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MAINTAINING GLOBAL FREEDOM FROM RINDERPEST

Rinderpest is a highly contagious disease that, throughout history, has resulted in the mortality of hundreds of millions of livestock and has caused significant disruption and damage to agricultural supply chains throughout the world.

FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and regional partners implemented the Global

Rinderpest Eradication Programme, which brought an end to the disease in 2011. Rinderpest is the first animal disease to be eradicated worldwide. FAO estimates that its successful eradication has avoided losses of 920 million USD every year in Africa alone.

To coordinate a post-eradication strategy and to keep the world free

of it, the FAO-OIE Rinderpest Secretariat and the FAO-OIE Rinderpest Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) were established in succession in 2012 with the core responsibility of securing rinderpest virus-containing material (RVCM) in a minimum number of designated rinderpest holding facilities (RHF) for limited and controlled use.

CHALLENGES

Although rinderpest was eradicated from the natural environment, stores of RVCM remain in a number of laboratories around the world.

The results of a FAO questionnaire in 2010/2011 revealed that RVCM were stored in over 40 facilities in over 36 countries. The majority of these facilities are located in Asia and Europe, with a few in Africa and North America. Over a dozen countries that had ended the disease decades prior did not submit a response to the questionnaire.

Countries may not report on their RVCM stocks because they choose to keep the virus as national security

for diagnostics and vaccine production in case of an emergency.

Some facilities that continue to store RVCM have not taken adequate biosecurity measures to prevent accidental or non-accidental release of rinderpest virus. The risk of a re-introduction of the virus into the natural environment can most effectively be reduced by substantially limiting the number of laboratories that store RVCM worldwide.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES

The Rinderpest Secretariat encourages transparency when it comes to RVCM stores and for countries to take action

KEY FACTS

RINDERPEST ERADICATION

GLOBAL FREEDOM FROM RINDERPEST WAS DECLARED IN 2011 THANKS TO CONCERTED EFFORTS BY COUNTRIES WITH SUPPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

THE RISK OF RE-EMERGENCE EXISTS DUE TO THE RINDERPEST VIRUS-CONTAINING MATERIAL HELD IN A NUMBER OF FACILITIES AROUND THE WORLD

THROUGH ADVOCACY AND IN-COUNTRY EXPERT MISSIONS, THE NUMBER OF LABORATORIES CONTINUING TO HOLD SAMPLES OF THE RINDERPEST VIRUS HAS BEEN REDUCED BY MORE THAN 50 PERCENT SINCE 2011

FIVE BIOCONTAINMENT RHFS ON THREE CONTINENTS HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED BY FAO AND OIE AS SAFE TO STORE RINDERPEST VIRUS-CONTAINING MATERIAL

COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS FOR DISEASE RECOGNITION AND REPORTING AMONG STAKEHOLDERS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED BY FAO AND OIE IN HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES

THE GLOBAL RINDERPEST ACTION PLAN IS IN ITS FINAL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND IS BEING HARMONIZED WITH REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTINGENCY PLANS

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on them. For instance, the options offered by the FAO are to request assistance in destroying the virus and decontaminating the facility, transferring of the virus to an FAO-OIE rinderpest holding facility (RHF) or applying to become an RHF. Five high-biocontainment facilities have been designated as FAO-OIE RHFs either for the storage of 1) RVCN excluding vaccine and vaccine virus seeds or 2) for rinderpest vaccine virus seeds and/or manufactured vaccines. The JAC reviews applications submitted to the Rinderpest Secretariat from countries applying to host RHFs and proposals for conducting research using RVCN.

As a result of the ongoing regional and international meetings for countries storing RVCN and their neighbours, the number of countries storing RVCN has declined by more than 50 percent since 2011. The Rinderpest Secretariat is available for assistance in the investigation of RVCN stocks and in the safe destruction or transfer of stocks.

The Global Rinderpest Action plan (GRAP) is being developed by FAO in collaboration with OIE with the aim to provide a framework for recognising, reporting and rapidly suppressing a rinderpest re-emergence and to offer decision-making pathways leading to full implementation of rinderpest emergency management measures.

In parallel, FAO and OIE are undertaking post-eradication communication and advocacy campaigns in several countries to enable governments and farmers

to recognize and report any signs of re-emergence. Awareness-raising campaigns have been conducted in Egypt Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal, targeting farmers and communities. The campaigns will be extended to Pakistan, South Africa and Viet Nam in 2018. Communication materials will also be developed for veterinarians, laboratory personnel, and academia with a special focus on delivery of e-Learning modules through 2019.

WAY FORWARD

Several measures are needed to further minimize the risk and respond to the possible (though improbable) re-emergence of rinderpest, including:

- Establishing a bank of reference vaccine strains available for vaccine production in case of an emergency;
- Expanding the number of vaccine reserves available to high-risk regions;
- Preparing countries and regions for rapid action and notification of a rinderpest re-emergence;
- Increasing the accuracy of current reports on RVCN stores;
- Continuing support to the virus sequence and destroy initiative; and
- Developing virus-free serological and molecular diagnostic tests to be deployed in case of emergency.

Through collaboration among countries, regions and international partners, the risk of rinderpest re-emergence can be minimized, and cattle can continue to be free of the deadly disease.