

## 4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These *Technical Guidelines* have been developed based on a set of Guiding Principles, which were reached by consensus among the participating countries during the Second Workshop of the FAO/NACA TCP/RAS/6714 (A) Project “Assistance for the Responsible Movement of Live Aquatic Animals”, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in February 1999. They are:

1. Movement of living aquatic animals within and across national boundaries is a necessity for economic, social and development purposes.
2. Such movements may lead to the introduction of new and emerging pathogens and to disease establishment and, therefore, may pose risks to the importing country's animal, plant and human health status.
3. The role of health management is to reduce the risks arising from the entry, establishment or spread of pathogens to a manageable level with the view to protecting animal, plant and human life. Health management should also protect living aquatic resources, the natural aquatic environment and aquatic biodiversity, as well as support the movement of aquatic animals and protect trade.
4. The health management process is defined, in the broad sense, as aquatic animal health management encompassing pre-border (exporter), border, and post-border (importer) activities, as well as relevant national and regional capacity-building requirements (infrastructure and specialized expertise) for addressing health management activities, and development and implementation of effective national and regional policies and regulatory frameworks to reduce the risk of disease spread through movements (intra- and international) of live aquatic animals.
5. Health management measures should be practical, cost-effective and easy to implement by utilizing readily available facilities. Individual countries may need to adopt, modify or vary these *Technical Guidelines* to suit their own particular situations and resources.
6. The varying capacity of developing countries to implement programs on health management should be acknowledged by relevant international organizations and financial institutions. These organizations should give full recognition to the special circumstances and requirements of many developing countries.
7. Health management measures shall be based on an assessment of the risk to animal, plant and human life or health. In assessing the risk, prevalence of specific pathogens in both the region of origin and the region of destination shall be a crucial issue. The likelihood of new or emerging pathogens becoming established in the region of destination is a major consideration.
8. All movements of aquatic animals should be conducted within the provisions given in existing relevant international agreements and instruments. Health management measures should not be applied in a manner which would constitute a disguised restriction on trade. Health management measures should be applied only to the extent necessary to protect animal, plant or human life or health, and must be based on scientific principles and not be maintained without sufficient scientific evidence.
9. In determining the appropriate level (stringency) of health management measures to be applied, relevant economic and ecological factors have to be taken into account. These are, *inter alia*: potential damage due to loss of production or value, and the cost of control or eradication. A conservative approach should be adopted in cases where insufficient knowledge exists in relation to disease risks posed by a particular import; a higher stringency of health management procedures should be adopted where inadequate knowledge exists.

10. The first movement (introduction) of a new species into a new area will require special health management considerations in light of the need to evaluate scientific evidence regarding the risk of introducing pathogens to new areas.

11. Different regions should attempt to harmonize health management procedures to facilitate safe movements of aquatic animals within and between regions.

12. Considering the free movement of aquatic species in trans-boundary waterways, division of regions into manageable sub-regional units based on factors such as geography, hydrography, ecosystems, epizootiological surveillance and effectiveness of control is necessary for the effective implementation of health management procedures. The basis for the establishment of such units should be uniform, clear and unambiguous.

13. Honest, conscientious and transparent reporting is essential for health management to be effective.

14. Technical cooperation among regional experts is essential to promote exchange of information and expertise.

15. Collaboration among the governments, public institutions, and the private sector, including all stakeholders, is important to achieve the full purpose of implementing effective health management. Opportunities for sharing the benefits of health management among all stakeholders should be explored.