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Internship Report at WOAHS Sub-Regional Representation for Southeast Asia (WOAH SRR-SEA), Bangkok, Thailand

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Internship Duration: 1st July to 29th August

Programme: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), Final Year Student

Introduction

As a final year veterinary medicine student, I got an opportunity to join WOAHS for two months at the Subregional Representation, Bangkok. The internship objective was to align my goals for One Health advocacy and global veterinary governance. The internship was an observational and learning-based opportunity, focusing on regional coordination efforts in the fields of animal health, AMR, and transboundary disease control. It was an exposure to global health collaboration and cross-sectoral coordination.

Objectives of the internship

- To gain practical exposure to the structure and functions of an international organization (WOAH) in the veterinary and One Health space.
- To observe regional coordination (ASEAN Countries) efforts addressing transboundary animal diseases, AMR, and public health risks.
- To attend meetings, workshops, and field visits organized by WOAHS SRR-SEA and its partners, such as WOAHS, ASWGL.
- To strengthen my understanding of cross-sectoral communication and global health frameworks.

What I learnt

My internship gives me a front-row seat to observing the organization's:

- Specialized meetings on animal health, veterinary services, and global disease surveillance
- Fast-moving projects and work groups
- Use of codes, acronyms, and technical language unique to WOAHS's global context

Activities I engaged in include

1. Meeting with SEAVSA and AVSBN (1st July, 2025)

On my first day at WOAHSRR-SEA, I attended a meeting with **SEAVSA** (Southeast Asia Veterinary Schools Association) and **AVSBN** (ASEAN Veterinary Statutory Body Network) representatives. Dr. Naree introduced the WOAHSRR team and outlined the organization's role, followed by updates on transboundary diseases, rabies control efforts, and upcoming events like World Rabies Day and the FAVA (Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations: FAVA) Council Meeting. AMR collaboration, autogenous vaccines, and veterinary education standards were also discussed. Discussion carried out on using autogenous vaccines for FMD as a regulated alternative to reduce antimicrobial use, with the FDA overseeing their standards in Thailand. As an intern, I observed the discussions and began familiarizing myself with regional priorities and partnerships.

2. Country Projects Meeting (2nd July, 2025)

Country	Project lead	Project name/disease of interest	Discussion points during presentation dated on 30 Apr 2025 (last day of the face -to face training)	Facilitators
Cambodia	Dina Koeut and Yoky Chav	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)	Entry risk assessment, Quantitative	Karma Rinzin, Ashish Sutar
Indonesia	Cut Desna Aptriana and Yalzar Masindo Mulyawan	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)	Java	Bolortuya Purevsuren, Irene Iglesias
Laos	Khamkeo Seng Outhai and Lee Sichamphone	African Swine Fever (ASF)	Introduction and spread ASF	Marta Martinez, Ashish Sutar
Malaysia	Muhammad Nazri Bin Khairuddin and Sarah Dadang Abdullah	Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)	Develop control strategy to prevent spread of LSD linked to risk- based surveillance and risk- based vaccination.	Karma Rinzin, Marta Martinez
Myanmar	Aung Ko Ko Minn and Kyaw Phyo Sunn	African Swine Fever (ASF)	Participated in the RA with HK Uni Looking into data, principle of risk assessment, Support freedom of disease Support early detection	Marta Martinez, Ashish Sutar
Philippines	Kysha Angeline Magdaraog and Mark Anthony Barreyro	Rabies	Risk questions	Karma Rinzin, Bolortuya Purevsuren
PNG	Josephine Inguba Bayango and Walambo Thompson	African Swine Fever (ASF)	Risk of spillover, wild pig population ,the risk of the country is free Establish the disease pathways . Value chain, population of pigs ,surveillance ,prevalence survey (spread of the disease) and interviews	Marta Martinez, Karma Rinzin
Singapore	Lina Sabrina Binte Yahya and Khaw Shan Wen Stacy	New Castle Disease (NCD)	Spatio-temporal distribution, plotting risk value chain, import risk assessment , import and export –share business interest- cross border	Irene Iglesias and Marta Martinez,
Thailand	Waroonsiri Charoenlarp, Hathaitip Wannakee, Rinnrada Sangchantip and Nawarat Ninprapha	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) SAT-2	Risk of introduction and spread of FMDV(SAT2) in Thailand	Bolortuya Purevsuren, and Irene Iglesias

Country Projects
Practical Application of Risk Analysis Concepts for the
Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases

Disease/Subject	Country/Region	Main Focus	Key Findings & Concerns
Foot-and-Mouth Disease	Cambodia	Risk in backyard cattle farms	High prevalence (53.7%), low vaccine coverage, high risk in southern regions, economic impact, need for better stakeholder engagement and communication.
Foot-and-Mouth Disease	Indonesia	Import risk and status analysis	Lost FMD-free status in 2022; current outbreaks linked to livestock trade; strict mitigation for imports; low risk for controlled imports.
FMD, SAT 1 strain	Thailand	New strain introduction risk	Suspected introduction from Iraq; no vaccine available; high density of susceptible animals; illegal animal movement is a major concern.
African Swine Fever	Myanmar	Risk overview	Risks linked to trade and wild meat hunting; briefly discussed in broader context.
Lumpy Skin Disease	Malaysia	Disease status and control	Endemic since 2021; mainly affects smallholders; spread driven by vectors and animal movement; targeted vaccination as mitigation.
Rabies	Philippines	Human exposure risk assessment	Dog bites cause 97% of exposures; extremely high risk; urgent need for better reporting and response; rabies-free goal set for 2030.
Newcastle Disease (NCD)	Singapore	Risk and impact assessment	Endemic disease; strong farm surveillance, but gaps in wild bird monitoring; biosecurity and import regulations are essential for control.

On my second day at WOA, I attended the country projects meeting that brought together representatives from multiple Southeast Asian countries to discuss animal disease risks and responses. The meeting covered the status, risk factors, and control strategies for key diseases, including Foot-and-Mouth Disease, Lumpy Skin Disease, African Swine Fever, Rabies, and Newcastle Disease. Each country presented its challenges, such as low vaccination rates, disease introduction via illegal animal movement, and difficulties in stakeholder coordination, and shared successful and ongoing risk mitigation strategies.

The session emphasized multi-stakeholder collaboration, developing disease surveillance, the importance of communication in local contexts, and the constant need to adapt strategies based on real-world field data.

Key lessons included the necessity of integrating local authorities and communities in disease control, and the pivotal roles played by organizations like WOA in supporting national and regional animal health initiatives.

This experience exposed me to management of animal health risks at the international and regional levels, the complexity of global animal health systems, and the collaborative processes that support animal disease prevention and response.

3. CDA Singapore/WOAH/One Health

The **Communicable Diseases Agency (CDA)**, established in **April 2025** as Singapore's statutory authority for managing infectious diseases, now leads the country's **One Health governance framework**. It coordinates cross-sectoral policy and technical efforts through the **One Health Coordinating Committee (OHCC)** and its **AMR and One Health Working Groups**.

CDA's **strategic direction** is guided by its upcoming **One Health Master Plan**, built around three pillars:

1. **Engagements** – Strengthening cross-sector and regional collaboration
2. **Sector Development** – Enhancing workforce capacity and infrastructure
3. **Insights** – Advancing research, surveillance, and data integration

During an **online engagement with WOAH**, discussions focused on CDA's role in regional One Health mechanisms, research on zoonotic and vector-borne diseases (e.g., avian influenza, leptospirosis), and its interest in integrating **social science approaches** into One Health strategies.

- CDA expressed a strong interest in participating in **regional One Health mechanisms**, including ASEAN-level events and technical discussions.
- The agency's current focus remains on **infectious and vector-borne diseases** relevant to Singapore's urban context, including active research in avian influenza, leptospirosis, and waterborne infections.

CDA conducts **regular working group meetings (2–3 per year)** and maintains communication through ongoing consultations. The agency follows **Quadripartite-aligned frameworks**, emphasizing **environmental surveillance and vector-borne disease tracking** as key performance areas.

Capacity building and research remain central priorities, with CDA exploring collaborations on **AMR surveillance, aquatic Vibrio infections**, and **urban ecosystem health**. Both CDA and WOAH recognized the value of continued **regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and policy alignment** to strengthen collective health security in Southeast Asia.

Personal note:

This engagement gave me a clearer view of how a national public health authority like CDA integrates the One Health approach into its operations. I found it interesting to see how Singapore tailors its strategies to urban health challenges while maintaining alignment with global frameworks. It emphasized how adaptable and context-specific One Health coordination must be to remain effective across different settings.

The dialogue also presented the value of sustained **regional cooperation**, with mutual benefits expected from technical exchange, peer learning, and policy alignment across Southeast Asia.

4. InFARM

What is InFARM?

- **InFARM (International FAO Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System)** is a global platform developed by FAO to help countries collect, manage, and share data on **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** in animals and food.
- Its main goal is to improve AMR surveillance and support informed policy decisions to combat AMR worldwide.

