



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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**SCIENTIFIC TASK FORCE ON WILDLIFE DISEASES:
REPORT OF THE LAUNCHING MEETING IN BEIJING 28-29 JUNE 2011**



Launching Meeting for the Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Diseases

28 and 29 June 2011

Beijing, PR of China

Welcome: Scott Newman (FAO – Italy), Borja Heredia (CMS), Vincent Martin (FAO – China)

Participant Introductions

- Kathryn Campbell: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- David Morgan: Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Peter Ben Embarek: World Health Organization (WHO)
- Guo Fusheng: Food and Agriculture Organization - China
- Lyndel Post: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry- Australia (DAFF)
- Baba Soumare: African Union-InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
- Tomoko Ishibashi: World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)
- Dae Sung Yu: International Veterinary Student Association (IVSA)
- Edgar Kaeslin: Food and Agriculture Organization- Rome (FAO)
- Meenakshi Nagendran: United States Fish and Wildlife Service(USFWS)
- Dolores Gavier-Widén: Wildlife Disease Association (WDA)
- Martin Wikelski: Max Planck Institute(MPI)
- Ruuragch Sodnomdarja: State Central Veterinary Laboratory (SCVL Mongolia)
- Ruang Dong
- Xiangdong Ruan: State Forestry Administration (SFA), China
- Qian Fawen: Bird Banding Center (SFA)
- He Hong Xuan: State Forestry Administration (SFA), China
- Sun Heting: State Forestry Administration(SFA) , China

Presentation of the Terms of Reference: Scott Newman

Philosophy: The Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Diseases encourages connectivity and linkages to any organization interested in being associated with or linked into information exchange supporting the purpose of the Task Force. While there will be a smaller group of core affiliates, other membership categories have been established to allow for maximum participation.

Co-conveners: the co-conveners (FAO and CMS) will broadly oversee activities, facilitate coordination, and identify funding opportunities, as appropriate.

Task Force Members: a group of relevant science-based organizations, associations, or individuals representing applicable disciplines with particular interest in collaboration at the interface of human, wildlife, livestock, and ecosystem health.

- **Core affiliates: 6-10 affiliates**

Each core affiliate will participate in quarterly teleconferences, attend meetings, participate in web-based communication (wiki, list server, etc.), and act as a communication & information sharing conduits. Core members will identify and develop the priority work areas and activities in addition to developing and maintaining the work plan for the Task Force. This group can include one NGO,



but will generally consist of international organizations and representation from multi-lateral environmental agreements. Core Affiliates will have the right to vote on issues that require clearance by the Task Force (i.e. work areas, topics, outputs). Links between the Task Force and Core Affiliate websites will be established.

- **Observers: 2-3 affiliates**

Each observer represents his or her respective organization on an informal basis and acts as a communication and information sharing focal point. Observers will be invited to participate in teleconferences and attend meetings but they will not have voting or decision-making rights.

- **Partners: unlimited**

Each partner will provide suggestions and inputs, identify needs, and serve as a conduit for information sharing from their respective expertise, geographic area, institution, readership, etc. to the Task Force, and they will also receive outputs, information and products developed by the Task Force. Links between Task Force and Partner websites are encouraged.

- **National Associates: unlimited**

Countries are welcome to identify representatives from ministries, departments, or other national structures, to serve as a conduit between the Task Force and the national counterpart. Multiple country organizations/representatives are welcome and the arrangement is non-binding. Inputs, suggestions, and ideas are welcome from any national associate, and outputs, information and products of the Task Force will be shared. Links between the country organization and the Task Force website are encouraged.

- **Student Associates: unlimited**

Student organizations representing all academic disciplines are welcome to identify representatives to serve as a conduit between the Task Force and the student organizations. Inputs, suggestions, and ideas are welcome from student organizations, and outputs, information and products will be shared with the student organizations. Links between the Task Force website and the Student Association website are encouraged.

Summary of Feedback:

- Name change
 - o The group determined that changing the name is possible, and likely required for appropriate understanding of the task force.
 - o With the current name “Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Diseases” the scope of work sounds like it should be focused solely on animal diseases, while some members voiced their desire for a broader context.
 - o We discussed additions to the name including “Migration”, “Ecology,” “Ecosystem,” and the importance of the term “HEALTH” in the name to indicate scope of greater than just diseases, while understanding that one of the focus areas will be how disease relates to other facets of health.



