



World  
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Animal

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# Americas Community of Practice for the follow-up of the WOAH Standards setting process

Terms of Reference  
July 2025

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## 1. Background

The creation of a Community of Practice (CoP) is proposed under the objective of strengthening the participation of the countries of the Americas in the standard setting process of the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). This initiative seeks to support the Delegates of the Members of the Americas region in the technical and strategic follow-up of the WOAHA Standards setting process.

## 2. General Objective

Build a voluntary, collaborative and informal space for the exchange of information and experiences between the Members of the Americas and the WOAHA Regional Representation, in order to strengthen the role of national Delegates to participate and influence the process of elaboration and revision of Standards developed by WOAHA.

## 3. Community of Practice Structure

The Community of Practice shall be organised into two thematic working groups, one for terrestrial animals and the second for aquatic animal Standards.

Each country may nominate one or two technical participants, as appropriate, to participate in one or both groups.

The designation of participants for each group will be the decision of the WOAHA Delegate, who will remain solely responsible for officially representing the country in the Standards setting process.

## 4. Specific Objectives

The following Specific Objectives are proposed:

- To support Delegates in identifying issues of national interest.
- Enable the knowledge and understanding of the procedures, steps and deadlines of the annual calendar of the WOAHA and its Specialist Commissions.
- Promote the continuous follow-up of the Standards setting and modification process.

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- Encourage anticipation, so as to allow for adequate preparation of technical comments and timely participation.
  - Enhance the ability of Members to express their needs and views effectively
  - Serve as a channel of communication between WOAHA and designated representatives.

## 5. Composition

The Community of Practice will be composed of:

- National participants nominated by the WOAHA Delegates, with a maximum of one per thematic group per Member.
- Members of the WOAHA Regional Representation for the Americas, who will coordinate and facilitate the activities of the Community of Practice.

If necessary, staff members from WOAHA Headquarters or from the Specialist Commissions may participate as a technical and guiding resource.

There will be no minimum number of participants for the operation of the Community of Practice, as it is a voluntary initiative.

## 6. Characteristics of the Participants

Participants nominated by countries should:

- Be endorsed by the National Delegate to WOAHA.
- Have the time and commitment to participate actively throughout the year.
- Be able to liaise with national experts and stakeholders when necessary.
- Possess communication and technical writing skills.
- Have prospects for continuity and to maintain their role in the medium and long term.

Ideally, it is recommended that the National Focal Point for aquatic animals be proposed for the relevant group.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

For the national participants:

- Monitor the annual WOAHA calendar and its updates.
- Periodically report to the Delegate on progress and opportunities for participation.
- Identify policy issues of national interest.
- Support the Delegate in coordinating internal technical consultations for the preparation of comments.
- Act as a point of contact with the WOAHA on issues related to the Standards setting process.

For the WOAHA Regional Representation for the Americas:

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- Coordinate and facilitate virtual meetings and electronic exchanges.
  - Provide technical and methodological guidance on the Standards setting process.
  - Share alerts, key documents and best practices.
  - Promote active and sustained participation of members.

## 8. Working Modality

- The Community of Practice will hold regular virtual meetings (at least quarterly) and continuous communication by electronic means.
- Priority will be given to the exchange of information, experiences and good practices.
- The discussion will not address specific technical issues and will not seek to build common positions.
- Work will be conducted in English and Spanish. The availability of simultaneous translation will depend on the availability of funds. Failing this, sub-groups will be organised by language if necessary.
- The Community of Practice itself will define its work schedule.
- The work will start gradually in order to be progressively integrated into the cycle of the Standards setting process.

## 9. Duration and Continuity

The Community of Practice will be permanent, with annual review and reporting on its performance. The designated representatives are expected to maintain their participation on an ongoing basis, given the protracted nature of the Standards setting process, which takes nearly four to five years since an initial topic proposal.