

WOAH Standards and Guiding Principles on Aquatic Animal Welfare

(update on ongoing work)

Interregional webinar for the Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions

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1. **Why aquatic animal welfare matters** (The WOAH framework for animal welfare)
2. **What principles underpin the work** (Animal Welfare Guiding Principles: the Five Freedoms)
3. **Why standards matter** (WOAH international standards, the basis for ...)
4. **What WOAH aquatic animal welfare standards currently exist** (Section 7 standards across the production chain)
5. **What is changing** (Ongoing work: Section 7 under review)
6. **How Members can engage** (WOAH standards and the standard-setting process (opportunities to contribute))
7. **Discussion**



The WOAH framework for animal welfare





Animal Welfare Guiding Principles: the Five Freedoms

4

[Animal Welfare - WOAAH - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

**Freedom from
hunger,
malnutrition
and thirst**

**Freedom from
fear and
distress**

**Freedom from
heat stress or
physical
discomfort**

**Freedom from
pain, injury and
disease**

**Freedom to
express normal
patterns of
behaviour**

To be applied to aquatic species through methods and environments appropriate to their biology.

[Aquatic animals - WOAAH - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

Outcome-based · Science-based and evolving · Built through Member and expert consultation



WOAH international standards, the basis for ...

5





Section 7 standards across the production chain

8

Section 7 of the Aquatic Animal Health Code, mapped to the stages where welfare risk is highest; currently covering farmed fish, excluding ornamental species.

CHAPTER 7.1. Introduction to recommendations for the welfare of farmed fish

General principles = The framework and rationale for farmed fish welfare (2008)

CHAPTER 7.2. Welfare of farmed fish during transport

Stocking density, water quality, humane handling (2009/2012)

CHAPTER 7.3. Welfare aspects of stunning and killing of farmed fish for human consumption

Methods that avoid unnecessary suffering (2010/2012)

CHAPTER 7.4. Killing of farmed fish for disease control purposes

Welfare during emergency culling response (2012/2013)



Ongoing work: Section 7 under review

The Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission February 2026 meeting report is accessible via the delegates' portal following the hyperlink: [Specialist Commissions Reports](#) and/or at the WOAHA public website: [a-aahsc-feb-2026-2.pdf](#)



The Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission is reviewing Section 7, drawing on **expert scientific reviews** of reports on the WOAHA website:

- [Welfare of farmed fish: Review of the relevant scientific evidence on the welfare aspects of farmed fish during transport, the stunning and killing of farmed fish for human consumption and the killing of farmed fish for disease control purposes](#)
- [Welfare of farmed fish: Review of Chapters 7.2. 'Welfare of farmed fish during transport'; 7.3. 'Welfare aspects of stunning and killing of farmed fish for human consumption'; 7.4. 'Killing of farmed fish for disease control purposes' of the Aquatic Code](#)



Ongoing work: Section 7 under review

10

And on **Member comments** regarding the following questions raised on the Aquatic Animals Commission February 2026 report:

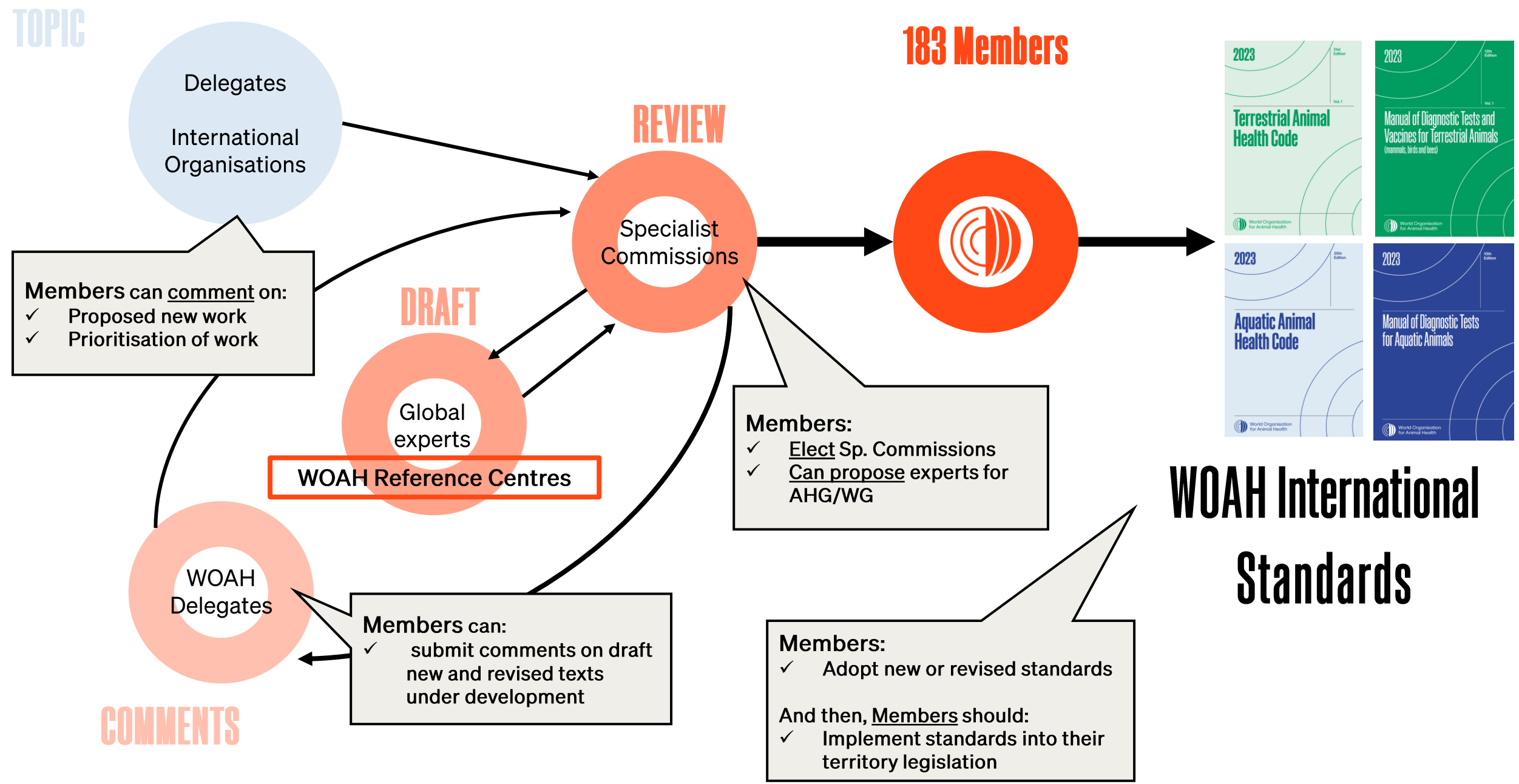
1. Should the *Aquatic Code* provide a high-level approach to achieve positive welfare outcomes, without the provision of detailed technical requirements, or are more detailed standards for certain species and systems preferred when scientific evidence is available to support those standards?
2. Are there alternative approaches or suggestions that Members wish to put forward?
3. Would Members prefer that the chapters in Section 7 be revised and released for comment sequentially, or that all four chapters of Section 7 be circulated for comment at the same time?