Training highlights:

- Focused on **how national focal points** collect, organize, validate, and upload AMR data using FAO templates.
- Showed the **workflow from national data collection to global submission**, ensuring data consistency and quality.
- Demonstrated **four country scenarios** representing different stages of AMR surveillance—from pilot projects to fully established multi-sectoral systems.
- Emphasized **collaboration among focal points**, data validation, and secure data transfer to the InFARM platform.
- Highlighted how the system generates **visual outputs** and reports to support evidence-based decision-making.

Key takeaway:

- InFARM enables countries with different levels of AMR capacity to participate in a **standardized global monitoring network**.
- It strengthens the **One Health approach** by linking animal and food sector data to global AMR surveillance.

The InFARM training presented four country scenarios to illustrate varying stages of national AMR surveillance programs. These ranged from a single focal point in a pilot program focusing on broiler chickens to multiple focal points coordinating integrated surveillance across terrestrial and aquatic animals in different countries. Each scenario demonstrated the process of data collection, preparation, and submission to the InFARM platform, highlighting the collaborative role of focal points and the comprehensive reach of AMR monitoring efforts.

The InFARM training demonstrated that countries at various stages of AMR surveillance can effectively enroll, prepare, and submit antimicrobial resistance data through the InFARM platform. The process facilitates standardized data collection, ensures data quality through validation, and produces valuable visualizations to support national and global efforts in combating AMR. Coordination among appointed focal points is key to successful data management and reporting.

Personal note:

During my internship, I attended a training on the FAO's InFARM system, which is an international platform for submitting and sharing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) data from animals and food. I learned about the roles of national focal points, the process of collecting and preparing AMR data according to international templates, and the steps necessary to validate and upload this data securely to support global AMR surveillance and action. The training used practical (test) scenarios to show how focal points collaborate to collect and validate data on antimicrobial resistance in animals and food, supporting international efforts to fight AMR.

Although the technical details were complex at first, this training helped me understand how international AMR data systems function in practice. I gained insight into the importance of structured data collection, validation, and collaboration between focal points to support global AMR monitoring. It also reinforced how data sharing plays a central role in shaping AMR control strategies under the One Health framework.

5. Special ACCAHZ meeting

ACCAHZ Coordination Meeting (July 2025)

Meeting focus:

- Strengthening the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Animal Health and Zoonosis (ACCAHZ) as a regional hub for TADs and zoonosis control.
- Reviewing financial, legal, and governance progress since the first Governing Board (GB) meeting in 2023.

Key highlights:

- **Financial setup:** Intergovernmental bank account to be opened by end of July 2025, ensuring financial transparency.
- **Annual contributions:**
 - Category 1 AMS: USD 37,500
 - Category 2 AMS: USD 29,200
 - Yearly total fund: ~USD 350,000 for Centre operations.

- **Governance:**
 - Second GB meeting planned for Nov 2025 (Malaysia).
 - ROPs developed for HCA, HR, GB, and finance.
 - Pending: ED appointment process and withdrawal protocols.
 - Proposed that the ED be selected from ASEAN-5 countries; appointment expected by the next General Board meeting.
- **Partnerships:** FAO and WOAHA were recognized as associate partners supporting technical coordination.
- **Future direction:** Creation of an ACCAHZ website for information sharing; review of technical working groups for improved coordination.

Personal note:

Attending as an observer helped me understand how ASEAN mechanisms operate in real time, linking governance, financial structure, and inter-country collaboration for regional animal health security.

Saraburi CPF Visit

Purpose:

As part of the ACCAHZ meeting activities, participants visited **Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF)** facilities in **Saraburi, Thailand**, to gain insights into industrial-scale **food processing, packaging, and animal welfare practices**.

Key observations:

- Overview of **CPF's production chain**, from sourcing to processing and export-level packaging.
- Presentation by CPF representatives on **sustainable animal welfare and responsible production systems**.
- Discussion on **biosecurity measures, traceability, and certification standards** ensuring food safety and animal well-being.
- Observation of how private-sector practices align with **ASEAN's animal health and welfare objectives** under frameworks like ACCAHZ.

Personal note:

The CPF visit provided me with a practical understanding of how animal health, food safety, and welfare principles are implemented in large-scale agribusiness operations. It was particularly interesting to see how sustainability and welfare commitments translate into real industrial practices, complementing the policy and coordination aspects discussed during the ACCAHZ meeting.

