence.

MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2025

2 Opening ceremony

The following authorities gave a welcome address:

- Dr Christodoulos Pipis, WOAHA Delegate of Cyprus;
- Dr Sanad Alharbi, President of the Regional Commission for the Middle East and WOAHA Delegate of Saudi Arabia;
- Dr Susana Pombo, President of the World Assembly of Delegates,
- Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, WOAHA Director General;
- Honourable Dr Saeb Khreisat, Minister of Agriculture of Jordan, and;
- Honourable Mr Michael Damianos, Minister of Health of Cyprus, who also declared the Conference open.

3 Adoption of the programme

The Programme described in the Annex 1 was adopted.

4 **Appointment of the Conference Committee**

The Conference Committee was elected by participants as follows:

Chairperson:	Dr Christodolous Pipis, Delegate of Cyprus
Vice-Chairperson:	Dr Fajer Alsalloom, Delegate of Bahrain
Rapporteur General:	Dr Shorouq Al Fawarah, Delegate of Jordan

5 **Appointment of session chairpersons and rapporteurs**

Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs were designated for the Technical Items as follows:

Technical Item I:	Dr Sanad Al Harbi, Saudi Arabia (Chairperson) Dr Shamma Ismail Alsabri, United Arab Emirates (Rapporteur)
Technical Item II:	Dr Samah Al Sharif, Oman (Chairperson) Eng Abdelaziz Al Zeyara, Qatar, (Rapporteur)

6 **Keynote: WOAHA in the Middle East: Empowering Veterinary Services, increasing visibility and modernising WOAHA**

Dr Emmanuel Soubeyran, WOAHA Director General, presented an overview of WOAHA's mission and the collective assets it provides for its Members. In this regard, the following main points were highlighted:

- In the Middle East, WOAHA membership is not only beneficial, but also strategic.
- WOAHA offers a unique value proposition through science-based international standards that support safe trade and market access, a global disease transparency system (WAHIS) that facilitates early warning and reliable information on major regional threats, and coordinated expertise and networks for disease control, including through GF-TADs and regional roadmaps.
- As the global reference for Veterinary Services, WOAHA strengthens the visibility and credibility of its Members with national and international decision-makers.
- Through its Regional and Subregional Representations, the Organisation provides direct support and a trusted platform for collaboration and technical networking.
- The full value of this membership depends on active engagement by Members, including participation in governance, standard-setting, transparent reporting and sustained financial commitment.
- In line with its modernisation agenda, WOAHA has launched a major initiative to strengthen governance and ensure that the Organisation can adapt to an increasingly complex and rapidly changing global environment. Central to this effort is the Governance Review Committee (GRC), which was established by the World Assembly of Delegates in 2024 to review WOAHA's technical, financial, legal, regional and institutional governance. The GRC's work is fully embedded in the future Strategic Plan, with recommendations expected in 2026 and a package of legal reforms to be proposed for approval in 2027. This process aims to reinforce accountability, transparency and value for money, ensuring that WOAHA remains efficient, effective and inclusive.
- Members are encouraged to actively engage with the GRC's work, as their input is essential to shaping a governance framework that supports all Members and strengthens WOAHA's global credibility.

- In the context of increasing global challenges, including emerging and re-emerging diseases, climate change, geopolitical tensions, misinformation, and competition for resources, it is crucial to prioritise animal health in political and funding agendas. WOAAH also plays a key advocacy role in high-level international forums, determined to raise the profile and recognition of Veterinary Services.
- Despite progress, significant gaps remain in the capacities of Veterinary Services, making sustained investment essential for animal health, food security, public health, and economic resilience.
- There is an urgent need to communicate more clearly and effectively with policymakers about the value of animal health and the need to allocate resources to Veterinary Services. Advocacy should bridge the gap between the technical and political areas.
- WOAAH's next Strategic Plan will provide a clear pathway to help Members navigate an evolve animal health landscape. Developed at a pivotal moment, under new leadership and in parallel with the work of the GRC, the Plan builds on a century of collective experience and has been co-constructed with Members, staff and stakeholders. Covering the period 2027 - 2031, the Plan will set out a shared vision and framework for action. It will be supported by a monitoring framework and estimated costs to ensure effective implementation. The Strategic Plan has been developed through an inclusive approach and will guide WOAAH's priorities, being translated into global and regional roadmaps that are aligned with the needs of Members. The Regional and Subregional Offices will play a central role in this process.

Dr Soubeyran also urged Members to reconsider their current level of contribution to WOAAH, emphasising that sustainable and equitable funding is essential for the organisation's future. Statutory contributions are the cornerstone of this foundation. She encouraged Members to increase their statutory contributions, where possible, to help WOAAH ensure a fairer distribution of costs.

Finally, Dr Soubeyran thanked those who have recently settled outstanding payments and encouraged others to explore options for clearing arrears.

7 The Jurisdictions and Actions Framework of Cyprus' Veterinary Services to ensure animal welfare, animal health and public health

Dr Christodoulos Pipis, WOAAH Delegate of Cyprus, presented the country comprehensive Jurisdictions and Actions Framework for Veterinary Services. This framework showcases a robust One Health approach that integrates animal welfare, animal health, and public health. He emphasised that the framework prioritises preventing the introduction of animal diseases, maintaining and achieving officially disease-free status, and ensuring the safe and uninterrupted trade of animals and animal products. Veterinary Services oversee disease surveillance, control, and eradication programmes, as well as the regulation of food of animal origin, animal products, and veterinary drug residues. Accredited animal health and public health laboratories support this work by providing diagnostics and food safety testing and serving as national reference laboratories for key pathogens.

8 Technical Item I: Improving capacity to implement assessment of socio-economic impacts of transboundary animal diseases (with focus on FMD and PPR)

The Technical Item I entitled "*Improving capacity to implement assessment of socio-economic impacts of transboundary animal diseases (with focus on FMD and PPR)*", was presented by Dr Theodore Knight-Jones, Technical expert from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). The presentation prompted animated discussions among participants, enabling the Regional Commission for the Middle East to develop a recommendation in accordance with WOAAH General Rules. The final recommendation is available in Annex 2.

9 **Animal health and reporting situation in the Middle East (2024–2025)**

Dr Jenny Hutchison, Head of the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department (WAHIAD), presented the reporting history of Middle East. While efforts by Members on reporting were appreciated, the Region had a low number of notifications of exceptional events in 2025. This could be due to low disease incidence in the region, reporting solely in six-monthly reports, or under-reporting. While normally exceptional events should be reported within 24 hours of confirmation, the region showed only a small number of incidents reported within the required time. Several countries have not yet submitted the first semester 2025 Terrestrial and Aquatic reports or 2023 and 2024 annual reports.

Dr Hutchison highlighted the evolution of foot and mouth disease, highly pathogenic avian influenza and bluetongue since 2024 in the Region. She demonstrated how reporting disease only in six-monthly reports without creation of a stable event in the Animal Disease Events Module makes it difficult for users consulting information on WAHIS to understand the disease situation presented in WAHIS.

Finally, Dr Hutchison highlighted the great collaboration at the recent Middle East notification training, which should result in more transparent reporting to WAHIS.

10 **Workshop: How to improve disease reporting**

Dr Peter Melens, Deputy Head of the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department (WAHIAD), facilitated a workshop on 'How to improve disease reporting' focused on the importance of accurate disease reporting and options for interconnection and interoperability for reporting systems.

Key deliverables per topic were as follows:

Topic 1: Disease reporting

Members use WAHIS as a central tool for real-time disease intelligence, early warning, and global transparency. WAHIS outputs are crucial for risk assessment, import/export decisions, surveillance planning, monitoring emerging threats, and defining national policies. Reporting high-impact diseases through six-monthly reporting only can have an adverse effect on the abilities of countries to make timely evidence-based decisions on animal health and welfare.

Topic 2: Interconnection and interoperability

Many Members report similar information in a variety of databases at national or regional level. Members and trading partners primarily use WAHIS data to make evidence-based decisions on animal health, impacting trade and animal health and welfare. Identifying mechanisms to reduce reporting burden, standardise the information reported and speed up reporting may assist Members reporting animal health information. Further work is needed with existing Early Warning Systems at national or regional level to understand the feasibility of these mechanisms.

11 **The Observatory thematic study: Use, challenges and impact of zoning**

Dr Caroline Paquier, Senior Programme Manager for the WOAHS Observatory, explained how the Observatory collects data to enhance the effectiveness and use of WOAHS standards following their adoption. Monitoring reports are published every five years, the second will be published shortly. Additionally, thematic studies focus on a specific sets of standards to analyse their use, as well as the barriers and success factors involved.

The latest thematic study focused on avian influenza (AI), African swine fever (ASF) and foot and mouth disease (FMD) from 2018-2022. Most Members use zoning for one or more of these diseases, mainly in response to an outbreak or to secure international trade of animals and animal products. The positive impact of zoning on trade was highest for FMD, also notably requiring a shorter lead-in time for acceptance by trading partners on zoning for this disease. The report is available [online](#).

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12 **Technical Item II: Strengthening multisectoral cooperation to implement a new vision of an alternative compensation policy that supports the stamping out policies for the control and eradication of high-priority animal diseases in emergencies and pandemics**

The Technical Item II, entitled “: *Strengthening multisectoral cooperation to implement a new vision of an alternative compensation policy that supports the stamping out policies for the control and eradication of high-priority animal diseases in emergencies and pandemics*”, was presented by Dr Savvas Savva, Senior Veterinary Officer from Cyprus Ministry of Agriculture. The presentation prompted interesting discussions among participants and allowed the Regional Commission for the Middle East to develop a recommendation in accordance with the WOAHP General Rules. The final recommendation is available in Annex 3.

13 **Strengthening Scientific Excellence of the Middle East Region through WOAHP Reference Centres network - Overview and examples of Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres activities**

Dr Gregorio Torres, Head of the Science Department, and Dr Mariana Delgado, Scientific Secretariat Officer, gave a remote presentation on the global overview of [WOAHP Reference Centres \(RCs\) network](#) as the core of scientific expertise which are key in supporting Members by generating scientific knowledge, contributing to international standards, and providing technical expertise for disease prevention, control, and decision-making. There are currently 270 Reference Laboratories (RLs) in 39 countries with 206 experts, and 80 Collaborating Centres (CCs) in 33 countries. Their contribution to scientific exchange and regional solidarity, through the sharing of expertise, data and resources, was recognised as essential to ensuring that all Members benefit from high-quality knowledge and technical capacity. WOAHP maintains robust processes for the application, designation and monitoring of RCs to ensure continued alignment with the Organisation’s objectives.

The presentation outlined the scope and strengths of the RCs network, while highlighting regional imbalances, such as limited coverage of certain diseases in regions like the Middle East. Delegates were encouraged to consider expanding the network and making better use of it to address these gaps and strengthen regional capacity.

The presentation also identified several key challenges, such as insufficient communication of Members’ needs to the RCs, inconsistent support from host countries and limited awareness of WOAHP activities among experts. Clearer communication and stronger engagement of experts in WOAHP activities were identified as solutions as well as promoting the RCs as a key element to reinforce Members’ solidarity and international scientific pride.

Looking ahead, the RCs network aims to build on its diagnostic excellence by strengthening quality assurance, technical support and data management, while also serving as a hub for global health intelligence by combining centralised expertise with decentralised capacity.

Dr Ahmad Almajali, Regional Representative for the Middle East, emphasised the strategic importance of the WOAHC RCs network in enhancing scientific excellence and technical capability in the Middle East. The existing Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres in the Region were showcased, along with their contributions to priority areas such as vaccine quality control, camel and aquatic animal health, veterinary education, and the management of transboundary and emerging diseases.

The regional network was presented as a valuable resource for supporting Members with diagnostics, surveillance, research, training and knowledge sharing, while also contributing to global WOAHC standards and scientific work. Members were encouraged to make stronger use of RCs to address regional needs.

Dr Ahmad Almajali also drew attention to the uneven global distribution of RCs, reinforcing the need to further strengthen and expand regional capacity in the Middle East.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion in which four speakers representing the RCs and WOAHC Members shared their experiences. From their interventions the following points can be underlined:

- WOAHC's entire network of RCs is accessible to all 183 of its Members.
- RCs can play a key role in supporting Members by providing training, helping with disease eradication planning, offering diagnostics and research services, and ensuring the quality and development of vaccines.
- However, access to support can be uneven due to complex procedures, limited responsiveness and unclear mandates, which can discourage Members from engaging with RCs.
- Sample sharing is critical to scientific excellence yet remains challenging. Harmonised, simplified procedures under the WOAHC umbrella are needed to facilitate sample shipment, international proficiency testing and timely outbreak support.
- Visibility, communication and accountability must be improved, including providing clearer information on mandates, giving regular presentations to Regional Commissions and at the General Session, improving website access and periodically evaluating the performance of RCs.
- Stronger regional coordination is essential to encourage direct interaction between Members and RCs, promote the use of twinning and research collaborations.

The Director General emphasised the importance of strengthening the relationship and operational engagement between WOAHC RCs network and the Members, recognising the dual role of this network in contributing to international standards and providing practical technical support. She encouraged Members to liaise with WOAHC through the Regional and Subregional Representations to facilitate the interaction as well as to clarify any doubt regarding the Terms of Reference and potential support RCs can provide.

Regional Representatives were invited to facilitate discussions at a regional level, bringing RCs together and highlighting the expertise available.

It was also recalled that providing timely technical support to Members is a core mandate of the RCs and that Members should inform WOAHC if their support needs are not being met, to ensure appropriate follow-up.

Delegates expressed the importance of further clarifying the [mandate](#) of Reference Centres.

In order to improve visibility and accessibility, it was recommended that WOAHA enhance the presentation of the RCs information and annual reports on its website and promote opportunities for centres to showcase their work at the Regional Commission meetings and during the General Session, including through dedicated side events.

Looking ahead, the session proposed concrete avenues to reinforce collaboration, including the exploration of regional mechanisms such as twinning partnerships, joint research initiatives and coordinated capacity-building efforts. Strengthening these partnerships will enable the region to access practical expertise in areas such as surveillance, vaccine quality and disease control, One Health and Animal health economy thereby improving preparedness and scientific excellence.

14 **WOAH Standards Setting Process: *Aquatic Code and Manual, Terrestrial Code and Manual***

Dr Etienne Bonbon presented and animated an interactive session on the WOAHA standards setting process providing insights into the factors influencing the region's level of engagement in the process.

