

WOAH Standard-Setting process and the Role of the Aquatic Animals Focal Point

Regional Workshop for WOAH Focal Points for Aquatic Animals

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World Organisation
for Animal Health



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



国立大学法人
東京海洋大学
Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology



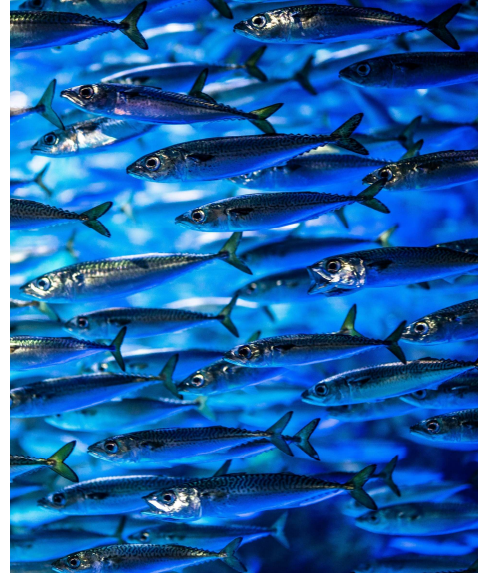
Overview

2

- 1. WOAHS standards and the standard-setting process**
- 2. How to engage with the standard-setting process**
- 3. Role of the Aquatic Animals Focal Point**
- 4. Conclusions**



WOAH standards and the standard-setting process





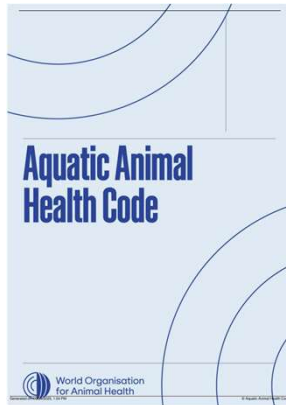
WOAH Standards

4

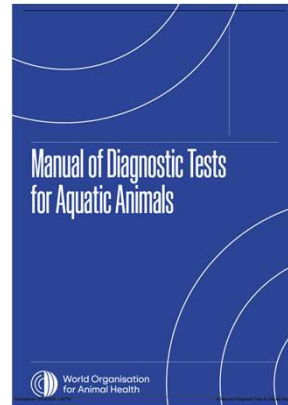
WOAH establishes standards for the improvement of animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide, including the prevention of disease spread through international trade of animals and animal products. Recognised by the WTO SPS Agreement as the standard for animal health and zoonoses.



[Codes and Manuals - WOAH - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)



Standards for safe trade



Standards for disease diagnosis

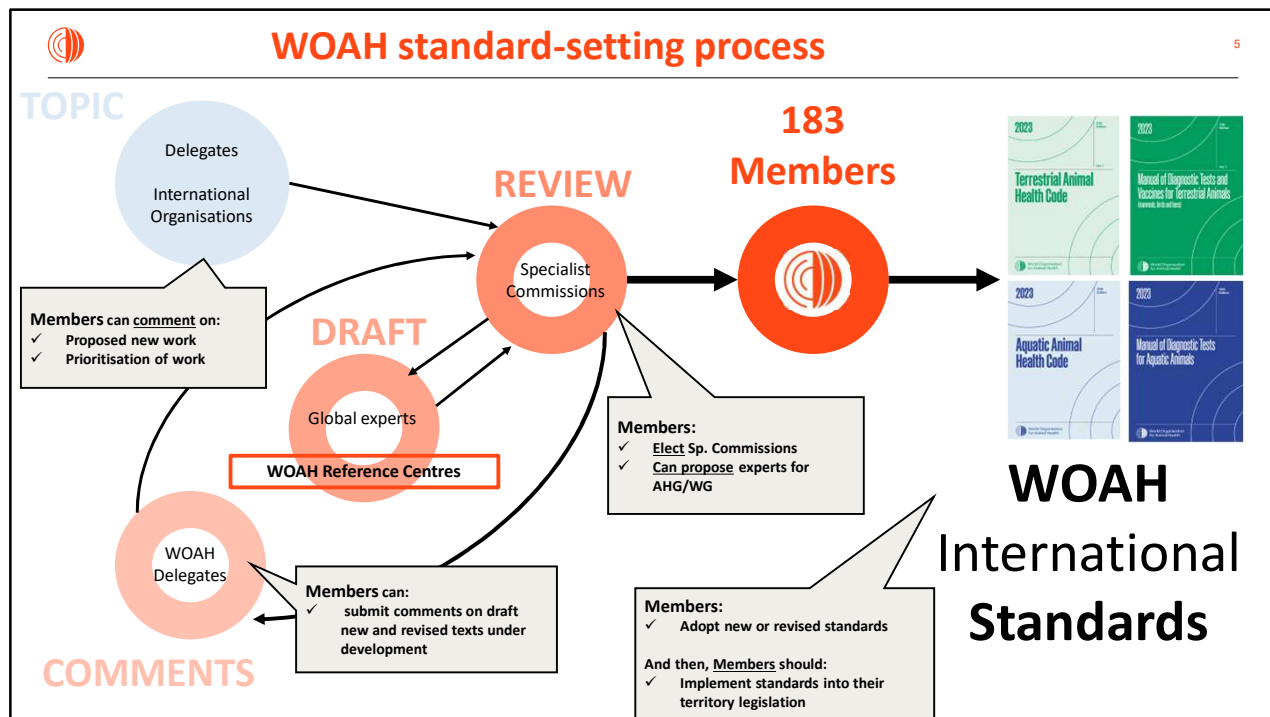
Aquatic Code:

- Provides standards for safe trade
- A harmonized approach to sanitary measures
- General provisions including notification of listed diseases, risk analysis, quality of Aquatic Animal Health Services, disease prevention, emergency preparedness and outbreak response, trade, responsible antimicrobial use, welfare.
- Disease-specific provisions including susceptible species, safe commodities, declarations of freedom, recommendations for trade of commodities.

Aquatic Manual:

- Provides standards for diagnosis
- General provisions including quality management for laboratories and principles and methods of validations.
- Disease-specific provisions including disease information, host factors, epidemiology, specimen collection, diagnostic methods, recommendations for purpose of use and case definitions.

NOTE: A hyperlink was added below the QR code, in case it eases access.



Key points:

- Not all topics may be of the same interest
- Topics progress slowly but steadily
- Takes 2 to 4 years to adopt
- Intervene sooner rather than later
- All contributions help
- Do not wait until the General Session!



How to engage with the Standard setting process





How to Engage: Where can I find information?

7

On the WOAH Delegate Portal

The screenshot shows the WOAH Delegate Portal interface. At the top, the 'Specialist Commissions Reports' menu item is circled in orange. Below the menu, four commission sections are visible: Aquatic Animals Commission, Biological Standards Commission, Scientific Commission, and Terrestrial Code Commission. Each section contains a list of reports with dates and download options.

- Private website for the WOAH Delegates
- Report and annexes in MS Word format
- Download files and use for commenting

[Specialist Commissions Reports](#)