6. WOAHA One Health Partnership Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting – Summary

Date: 30 July 2025

The meeting reviewed progress under **Phase II (2023–2027)** of the Australia–WOAH One Health Partnership, co-funded by **DFAT**. WOAHA presented updates on key outputs, including **PVS Pathway, One Health activities, rabies control, and veterinary workforce development**.

Participants discussed regional coordination through **ARAHIS–WAHIS integration**, upcoming **One Health and workforce workshops**, and **ASEAN rabies elimination efforts**. The **Nossal Institute** presented an external review highlighting strong regional coherence, but the need for better **GEDSI integration and monitoring frameworks**.

The session concluded with remarks from **Dr. Naree Ketusing**, emphasizing sustained collaboration and data-driven One Health capacity building across Southeast Asia.

7. One Health Joint Plan of Action (OH JPA) Implementation in Pakistan

This report analyzes Pakistan's commitment to the **One Health Joint Plan of Action (OH JPA) (2022–2026)**—the global strategy led by the Quadripartite (WHO, FAO, UNEP, **WOAH**). The OH JPA provides a critical framework for tackling threats like zoonotic diseases and **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**.

Key Findings & Achievements:

- **Policy Alignment:** Pakistan has an established **One Health Hub (NIH)** and recently launched the **National Action Plan for Health Security (2024–2028)**, fully integrating OH principles.
- **Major Investment:** Implementation is backed by substantial funding, including the **\$18.7 million Pandemic Fund Project** to establish **One Health Units** nationwide, and focused **Fleming Fund** projects addressing AMR (OH JPA Action Track 5).
- **Veterinary Infrastructure:** The Fleming Fund has successfully renovated **11 Animal Health laboratories** and supported the development of key policies, like the **Veterinary Laboratory Policy**.

Critical Gaps and Challenges:

Despite these successes, two major barriers persist:

1. **Multisectoral Silos:** There are documented gaps in practical collaboration and data-sharing between the human and animal health sectors.
2. **Veterinary Capacity:** A need for reform in veterinary education and sustainable career pathways is necessary to retain talent and fill critical roles in surveillance and disease control.

Conclusion for the Veterinary Sector:

The OH JPA provides an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen the public-sector veterinary system. Future success depends on **Action Track 1 (Capacity Building)** and the ability to integrate veterinary expertise fully into the new One Health Units and AMR strategies, moving from policy alignment to equitable, sustained implementation across all sectors.

Personal Note

My analysis focused specifically on OH JPA Action Track 5 (AMR) and the Fleming Fund investment. I gained key insight into multisectoral resource mobilization, understanding the institutional barriers (e.g., data silos) that currently hinder the integration of veterinary surveillance data into national-level reporting.

8. Anthrax situation analysis

Brief Desk Review – Anthrax Situation in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia

As part of a short research task, I conducted a **desk review** on the **anthrax situation** in **Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia**. The objective was to compile recent outbreak trends, national response mechanisms, and gaps in surveillance or reporting.

The review highlighted that while anthrax remains **sporadically reported** across all three countries, **underreporting and limited veterinary surveillance data** are consistent challenges. Cross-sectoral coordination, particularly between **public health and livestock departments**, varies by country, with Thailand maintaining relatively stronger laboratory and response capacity.

This exercise helped me better understand **how zoonotic disease surveillance functions at the regional level** and how **data integration and cross-border information sharing** are critical for early detection and response in transboundary diseases.

9. Consultative Meeting on Pandemic Fund Regional Entity Proposal (SRCMF–Quadripartite One Health Group)

Date: August 2025

Organizers: Southeast Asia Regional Coordination Mechanism Forum (SRCMF) & WHO SEARO

Participants: Representatives from WHO, FAO, WOA, and UNEP

This meeting and subsequent discussions focused on developing the **SRCMF Regional Entity Proposal** for the **Pandemic Fund (Round 3)**, with WHO as the **Implementing Entity** and the Quadripartite partners (WOAH, FAO, UNEP, WHO) as **delivery partners**. The proposal aims to strengthen **pandemic preparedness and One Health coordination** across eight Southeast Asian countries through improvements in governance, laboratory systems, surveillance, workforce development, and community-level preparedness.

Key points included:

- Integrating **animal and environmental health components** alongside public health priorities.
- Defining **clear roles** for Quadripartite organizations in proposal design and delivery.
- Ensuring **One Health balance** across the proposal pillars.

Although I joined the discussion later (around **13 August**) and mostly followed through **email exchanges**, it offered a valuable look into how **regional coordination and proposal drafting** take place among international organizations.