- The proposed new name for the task force is: the Scientific Task Force on Wildlife and Ecosystem Health
 - Although some concerns were voiced that the name change could reflect and over-expansion of the scope of the TF outside of the mandate and expertise of its affiliates, the Terms of Reference for the TF will help to specifically delineate the scope.
- TORs as they stand now do not adequately reflect the scope of the task force, but we do have the ability to change these
 - The group would like to see an updated version to include more description of the stated goals of the task force, specific performance indicators and a clear outline of the responsibilities of each member category (i.e. core affiliate, national associate, etc)
- Participants reiterated that it is the CITES Secretariat, the CMS Secretariat, the CBD Secretariat and the RAMSAR Secretariat that are present as stakeholders. Although the Secretariats are in support of the Task Force, they do not speak on behalf of the Parties to their Conventions and the support of the Parties may be required in some situations. This could be facilitated by presenting specific resolutions for adoption during Conferences of the Parties.
- The group agreed to utilize the definition of wildlife to follow the OIE definition of “animals not managed by humans and not genotypically managed” but also will include typically wild type species that are raised in a farm or production systems.
- “Task Force” (TF) does not translate into other languages well. Thinking of an easier to translate alternative may be useful.
 - Other potential options included committee, council, etc but these other options were determined to be too weak to be the final title of the group.
 - At the close of the meeting it was determined to leave the title as “Task Force”
- The importance of keeping focus at the beginning phase of the TF was emphasized to make sure that there are definable goals that can be reached.
 - A defined work plan was needed for the next few months to make sure that work would be completed prior to the CMS COP in November.
- One of the major challenges of the TF will be determining better ways to approach data sharing in an international context.
 - We acknowledged that challenges include political concerns, regulatory issues, unwillingness to share information, and ownership concerns.
- Voting, when needed, would involve only the core affiliates. However, the TF will strive for consensus as much as possible. It is not a legally binding agreement.
 - Concerns were raised about how some decisions may not suit all members. The question was raised who would have a vote. After some discussion it was determined that despite the input from many members of the task force, the core affiliates would be the only ones with a vote.
 - In all situations the TF will strive to reach a consensus as opposed to producing material that is not supported by all TF core affiliates.
- Standard Operating Procedures are required for successful implementation of the TF particularly in regard to TF press statements, media alerts, web content and outreach materials.
 - Discussion focused around organizing a solid framework for task implementation and the role of participants (i.e. core affiliate responsibilities vs national associates etc.)
- Emphasis on not duplicating efforts, but instead working within frameworks which are already available.



- The TF will link via online resources to other groups also working in ecology, ecosystem health, and wildlife health.

Potential products from the Task Force

- Fact sheets: Utilize the Ramsar Convention format for disease fact sheets
 - These would be developed only specific to wildlife and conservation concerns in areas where current resources do not adequately cover the subject field.
- Brochures
- Technical workshops: These workshops could be through an online medium or direct contact.
- Technical publications
- Online workshops/video presentations
- Outreach in social media or other media
- Success stories/case studies
- Utilizing / encouraging One Health WILD training modules or other appropriate modules (i.e. university distance learning etc)

Listing of Important One Health topics / concerns for participating organizations:

1. Kathryn Campbell (CBD): Utilizing healthy ecosystems for the foundation of human and animal health.
 - a. What conditions affect/change regulation of diseases in environment, animals and humans
 - b. Disease as an extinction threat – i.e. Chytridiomycosis.
 - c. Climate change and its impact on human/animal/environmental health
2. Peter Ben Embarek (WHO): Approaching these questions from a public health perspective.
 - a. Food safety aspect of these issues, i.e. the wild meat issue and food security.
 - b. Management: How different sectors can work together to improve understanding. Including surveillance issues.
3. Lyndel Post (DAFF):
 - a. Developing infrastructure
 - b. e for monitoring/surveillance both regionally and globally. Including information about data management and capacity building.
 - c. Triggers for spillover of wildlife diseases into food animal and public health
4. Baba Soumare (AU-IBAR):
 - a. Capacity building – especially animal health services to folks working in wildlife that might not have the medical perspective to work with.
 - b. Information sharing especially with health / disease and the actual connection it has to both human and animal health
 - c. Strategies for transboundary diseases
5. Dolores Gavier-Widén (WDA):
 - a. WDA would like to function as more of a resource for the TF



