

Aquatic animals

About 50% of global production of aquatic animals for human consumption in sea water or in fresh water (fish, molluscs, amphibians and crustaceans) comes from aquaculture, close to 90% of which is produced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Aquaculture will continue to grow strongly and provide an increasing proportion of the world's aquatic animal products. To support this growth, the health of aquatic animals must be managed carefully to overcome sanitary challenges met by the numerous species concerned, high trade volumes, and unique challenges posed by the open environment in which these populations often live.

KEY FACTS

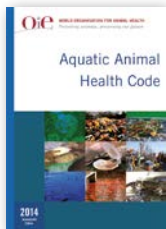
- The human consumption of aquatic animals is constantly rising.
- The intensified production and trade of aquatic animals generate new sanitary challenges.
- The OIE elaborates international standards for aquatic animal health and welfare, as well as for safe international trade in aquatic animals and derived products.

IMPROVING AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH WORLDWIDE

With the increase in farming and global trade of aquatic animals and their products, diseases can spread to new geographic areas and new diseases emerge regularly. The OIE provides information on the aquatic animal disease situation worldwide – including disease alerts – through the online [WAHIS](#) system. The OIE also provides standards and guidelines for the improvement of aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide. The latter are regularly updated and include, among others, requirements for safe international trade in aquatic animals and derived products.

AQUATIC ANIMALS AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The OIE *Aquatic Animal Health Code*



Since 1995, the OIE *Aquatic Code* provides international standards for the surveillance, prevention and control of 27 aquatic animal diseases as well as the safe trade of amphibians, crustaceans, fish, molluscs and their products.

The development of these standards and recommendations is the result of continuous work by the OIE's Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission. The Commission comprises six members experienced in the fields of surveillance,

diagnosis, control and prevention of infectious aquatic animal diseases who are elected by the World Assembly of Member Countries' Delegates. It also draws upon the expertise of internationally renowned specialists on an *ad hoc* basis.

In May of each year, several new or revised Chapters are approved for inclusion in the *Aquatic Code*, which is published annually. All are ratified by the OIE World Assembly of Delegates.

Welfare of aquatic animals

The use of aquatic animals by humans for food or any other purpose carries the ethical responsibility to avoid unnecessary suffering of these animals. The OIE has developed welfare standards for farmed fish that cover transport, stunning and killing for human consumption and killing for disease control purposes.

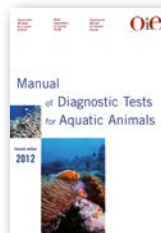
Use of antimicrobial agents

Appropriate use of antimicrobial agents in aquaculture is important to manage issues relating to public health and food safety, animal health and production, and health of the environment.

The OIE has developed standards in the *Aquatic Animal Health Code* on the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals, and on monitoring programs for antimicrobial resistance. The OIE has also published a [List of Antimicrobials of Veterinary Importance](#). These have been adopted by all OIE Member Countries.

See also: [OIE Fact sheet on Antimicrobial resistance](#).

The OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals



The *Aquatic Manual* provides a uniform approach to the diagnosis of the diseases listed in the OIE *Aquatic Code* and some other important diseases. The *Aquatic Manual* describes the diagnostic methods that can be applied in aquatic animal health laboratories all over the world. It is continually revised and updated as new information becomes available. A new edition is published every 4 years. The seventh edition of the *Aquatic Manual* was published in 2014. Updates adopted between printed editions are made available on the [online version](#).

Aquaculture and fisheries

Two distinct industries are responsible for the production of aquatic animals: aquaculture (the farming of aquatic animals) and commercial fisheries (the capture and processing of aquatic animals from wild populations). There are limits to the sustainable supply of aquatic animal products from commercial fisheries; however, aquaculture is supplying a growing proportion for the world's increasing human population. Many aquatic animal species are farmed including amphibians, crustaceans, fish and molluscs.



IMPROVING AQUACULTURE PRODUCTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The contribution of aquatic animal health programmes is essential to improve aquaculture productivity and sustainability. Veterinarians, aquatic animal health professionals, and other partners play a crucial role in assuring the production of aquaculture products that are safe for human consumption and appropriately certified to meet international trade requirements. Therefore, the OIE constantly seeks to raise awareness on the need for good governance of Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services (both governmental and private sector) through different means.



In this context, the **3rd OIE World Conference on Aquatic Animal Health** held in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) in January 2015 gathered representatives from national Veterinary Services, Aquatic Animal Health Services, other relevant Competent Authorities, international organisations, industry, and aquatic animal health experts. The aim was to identify future needs and priorities for the OIE to address in order to minimise the burden of diseases in global aquatic animal production for Member Countries.

Supporting OIE Member Countries: *OIE PVS Tool: Aquatic*



Strengthening Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services (AAHS) to help them comply with OIE international standards for quality and evaluation requires active participation and investment by both the public and the private sector. The first edition of the '*OIE Tool for the evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services and/or aquatic animal health services*' (*PVS Tool: Aquatic*) published in 2013, is designed to improve the governance of the AAHS. It assist them to establish their current level of

performance, to identify gaps and weaknesses in their ability to comply with OIE international standards, to form a shared vision with stakeholders (including the private sector) and to define priorities and carry out strategic initiatives.

Spotlight on emerging diseases

New diseases regularly emerge in aquaculture and may be damaging to industry productivity and the environment. Because they are new to science, emerging diseases are usually poorly understood and this presents challenges for their control. A recent example is Acute Hepatopancreatic Necrosis Disease (AHPND). AHPND has severely impacted shrimp farming in several countries. It was officially reported in the People's Republic of China and Vietnam in 2010 and later in Malaysia (2011), Thailand (2012) and Mexico (2013). The causative agent of AHPND was first identified in 2013.

The OIE has developed a [technical information sheet](#) to provide guidance on diagnosis and control of AHPND, including information on the safe trade of shrimp and shrimp commodities.

In 2014, the OIE World Assembly of delegates adopted new articles in the OIE Aquatic Code to improve the transparency of reporting on emerging diseases like AHPND.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The OIE has established relationships with relevant organisations, for example the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) by entering into official agreements with these organisations.

The OIE is recognised by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) as the reference international standard-setting organisation for terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases, including those transmissible to humans.

An international network of expertise

42 [Reference Laboratories](#) and two [Collaborating Centres](#), spread across the globe make up part of the OIE global scientific expertise in aquatic animal health.

Cartography.

The role of Delegates and national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals

Each 180 OIE Member Country appoints a national Delegate who represents his/her country to the OIE, and who nominates a national Focal Point for Aquatic Animals. The latter is responsible for helping the Delegate to participate in the procedure for adopting or revising OIE standards on the health and welfare of aquatic animals but also to fulfil the country's obligations as an OIE Member (e.g. disease notification and compliance with standards relating to international trade).

The OIE has set up training programmes to support the capacity building of the Aquatic animal health Services by explaining and clarifying the role and responsibilities of Delegates and Focal Points and to facilitate networking and harmonised approaches amongst OIE Member Countries.

For more information

- [OIE Aquatic Code](#)
- [OIE Aquatic Manual](#)
- [OIE Aquatic Animals Health Standards Commission](#)
- [Guide for aquatic animal health surveillance \(2009\)](#)