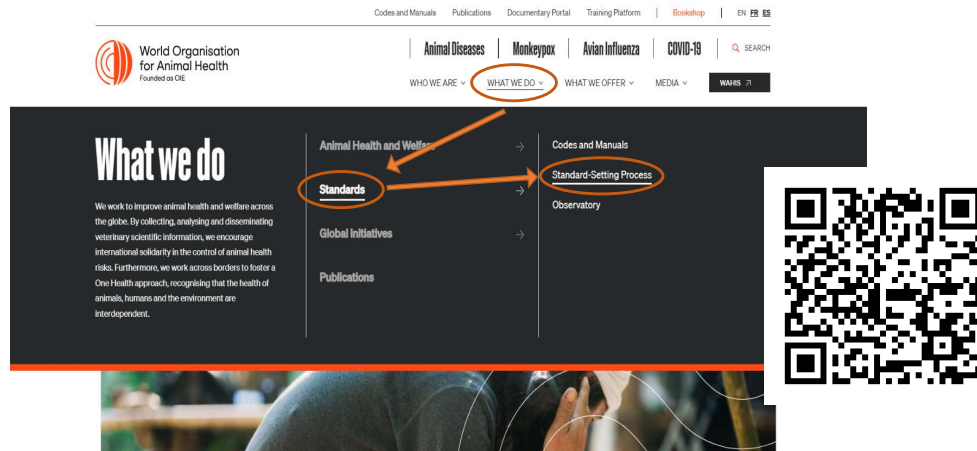
Added a hyperlink on the bottom of the slide to ease access to [Specialist Commissions Reports](#) on the WOAH Intranet Delegate portal



How to Engage: Where can I find information?

8

On the WOA Website



[Standard-Setting Process - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

By going to: [What we do - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#), you can access the [Standard-Setting Process - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#). On the bottom of the slide is the hyperlink to the later, in case the QE code is not as easily accessible.



How to Engage: Where can I find information?

9

On the WOA Website (cont.) Specialists Commissions

The relevant Specialist Commission consider requests to develop new standards or review existing standards received from a range of stakeholders including from Members, partner international organisations, and its scientific network. These requests are reviewed, prioritised and included on its respective work plans.

Calendar of the upcoming Specialist Commission meetings

Commissions*	Sept. 2024	Feb. 2025	Sept. 2025	Feb. 2026	Sept. 2026	Feb. 2027
Code Commission	9-19	4-14	9-18	3-13	8-17	2-12
Biological Standards Commission	9-13	3-7	8-12	2-6	7-11	1-5
Scientific Commission	9-13	10-14	8-12	2-6	7-11	8-12
Aquatic Animals Commission	18-25	12-19	17-24	11-18	16-23	10-17

*Projected dates of the next meetings of the four Specialist Commissions

- **Schedule** of upcoming Specialist Commissions meetings (**Feb** and **Sep**)
- Links to **Specialist Commissions**, **ad hoc Groups** and **Working Groups**

Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission

[Discover →](#)

Biological Standards Commission

[Discover →](#)

Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases

[Discover →](#)

Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission

[Discover →](#)

Ad hoc Groups and Working Groups

The *ad hoc* Groups and Working Groups may be requested to address specific topics to ensure that new or revised standards are based on the latest scientific evidence and knowledge. The views of the Members and partner international organisations are routinely sought through the circulation of draft and revised texts in the relevant Specialist Commission report.

Ad hoc Groups

[Discover →](#)

Working Groups

[Discover →](#)

This information is all in the webpage following the hyperlink mentioned on the previous slide: [Standard-Setting Process - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#).



On the WOAH Website



Ad hoc Groups

An ad hoc Group is convened at the initiative of the Director General to provide expert advice on a topic as defined by the Terms of Reference. The ad hoc Group reports are considered by the relevant Specialist Commission or Director General. An ad hoc Group usually comprises six internationally recognised experts and take into consideration geographical representation and gender balance.

[Introduction](#) [Terrestrial Animals](#) [Aquatic Animals](#) [Animal Welfare](#)

[Antimicrobial Resistance](#) [Official Status](#) [Others](#)

[Ad hoc groups - WOAH - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

Working Groups

WOAH permanent Working Groups are responsible for continually reviewing developments in their fields, and for keeping WOAH Members informed of current issues.

Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Following the adoption of Resolution no. 14 "WOAH's engagement in the One Health Global Effort to Control Antimicrobial Resistance" by the World Assembly of WOAHO Delegates in May 2019, a Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) was established to support the implementation of the [WOAH Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance](#) and the [Prudent Use of Antimicrobials](#) and the organisation's capacity to respond to global challenges according to its mandate.