- b. The variety of disciplines involved and the large geographic distribution of the organization makes it impossible to choose specific diseases / one health issues.
6. Martin Wikelski (MPI):
 - a. Coming from a research-based institution would like to see focused points
 - b. Fruit bats – focus on migration patterns/local movements, transmission of disease, use as bushmeat
 - c. Spillover from domestic animals into wildlife – case studies and surveillance systems
7. Meenakshi Nagendran (USFWS):
 - a. Capacity building: especially in areas of endangered species
 - b. Disease spillover from domestic animals into wildlife
 - c. Fencing and how it relates to or disrupts wildlife migration
 - d. Practical tools to manage disease
8. Dae Sung Yu (IVSA):
 - a. Emerging pandemic threats and how to improve reporting
 - b. Climate change as it relates to human, animal, and wildlife health
 - c. Improving information gaps between professional and non professional associations
9. David Morgan (CITES):
 - a. Traditionally CITES is concerned with issues associated with overharvesting
 - b. Role of international trade in invasive species issues
 - c. Advocating for the sustainable use of wildlife for the benefit of local people.
10. Guo Fusheng (FAO China):
 - a. Domesticated wildlife and the impacts of wildlife farming
 - b. Invasive species concerns and domesticated animal impacts on wildlife when released
 - c. Capacity building in developing countries
11. Borja Heredia (CMS):
 - a. Capacity building: Emerging concerns and training on how to deal with wildlife diseases.
 - i. Surveillance at the transboundary disease level
 - ii. How to react in cases of emergencies
 - b. Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs): consequences/how to approach these issues
 - c. Legal and policy issues: How to harmonize (as much as possible) legislation for wildlife diseases.
 - d. Improving the knowledge of migration and migration ecology as it relates to wildlife diseases
12. Tomoko Ishibashi (OIE):
 - a. Domestic disease control management / regulation –The OIE Code offers wildlife surveillance guidelines for some diseases. The OIE is working on increasing information on wildlife in the Code Chapters to better address the situation of wildlife as not all diseases are represented.
 - b. Personal Perspective:



- i. Implementation of wildlife disease control and surveillance at the national level. Regional members seem to need support for this.

13. Ruuragch Sodnomdarja (SCVL Mongolia):

- a. Role of wildlife in infectious disease spread, especially gazelle with foot and mouth.
- b. Rabies

Summarizing Issues Discussed Multiple times

- Capacity or capacity development focused on issues relating to disease monitoring, guidelines, surveillance, and outbreak control
 - o This could revolve around supporting already existing capacity building or creating documents for use in training modules (i.e. online training programs, monitoring guidelines etc).
- Policy/Legal issues: Trying to streamline or harmonize the legal aspect
- TFCAs and fencing issues
- Bushmeat issues
- Information gaps between professionals and non-professionals, and among different disciplines
 - o This was one of the most discussed points referring to both the gap between professionals and the general public as well as the gaps between conservationists/biologists and health professionals.
 - o The TF decided to focus mainly on closing the gap between conservationists/biologists and health professionals through targeted publications to include input from both sides.
- Regional concerns: Must understand that disease importance will be highly variable by region, but in order to quantify this by region we would need a standard way of breaking down areas into regions. .
 - o Originally the regional concerns were identified as a main target area for work. When the group began to discuss the potential allocation of countries into “regions” for analysis we realized that defining specific regions would be nearly impossible within a short amount of time.
 - o This idea was tabled for use in the future when we have more participants who can work on the issue of regional analysis and the best way to organize.
- Important pandemic disease threats.
 - o This segment is important as it was the main reason for the creation of the TF in 2008. Identifying diseases of concern for the future will be one of the first tasks accomplished by the group.

Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds (AI Task Force): The group determined that this Task Force is of great importance, and should not be forgotten or discarded. One suggestion was that the best course of action could be to have the TF absorb the AI Task Force as a specific working group.

The Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Diseases was created as a direct result of the successes of the AI Task Force. In December 2008, in UNEP/CMS/Resolution 9.8, the Conference of the Parties to the



Convention on Migratory Species called on the FAO Animal Health Service and CMS Secretariat to co-convene the new TF to expand on the successful accomplishments of the AI Task Force. The group discussed the feasibility of running two separate task forces given that for migratory birds and influenza, concerns and information could be over-lapping. To allow for best resource allocation, the suggestion to have the AI Task Force become a specific work plan activity within the Scientific Task Force on Wildlife Diseases was raised. This was met with acceptance from all attendees but will require discussion with active members of the AI Task Force, as well UNEP-CMS parties. One suggestion was to allow those organizations/people who had previously worked on the AI Task Force to continue to serve in that capacity within the framework of the new TF and the web site of the AI Task Force to be maintained as part of their activities.