He provided an overview of WOAHA standards, highlighting their central role in supporting national animal health and welfare systems, ensuring transparency, facilitating safe trade and enabling a mutual understanding of animal health situations among Members. Dr Bonbon reaffirmed that WOAHA standards are science-based and inclusive, and are developed through a Members-driven, consensus-based process overseen by the Specialist Commissions and informed by global scientific expertise.

He explained the standard-setting process step by step, emphasising the various ways in which Members can engage, such as proposing new work and experts, submitting science-based comments, and participating in the adoption process at the General Session. Members were encouraged to engage early and consistently throughout the cycle rather than waiting until the final stages, as this strengthens the standards' relevance and feasibility.

In his presentation, Dr Bonbon also summarised the key outcomes of the September 2025 meetings of the Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commissions. He outlined the scope of ongoing work programmes and the number of draft and revised texts that had been circulated for comments and proposed for adoption at the 2026 General Session.

Dr Bonbon also provided practical guidance on how and where Members can access information, submit comments and follow the work of Specialist Commissions emphasising that active participation by Members is vital to ensure that WOAHA standards reflect regional realities and can be implemented effectively.

The session emphasised the need for more regional experts in WOAHA Specialist Commission and ad-hoc groups, as well as more regional input to the standards. Dr Bonbon strongly encouraged the Middle East region to engage more in the standard-setting process.

The essential role of working groups in ensuring scientific excellence was acknowledged, and the region was encouraged to propose candidates for these groups, who could then potentially be proposed as members of the Specialist Commissions.

It was emphasised that comments are published anonymously, and Members were encouraged to submit comments and read those of other Members to understand different positions.

It was proposed that practical support, such as regional-level discussions and webinars, be considered with the help of the Regional and Subregional Representations to facilitate understanding of, and active participation in, the standards setting process.

15 Antimicrobial Resistance – everyone’s matter, everyone’s responsibility

Dr Javier Yugueros-Marcos, Head of the Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department, presented on the topic of how antimicrobial resistance (AMR) affects us all, both as humans and in our veterinary roles.

He revealed that one in six bacteria tested in laboratories is now drug-resistant and warned that the consequences are already severe. In 2022 alone, 1.2 million people died from infectious diseases that could no longer be treated with antibiotics. If current patterns of antimicrobial use do not change, AMR could cause 39 million deaths by 2050.

He also emphasised that Veterinary Services are increasingly overwhelmed by the rising number of animal disease outbreaks, while data on the AMR burden in animals remains limited. Yet many of the diseases they must address still require the use of antimicrobials. Recent studies also suggest that drug-resistant bacteria are already contributing to losses in animal productivity.

16 The economic impact of AMR in animal health: facts, figures and cost-effective interventions

Dr Marco Hafner, Principal Health Economist at RAND Europe, presented findings from the EcoAMR report that examines the economic impact of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in food-producing animals, focusing on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The study applied at the Livestock Production Disease (LPD) model in conjunction with a Dynamic Computable General Equilibrium (DCGE) model estimating productivity and GDP losses under different scenarios: business-as-usual, pessimistic, and human spillover. The results indicate that by 2050, AMR could reduce global GDP by \$5.3 trillion, with MENA facing a 2.8% GDP loss and severe declines in meat and milk production (up to 8.7% for chicken meat).

The analysis highlights that AMR already causes significant productivity losses, threatening food security and economic stability. Without intervention, resistant infections will escalate, impacting both animal and human health. Conversely, a 30% global reduction in antimicrobial use (AMU) by 2030 could yield \$120 billion in cumulative GDP gains, with an estimated ROI of 4:1. Strategies include better husbandry, vaccination, early diagnostics, and AI-based monitoring, which can cut medical costs per animal by up to 53%. Key recommendations are to mobilise investments in AMR mitigation, to improve data flow and transparency (e.g., ANIMUSE platform), to prioritise prevention through vaccination and prudent AMU and to foster R&D under a One Health approach.

17 Investing in animal health systems: why and how?

Dr Javier Yugueros-Marcos made a presentation on the importance of investing in animal health systems as a cornerstone for combating AMR and ensuring global health security. It builds on the 2024 UN Political Declaration on AMR, which includes 45 commitments, with four directly targeting animal health: prevention, resourced surveillance, cross-sectoral coordination, and sustainable funding.

He highlighted that these commitments aim to reduce antimicrobial use, promote prudent practices, strengthen vaccination strategies, and guarantee access to essential veterinary services. The document demonstrates the urgent need for financing mechanisms, such as the AMR Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), which seeks to mobilize \$100 million by 2030 to support national AMR action plans, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

It also underscores the role of global institutions like the World Bank, which funds One Health initiatives and stresses prevention as more cost-effective than preparedness. Key actions include improving biosecurity, expanding vaccination coverage, enhancing diagnostic capacity, and fostering Public-Private Partnerships. Tools such as WOA's PVS evaluations, ANIMUSE database, and international standards are recommended to guide implementation. Ultimately, investing in animal health systems is framed as an opportunity to protect food security, reduce AMR risks, and strengthen resilience under a One Health approach.

18 Interactive session around the implementation of the 2024 UN Political Declaration on AMR – The power of collective intelligence

Dr Andrés Garcia Campos, Senior Programme Manager from the WOA's Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department, facilitated the interactive session to present the current status of WOA's work and three country experiences related to the priority actions under the 2024 UN Political Declaration on AMR, specifically for animal health: 1) reducing antimicrobial use in animals, 2) promoting prudent and responsible use, and 3) prioritising disease prevention through vaccination.

Participants then engaged in a dynamic brainstorming session to support the development of a joint regional action plan to meet these commitments by 2030.

For the first commitment, reducing antimicrobial use, participants were encouraged to report national AMU data to ANIMUSE, as regional participation remains low. Reporting and validating AMU helps Members strengthen decisions and policies in their National Action Plans. The UAE shared its experience in reducing AMU and reporting to WOA.

For the second commitment, promoting prudent and responsible use, Members received updates on WOA's International Standards and Technical Reference documents to support national antimicrobial stewardship guidelines. It was stressed that using antimicrobials for growth promotion is not considered prudent or responsible use as defined on Chapter 6.9 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and WOA urges to phase out the use of antimicrobial as growth promoters. Updates on the Vet-AWaRe initiative and preparations for the next Inter-Ministerial Conference on AMR (Nigeria, 2026) were shared, with a call for Members' support. Jordan presented its experience implementing prudent-use measures, which brought up a reminder from WOA about the One Health Legal Assessment Tool and TRUVET as complementary tools supporting responsible prudent use.

For the third commitment, prioritising disease prevention through vaccination, WOA outlined available tools, standards, and best practices in husbandry, biosecurity, and vaccination. Members were reminded of WOA's lists of priority diseases for which vaccination can reduce AMU. These lists, published in 2015 and 2018, are being updated and Members were encouraged to integrate them into national priorities. Oman presented its vaccination strategies.

The session concluded with discussions that informed a list of proposed actions for the next sessions.

19 Collective definition and agreement of a joint regional action plan for the successful implementation of the UN political declaration commitments made in animal health

Dr Andrés Garcia Campos, reported ten actions identified and agreed by participants:

1. Members to continue strengthening AMR/AMU surveillance programs, regularly reporting quantitative data to ANIMUSE (terrestrial and aquatic animals), and transforming data into national reports and policy briefs to inform policy decision-making levels, all these with the support and collaboration of WOA.

2. Members to implement WOAHA international standards, and follow recommendations and guidelines (i.e., WOAHA list of antimicrobials of veterinary importance, technical reference documents, among others), in the design and deployment of national action plans on AMR. Special attention to recommendations concerning HPCIA antimicrobials (i.e., complete phase out of their use as growth promoters). All these with the support and collaboration of WOAHA.
3. Members to support WOAHA in the development of the Vet-AWARe list as additional science-based global stewardship guidance.
4. WOAHA to update the list of priority diseases for which vaccines could reduce antimicrobial use, and Delegates providing guidance on a potential prioritisation for implementation adapted for the Middle East region, so Members can ensure that animal vaccination strategies are defined as a measure to reduce AMU and consequently contain development and spread of AMR.
5. Delegates to consider Public-Private Partnerships, with the support from WOAHA as requested, in sustaining the accessibility of vaccines and vaccination programmes while prioritising animal disease prevention through farm biosecurity measures.
6. Members to engage with the World Bank Group, or any Regional Development bank, to explore opportunities to support sustainable funding in the strengthening of animal health systems, including Veterinary Services, as committed in the 79th United Nations General Assembly Political Declaration on AMR. WOAHA to assist upon request in the bridging, as well as in the technical development of proposals for funding.
7. Members to explore opportunities either to support the AMR-MPTF Program, or to benefit from where applicable, seeking for the effective implementation of multisectoral National Action Plans on AMR. WOAHA to assist in any of the processes, as requested by Members.
8. Delegates to contact the Nigerian Delegate and actively engage in the definition of the program and corresponding outcome document of the fifth Ministerial meeting on AMR, planned to be held in Nigeria in 2026.
9. Members, with the support of WOAHA, to work on early awareness and share materials related to AMR in schools for educating younger generations, as well as in curriculum in universities for future veterinarians from a One-Health angle.
10. Members are invited to use existing tools to enhance responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials, such as the One Health Legal Assessment Tool (OHLAT) and the Track and Report Unsafe VET Products system (TRUVET), requesting support from WOAHA as needed.

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20 The Role and value of non-governmental organisations (NGO) in promoting the regional Animal Welfare activities

Ms Julia Havenstein, Chair of the International Coalition for Animal Welfare (ICFAW), highlighted the role of ICFAW as a key NGO partner supporting WOAHA in the development, implementation, and promotion of animal welfare standards at global and regional levels. Operating under a formal Memorandum of Understanding with WOAHA, ICFAW contributes to standard-setting, regional animal welfare strategies, capacity building, and awareness-raising through its regional and thematic working groups.

The presentation illustrated the added value of NGOs through field-based expertise, independent assessments, training, research support, and community engagement, complementing the regulatory role of Veterinary Services. Concrete examples from the Middle East demonstrated how NGO-led initiatives, particularly on working equids, animal transport, and camel welfare, have improved animal welfare outcomes through education, capacity building, and collaboration

with national authorities. Overall, the presentation concluded that structured, coordinated collaboration between NGOs, Veterinary Services, and WOAAH is essential to achieve sustainable and culturally appropriate improvements in animal welfare across the region.

Discussions among participants explored how NGOs can effectively contribute to the promotion of animal welfare at regional level, while ensuring alignment with national realities, cultural contexts, and WOAAH standards. The main points can be highlighted:

- Participants acknowledged that misunderstandings sometimes arise when NGOs operate in countries without sufficient awareness of local traditions or regulatory frameworks, underscoring the importance of culturally sensitive and coordinated approaches.
- Delegates emphasised that Veterinary Services play a central role in guiding and supporting animal welfare implementation, in line with WOAAH's mandate and international standards, notably the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the WOAAH Animal Welfare Strategy. NGOs were encouraged to work in close partnership with Veterinary Services, recognising their regulatory authority and technical expertise, rather than acting independently. Strengthening collaboration with Veterinary Services was seen as a way to reduce misunderstandings and improve consistency in animal welfare messaging and actions.
- The discussion highlighted the diversity of NGOs, including international organisations and numerous local NGOs whose understanding of animal welfare may vary. Participants noted that some local NGOs may misinterpret animal welfare concepts, reinforcing the need for harmonised guidance. It was suggested that the Animal Welfare Coalition consider developing practical guidelines, in coordination with the national Veterinary Services, to clarify roles, expectations, and alignment with WOAAH standards, and to facilitate more effective collaboration at country level.
- Cultural factors were identified as a key challenge. Delegates agreed that education and sensitisation, rather than prohibition, are essential to promote behavioural change, helping communities understand animal welfare principles and why certain practices should evolve.
- It was recalled that WOAAH has recently strengthened its support to animal welfare capacity building, notably through the development of the Competency Package on Animal Welfare, whose Terms of Reference are expected to be available in the second quarter of 2026. In parallel, an ongoing project under the authority of the Director General aims to update the WOAAH recommendations on competencies for graduating veterinarians ("Day 1 Graduates") and the veterinary education core curriculum, ensuring that animal welfare is fully integrated alongside animal health, in line with current scientific knowledge, societal expectations, and WOAAH standards, and supporting greater global comparability of veterinary qualifications.
- Concluding the discussion, the Director General reaffirmed WOAAH's constructive collaboration with ICFAW and other partners. She also emphasised the distinct and essential role of Veterinary Services, cautioning against the blurring of responsibilities and reiterating that Veterinary Services remain the competent authority responsible for enforcing regulations and ensuring the implementation of WOAAH animal welfare standards. The Director General also acknowledged the variety of NGOs operating in this area, distinguishing between organisations focused on practical improvements that can be valuable partners, and abolitionist groups whose views may conflict with food security concerns. Dr Soubeyran emphasised that meaningful progress in animal welfare depends on inclusive, pragmatic collaboration with NGOs that share common objectives and work constructively with the relevant authorities to improve animal welfare outcomes.

21 WOAH Wildlife Health Programme: Presentation, Q&A, Interactive session through Menti meter & Feedback

Dr Sophie Muset, Wildlife Health Programme Manager and ZOOSURSY Project Manager, and Dr Fayçal Meziani, Technical expert from the Regional Representation for the Middle East, presented the main achievements of the Wildlife Health Framework

This was followed by an interactive Mentimeter session in which the main achievements of the framework were reviewed and Members' feedback was collected to inform the next strategy. This consultation was conducted across all WOAH Regional Commissions since 2024 and concluded with engagement from the Middle East. The contributions gathered will be consolidated at a global level and will inform the overall revision of the Wildlife Health Framework.

Significant progress has been made through the Wildlife Health Framework (2021-2025), including development of international guidelines, legislative reviews to address wildlife health gaps, pilot VLSP missions with wildlife components, and strengthened advocacy and communication tools.

Improved data collection and reporting through WAHIS and WAHIS-Wild Beta were highlighted as key tools to enhance surveillance, raise awareness of emerging threats, and support evidence-based decision making for both animal and human health.

Regional priorities for the Middle East include rebuilding and reactivating the Wildlife Health Network, strengthening wildlife related laboratory capacity, enhancing surveillance at the wild domestic interface (e.g. HPAI, PPR), and securing sustainable funding to support focal point training and regional coordination.

