

Successful organization the First Course of the Veterinary Epidemiology Training Program for University Academics

The First Course of the Veterinary Epidemiology Training for University Academics was held at Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU) in Wuhan from 13th to 17th January 2014. This was a joint initiative of FAO Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) China, HZAU, Veterinary Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and China Animal Health and Epidemiology Center (CAHEC). The training course was delivered by Professor Ian Robertson and Dr Cai Chang from the Murdoch University, Australia, with support of a team of Chinese co-facilitators from HZAU (Prof Guo Aizhen, Dr Chen Yingyu), CAHEC (Dr Wang Youming and Dr Shen Chaojian) and FAO ECTAD China (Dr Guo Fusheng and Dr Li Yin).



▲ Group photo

participants. This was an important part of this joint initiative. Over the next few months, Dr Cai Chang will also conduct follow-up activities with four of the national universities to assist trainees with course development, presentation of seminars/lectures and advocacy at senior levels in the universities.

A total of 27 trainees from 17 universities in China attended the one-week training course. A launching ceremony was organized at the beginning of the training, leaders from the Veterinary Bureau, HZAU, CAHEC and FAO ECTAD China were present to demonstrate their strong commitment. The emphasis was to demonstrate how to teach epidemiology at undergraduate level while ensuring knowledge of the main components of epidemiology including epidemiology, disease causation, disease patterns, measures of disease frequency, epidemiological studies and diagnostic tests. Considering the limited English language capacity of many of the trainees, a Chinese-speaking veterinary epidemiologist Dr Cai Chang delivered some of the presentations and facilitated participative discussions among



▲ Prof Ian Robertson delivering a presentation to trainees



▲ Dr Li Yin and trainees were having some discussions

The feedback from the training was very positive, with high level of satisfaction from the trainees. Through this training, the trainees showed their commitment to the vision to further develop epidemiology teaching in Chinese Universities, and their willingness to maintain ongoing networking among the participants. It is envisaged that there will be many opportunities for the veterinary schools involved to establish partnerships with a range of international schools to progress their plans for epidemiology teaching.

FAO ECTAD China co-hosting the LinkTADs coordination meeting in Beijing

A coordination meeting of the “Linking Epidemiology and Laboratory Research on Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) and Zoonoses in China and EU (LinkTADs) program” was co-hosted by China Animal Disease Control Center (CADC) and FAO ECTAD China at Yong'an Hotel on 21 January 2014. Representatives from project Chinese partners including CADC, China Animal Health and Epidemiology Center (CAHEC), Harbin Veterinary Research Institute (HVRI), Shanghai Veterinary Research Institute (SVRI), and FAO ECTAD China were gathered to have discussions about implementation on the LinkTADs program. Dr Guo Fusheng and Dr Li Yin from the FAO ECTAD China attended this meeting.

The major objective of this workshop were to clarify the tasks and responsibilities of the Chinese partners, development of cooperation mechanisms, the work in the different task packages and the priority animal diseases. The financial management and other operational issues were discussed and all partner agreed to work together to achieve the objectives and overcome any obstacles.

Dr Guo Fusheng led discussion on two important objectives. One was to set up links between the EU and Chinese partners, among Chinese partners, between epidemiology and laboratories. Another objective was to find common interests among all partners to develop collaboration opportunities in the future. SVRI agreed to take the lead on organization of the scientific workshop scheduled to be held in Shanghai in April 2014. They will draft the agenda and share with all partners.

Increased detection of influenza viruses

The last few months has seen reports of increased detection of a variety of influenza viruses in China and other east Asian countries. These reports include: a second wave of the H7N9 Influenza virus and human deaths, with the detection of the virus in live bird markets in eastern provinces of China; continued reports of H5N1 influenza viruses in Vietnam and China; two reports of H5N2 influenza in China; reports of H5N8 in ducks and wildlife in South Korea; and, H10N8 and H9N2 influenza viruses as apparently incidental isolated cases in humans. The increase in detection of these outbreak incidences has, in part, been due to an improvement in diagnostic capacity, increased activity and reporting by animal and human health authorities and heightened awareness by the public and the national and international scientific communities.

Further work by all parties is essential as it is clear that there are a number of different influenza viruses circulating in animals, humans and wildlife in China and its neighbouring countries. While many of these are of an incidental nature, or of low pathogenicity that have little impact, some strains may be able to evolve into significant animal and/or humans pathogens.

These events are a wakeup call for national and international, animal and human health authorities in the region to the importance of early detection of emerging and potentially, pathogenic strains of influenza viruses. The effective prevention and response to these potential threats requires increased and focused attention on the development of improved systems for detection, epidemiological investigation rapid response, prevention and control.

Upcoming Activities:

1. FAO ECTAD China Strategic Planning Meeting will be organized in February 2014.
2. The first round of sampling activities of the Emerging Pandemic Threats Plus (EPT+) project will be conducted in Guangdong and Hunan Provinces in February 2014.
3. Hoping that everyone had a great Chinese New Year. Wishing you and your family a happy, healthy and prosperous year of the Horse.