Prioritization Discussions

- Prioritization of diseases: Difficult to do at the meeting, would prefer to have each organization submit 5 prioritized diseases in each of the following categories for further discussion at a later date.
 - o Wildlife Population Health: Diseases affecting wildlife populations which originate in livestock, humans, or other animals. Examples might include Chytridiomycosis in amphibians or White Nose Syndrome in bats.
 - o Zoonotic Disease Threats: Wildlife diseases that pose a threat to public health
 - o Wildlife- Livestock Diseases of Importance to Production: identify diseases that have an impact on both domestic and wildlife species that are the greatest concern to food security economics and sustainable livelihoods.
 - o Diseases of Regional Importance.
- Question was raised about “why” the disease is considered important
 - o Epidemiological significance
 - o Occurrence (i.e. frequency/incidence)
 - o Impact (i.e. zoonotic, conservation, economic, social or livelihood)
 - o Other reasons (i.e. bioterrorism, commerce or trade, political)
- Human-Wildlife-Livestock (ecosystem) interface: A general topic under which we hope to do specific focused tasks
 - o Movement of disease between compartments: This section is mainly focused on the movement of diseases from other compartments INTO the wildlife sector.
 - o Food Safety: May include bushmeat issues, food security concerns for domesticated species that have interaction with wildlife, or specifically the food safety concerns of farmed wildlife.
 - o Captive and farmed Wildlife emerging issues: Specifically who is responsible for the management of these animals; Ministries of Agriculture or Ministries of Environment?
 - o Bushmeat: There are many groups that are already working on this issue, but it would be appropriate for the TF to bring together information about what is being done and the major concerns associated with hunting for bushmeat or its consumption.



- Conflict between compartments: Excluding diseases, things that cause conflict between humans and wildlife. This may include things like crop destruction, injury or death, etc.
- Encroachment: This is a large enough topic that it deserved a section of its own. Concerns raised at the meeting included population encroachment into areas that were traditionally inaccessible to humans, overpopulation, and food security.
- Migration Ecology
 - Balancing land-use for wildlife vs other uses
 - Climate Change
 - Distribution of migratory species
 - Disease transmission
- Bridging the gap between natural resource professionals and health professionals
 - The group discussed which would be the easiest ways to do this and decided that estimating economic value on the wildlife / ecosystem health would be the best way to do this, such as The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) reports.

Discussion on mechanisms available to the TF for delivery of product

- Capacity Building
 - Population monitoring / management
 - Guidelines on disease control/surveillance/monitoring
- Communication
 - Alternative methods of outreach (social media)
 - Input of suspect events through a potential unofficial reporting system
- Online Media
 - Can include things like YouTube videos, web based training programs, etc

Resource availability

- TF is relying on individual contributions at a technical level, as there is not sufficient funding to pay people to help prepare/develop documents.
- CMS and FAO are looking for funding opportunities as well as finding sustainability for the task force.
- We do have funding to support the website updates etc
- Also looking at funding from countries that see this as an important initiative.
- Discussed having membership dues to be a member of the program, but don't want to start this at this stage until the TF has better insight into where they would like to go in the future.

Day Two: State Forestry Presentation, Work Plan, Communication Strategies

Xiangdong Ruan – State Forestry Administration

- General Headquarters of HPAI Prevention and Control was constructed by the State Council in 2004 and includes three departments:



- Ministry of Health: Concerned with human health aspect
- State Forestry Administration: Concerned with wildlife aspect and controlling/eliminating transmission through animals in coordination with MOA.
- Ministry of Agriculture: Concerned with domesticated species and aquatic species
- SFA works for detection control and elimination of the transmission from animals as well as cutting off the transmission pathway
- Utilize also public resources research centers for scientific and technical support
- SFA Products
 - Regulations on handling major animal epidemic emergencies, criterion for terrestrial wildlife borne infectious disease monitoring, measures for terrestrial wildlife borne infectious diseases monitoring and control, zero report policy etc
 - 350 national monitoring stations, 768 prevention monitoring systems, over 2000 monitoring stations
 - Trained over 15,000 people (some professional level and some non professionals)
 - Sent a diplomatic note to 8 neighboring countries for strategies for joint prevention and control for wildlife borne infectious diseases in the border areas
 - NO response yet
- Future areas of work
 - Improve regulations, especially for wildlife borne infectious diseases
 - Strengthen the monitoring and control network – have more monitoring stations nationally.
 - Establish information management system – improved reporting systems
 - Set up emergency response system
 - Provide scientific and technical support
 - Enhance international exchange and cooperation through joint prevention and control, technical training, workshops etc.

Website Discussion/Feedback

- Emphasis placed on having website appear similar to FAO supported general websites, although it will not be hosted specifically by FAO.
- Would want a fairly extensive links page, or documents page where the TF could serve as an information resource.
- The wildlife community (CMS and others) have asked for an easy on-line reporting system for wildlife morbidity and mortality events
- FAO has explored several open-access systems already available on-line, and one good option is the wildlife health event reporter (WHER), who is interested in partnering.
- Discussion about implications of using WHER, concerns with reporting, trade controls, and how an “unofficial” vs “official” systems would be linked if diseases were diagnosed, as opposed to other sources of mortality. In most cases reported on WHER, no diagnosis is provided.
 - Potentially promoting the unofficial reporting mechanism
 - Suggestions for a short trial run of the system
 - If trial is to occur, requires clear SOPs to demonstrate compatibility and linkages with official OIE reporting system.
 - Scott Newman will lead on the development of the SOPs and liaise with OIE.
 - Concerns raised about using the WHER included duplicating efforts already in place at OIE, and even that there may be a weakening of the role of OIE National Focal Points for Wildlife regarding developing networks among a country’s wildlife personnel to feed



information into WAHIS, repercussions on a national or international level based on reporting, and control of data i.e. who is actually able to see the reports.

- Until clear SOPs are developed and supported by all Core Affiliates, the TF will not move ahead with incorporating the WHER system.
- FAO and the TF support official reporting to OIE through WAHID but since many wildlife morbidity and mortality events are caused by non-pathogen associated events, this unofficial system would allow monitoring and response to support wildlife management and conservation, and encourage further investigation of the potential causes of wildlife mortality events.
- The OIE commented that the OIE's immediate notification is applied to wildlife diseases as well, and that the OIE has been conducting rumour tracking and verification of unofficial information on events including wildlife.

Core Affiliate Discussion:

- Question was raised about what to do for core affiliates and whether or not to include an NGO
- WWT: historically demonstrated commitment and leadership for the AI Task Force
 - Previous responsibility for website
 - Providing input and drive to create the STFWD through co-preparing the UNEP-CMS Resolution establishing the TF
- Points raised
 - How do we justify including one NGO over another?
 - By allowing one NGO to represent the NGO community by participation as a core affiliate, would we alienate other NGOs who would otherwise want to participate?
 - How do we justify the choice of one NGO over others who were not given the opportunity to participate
 - If it is a permanent core affiliate status, how do we ensure that the level of commitment remains high over time?
 - By allowing for changing NGOs present as a Core Affiliate, there would be an incentive to continue to commit at a higher level over time.
 - Perhaps an alternative is create an NGO Core Affiliate position that rotates annually or bi-annually and have WWT start as the first core affiliate
 - This mechanism allows the STFWD to recognize the hard work that WWT did previously with the AI Task Force as well as work on the STFWD
 - Potentially WWT could continue being the NGO Core Affiliate if no other group is interested in participating.
 - Even if one NGO is serving as the representation of Core Affiliate, other NGOs are welcome to become Partners
- Determined that it is probably feasible to have WWT as a core affiliate, but must determine the desired level of involvement of WWT before finalizing.
 - If they are not sure of the commitment level, perhaps we can open up the NGO position to other NGOs who have expressed interest in participating at a greater level within the Task Force.

Work Plan

- The work plan was outlined based on discussions of priority areas from Day One



- Plan was further refined to include specific tasks and due dates as well as responsible parties.
- See Work Plan

Communication Strategies

- Need to define specific audience that we are trying to reach
 - o Health professionals
 - o Non health professionals
 - o Student organizations
 - o International professional associations
 - o Governmental representatives
 - o Lesser extent – the general public as well.
- Methods for reaching audiences / each other
 - o Website: main source of information
 - This should include a section for members only that allows the working groups to work on documents in a central location as well as share information
 - The main website should have document access for interested parties, links to other important organizations, sections for descriptions of participants and participant organizations
 - Potentially utilizing video /news/story updates
 - o Facebook / Twitter/Linked In
 - This will be a useful method of communication in order to communicate with younger professionals and students
 - Allows adequate networking with other organizations
 - Of the two methods of communication, Facebook will be a more useful tool
 - Facebook can be utilized after the creation of the website to allow for information sharing and online networking.
 - o Publications: As deemed necessary or possible
 - o Emails: Main method of communication for the TF group after launching workshop