REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Chair: Dr. Joan M. Arnoldi, Brooklyn, WI
Vice Chair: Dr. Norman G. Willis, Ottawa, Ont., CAN

Dr. Michael J. David, MD; Dr. Peter J. Fernandez, DC; Dr. John R. Fischer, GA; Mr. Bob Frost, CA; Dr. Lonnie J. King, MI; Dr. Elizabeth A. Lautner, NY; Dr. Jim Logan, WY; Dr. Bret D. Marsh, IN; Dr. Alex B. Thiermann, France; Dr. Alfonso Torres, NY; Dr. Gary M. Weber, DC.

The Committee met on Sunday, October 24, 2004 from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm. There were 30 attendees including 13 members. Chair Joan Arnoldi presided assisted by Vice Chair Norman Willis. The committee members and guests were welcomed to this second meeting of the Committee and each was given the opportunity to introduce themselves.

Dr. Alex Thiermann, current President of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Standards Commission presented an overview of current activities and directions taken in the OIE during the past year. He emphasized the strong focus on the Animal Health Standards (Code) development, particularly the shift from country disease freedom to mechanisms for safe trade in animal commodities. Of particular attention was the Code chapters on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and bluetongue. In addition, harmonization of the Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Standards are progressing.

The OIE is actively involved in the area of capacity building for developing countries with three specific projects funded by the World Bank and supplemental funding from three European countries.

The Regional Commission for the Americas will meet during the third week of November 2004. In addition, the development of the 4th Strategic Plan of the OIE, 2006-2010, has been initiated and Dr. Brian Evans is the representative for North America on the Administrative Commission.

Dr. Richard Willer, President-elect of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA), offered his support to the International Standards Committee and stressed its importance.

Dr. Michael David of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) described the activities taken by the U.S. in response to OIE actions. This included full transparency of OIE documentation on the APHIS Web site, the active participation with industry and State counterparts on the commenting process of new or updated Code chapters, and the extensive U.S. participation on the OIE Specialist Commissions, Working Groups and ad hoc groups.
Dr. John Fischer, University of Georgia, described an example in each of five countries of wildlife reservoirs for bovine tuberculosis (TB). He concluded that for TB eradication programs to succeed in such environments, the programs must be aggressive and sustained.

Dr. Lonnie King, Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University, presented his thoughts and perspectives on the shifting “face” of agriculture and the need for “connexivity”, a combination of connectivity and complexity. He believed that the OIE is moving in the right direction with issues such as animal welfare, food safety, and emerging diseases, despite some discomfort with this. He also pointed out that the next future wave will be a direct involvement between animal health and public health.

Vice Chair Willis described concerns with a possible crisis in international trade as a result of countries not abiding by the scientific guidance of the OIE Code. The shift must be made away from zero risk for a given disease and to the management of risks. The dilemma is how to communicate the need and encouragement for full country participation. The threat is the potential loss of disease detection for fear of unjustified trade restrictions and resulting economic hardship.

Dr. Alfonso Torres, Associate Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University described the active progress of the Inter-American Group for the Eradication of Food-and-Mouth Disease (GIEFA) in South America. This involved strategic vaccination and identified levels of infection.

Dr. Peter Fernandez, Associate Administrator, USDA-APHIS defined regionalization and described examples of its use. He also described some of the difficulties and resource implications of this approach.

Chair Arnoldi drew attention to the mission statement of the Committee and asked for comments on its appropriateness. Discussion revealed a desire for broadening the scope, for raising more issues, for more industry involvement, and for more representation from other countries. The suggestion was provided that perhaps the Committee should emphasize global strategic issues more than just animal health standards.

Meeting participants expressed high interest in the subject matter with full and active discussion and satisfaction with the outcome.