The next steps will involve integrating the Middle East dataset with contributions from other regions, ensuring a comprehensive global analysis. These findings will complement the external evaluation of the Wildlife Health Framework, the results of which were presented in September 2025 and to which the region actively contributed. Together, these findings will inform the ongoing revision of the Wildlife Health Strategy, which is expected to be finalised in the first quarter of 2026.

22 One Health in action: regional achievements

Dr Fayçal Meziani made a presentation showing how the Middle East has built a solid foundation for One Health, with most Members already operating intersectoral coordination mechanisms.

Two key questions were raised during the discussions:

- The designation of a WOAH National One Health Focal Point Network, similar to what WHO and FAO have established under the Regional Quadripartite Action Plan 2025-2027. The objective would be to enhance coordination, information flow, follow-up on the Regional Roadmap, and visibility of country-level activities. The suggestion of appointing the Delegate as the One Health National Focal Point was discussed. However, further internal consultation appears necessary to ensure alignment with the global level.
- The potential designation of a Regional One Health Collaborating Centre: Interventions from several participants indicated that this idea may be premature. A more stepwise approach was recommended, beginning with the institutionalisation and strengthening of national One Health mechanisms.

23 **Climate Change and Animal Health – Emerging Risks and Regional Preparedness**

Dr Ahmad Almajali animated a session which aimed at addressing the growing impacts of climate change on animal health and the resulting emerging risks for the Middle East region. It aimed to raise awareness of climate related animal health threats, highlight WOAHA's support to Members through standards, tools, and emergency management guidance, and emphasise the importance of cross sectoral coordination under the One Health approach.

The session started with an intervention from Dr Chadia Wannous, WOAHA One Health Senior Specialist and Global Coordinator, in which she explained why coordination matters and provided a One Health perspective regarding climate change and animal health. She highlighted climate change as a major and growing driver of animal health risks, calling for stronger integration of animal health into climate policies and financing through a One Health approach, with Veterinary Services playing a frontline role in climate resilience, disease prevention, and sustainable development.

Then Dr Madison Wimmers, Project officer on Biological Threat Reduction from Preparedness and Resilience Department, highlighted how WOAHA supports Members in strengthening emergency preparedness and response through international standards and the Incident Management System (IMS), enabling Veterinary Services to effectively manage animal health emergencies, including those exacerbated by climate change, using a coordinated, all-hazards approach.

Finally, Dr Anastasios Matsikaris, Meteorological Officer from Cyprus, illustrated how climate change is already affecting animal health in Cyprus through rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and the spread of vector-borne diseases, highlighting the need for climate adapted livestock management, strengthened surveillance, and enhanced regional cooperation to mitigate emerging risks.

The main points can be highlighted from the discussion:

- The potential designation of WOAHA National One Health Focal Points was again raised as an enabler for advancing the One Health approach, strengthening coordination across sectors, and supporting the implementation of national One Health action plans.
- Participants noted a limited focus on adapting animal health strategies to climate change, highlighting the need for stronger advocacy to ensure climate considerations are integrated into national animal health plans and evaluation frameworks.
- Following COP30, climate change was acknowledged as an irreversible challenge, with global consensus remaining limited. This reinforced the importance of sustained engagement, despite ongoing political and financial constraints.
- Veterinary Services require increased and sustainable funding to address climate related animal health risks, although competing national priorities make resource mobilisation a significant challenge.
- WOAHA's continued advocacy and presence at global climate forums was welcomed, with calls for the organisation to support its Members and Veterinary Services further in engaging with climate negotiations and accessing climate finance, in order to strengthen the resilience of animal health.

24 Empowering Veterinary Services: From Evidence to Action through PVS Pathway and Training Platform

Dr Valentyna Sharandak, Programme Manager, and Dr Rahul Srivastava, Public-Private Partnership Project Manager, from WOAAH Capacity Building Department, presented capacity-building initiatives focused on the PVS Pathway and competency-based training. They emphasised interventions in the WOAAH Middle East region.

Their presentation covered various aspects of PVS Monitoring and Evaluation, including orientation, evaluation, gap analysis, and planning. They also discussed targeted support activities aimed at strengthening Veterinary Services, such as the Veterinary Legislation Support Programme, Public-Private Partnerships, workforce development, the National Bridging Workshops, and sustainable laboratories. They introduced the PVS Evaluation stage, during which representatives from the UAE and the Delegate from KSA shared their experience of successfully implementing the programme in their countries. The gap analysis presentation concluded the PVS Monitoring cycle by outlining the process for evaluating progress. The session on PVS Information Systems covered recent developments and provided comparative insights and recommendations. The first Annual Self-Assessment Report was launched in October 2025, with Delegates contacted prior to the event. Participation in the report reached 50%, a fact emphasised to the audience.

Details of all five targeted support activities were presented, explaining what they are and how any Member can access support from WOAAH. Delegates from Jordan and Bahrain also shared their experiences of the Veterinary Legislation Support Programme and Public-Private Partnerships.

After discussing the PVS Pathway, the speakers introduced the training platform and shared the 15 competency profiles and terms of reference designed to help Members strengthen their capacities in their own countries. This approach is integral to enhancing Veterinary Services.

Finally, the speakers addressed institutional and individual capacity building, respectively, ensuring a comprehensive strategy for strengthening Veterinary Services in the region.

25 Discussion of recommendations

Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran presented draft Recommendations 1 and 2 on the two Technical Items of the Conference to Delegates for discussion. Both draft recommendations will be submitted for adoption at the Friday session with amendments as per participants' suggestions and discussions.

Following adoption by the Regional Commission, the Recommendations will be submitted for endorsement by the World Assembly of Delegates in May 2026. Once endorsed by the Assembly, they will serve as an important guideline for Members of the Regional Commission for the Middle East, as well as for the Organisation as a whole.

THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2025

26 Technical and cultural visit

Participants greatly appreciated the technical and cultural visit organised by the host country.

FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2025

27 Progress update on the Governance Review Committee

Dr François Caya, Deputy Director General for Institutional Affairs and Governance, reminded participants about the Governance Review Committee (GRC), its main task and the progress made during 2025. He also provided an update on the revised timeline and upcoming GRC meetings, including an outline of the topics to be discussed at these meetings. The work of the two GRC members in the Middle East was acknowledged.

The presentation provided an opportunity to reflect on the region's understanding of, and involvement in, the work of the GRC. Delegates reported varying levels of awareness, ranging from a good understanding to a need for further clarification. This indicates that the region is still becoming familiar with the process.

The main points that emerged from the discussions are as follows:

- The Regional Commission emphasised the importance of receiving regional feedback on GRC recommendations, as well as the need for the region to present a united position and contribute effectively to the discussion on the governance as well as to building regional consensus on final decisions.
- Delegates acknowledged the extensive documentation provided during consultations and appreciated the Secretariat's efforts in producing summaries. However, they requested support in translating these summaries into Arabic to encourage wider participation.
- Concerns were raised regarding how regional representation is perceived, particularly when Members belong to more than one Regional Commission. The representation of the Middle East is diluted by double membership, as several Members are more active in another region. This reduces their engagement and influence within the Regional Commission for the Middle East, highlighting the need to revisit and revise double membership arrangements.
- While it was explained that the Middle East's single seat on the Council could represent a larger representation of Members than in other regions (one member of the Middle East represents 20 Members, whereas two members of Africa each represent 26 Members), some Members emphasised that the responsibilities and workload attached to the role, rather than the number of Members a representative serves, determine Council work. It was emphasised that the workload remains significant regardless of region size and that the Middle East faces many challenges (including a lot of Members in conflict) that justify strong representation.
- The Director General acknowledged the region's active engagement in the Council and noted that the upcoming Middle East presidency of the Council will reinforce its voice in global governance discussions.
- Participants emphasised the importance of reinforcing regional structures, such as the Regional Core Group (RCG), the Regional Commission and the RR/SRR, to better address the needs of Members. Support through secondees to the regional offices was encouraged by the Director General.
- There were also concerns about the lack of representation from the Middle East in the Specialist Commissions, with a call for active efforts from Members to propose experts to the ad hoc groups that in the future could join the Commissions.

Both, Dr Pipis and the Director General, emphasised that effective regional participation begins at the individual level, with Delegates strengthening cooperation, openly sharing perspectives, and fostering trust. Decision-making should be driven by consensus and transparency, with the voice of each Member valued equally. Ultimately, in a system of one country, one vote, it is engagement and coordination that matter more than the number of seats assigned to each region.

28 Follow up of the last Conference Recommendations

Dr Fayçal Meziani conducted a brief exercise on the follow-up to the recommendations of the last conference.

While progress was reported in some areas, it was acknowledged that more effort was needed to ensure the full implementation of all recommendations. This exercise enabled Dr Meziani to emphasise the importance of ensuring that recommendations are measurable and realistic, and of avoiding long-term, unattainable proposals. It is much more efficient to take things step by step than to include a long list of desired or ideal situations in a recommendation that will be impossible to achieve in two years.

29 Updated on regional activities, recommendations, work plan 2026

Dr Ahmad Al Majali and Dr Mohamed Alhosani, WOAHA Sub Regional Representative for the Arabian Gulf, provided updates on WOAHA's regional activities in the Middle East for 2024 - 2025. They emphasised the organisation's strong commitment to preventing and controlling transboundary animal diseases, implementing the One Health approach, building capacity, and improving disease reporting. Key achievements included regional coordination on HPAI, FMD, PPR, and brucellosis; strengthened laboratory and surveillance capacities; enhanced One Health and AMR collaboration; and extensive training and awareness activities.

The presentation also outlined priority actions for 2026, focusing on preparedness, the harmonisation of approaches and sustained support for Veterinary Services across the region.

30 Conference conclusions and adoption of recommendations

Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, presented the Recommendations to the Delegates, including all the comments made during the discussion session. She explained the procedures for the adoption of recommendations, stressing that they must be adopted during the current session and cannot be amended subsequently, only editing being accepted.

The two draft recommendations were unanimously adopted and will be published along with the final report.

Dr Soubeyran then summarised the main conclusions of the conference, emphasising that solidarity, mutual respect and transparency were the key to advance.

She underlined that the Conference served to discuss the strategic value of WOAHA membership and the benefits for the Middle East as well as the importance of Members' engagement at the Organisation's political, technical and financial levels to guarantee its sustainability and relevance.

After several productive days of technical discussions and knowledge sharing, the 18th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East came to a close. Participants reviewed WOAHA's activities and services, discussed regional challenges and explored ways to better support Members. There was a particular focus advocacy actions highlighting the advocacy work that WOAHA is initiating to better positioning animal health and Veterinary Services' key contribution to the global health agenda. The word "advocacy" came up several times during the discussions underling the need to communicate more clearly and effectively with policymakers on the value of animal health and the need to allocate resources to Veterinary Services. Advocacy should bridge the gap between the technical and political areas.

The PVS Pathway is a powerful tool that helps Members to identify gaps, set priorities and mobilise resources. It must be better understood and promoted in the region. Members were encouraged to request PVS missions, since the resulting data can inform targeted capacity building initiatives and support advocacy efforts at the national and regional levels.

Several interactive sessions took place including a workshop on 'How to improve disease reporting' focused on the importance of accurate disease reporting and options for interconnection and interoperability for reporting system. An interactive presentation and discussion on the WOAAH standards setting process also allowed Delegates to express their concerns and discuss options to better engage with it.

Discussions on the various agenda topics underscored that effective disease control in the Middle East requires stronger multisectoral collaboration combined with robust economic evidence. This can be achieved by collecting high-quality epidemiological and socio-economic data, and by working with WOAAH Reference Centres on Animal Health Economics. This will enable impact assessments, evidence-based decision-making, and more efficient allocation of resources.

The Director General commended the active engagement and constructive exchanges that had taken place throughout the week, noting that these would inform future WOAAH strategies and regional priorities. She concluded reminding that the Conference Recommendations would guide implementation over the next two years, with progress to be reviewed at the next Regional Conference.

31 Proposal of date and venue of the 19th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East

The President of the Regional Commission asked the Delegates present if any of them would like to host the 19th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East in 2027.

The Delegate of Bahrain mentioned that she would like to propose organising the next conference in her own country.

The Regional Commission welcomed Bahrain's proposal, which will be confirmed at the Regional Commission meeting in May 2026 and submitted to the World Assembly of Delegates for formal endorsement.

The exact dates will then be decided in consultation with the WOAAH Director General.

32 Closing ceremony

Dr Susana Pombo and Dr Fajer Alsalloom delivered closing remarks and thanked everyone involved. They thanked Cyprus for its warm welcome and the excellent organisation of the event, and the Delegates for their active engagement in the discussions. They also thanked all the teams responsible for organising the event.

Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran thanked Cyprus for being an excellent host and for the warm hospitality extended to all participants, which made their stay in Larnaca pleasant and memorable. She noted that it had been an engaging week, with interesting sharing of ideas, meaningful discussions and collective efforts to promote animal health, welfare and food safety in animal production across the region.

Dr Soubeyran expressed her appreciation to Dr Maria Panayiotou, Minister of Agriculture of Cyprus, and Mr Michael Damianos, Minister of Health of Cyprus, for their leadership, continued commitment to protecting the health of animals, humans and ecosystems, and strong support to this event.

Dr Soubeyran also extended her sincere gratitude to Dr Christodoulos Pipis, WOAHA Delegate of Cyprus for hosting and chairing this important Regional Conference. She thanked him for his close collaboration with the WOAHA team, for his dedicated efforts to ensure the success of the conference, and for the warm welcome he extended to her and to all participants.

She also thanked all those who contributed to the conference's success, including the speakers, Delegates, and the entire WOAHA team.

In conclusion, Dr Soubeyran reaffirmed WOAHA's commitment to ensuring that its programmes remain relevant and responsive to Members' expectations. She emphasised the importance of feedback from Delegates in helping WOAHA better address Members' needs.

She wished all participants a safe journey home.

Dr Christodoulos Pipis, WOAHA Delegate of Cyprus, thanked all the participants for their active engagement throughout the week's discussions and activities. He also thanked the speakers, the local organisers and the WOAHA team for their contributions to the productive and successful conference. He wished everyone a safe journey home and said he hoped they had enjoyed their time in Larnaca.

The conference closed at 12:30 pm.

