



Managing animal health emergencies with a One Health approach

The concept of **One Health is woven into the fabric of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health (EMC-AH)**. EMC-AH was created in 2006 as a global response platform to the outbreak of H5N1, a disease which affects both animals and humans. Part of EMC-AH's mandate was to collaborate, at the global level, with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) to address the outbreak and engage in a One Health approach. Since its establishment, EMC-AH continues to carry out its activities in close collaboration with One Health partners.

By engaging in One Health activities, EMC-AH supports FAO's *Strategic Framework 2022-2031*¹ through its Programme Priority Area (PPA) BP3 (Better Production – One Health). Under the new PPA, EMC-AH is supporting the design and implementation of preparedness and response activities worldwide.

FAO Good emergency management practice (GEMP)

The third edition of the *Good emergency management practice: The essentials*² (GEMP) manual, produced by EMC-AH in 2021, reflects the Centre's One Health practices in concrete terms. GEMP is an internationally recognized preparedness tool to support countries as they design and implement preparedness and response plans for increased resilience to existing or potential threats to animal health, involving key actors across multiple fields where necessary. The One Health approach supported by the GEMP manual is incorporated into GEMP workshops delivered at country and regional levels.

Building resilience: agro-crime and agro-terrorism affecting animals

EMC-AH is managing and implementing FAO's portion of a joint project with OIE and INTERPOL, funded by Global Affairs Canada, to build resilience against agro-terrorism and agro-crime affecting animals. By working together, FAO, INTERPOL and OIE aim to sustainably build global capacity to respond to animal health emergencies due to the intentional release of animal pathogenic biological agents. To reach this objective a multi-disciplinary approach must be incorporated, bringing together actors from the animal health sector, the military, and the police force, among others. During GEMP workshops, EMC-AH now includes a module supported by this project which covers the intentional misuse of pathogens related to agro-crime or agro-terrorism affecting animal health.

What is One Health?

One Health is an integrated approach that recognizes that the health of animals, people, plants and the environment is interconnected and ensures that specialists in multiple sectors work together to tackle health threats to animals, humans, plants and the environment. Ensuring a One Health approach is essential to anticipate, prevent, detect and control diseases that spread between animals and humans, tackle antimicrobial resistance, ensure food safety, prevent environment-related human and animal health threats, as well as combatting many other challenges.



© Lisa Cavalerie

A quarantine laboratory in Djibouti visited during an EMC-AH RVF mission

¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf>

² <https://www.fao.org/3/cb3833en/cb3833en.pdf>



© Eibhlinn Lynam

COVID-19 ICG meeting led by EMC-AH in January 2020

Coordinating events from a One Health perspective

EMC-AH leads Incident Coordination Groups (ICGs)³ with active participation from external partners, such as WHO and OIE, to coordinate zoonotic events, ensuring a One Health perspective. In 2020-2021, this collaborative work focused on COVID-19 to ensure accurate messaging on the virus and animal health was being disseminated to target audiences. A One Health approach is also adopted for the Rift Valley fever (RVF) ICG to effectively coordinate a response to outbreaks of the disease in various countries given its zoonotic nature.

EMC-AH is a global platform with coordination expertise that is applied through FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience, going beyond animal health to support the implementation of a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. The project aims to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission among food chain workers,⁴ ensuring continuity of production of food to communities, particularly those already vulnerable to food insecurity. The activities carried out under this project are an example of **EMC-AH's work bridging the gap between animal health and public health, and how it links with One Health partner organizations.**

In addition, **EMC-AH is leading the development of a strategy for the coordination of animal health emergencies at global and regional level**, with inputs and active participation from OIE and WHO colleagues, as well as other partners from the public and private domains. The objective is a more systematic and fully endorsed global crisis management system and streamlined coordination of emergencies, which will include diseases affecting both animal and public health.



³ <https://www.fao.org/3/ca9200en/ca9200en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/covid-19/en/>

SUCCESS STORY

Rift Valley fever mission to Mauritania

Following an official request for assistance from the Government of Mauritania on 28 September 2020, EMC-AH deployed an emergency joint mission on 16 November 2020, in collaboration with OIE and WHO, to support in controlling outbreaks of RVF. The mission team worked to assess the situation; identify gaps and develop a proposal for longer term support; increase the country's capacity for RVF surveillance, preparedness, and control activities; and increase private and public awareness of the disease and its risk factors. One of the objectives of the mission was also to increase national veterinary services' capacity to survey, prepare for and respond to RVF using a One Health approach.

Mission experts provided their contribution to the development of an emergency project funded by CERF. Moreover, as a demonstration of the positive outcome of the mission and the consecutive work of the country's competent authorities that followed the mission recommendations, the RVF outbreak in September 2021 was managed in a greatly improved way, with a One Health platform and early warning coordination fully operational and animal and public health consequences significantly reduced.

One Health response activities

EMC-AH deploys rapid response missions to support countries in preparing for and responding to animal disease outbreaks, upon official request from governments for FAO support. Where relevant, both OIE and WHO are involved in the planning, implementation and follow-up of these missions. For example, in November 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, an emergency mission was deployed to Mauritania by EMC-AH, jointly with OIE and WHO, to address reported RVF outbreaks in both humans and animals. By working closely together, team members from all three organizations ensured that both public health and animal health sectors collaborated to prepare for and respond to the outbreak (see success story above).

The map below demonstrates the One Health missions, per disease, carried out by EMC-AH between 2018 and 2021, and provides a snapshot of the support offered to countries by EMC-AH in the form of One Health activities.



Visit to a laboratory during the EMC-AH joint RVF mission to Mauritania with OIE and WHO, November 2020

EMC-AH One Health rapid response missions from 2018-2021



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence