



OIE Communication Focal Points Training Seminar: Focus on ASF

"The OIE continues its training activity by adopting new modalities, combining e-learning and webinars"

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the measures implemented in response to the disease have challenged the development of several capacity building activities in the Americas Region. As a way to adapt to this new reality, a virtual webinar for the OIE national Focal Points for communication was held from 24 to 28 August 2020, becoming the first virtual training for the OIE national Focal Points (NFP) in the region. This new format allowed countries to share their experiences, contributing to strengthen the regional network.

Communication should be an integral part of all the activities of the Veterinary Services. The webinar programme was specifically developed to build risk communication skills with a focus on African swine fever (ASF), a growing threat to the Americas, a region currently free of this disease. The risk of introduction is high, and prevention becomes key in the absence of an effective vaccine. Therefore, risk communication remains an essential component of the prevention efforts to raise awareness and motivate actions that can reduce the risk of ASF introduction. The OIE awareness campaign 'ASF kills pigs' was used as a basis for simulation exercises with interactive group sessions.

Crisis communication skills, including rumour management, are also important to respond to animal diseases. Invited experts from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Leticia Linn and Sebastian Oliel, addressed the main principles of crisis communication and management of rumours, presenting the communication efforts during the COVID-19 sanitary crisis as an example.

Prior to the webinar, all participants completed a communication e-learning, available on the OIE portal for the training of Veterinary Services, in order to get prepared for the workshop sessions. This new portal is part of the OIE efforts to improve the capacity of national Veterinary Services via training activities, resources and discussions.

The webinar marked the beginning of the 3rd cycle of capacity building activities for the OIE NFP for communication from the Americas Region, which will be complemented with additional activities according to the evolution of the COVID-19 situation worldwide, and the eventual travel restrictions. The learnings from the regional webinar will help countries better implement the OIE international Standards for communication, available on the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.



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The OIE would like to express their gratitude to the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA) for the kind support in the organisation of this webinar.

For more information on the webinar, Click [here](#)