WOAH: Setting International Animal Health Standards

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The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is a globally respected source for animal health and veterinary information. WOAH collects and shares information about animal diseases worldwide and develops science-based animal health standards that facilitate safe international trade in animals and animal products.

What Is WOAH's Role?

WOAH sets international trade standards for animal health and disease control. APHIS, the primary U.S. agency responsible for animal health issues associated with trade in animals and animal products, actively participates in creating these standards, which protect U.S. animal agriculture and support safe global commerce.

To create these standards, WOAH periodically collects information on diseases found in each country. WOAH revises international trade standards, which are sent to member entities, including APHIS, for opportunities to review and comment.

The Review Cycle for International Animal Health Standards

September	Meeting of WOAH Specialist Commissions (Terrestrial, Aquatic, Biological, Scientific) to create new or update existing standards.
Late October/Early November	WOAH distributes proposed standards to members, including APHIS, for comment. APHIS posts the standards and invites stakeholders to comment on two lists of standards: • "Part A" list standards are proposed for adoption in May. • "Part B" list standards will go through additional rounds of comments before being proposed for adoption.
Late December/Early January	APHIS submits U.S. comments to WOAH. APHIS posts the proposed standards and invites stakeholders to comment.
February	Meeting of WOAH Specialist Commissions (Terrestrial, Aquatic, Biological, Scientific) to create new or update existing standards.
Late March/Early April	WOAH distributes proposed standards to members, including APHIS, for comment. APHIS posts the standards and invites stakeholders to comment.
May	Proposed "Part A" list standards are adopted at the WOAH General Session and become the international standards.
July	APHIS submits U.S. comments on "Part B" list standards to WOAH . APHIS posts the proposed standards and invites stakeholders to comment.

What Is APHIS' Role?

The Deputy Administrator of Veterinary Services, also known as the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), is designated as the U.S. Delegate, managing animal health standard-setting activities related to the WOAH (see table in the "What Is WOAH's Role?" section above). The CVO coordinates U.S. comments on animal health standards proposed for adoption.

While it is the United States' intent to participate in developing science-based international standards and support their adoption, the U.S. position on a specific

draft standard depends on the acceptability and technical merit of the final draft.

How to Comment on WOAH Standards as a Stakeholder

Below are links to the standards for which APHIS seeks comment. Comments are accepted during specific periods in the review cycle for International Animal Health (see table in the What Is WOAH's Role section above).

Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Animals Commission)

The Aquatic Animals Commission helps ensure the Aquatic Animal Health Code (Aquatic Code) and Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals (Aquatic Manual) reflect current scientific information. The Aquatic Code and Aquatic Manual contain international standards for trade, disease prevention, and disease control for aquatic animals and their products.

Biological Standards Commission (Laboratory Commission)

The Laboratory Commission helps ensure the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Terrestrial Animals (Terrestrial Manual) reflects current scientific information. The Terrestrial Manual develops international standards for laboratory diagnostic tests and vaccines for animal diseases.

Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission)

The Code Commission helps ensure the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code) reflects current scientific information. The Terrestrial Code contains international standards for trade, disease prevention, and disease control for terrestrial animals and their products.

Scientific Commission Report

In addition, you can view the most recent Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) report. The Scientific Commission helps identify the most appropriate strategies and measures for disease prevention and control. It also examines voluntary requests from WOAH members about their disease-specific animal health status.

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