

The Official

Bulletin 2022-2



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This article briefly describes the standard-setting activities of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Specialist Commissions during the first year of a new term (2021–2024).

WOAH International Standards

A core mandate of WOA is the development of International Standards, the [Aquatic Animal Health Code](#) ('[Aquatic Code](#)'), the [Terrestrial Animal Health Code](#) ('[Terrestrial Code](#)'), the [Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals](#) ('[Aquatic Manual](#)') and the [Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals](#) ('[Terrestrial Manual](#)'). These Standards aim to facilitate international trade in aquatic and terrestrial animals and animal products, and to contribute to the improvement of animal health worldwide. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) recognises WOA as the international standard-setting organisation for animal health and zoonotic diseases, and on which WTO Members should base their import requirements.

WOAH Specialist Commissions and the standard-setting process

WOAH regularly updates its international standards in accordance with its standard-setting process, based on the latest scientific knowledge. The Specialist Commissions play a key role in the standard-setting processes, working in collaboration with the WOA Scientific Network and other relevant experts. The development and revision of the [Terrestrial Code](#) is led by the [Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission \(TAHSC\)](#), in collaboration with other Specialist Commissions, in particular the [Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases \(SCAD\)](#). The development and revision of the [Terrestrial Manual](#) is led by the [Biological Standards Commission \(BSC\)](#), in collaboration with other Specialist Commissions. The development and revision of the [Aquatic Code](#) and [Aquatic Manual](#) is led by the [Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission \(AAHSC\)](#), in collaboration with other Specialist Commissions.

In 2021, at the annual WOA General Session, elections were held for the six members of each of the four WOA Specialist Commissions to serve a three-year term (May 2021 until May 2024).

The first meeting of each of the newly elected Specialist Commissions was held during September 2021. Specific to standard-setting work, each Commission continued to progress standard-setting work already in progress, to consider requests for new work, and review and re-prioritise respective work plans for its respective three-year term. New and revised draft texts were circulated for comments by Members and international partner organisations. *Ad hoc* Groups were convened or expert consultations conducted, at the request of Specialist Commissions, to inform its work.

At the February 2022 meeting of the AAHSC, BSC and TAHSC, each Commission reviewed comments received and agreed on final texts to be proposed for adoption.

During the 89th General Session, in May 2022, the World Assembly of Delegates discussed and adopted the new and revised texts proposed by the respective Specialist Commission. The adopted texts will be incorporated into the 2022 editions of the [Aquatic Code](#) and [Terrestrial Code](#) and the updated versions of the [Aquatic Manual](#) and the [Terrestrial Manual](#), which are available on the WOA website in August and July, respectively.

The standard-setting process will continue when the Commissions meet in September 2022.

[Report of the meeting of the WOA Biological Standards Commission \(BSC\)](#) held from 7 to 11 February 2022.

[Report of the meeting of the WOA Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission \(Code Commission\)](#) held from 1

to 11 February 2022.

[Report of the meeting of the WOAHS Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases \(SCAD\)](#) held from 7 to 23 February 2022.

[Report of the meeting of the WOAHS Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission](#) held on 24 and 27 January, and 16 to 23 February 2022.

[More information about WOAHS Specialist Commissions](#)

EXPERT REPORTS

► SPECIALIST COMMISSIONS

A year in the life of the WOAHS Specialist Commissions standard-setting work

KEYWORDS

#WOAH Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission, #WOAH Biological Standards Commission, #WOAH Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases, #WOAH Specialist Commission, #WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission, #World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).



WOAH (founded as OIE) is a global organisation, working to ensure the health of animals across the world. Since 1924, we have focused on the complexities of animal health. We disseminate information on animal diseases and use science-based strategies to limit their potentially negative impact on society.

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