[Learn more](#)

Working Group on Wildlife

Founded in 1994, this Wildlife Working Group informs and advises the WOAHO on all health problems relating to wild animals, whether in the wild or in captivity. It has prepared recommendations and oversees numerous scientific publications on the surveillance and control of the most important specific wildlife diseases. The Working Group comprises world-leading scientific experts in their subject areas.

[Learn more](#)

[Working Groups - WOAHO - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

This slide has hyperlinks in the bottom, in case it eases access.



How to Engage: Submitting Comments

- Submitted by the WOAHA Delegate or an International Organisation with a cooperative agreement with WOAHA.
- Follow the **Guide** on the public website; send Word format annexes attached to an email with one document per annex to AAC.Secretariat@woah.org by the **deadline** in the previous AAC report.
- ✓ On the work programme or items documented in the report that do not include annexes: request new work, support or object to items, comment on priorities, or provide scientific evidence.
- ✓ On annexes (draft standards): always propose alternative text in **blue font**; use ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions and double underline for additions (**no track-changes**).
- ✓ Each comment: state the aim (Addition / Deletion / Change / Editorial / General) with a clear rationale (<200 words) and references to documented evidence.



[a-commenting-guide.pdf](#)

A hyperlink to the Guide is under the corresponding QR code to ease access.



How to Engage: Submitting Comments (example)

12

Commenting on the **work programme** or items documented in the report that do not include annexes

FORM A	
COMMENTS ON THE WORK PROGRAMME OR ITEMS DOCUMENTED IN THE REPORT THAT DO NOT INCLUDE ANNEXES	
Name of Member or IO:	Commission report and date of report:
	Title of the item in the report or item in the work programme annex:
	Proposal/Comment:
	Rationale:
	Supporting evidence, if relevant:
	Title of the item in the report or item in the work programme annex:
	Proposal/Comment:

Members and IOs can comment to:

- Request new work to be undertaken;
- Support or object to work items in a Specialist Commission work programme;
- Comment on the priority of work items in a Specialist Commission work programme;
- Raise points of interest for work items in a Specialist Commission work programme and provide information, evidence or expertise that could be taken into consideration for the development of the work (especially for ones that have not yet started or are in preparation);

Each comment should be supported by a brief, but clear, explanation of the reasoning or justification for the proposal.

- In less than 200 words.
- The rationale should take into consideration the relevant background for the work (e.g. AHG reports, previous SC reports), and include references to documented evidence when relevant.

Add links for Work Programme for aquatics once it is up. The latest Work Programme can be accessed via Annex 4 of the latest Aquatic Commission's report; for example, from February 2026: [a-aahsc-feb-2026-2.pdf](#)



How to Engage: Submitting Comments (e.g., Annexes)

13

Commenting on **new or revised standards** circulated for comment as **annexes**

Name of Member or IO	Category (addition, deletion, change, editorial, general):
	Proposed amended text (or precise suggested deletion):
	Rationale:
	Supporting evidence, if relevant (e.g. scientific references, national and international reports, tangible experiences in this regard attached to this table)

Members and IOs should indicate the aim of the comment

- **Addition:** when proposing to add new content
- **Deletion:** when proposing to remove proposed content;
- **Change:** when proposing to modify the proposed content (meaning);
- **Editorial:** when proposing to address formatting issues and to improve language, including translation without altering the meaning;
- **General Comment** the comment should be on the whole text, rather than focusing solely on a specific paragraph.

Members and IOs must suggest an alternative text that would address their concerns.

- Use a **blue font** to show the proposed alternative text.
- DO NOT use the automatic 'track-changes' function in MS Word.
- Apply **strikethrough** formatting to indicate suggested deletions. Apply **double underline** to proposed additions.
- Do not use the highlight feature for suggested new text, but instead, use **blue font**.

Each comment should be supported by a brief, but clear, explanation of the reasoning or justification for the proposal.

- In less than 200 words.
- The rationale should take into consideration the relevant background for the work (e.g. AHG reports, previous SC reports), and include references to documented evidence when relevant.

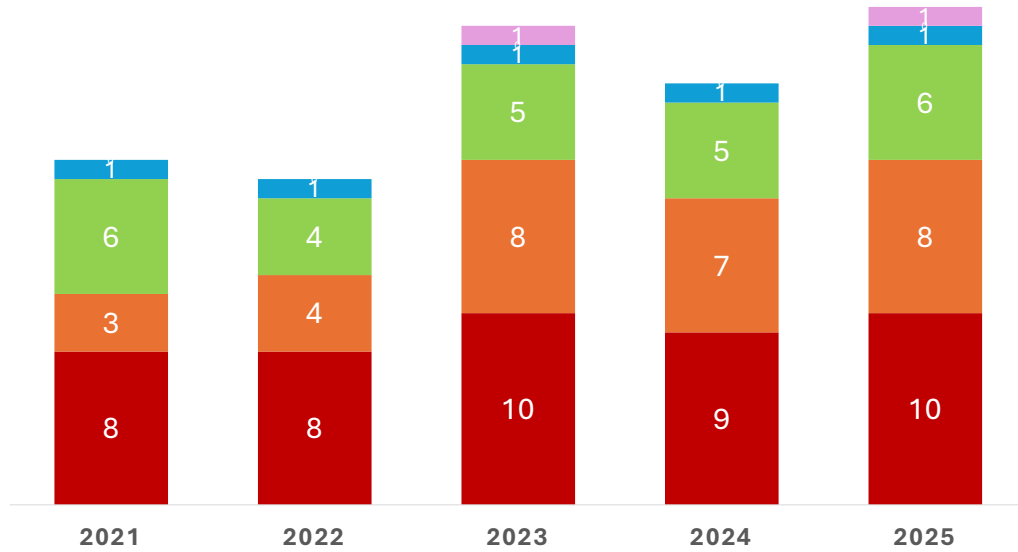
The latest Aquatic Commission report is publicly available; for example, from February 2026: [a-aahsc-feb-2026-2.pdf](#)



Number of member submitted comments on Aquatic Animal HC (2021 – 2025)

14

■ Asia-Pacific ■ Europe ■ America ■ Africa ■ Middle east ■ others(int'l Orgs)





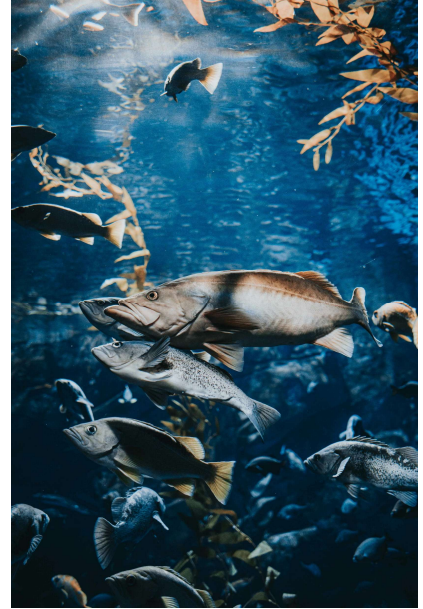
Aquatic Animal Health Code of Interest by Regions (Number of Member, Feb. 2026)

15

Aquatic Animal Health Code	Chapter	Total	Asia Pacific	America	Europe	Int'l Groups
Definition of Compartment	Glossary	5	3	1	1	
Definition of Ornamental Aquatic Animal	Glossary	6	3	2	1	
Application of compartmentalization	4.3.	15	7	5	3	
Following in Aquaculture	4.7.	10	4	3	3	
Trade measures, importation/exportation procedures and health certification	5	9	4	3	2	
Infection with <i>Aphanomyces astaci</i> (crayfish plague)'	9.2.	6	3	1	2	
Infection with <i>Gyrodactylus salaris</i>	10.3.	9	2	2	3	2
Infection with infectious salmon anaemia virus	10.4.	1			1	
Taxonomy		5	3	1	1	



Role of the Aquatic Animals Focal Point





6 Key Tasks of the Aquatic Animals Focal Point

17

NETWORK & COORDINATION

1 Build an Expert Network

Establish or connect with an existing network of aquatic animal health experts in the territory.

