

Conclusions of the Inter-Regional Conference

Rift Valley Fever: New Options for Trade, Prevention and Control

Djibouti, 21-23 April 2015

Considering that

- Rift Valley Fever is recognised as a priority disease for the Horn of Africa and Middle East regions and has been integrated into the regions' 5-year action plan for GF-TADs
- RVF is a zoonosis and causes significant socio-economic impact during times of outbreak
- Livestock trade between the Greater Horn of Africa and the Gulf countries is of significant importance to reduce poverty in the region especially in vulnerable populations such as pastoralist communities and women.
- The OIE has followed up on recommendations by previous meetings and has revised the Code Chapter on RVF including provisions for safe trade during inter-epizootic as well as during epizootic periods
- The tripartite (FAO, OIE, WHO) has developed One Health tools to facilitate reviews of competencies at the interface between Animal and Human Health Services
- The probability of new RVF outbreaks in the countries at risk such as Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan and South Sudan is high, given that this is year 8 after the last outbreaks and the high probability of a medium to strong El Nino event during the coming season, which may lead to above normal rains during the latter half of the year and that countries should therefore be considered as standing between the *Early Warning Phase* and the *Alert Phase*
- The *Decision Support Framework* developed by ILRI and partners has been updated and can assist the countries at risk to assess their level of preparedness
- The Clone 13 vaccine is still the only registered alternative to the Smithburn-based and inactivated vaccines, with registration only in South Africa and Namibia
- Despite the progress in research on promising new vaccines with potential DIVA capacity, durable immunity and improved safety, none of these candidate vaccines are on the market as yet.

The Conference concludes:

That the countries in the regions should develop an attitude of preparedness rather than reactivity once a crisis is imminent.

On surveillance, outbreak prevention and early response

- Countries should recognise that RVF outbreaks might occur in the region within the next 18 months, given the extended time period of 8 years since the last outbreaks and the increased susceptibility of populations due to the turnover in livestock populations after the last severe draught (2010 – 2011) and the ENSO prediction indications, and are urged to make the following preparations:

- Urgently develop, evaluate and update, where appropriate, their national Contingency Plans using a One Health approach, e.g. by using the tools developed jointly by OIE/WHO/Worldbank with the support of FAO (Integrated IHR – PVS tool¹ and Trans-sectorial Coordination Framework²)
- Develop concrete national action plans for the Early Warning Period based on the updated Contingency Plans and the updated Decision Support Framework
- The national action plans should be prioritised and include updated risk maps and estimation of animal numbers in the risk areas
- Countries should heighten surveillance in high risk areas, e.g. increased monitoring of sentinel herds where available; and increased surveillance in markets or places where large numbers of animals are traded or congregate
- Countries previously affected by RVF should consider to start carrying out targeted vaccination campaigns in high risk areas
- Regional African and Middle East organisations including AU-IBAR, IGAD and AU-PANVAC should assist countries at risk to develop a detailed vaccination policy strategy based on the national risk maps
- International and regional organisations are encouraged to support this operational planning, preferably within the framework of already ongoing existing projects or within joint advocacy platforms for donor funding

On vaccine development

- Vaccine producing laboratories are encouraged to speed up the process to commercialise candidate vaccines in order to overcome the shortcomings of the currently existing vaccines such as availability, safety, efficacy and stability in line with OIE standards for vaccine quality
- In order to increase the uptake of preventive vaccination during the inter-epidemic period by farmers and the Veterinary Services, vaccine manufacturers are encouraged to develop live attenuated multivalent combination vaccines offering protection against multiple transboundary animal diseases and with an improved benefit/cost ratio as compared to monovalent RVF vaccines
- AU-PANVAC with the support of AU-IBAR is encouraged to carry out quality assessment of existing vaccines as well as an assessment of the production and delivery capacity of vaccine producers of registered vaccines (Smithburn, Inactivated, Clone 13) within a short time period
- OIE in collaboration with AU-PANVAC and IGAD should facilitate the establishment of RVF regional vaccine banks at regional level based on the results of the aforementioned assessment

¹www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/press-releases/detail/article/bridging-who-and-oie-tools-to-better-control-global-health-risks-at-the-human-animal-interface/

²http://web.oie.int/boutique/index.php?page=ficprod&id_prec=1308&id_produit=1435&lang=en&fichrech=1&PHPSESSID=788e271d58b0b868758653a786a1584c

On diagnosis of RVF

- Reference Laboratories and pharmaceutical companies are encouraged to increase the production of reagents necessary for serological detection of RVF IgM and IgG and to increase collaboration with AU-PANVAC for the evaluation, quality control, production and distribution of diagnostic assays/reagents to national laboratories
- Reference laboratories are encouraged to continue capacity building activities on RVF diagnosis and to consider twinning programmes within the framework of the OIE.

On trade

- Countries are encouraged to translate the revised OIE Code Chapter into their national legislation and regulations and reinforce its application; and to exchange information with trading partners on the disease situation in their countries
- Veterinary Services should regularly audit quarantine stations for compliance with national regulations and inter-governmental standards.
- IGAD and AU-IBAR are requested to support improvement of technical capacity of quarantine stations through the export quarantine network being formed

On communication

- International and regional organisations are urged to communicate these recommendations jointly via a Press Conference to attract sufficient attention
- National authorities should also disseminate these recommendations at the national level
- Countries should develop awareness campaigns among vulnerable populations such as farmers, abattoir workers, and other stakeholders
- National Authorities should establish regular communication channels between public health and veterinary authorities to ensure disease surveillance results are timely reported.