18th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East
Larnaca, Cyprus, 24-28 November 2025

PROGRAMME

SUNDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2025

Arrival of participants

MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2025

- 08:00 a.m. Conference registration
- 09:00 a.m. Opening ceremony
- 10:00 a.m. Group Photo / Break
- 10:30 a.m. Approval of the Programme
Appointment of the Conference Committee
(Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and General Rapporteur)
Appointment of session chairpersons and rapporteurs (Technical items)
- 10:45 a.m. Keynote: WOAHA in the Middle East: Empowering Veterinary Services, increasing visibility and modernising WOAHA (Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, WOAHA Director General)
- 11:15 a.m. Discussion
- 11:45 a.m. The Jurisdictions and Actions Framework of Cyprus' Veterinary Services to ensure animal welfare, animal health and public health (Dr Christodoulos Charalambous Pipis, WOAHA Delegate of Cyprus)
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch break
- 1:15 p.m. Technical item I: Improving capacity to implement assessment of socio-economic impacts of transboundary animal diseases (with focus on FMD and PPR) (Dr Theodore Knight-Jones, International Livestock Research Institute)
- 2:00 p.m. Discussion
- 2:30 p.m. Animal health and reporting situation in the Middle East (2024–2025) (Dr Jenny Hutchison, Head of the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department)
- 3:00 p.m. Break
Preparation of Recommendation No. 1 by designated small group
- 3:30 p.m. Workshop: How to improve disease reporting (Dr Jenny Hutchison and Dr Peter Melens, Deputy Head of the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department)

- 4:30 p.m. Report back from Group work and discussion
- 5:00 p.m. The Observatory thematic study: Use, challenges and impact of zoning (Dr Caroline Paquier, Senior Programme Manager - WOAHObservatory)
- 5:30 p.m. End of the day
- 7:00 p.m. Reception hosted by the Host country

TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2025

- 9:00 a.m. Technical Item II: Strengthening multisectoral cooperation to implement a new vision of an alternative compensation policy that supports the stamping out policies for the control and eradication of high-priority animal diseases in emergencies and pandemics (Dr S. Savva and Dr G. Krasias, Animal Health and Welfare Division, Veterinary Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus).
- 9:45 a.m. Discussion
- 10:15 a.m. Break
Preparation of Recommendation No. 2 by designated small group
- 10:45 a.m. Strengthening Scientific Excellence of Middle East Region through WOAHO Reference Centres network - Overview and examples of Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres activities (moderated by Dr Ahmad Almajali, Regional Representative for the Middle East)
- 11 :45 a.m. WOAHO Standards Setting Process: Aquatic Code and Manual, Terrestrial Code and Manual (Dr Etienne Bonbon, President of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission)
- 12:45 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. Antimicrobial Resistance – everyone’s matter, everyone’s responsibility (Dr Javier Yugueros-Marcos, Head of the Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department) (virtual)
- 2:15 p.m. The economic impact of AMR in animal health: facts, figures and cost-effective interventions (Dr Marco Hafner, Principal Health Economist at RAND Europe) (virtual)
- 2:45 p.m. Investing in animal health systems: why and how? (Dr Javier Yugueros-Marcos, Head of the Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department) (virtual)
- 3:30 p.m. Break
- 4:00 p.m. Interactive session around the implementation of the 2024 UN Political Declaration on AMR – The power of collective intelligence (Dr Andrés Garcia Campos, Senior Programme Manager, Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department)
Reduction of antimicrobial use: state of play (WOAHO) + country experience
Responsible use: state of play (WOAHO) + country experience
Implementation of vaccination strategies to reduce antimicrobial use: state of play (WOAHO) + country experience
- 5: 45 p.m. Collective definition and agreement of a joint regional action plan for the successful

implementation of the UN political declaration commitments made in animal health (Dr Andres Garcia Campos, Senior Programme Manager, Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department)

6:30 p.m. End of the session

7:00 p.m. Reception by WOAHA

WEDNESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2025

9:00 am The Role and value of an NGO in promoting the regional Animal Welfare activities (Ms Julia Havenstein, ICFAW)

9:30 a.m. Discussions

10:00 a.m. WOAHA Wildlife Health Programme: Presentation, Q&A, Interactive session through Menti meter & Feedback (Dr Sophie Muset, Wildlife Health Programme Manager and ZOOSURSY Project Manager & Dr Faycal Meziani, Technical Expert, Regional Representation for the Middle East)

11:00 a.m. Break

11:30 a.m. One Health in Action: regional achievements (Dr Faycal Meziani)

12:00 p.m. Discussions

12:30 p.m. Climate Change and Animal Health – Emerging Risks and Regional Preparedness (Dr Chadia Wannous, WOAHA One Health Senior Specialist and Global Coordinator, Dr Madison Wimmers, Project Officer, Biological Threat Reduction, WOAHA Preparedness and Resilience Department, Dr Anastasios Matsikaris, Meteorological Officer, Department of Meteorology, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus)

1:05 p.m. Discussions

1:30 p.m. Lunch

2:30 p.m. Empowering Veterinary Services: From Evidence to Action through PVS Pathway and Training Platform (Dr Valentyna Sharandak & Dr Rahul Srivastava, WOAHA Capacity Building Department)

4:00 pm Break

4:30 p.m. Discussion of the recommendations

5:30 p.m. Side Event on Gender

6:30 p.m. End of the day

THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2025

Technical and Cultural visit

FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2025

- 9:00 a.m. Progress update on the Governance Review Committee (Dr François Caya, WOAHA Deputy Director General for Institutional Affairs and Governance)
- 9:45 a.m. Follow up of the last Conference Recommendations (WOAHA Regional Representation for the Middle East and Sub Regional Representation for the Arabian Gulf)
- 10:15 a.m. Updates on regional activities, recommendations, work plan 2026 (Dr Ahmad Almajali, Regional Representative for the Middle East and Dr Mohamed Alhosani, Sub-Regional Representative for the Arabian Gulf)
- 11:00 a.m. Break
- 11:30 a.m. Conference conclusions and Adoption of Recommendations
- 12:30 p.m. Proposal of date and venue of the 19th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East
- 12:45 p.m. Closing Ceremony
- 1:00 p.m. End of the Conference

**18th Conference of the WOAHA regional commission for the Middle East 2025
Larnaca, Cyprus, 24-28 November**

Recommendation No 1

**Improving capacity to implement assessment of socio-economic impacts of
transboundary animal diseases (with focus on FMD and PPR)**

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. Two-thirds of Members in the region report that disease control programmes for priority diseases (e.g. FMD and PPR) are underfunded;
2. Yet livestock are crucial for national economies and livelihoods. Reducing the disease burden would generate economic benefits, enhance animal welfare and promote the more efficient use of natural resources;
3. One reason for the underinvestment in livestock and disease control programmes is the lack of evidence regarding the economic importance of animal diseases and the benefits of effective disease control programmes;
4. 80% of Veterinary Services in the region reported having very low, low, or moderate capacity for animal health economics (AHE), on average; Veterinary Services in the region produce only one AHE analysis every ten years. However, a few Members produce one analysis per year;
5. In order to address this issue and improve the mobilisation and management of resources for animal disease control, there is a need to increase AHE capacity in the region, supported by the collection of relevant quality data;
6. Currently, only a fifth of Members have access to AHE training materials, with half reporting an urgent need for training;
7. Among the factors contributing to the lack of investment in livestock disease control, there is the lack of high-level awareness of the disease burden and the benefits of control. This is related to poor advocacy skills;
8. Other contributing factors include low private sector involvement in disease control, and the low effectiveness of control programmes due to limited planning and budgeting, as well as economic constraints

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Members strengthen multisectoral collaboration between Veterinary Services, public health authorities, environmental authorities, economists, social scientists, policy experts, relevant ministries (such as planning and finance), academia, and extension services to ensure that assessments of transboundary animal diseases are truly holistic and One Health oriented. In particular, Members should collaborate with economists and sociologists to ensure that transboundary animal disease analyses are carried out with the appropriate expertise and should also emphasise regular coordination with finance and planning authorities to ensure the right information is taken into account when budgetary decisions and investment plans are made;
2. Members ensure that Veterinary Services and relevant partner institutions have adequate IT systems to store, manage, and analyse socio-economic and epidemiological data. This includes conducting a basic gap and needs assessment adopting simple and standardised data collection methods during FMD and PPR outbreaks and validate and store all outbreaks data collected in a single national database accessible to Veterinary Services;
3. Members strengthen animal health surveillance and laboratories systems, and improve the collection and transfer of epidemiological and socio-economic data from the field to national veterinary authorities, in order to enable impact assessments and support evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation;
4. Members use the PVS Pathway, particularly Gap Analysis and Strategic Planning, to strategically prioritise and cost investments and capacity needs to empower Veterinary Services with data driven decision-making related to resource mobilisation;
5. Members actively utilise the expertise of the WOAHA Reference Centres for Economics in Animal Health and other research institutions to access standardised methodologies, receive technical guidance, and plan long term capacity building programmes. They should also work toward increasing regional expertise in animal health economics, including in areas such zoonosis and food safety, and consider identifying a regional institution or consortium that could serve as a WOAHA Collaborating Centre on Animal Health Economics in the region;
6. Members strengthen engagement with the private sector, including producers, livestock associations, and actors in the value chain to support, among others, hands-on training, access to relevant economic information, such as production costs and market prices;
7. WOAHA continue to provide technical guidance including templates for socio economic analysis, and regional training workshops to support, among others, improving disease reporting through WAHIS, and incorporating basic socio-economic elements into national outbreak investigation methods where appropriate;
8. WOAHA explore options for interoperability between national systems and WAHIS to ensure transparency and inform national and global decision-making;

9. WOAH provide technical advice on storing and organising high-quality socio-economic data using existing national systems and simple digital solutions;
10. WOAH support its Members in using socio-economic data to inform two distinct types of decision: (i) disease management decisions, such as assessing the cost–benefit of control measures (e.g. vaccination vs. no vaccination), and (ii) advocacy for resource mobilisation, by helping Members to prepare concise policy briefs and investment cases that communicate the economic impact of priority diseases to policymakers and other stakeholders. This support should include guidance on how to draw on available information, including findings from the PVS Pathway and the PVS Information System, where relevant.

**18th Conference of the WOAHA Regional Commission for the Middle East 2025
Larnaca, Cyprus, 24-28 November**

Recommendation No 2

Strengthening multisectoral cooperation to implement a new vision of an alternative compensation policy that supports the stamping out policies for the control and eradication of high-priority animal diseases in emergencies and pandemics

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. High-priority animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), African swine fever (ASF), high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) and brucellosis continue to pose a major risk to animal and public health, livelihoods, the economy and trade. These diseases require early detection, timely reporting and effective response mechanisms and public private cooperation;
2. Compensation is an essential component of effective response strategies as it encourages early reporting, promotes transparency and fosters cooperation between farmers and Veterinary Services, ensuring the effective implementation of official control measures;
3. However, several WOAHA Members face legislative gaps, limited preparedness and underfunded or poorly designed compensation mechanisms. Coupled with animal keepers/producers disappointment due to past uncompensated losses, these issues negatively affecting the implementation of disease prevention and control measures;
4. Multisectoral cooperation at national, regional and international levels, involving ministries, Veterinary Services, local authorities, private veterinarians, producer organisations, the insurance sector, research institutions and environmental agencies, is essential to ensure a rapid response, coherent implementation, and fair and transparent compensation mechanisms;
5. The One Health approach provides an appropriate framework for coordinated action across the animal, human and environmental health sectors, supporting effective disease prevention, surveillance, preparedness and response;
6. Alternative compensation mechanisms, such as incentive-based policies, biosecurity-linked payments, livestock insurance schemes and mutual compensation funds, can enhance responsiveness, fairness, financial sustainability and shared responsibility among stakeholders;
7. There are Members in the Region which experience illustrates the value in having a clear legislation, transparent valuation procedures, strengthened multisectoral coordination, and harmonised implementation in supporting efficient compensation systems and fostering trust between farmers and the relevant authorities;
8. The Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway, WOAHA international standards and the GF-TADs framework provide Members with a coherent set of tools which can be used to evaluate needs, strengthen Veterinary Services and improve the design and sustainability of compensation mechanisms.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Members strengthen the legal framework and mechanisms for compensation, including enhancing the prompt and transparent delivery of compensation and introducing simple incentives (e.g., for timely reporting or minimum biosecurity compliance, or diseases control compliance) to promote responsible behaviour and trust, including through collaboration with the private sector. This should be achieved by conducting a targeted review of national legislation and administrative procedures to ensure that compensation mechanisms are transparent, fair, well-defined, and aligned with WOAH international standards;
2. Members establish or reinforce multisectoral approach, involving relevant stakeholders, to formalise compensation mechanisms in order to ensure coherent implementation of compensation during outbreaks;
3. Members, with support from WOAH, strengthen the capacities of Veterinary Services, such as surveillance, diagnostics, contingency planning, legislation, and animal welfare, mainly through PVS Evaluation followed by targeted support like Veterinary Legislation Support and Public-Private Partnerships, where appropriate. Furthermore, they carry out a comparative review of compensation legislation and administrative procedures across the region, identifying at least three areas for regional harmonisation within 12 months to enable coordinated responses in transboundary outbreaks;
4. Where compensation mechanisms are in place, Members strengthen public communication and raise farmers' awareness regarding the rules and procedures associated with compensation ;
5. Members request the support of WOAH Reference Centres on Animal Health Economics to design appropriate compensation mechanisms that incentivise timely reporting and participation in disease control programmes;
6. WOAH develops practical guidance and examples on legal frameworks, valuation methods, and coordination mechanisms through private sector engagement to support Members in improving compensation governance. It also assists its Members in sharing experiences through dedicated platforms, mechanisms, and workshops, while exploring harmonised approaches to compensation-related aspects and stamping out policies;
7. Where relevant, WOAH promotes discussions on compensation-related aspects (e.g. legislation, coordination and implementation) during PVS evaluations, Gap analysis exercises and Strategic Planning workshops, as well as in targeted support programmes, including public-private partnerships;
8. WOAH helps Members identify opportunities for collaborative projects, pilot initiatives, and emergency support mechanisms that strengthen their compensation systems and preparedness, using regional platforms such as the GF-TADs;
9. WOAH, considers establishing a regional technical working group for compensation, linked to GF-TADs , to share national experiences, harmonise operational procedures, and coordinate cross-border outbreak compensation responses.