



Training of National Focal Points for Aquatic Animal Health (Cycle IV)

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CERTIFICATION

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Harmonisation of international trade and certification

Objective to facilitate international trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products to avoid unacceptable risks to human and aquatic animal health.

Requires considering the aquatic animal health situation in the:

- Exporting country,
- Transit country/countries, and
- Importing country.
- Competent Authorities should base their import requirements on the standards of the WOAHA
- These should form the basis of certificates drawn up in accordance with the model international aquatic animal health certificates (IAHC) provided by WOAHA.

Animal health certificates

- Should be exact and concise.
- Clearly address the requirements of the importing country.
- Prior consultation between Competent Authorities (CA) of importing and exporting countries helps to determine the exact requirements of the certification.
- May include mutually agreed upon visitation by the CA of the importing country.
- Certificates should be:
 - Issued and signed by a certifying official authorised by the CA to perform inspections.
 - Provide the necessary guarantees of disease-status relating to only those diseases known to be transmitted by the commodity concerned.
 - Endorsed through signature and/or official stamp of the CA.

Responsibility of the importing country

- Import requirements should assure that commodities introduced into the importing country comply, and are aligned, with the recommendations in the relevant standards of WOAHA.
- If a country chooses a level of protection requiring measures more stringent than the standards of WOAHA, these should be based on an import risk analysis.
- Import requirements should:
 - NOT include the exclusion of pathogenic agents or aquatic animal diseases that are present in the importing country and are not subject to any official control programme.
 - Should not be more stringent than measures applied as part of official control programmes operating within the importing country.
 - should not include measures against pathogenic agents or diseases that are not WOAHA-listed unless significant risk to the importing country can be demonstrated by risk analysis

Responsibility of the exporting country

An exporting country should, on request, supply the following:

- Information on the aquatic animal health situation and national aquatic animal health information systems relative to WOAHA-listed diseases to determine :
 - Whether the country is disease free
 - has disease-free zones or
 - has disease-free compartments.
 - pathways followed to achieve disease freedom e.g.:
 - ❖ historical freedom,
 - ❖ absence of susceptible species or
 - ❖ targeted surveillance.
 - regulations and procedures in force to maintain the free status
- Regular and prompt information on the occurrence of listed diseases.
- Details of the country's ability to apply measures to control and prevent listed diseases.
- Information on the structure and authority of the CA.
- Technical information, particularly on biological tests and vaccines applied in all or part of the country.

CA of the exporting country is ultimately accountable for certification used in international trade.

The CA:

- Should have official procedures for the authorisation of certifying officials, defining:
 - Functions and duties,
 - Conditions of oversight and accountability,
 - Measures for possible suspension and termination of the authorisation.
- Ensure that relevant instructions and training are provided to certifying officials.
- Monitor the activities of the certifying officials to verify their integrity and impartiality.

International trade involves a continuing ethical responsibility.

- Acceptable level of risk (versus zero risk, which is not attainable).
- Responsibilities of the CA in case of an incident related to importation:
 - Obligation to notify the CA of the importing country should an outbreak of disease occur in the exporting country that is specifically included in the international animal health certificate (IAHC) or other disease of potential epidemiological importance.
 - Notify the exporting country if a disease appears in aquatic animals and is associated with importation of commodities to enable the exporting country to investigate.
 - ❖ This may be the first available information on the occurrence of the disease in a previously disease-free aquatic animal population, or
 - ❖ Further action may be required if the source of the infection did not originate in the exporting country.

Responsibility of the importing and exporting country

In case of suspicion, on reasonable grounds, that an international aquatic animal health certificate (IAHC) may be fraudulent, the CAs of both countries should:

- Conduct an investigation.
- Notify any third country that may have been implicated.
- Keep under official control all associated consignments, pending the outcome of the investigation.
- Fully cooperate with CAs of all countries involved.

If an IAHC is found to be fraudulent, every effort should be made to identify those responsible so that appropriate action can be taken in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The certifying official

Certification based on the highest possible ethical standards must respect and safeguard the professional integrity of the certifying official.

The certifying official:

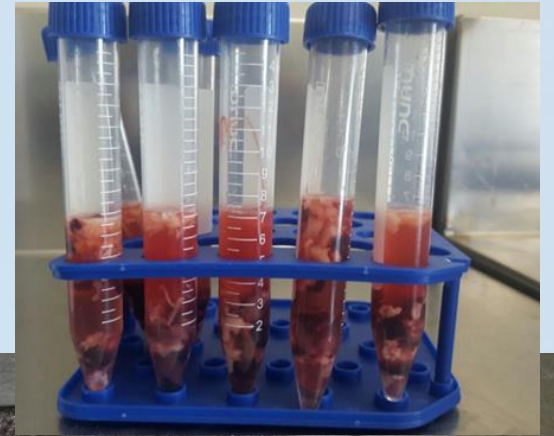
- Must be authorised by the CA of the exporting country to sign IAHCs.
- Only certify matters that are within their own knowledge at the time of signing the certificate, or that have been separately attested by another party authorised by the CA.
- Sign only at the appropriate time certificates that have been completed fully and correctly.
- Should have verified or be in possession of supporting documentation before signing, where a certificate is signed on the basis of such documentation.
- Have no conflict of interest in the commercial aspects of the aquatic animals or aquatic animal products being certified and be independent from the commercial parties involved.

Principles of drawing up IAH certificates

- Designed so as to minimise the potential for fraud.
- Use terms that are simple, unambiguous and easy to understand.
- If required, written in the languages of both the importing and exporting countries.
- Aquatic animals and aquatic animal products should be appropriately identified.
- Should not require a certifying official to certify matters that are outside his/her knowledge or that he/she cannot ascertain and verify.
- Provide notes of guidance indicating the extent of enquiries, tests or examinations expected to be carried out before the certificate is signed.
- Text should not be amended except by deletions that should be signed and stamped by the certifying official.
- Signature and stamp should be in a colour different to that of the printing of the certificate.
- Only original certificates should be accepted by the importing country.
- Replacement certificates should reference the number and the issue date of the certificate that it supersedes.

IAH certificates provide information on disease-status

- Guarantees guarding against the introduction of unwanted diseases have become an essential element of international trade in/movement of aquatic animals.
- Exporting countries need to meet disease-status requirements laid down by importing countries. The burden of proof lies with the exporting country and at compartment level with the producer.
- Where a country is unable to prove absence of a disease, based on surveillance, the concept of zoning and compartmentalization allows a country's CA to provide internationally accepted disease-status guarantees.



History of SPF trout ova exports from South Africa – an example of compartmentalisation

- Rainbow and brown trout were introduced to South Africa through the importation of eyed-ova since the early colonial days, and a viable salmonid aquaculture industry developed.
- Strict import controls requiring disease-free guarantees have protected the South African salmonid industry from viral and bacterial diseases that have plagued aquaculture elsewhere despite frequent importations of eyed-ova.
- South African trout farmers have successfully exported specific-pathogen-free (SPF) trout ova to the Northern and Western Hemisphere since the late 1980's to enable year round production of table fish for consumption in these countries.



South African imports and exports of eyed-ova

- Exports from South Africa have exceeded 40 million SPF eyed-ova per annum since the late 1980s, and are expected to exceed 100 million in the near future.
- Disease-status guarantees for prioritized diseases are provided by the CA (State Veterinary Services) based on individual importing countries' requirements. These reflect, but may also exceed, WOAHA standards.
- The diseases for which guarantees are provided are included in the country's list of notifiable diseases.
- Each year, a significant number of salmonid eyed-ova are also imported into South Africa from the Northern Hemisphere.
- Import permits are issued subject to the CA of the exporting country providing equivalent or higher disease-status guarantees as those required by exports from South Africa.

Prerequisites to providing disease-status guarantees

- National veterinary laboratories (in South Africa, Onderstepoort Veterinary Research) need the capacity to isolate and diagnose the relevant salmonid diseases to the standards provided by the WOAHA Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals.
- Farms wishing to export ova are required to commit to, and maintain, biosecurity practices appropriate to compartmentalisation.
- Export farms need to be officially registered as an export facility with the CA responsible for fish health in the exporting country. In South Africa they are subject to annual inspection and are issued a unique export facility registration number that appears on the IAHC.

Ornamental fish

- Ornamental fish are highly traded commodities increasingly implicated in the spread of aquatic pathogens.
- Veterinary certificates of health are more often based on inspection and quarantine than on biosecurity and disease surveillance of the source populations.
- Large numbers of koi are still imported into many countries from various sources with minimal certification and in many cases dubious health status.
- This has resulted in frequent outbreaks of disease amongst koi and food carp as a result of koi herpesvirus disease (KHVD).
- Strict biosecurity measures and disease surveillance, based on WOAHA standards, when applied to koi breeding farms enables the CA to meet the importing countries' disease-status requirements.
- Export of koi herpesvirus- and rhabdovirus carpio-free koi for the ornamental fish market provides entrepreneurial opportunities.



Production of SPF trout ova and SPF koi and tilapia fingerlings

Follows the same process and requires:

- Maintaining a closed population of parent fish on a protected water source.
- Adherence to strict biosecurity measures at National and compartment level.
- Strategic sampling for prioritized diseases at a statistically relevant confidence level at six-monthly interval.
- Contingency planning that may necessitate eradication of known infected stock.
- Identification and remediation of critical control points to eliminate or minimize the risk of introducing diseases.
- After a two-year period of surveillance with negative results, a Government-endorsed certificate of veterinary inspection can provide the guarantees required for sale and export of specific-pathogen-free (SPF) fish or ova.



Targeted disease surveillance and veterinary auditing

- The disease status of aquatic animals on a farm, registered for export, is evaluated on a continuous basis.
- At 6 monthly intervals, 150 fish, representative of all fish populations held in the hatchery at that time, are sampled for testing for prioritized diseases .
- Testing of 150 fish represents, statistically, the 95% confidence level for detecting a disease with 2% prevalence in a closed population of fish exceeding 1000 individuals, as required by the CA of most importing countries based on WOAH standards.



Verification and endorsement by the veterinary authority

- Prior to export, the disease-free status of the parent stock will be verified by the state veterinarian who in turn will recommend the issue of the official veterinary aquatic animal health certificate. This is subject to the hatchery having maintained a current fish export farm registration.
- The certificate is issued on the official letter head of the Government of South Africa and must contain the export farm registration number.
- The responsible state veterinarian will sign the certificate after inspecting each batch of eyed-ova as they leave the hatchery.



For many African countries there is urgency to deal with IAH certification for the movement of live tilapia by applying WOAHA standards

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION