



WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH  
*Protecting animals, preserving our future*

# Communication **Handbook** Veterinary Services



World Health  
Organization

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This book has been developed by:

**World Organisation for Animal Health – OIE**

OIE Communication Unit

In collaboration with

**World Health Organization - WHO**

WHO Headquarters

Department of Communications Director-General's Office

# Table of contents

Introduction	5
User Guide	9
<b>Section A Framing your communications</b>	<b>11</b>
Session 1 The SOCO and the POINT	13
Session 2 The audience	25
Session 3 Communicating on risk	37
<b>Section B Developing communication materials and products</b>	<b>53</b>
Session 4 7 Cs of Veterinary Services' communications	55
Session 5 Storyline and talking points	65
<b>Section C Working with the media</b>	<b>77</b>
Session 6 Media spokesperson tools	79
Session 7 Tips for working with the media	95
<b>Section D Standards on OIE communication</b>	<b>105</b>
Session 8 Terrestrial Animal Health Code	107
Session 9 Aquatic Animal Health Code	115
Acknowledgements	123



# Introduction

Veterinary Services and their partners play a key role in protecting animal health and welfare. Everyday, they monitor, detect, notify and respond rapidly to animal diseases. They develop and implement protective animal health and welfare measures, and establish and deliver international veterinary certification.

To carry out these missions, Veterinary Services personnel rely not only on scientific knowledge and expertise, but on collaboration with key stakeholders and concerned publics. Veterinary Services need to talk to health professionals, farmers, civil society, communities, media and others who are largely unfamiliar with the scientific knowledge of the world of animal health.

In an era of globalisation and rapid circulation of goods, people, animal products and live animals, effective communication has become ever more important. Enormous evolutions in information technology and transformation of how people access information have further increased the demand for experts and officials to communicate clearly, quickly and credibly about risks to animals and humans from the animal sector.

In 2011, the Member Countries of the OIE adopted international standards on the communication of Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services. Relevant provisions are included in the section dealing with quality services of the Terrestrial (chapter 3.3, section 3), and the Aquatic Animal Health Codes (chapter 3.2, section 3) respectively.

National Delegates of OIE Member Countries are encouraged to designate Focal Points for Communication. OIE conducts regional seminars for National Focal Points to further strengthen their communications skills and capacities, and provide an opportunity to network. This publication is another contribution from the OIE for further improving communication capacities of the Veterinary Services.

Veterinary Services communications contributes significantly to the protection of human health. With 75% of new human diseases reported to be emerging from the animal world, two-way communication between human and animal health sectors is essential. They have to communicate effectively on risks and events such as disease outbreaks. Collaboration between the two sectors is equally essential in health education and health promotion, and other risk communication activities. During outbreaks and epidemics, the two sectors must harmonise their communication on hazards, on the nature and magnitude of risks and vulnerabilities, and on actions taken to control the crisis. They must quickly identify and address perceptions, beliefs, rumours and misinformation. Timely, credible, easy to understand and trustworthy information and advice will minimise the loss of lives, disease and economic and social loss due to disease.

The International Health Regulations (2005), of the World Health Organization require all Member States to develop core capacities for detecting and responding to disease outbreaks and public health events. One of these core capacities is risk communication.

OIE and WHO work closely on many aspects of the One Health approach which views human, animal and environmental health in a holistic interlinked way. The two organisations collaborate in the area of risk communication and this publication is one of several joint initiatives to strengthen the risk communication capacity of organisations' staff, and international and national counterparts.

This Handbook was adapted directly from WHO-s Effective Communications Participant Handbook which is used in their face to face and online communications training programme. The adapted Handbook allows you to brush up on your communications knowledge and skills and share with your international and national counterparts.

I hope you will find this handbook useful.

**Bernard VALLAT**

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for Animal Health - OIE

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