2 Liaise with Competent Authority

Maintain dialogue with the Competent Authority and facilitate cooperation among all relevant authorities.

3 Support WAHIS Reporting

Under the Delegate's authority, coordinate WAHIS submissions: notifications, 6-monthly reports & annual questionnaires.

DISEASE INFORMATION & STANDARDS

4 Contact Point for WAHIS

Serve as the Member contact point for all WAHIS matters related to aquatic animal disease information.

5 Consult on Draft Standards

Receive AAC reports from WOAHS HQ and lead in-territory consultation on proposed draft standards.

6 Prepare Comments for Delegate

Draft scientific comments for the Delegate on meeting reports and proposals for new or revised aquatic standards.

Activities of the focal points in relation with WOAHS rights and obligations are **under the authority of the WOAHS Delegate**.

From a legal perspective, the WOAHS considers the official WOAHS Delegate to be the **unique representative of the member territory**.

WOAHS greatly appreciates the **Focal Points' recommendations regarding experts**; for example, when considering new *ad hoc* Groups.

Why should Member engage in the WOAHS standard-setting process:

- **The standards are for Members**; they need to be adopted by consensus by Members for implementation by Members.
- Commenting allows your opinion/concerns to be heard to make the **standards work for you**.
- Ensures that the **standards work for all** different types of Competent Authority organizational structures

Note: **By consensus** means that a decision or agreement is reached when **all parties accept it**; abstention is not considered an objection, so consensus can still be reached.



Conclusions





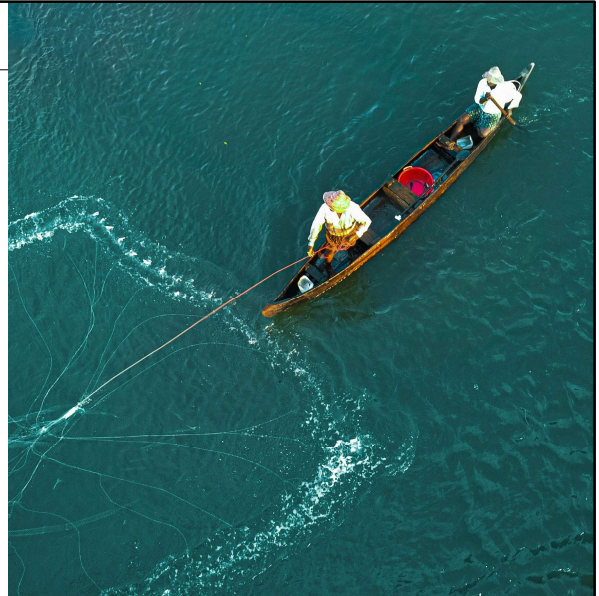
Conclusions

- WOAHA aquatic standards represent an agreed approach to improve aquatic animal health globally.
- The standards provide a harmonised approach to manage the risks of disease spread associated with spread.
- The standards must continue to evolve as the aquaculture industry evolves and as new scientific information becomes available.
- The development of the standards takes time, so it is advisable to think ahead and anticipate what may be needed.
- The Aquatic Animal Focal Point has an important role acting under the WOAHA Delegate's authority to help them fulfil their WOAHA Member obligations more efficiently.

NOTE: Often overlooked is that following WOAHA standards is cost-effective — the alternative requires risk analysis-based measures, which can be significantly more expensive.



Thank you



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for Animal Health



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



国立大学法人
東京海洋大学
Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology