Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health

One Health approach

Incident coordination groups (ICGs) are a solid example of tripartite members joining forces and strengthening One Health collaboration. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is involved in the majority of ICGs focused on animal health diseases alone, and both the World Health Organization (WHO) and OIE participate in the Rift Valley fever and COVID-19 ICGs to ensure good coordination across public health and animal health sectors.

COVID-19 ICG: clear communication

The COVID-19 ICG enables the sharing of activities between FAO, OIE and WHO on the new coronavirus outbreak, particularly to align messaging regarding COVID-19 in the context of animal health.

Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health incident coordination groups: Increasing coordination of emerging or existing global and regional animal health events

For large-scale animal health emergencies that require humanitarian system-wide mobilization due to the scale of their impact, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health (EMC-AH), through the support of donors such as the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), is committed to leading global coordination for animal health emergencies with severe impact on food security and livelihoods. EMC-AH is equipped to provide the platform, tools and coordination expertise to support preparedness and response capacities to FAO Member States around the world. This coordination is achieved through the implementation of incident coordination groups (ICGs).

To best respond to coordination needs and when setting up an ICG, EMC-AH considers the national, regional and global impacts of an animal health event, as well as its political implications, epidemiological features and livelihood and trade impacts. ICG members can come from various backgrounds and organizations, depending on the topics and geographical areas of concern, making each ICG best suited to address specific threats. Once activated ICGs serve to:

- set the overall strategy for the preparedness, response and overall coordination of animal health events;
- align efforts of animal health, public health and food security experts at the national, regional and global level;
promote cooperation and collaboration among animal health organizations, key partners and the public health sector where relevant; and ensure the coordination and delivery of consistent messaging to the general public, key stakeholders and the media.

ICGs aim to gather needs from countries and regions affected or threatened by an animal health event and coordinate any activities supporting them to better prepare and control those events. What’s more, running these ICGs enables the EMC-AH to acquire up-to-date knowledge on developing global coordination networks, thereby complementing the OFDA-funded project to develop a strategic framework for strengthening the global coordination of animal health emergencies of international concern.

ICGs: bringing clarity to animal health situations

The ICG for mortality in equids in Western Africa was set up in order to gather data on an unclear situation in West Africa on sudden equine mortalities. The ICG supported a communication from FAO’s Chief Veterinarian Officer to at-risk and infected countries encouraging an increase in awareness of the veterinary services of this particular event. The ICG also launched two EMC-AH assessment missions to support member countries to better understand the nature of the diseases involved.

ICGs lead to action

The six ICGs activated in 2019–2020 have had many positive impacts at various levels. They include: an increase in information sharing at global level; enhanced collaboration with WHO, OIE and other key partners in the countries and regions; delivery of agreed-upon communications and training material; maintaining a strategic approach to the prevention and control of existing and future animal health threats; and a number of preparedness, response and assessment missions to affected countries.

Lumpy skin disease ICG successes

The lumpy skin disease ICG succeeded in connecting regions and countries with varying experience on the disease. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia shared its wide and solid knowledge on the disease with other ICG members, in particular Bangladesh, which relied on that information to address the outbreak in that country. Myanmar also benefited as it worked to raise awareness of a possible new threat.