

Training Workshop for OIE National Focal Points on Wildlife Diseases

Naura Springs Hotel Arusha, – Tanzania 15 - 19 March 2010

Opening Remerks by Dr Bonaventure Mtei

OIE Sub regional Representative for Southern Africa

Guest of Honour,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Dr Bernard Vallat, the Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and on my own behalf, may I join the OIE Delegate for Tanzania, Dr Mleche to welcome you all to Arusha, and in particular to this workshop.

Guest of Honour,

I thank you for availing yourself to come and officiate this meeting. We are most grateful to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania through the Ministry of Wildlife and Natural resources and the Ministry of Livestock Development and Fisheries for agreeing to host this meeting.

I would also like to thank Prof. Coetzer and his team from the **OIE Collaborating Centre for Training in Integrated Livestock and Wildlife Health Management** together with the workshop organizing committee for their efforts in preparing for this workshop.

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation financial support to the OIE from the European Union in organizing this workshop through the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme for Africa.

Colleagues,

Wildlife health is a term used to encompass not only diseases of wildlife species, but also nutritional issues and the general well being including environmental factors that allow

interaction of multiple factors. OIE defines health as a condition that allows species to prosper within a habitat where sustainable biodiversity and biosecurity are the measures of success. Therefore, diseases are not the only monitors of health but indeed an integral part of a “healthy” ecosystem.

Human doctors, veterinarians and biologists are currently trained to become professional specialists separately and there is lack of cross cutting specialties. OIE and many other institutions now strongly believe in a multidisciplinary approach to health and well being of all species within ecosystems and as a result of a relatively new concept has evolved on **One Health**. In comparison to human and animal health, One Health examines ecological health concerns beyond the species-specific approach.

Current health problems are largely due to human activities. Humans have an extraordinary capacity to modify the physical world. This power allows humans to be the most instrumental force in setting the stage for evolution and or extinction. For this reason, OIE supports the concept that people must live and thrive in ecosystems they share with their natural heritage and environment. The greatest physicist, Albert Einstein, may have created some problems but before he died he stated, “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” When biodiversity and biosecurity are lost, species composition is disturbed, ecological processes are disrupted and therefore serious health implications arise. OIE understands the interconnections of species and the complexity of ecological health problems. I believe Albert Einstein would have appreciated using the One Health approach as a guide, to bridge the gaps of professional specialties.

Guest of honour,

Gathered here are wildlife health experts from Africa and Middle East to deliberate and share experiences on how best to address wildlife health challenges. Some of the subjects to be covered during this workshop include wildlife disease reporting systems and evolutions of health problems of free living and farmed wildlife as they relate to populations of domesticated animals and humans. Measures to prevent, control or where appropriate, treat these wildlife health problems will be discussed with special reference to risk problems in the transportation and trade of wildlife and products thereof. But more importantly as a result of this workshop we hope to establish a network of wildlife health experts who should contribute to improved surveillance and diagnostic techniques of wildlife diseases.

Guest of honour,

Of particular interest to the OIE is the role played by wildlife in the epidemiology of infections and or diseases like Bovine Tuberculosis, Avian Influenza, Newcastle Disease, Foot and Mouth Disease, Classical Swine Fever, African Swine Fever, Bluetongue, Rabies, Brucellosis, Anthrax and Rift Valley Fever to mention a few especially with regards to trade. Very often illegal wildlife trade presents an unquantified risk of geographical spread of infectious diseases as well as enhanced opportunities for new interspecies exchange of infectious organisms.

On the other hand, legitimate trade in wildlife serves a role in captive breeding and zoological gardens, as well as potentially an important source of protein and income for many people. Obviously various stakeholders need to work together to discuss and evaluate wildlife commodity trade and health risk management, food security and livelihoods issues and conservation impacts in order to objectively inform the global community including standard setting bodies like OIE.

This is one of the very first training sessions conducted for OIE Wildlife Focal Points as encouraged by the OIE. We will be discussing in more details the terms of reference for the OIE Wildlife Focal Points but at the end of this workshop it is expected that the level of awareness will be raised to facilitate networking, cooperation and communication among several competent authorities where responsibilities are shared. We need to maintain dialogue amongst the relevant competent authorities with the One Health concept in mind at all levels to ensure efficient and effective management of wildlife health for the benefit of currently and future generations.

Colleagues,

I believe you will find this training a worthwhile undertaking and for those visiting Arusha for the first time, the field visit to Tarangire will definitely be a lifetime experience for you.

I thank you all for your attention.

AKSANTENI SANA