- Deadline for Member comment on these questions was 3 July and has now passed.
- **Next opportunity for Member comment will be the September AAC meeting report, once it circulates!**



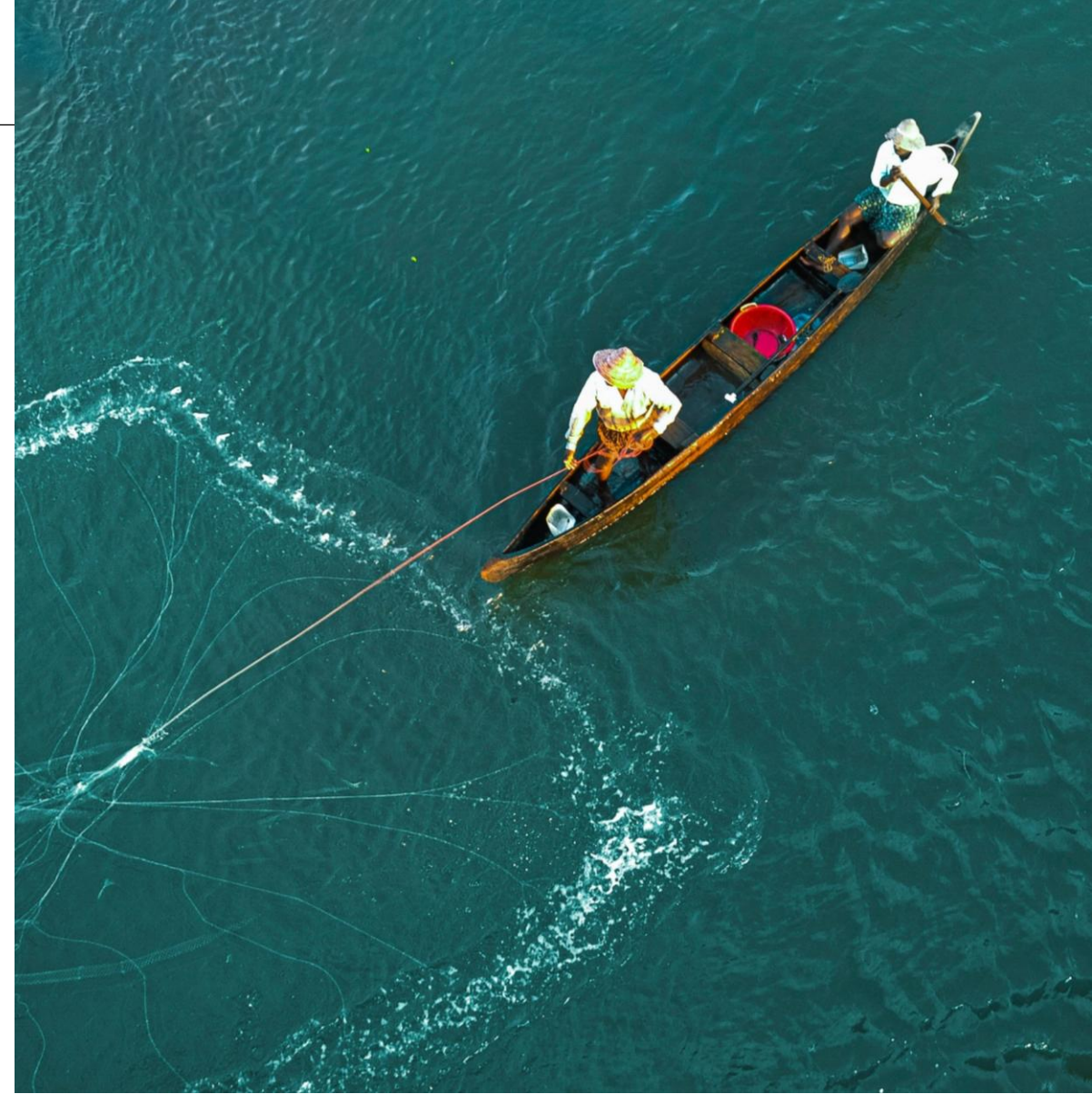
WOAH standard-setting process

11





Thank you



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