



Draft OFFLU Steering Committee teleconference

Thursday 14th May, 4.30 – 6.00 pm (Paris time, GMT+2)

Chair: Steve Edwards (OFFLU Chairman)

Participants: Cristobal Zepeda, Gideon Bruckner, Ilaria Capua, Keith Hamilton, Gwenaelle Dauphin and Liz Mumford.

The minutes of the previous meeting, held at FAO in Rome, were agreed. There are two outstanding actions from this earlier meeting; to clarify the legal status of OFFLU and to communicate to all OIE Members the importance of sharing influenza material and information.

Action: FAO and OIE to take forward the legal status of OFFLU at senior management level. OIE to address this issue at the next Administrative Commission meeting.

Action: OIE to communicate with OIE Delegates reminding them of their obligations with regards to the Resolution XXVI on animal influenza virus and information sharing. To update this communication with a message on the importance of sharing swine influenza viral material and information.

Flu lab net (FLN) – electronic communications forum. A small survey conducted by the OFFLU Scientist revealed that OFFLU members did not see much advantage in using FLN over email exchanges. Any initiative to further develop this will be put on hold.

With the emergence of H1N1 virus in humans in 2009, containing genetic components similar to swine and avian elements, the Steering Committee has agreed to extend the mandate of OFFLU to include other animal influenza viruses, notably swine, and to reflect this in the name ‘OIE/FAO network of expertise on animal influenza’. The OFFLU network is an open network and there is no foreseeable problem including ‘swine influenza specialist laboratories’. A list of specialist swine influenza laboratories will be posted on the OFFLU website with a note stating that the list is not a restricted list.

Many of the OFFLU influenza laboratories are updating existing diagnostic protocols and developing new protocols for detection of A/H1N1 in animals. OFFLU needs to distribute this information and provide common guidance on available diagnostic tests for new A/H1N1 in pigs and guidance on shipping RNA samples between laboratories.

Action: OFFLU Scientist to work on gathering information about new protocols for molecular diagnosis of A/H1N1 and develop a guidance document.

There will also be a need for OFFLU to provide guidance on surveillance strategies for influenza viruses in swine. The main concern is the risk to public health so this will be a human-animal interface activity.

Action: To mobilise OFFLU and WHO epidemiology experts to collaborate on recommendations for influenza surveillance in swine.

Action: To ask the OFFLU biosafety group to develop some guidance on minimum biosafety requirements for handling swine viruses or new A/H1N1 derived from animal samples.

The OFFLU afternoon at the 7th International Symposium on Avian Influenza was a success and participation was good. The leaders of each OFFLU Avian Influenza Technical Activity provided updates; these presentations will be posted on the OFFLU website shortly. There is still a need to maintain the momentum of these technical activities.

The OFFLU Scientist at VLA, has provided an annual activity summary to OFFLU. Over the coming months there is a need to develop further specific technical projects for her and to ensure that she continues to actively encourage deposition of influenza viral sequences; outputs from this latter activity should be visible.

Action: Executive Committee to develop specific technical projects for the OFFLU Scientists. FAO to provide a report for the OFFLU Scientist based at FAO, Rome.

The annual heads of Reference Laboratories meeting is scheduled for 15 -16 September 2009, at OIE in Paris. It was decided that key OFFLU swine influenza experts should also be invited to this meeting.

Action: OFFLU Secretariat to prepare invitations and secure funding for the OFFLU experts meeting in September. Executive Committee to prepare an agenda.

The activities of OFFLU have developed significantly since the previous global budget was drafted in 2007. The OFFLU budget needs to be redrafted.

Action: KH to redraft an OFFLU global budget, complying with OIE World Fund and FAO requirements, in collaboration with GD.

The next face to face meeting of the OFFLU Steering Committee meeting should take place in Paris, on 14th September in conjunction with the OFFLU experts meeting.