Regional Workshop for OIE National Focal Points for Wildlife

Obihiro, Hokkaido, Japan, 1–4 July 2014

© OIE RR-AP/Phnin Thidar Myint

The OIE Regional Workshop, 'Training of OIE National Focal Points for Wildlife in the Region of Asia and the Pacific', was held from 1 to 4 July 2014 in Hokkaido (Japan), at the Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (OUAVM), the OIE Collaborating Centre for Surveillance and Control of Animal Protozoan Diseases, with a solid attendance of 55 participants, including 27 nominated country representatives, 21 of whom were OIE National Focal Points for Wildlife.

After the opening remarks by Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Prof. Hideyuki Nagasawa, OUAVM's President, welcomed participants, noting the increasing attention being paid to wildlife from both human and domestic animal health viewpoints, especially in Hokkaido, where wildlife habitats overlap those of humans and domesticated animals. Comments made by various participants during the seminar confirmed that many Members in the region share this problem.

Dr Elisabeth Erlacher-Vindel, Deputy Head of the OIE Scientific and Technical Department, spoke about the OIE, highlighting the role and responsibilities of National Focal Points for Wildlife, the history of their training and their expected tasks. She also outlined future projects and emphasised the importance of the contribution of Wildlife Focal Points to the OIE's work.

One day was dedicated to wildlife health risk assessment, based on the teaching of and a work-book developed by Dr Frederick A. (Ted) Leighton, and composed of lectures and group discussions. Groups of five or six participants debated given topics and completed an exercise on the planned movement of American buffalo to an imaginary island.

Another day was dedicated to the notification of wildlife diseases using the WAHIS and *WAHIS-Wild* systems. There were presentations on the functionalities of *WAHIS-Wild* as well as practical exercises. This meant that every participant could work through each section, i.e. the section on OIE-listed diseases, and the section on non OIE-listed diseases, using a dedicated training platform. The relatively long allocation of time to these exercises seemed effective, and allowed participants to receive individualised advice from Dr Marija Popovic and Dr Lina Awada, from the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department. The responsibilities of National Focal Points for Wildlife were clarified regarding both disease notification and collaboration with National Focal Points for Animal Disease Notification to the

OIE. The *WAHIS-Wild* Interface, a new website dedicated to non OIE-listed wildlife diseases, was also introduced.

In addition, there were three stand-alone presentations:

a) Prof. Ikuo Igarashi, from the National Research Centre for Protozoan Disease of the OUAVM, talked about the OUAVM's work as an OIE Collaborating Centre, and discussed protozoan diseases in wildlife, such as malaria and babesiosis, from the viewpoint of zoonotic concerns;

b) Dr Boripat Siriaroonrat, from the Bureau of Conservation, Research and Education, Thailand, talked about the need for capacity-building and for more reporting of wildlife morbidity and mortality, encouraging participants to pay attention to the Asian Society of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine (ASZWM); and

c) Dr Dolores Gavier-Widén, from the National Veterinary Institute of Uppsala, Sweden, presented the recently adopted OIE guideline on *Principles and methods for the validation of diagnostic tests for infectious diseases applicable to wildlife*[1], referring to the concept of provisional recognition. She noted the importance of implementing such tests and encouraged the wide sharing of results to increase information about test performance.

A short film on diseases of large game animals, made in collaboration with the French Agency for Hunting and Wildlife (*Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage* – ONCFS), was shown and attracted much interest[2].

Day three centred around a field trip, first to a deer farm where captured wild deer are fattened before slaughter. The increase of wild deer has been a serious problem for the local agri-forest industry, as well as for traffic safety, and the use of these wild deer for food is becoming popular in Hokkaido, alongside the development of voluntary guidelines to ensure food safety.

Participants also visited the Wildlife Conservation Centre at Kushiro-shitsugen National Park. There, Dr Keisuke Saito, a private veterinarian who runs the Institute for Raptor Biomedicine attached to the Centre, spoke about medical conservation activities for wild raptors, including the discovery of lead poisoning from bullets. His comments about avian influenza in swans, an infection for which commercial test kits have given inconclusive diagnoses, reinforced the importance of test validation for wildlife.

© OIE RR-AP/Hnin Thidar Myint

Field trip to a deer farm

© Boripat Siriaroonrat

Dr Keisuke Saito gives a presentation on conservation veterinary activities for wild raptors in Hokkaido

Throughout the three days, the interest shown by participants was very high and the success of the seminar was undoubtedly also due to the dedicated and very helpful support of the OUAVM personnel.

Over all, the seminar was a great opportunity for OIE staff to meet the National Focal Points for Wildlife and to discuss the importance of wildlife surveillance and control programmes in the countries of the region, each with their own diverse set of circumstances.

1 Guideline 3.6.7. in the *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (2014)

2 Available at www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/multimedia/video-oie/