**TRAINING COURSE ON THE SURVEILLANCE OF
WILDLIFE DISEASES – THE ROLE OF HUNTERS**

Summary and comments from delegates at the meeting in Pravets, Bulgaria December 18-19, 2017

**Introduction**

* OIE, CIC and FACE recognise the important role hunters play in the surveillance of diseases of wildlife. Based on this have these organisations organised a training course for hunters in the surveillance of Wildlife Diseases. The training course was supported by grants from the European Union and the Bulgarian state, and was held December 18-19, in 2017 at the CIC Wildlife Health Center in Pravets, Bulgaria under the leadership of Torsten Mörner, representing both the OIE and CIC.
* The meeting gathered around 45 people from 18 different countries, with 19 representatives from the hunter associations and 24 veterinarians, including 7 OIE Focal Point of Widlife veterinarians.
* The following slides is the summary and recommendations from this meeting and the participants, covering different issues concerning the hunters role in the surveillance work with wildlife diseases, and at the moment with a special focus on African Swine Fever (ASF).

**COMMUNICATION
HUNTERS – HUNTER ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL LEVEL**

* Hunter association prepare a working plan for communication with hunters concerning wildlife disease issues.
* This plan shall contain communication strategies for different target groups.
* Establish a E-mail list to hunting clubs and relevant associations at a local level.
* Encourage hunter magasines to publish articles about wildlife diseases on a regular basis.
* Encourage hunter associations to publish information concerning wildlife diseases in social media and homepages.

**COMMUNICATION
CIC/FACE - NATIONAL HUNTER ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

* On a regular basis publish information about wildlife diseases on a global level.
* National hunting associations to inform FACE/CIC if emerging disease events ocur.
* CIC and FACE to establish an information platform available for national hunting associations.

**COMMUNICATION
HUNTERS – VETERINARY AUTHORITIES
NATIONAL LEVEL**

* Establish continuous communication with veterinary authorities concerning wildlife disease issues.
* Inform veterinary authorities if unusual disease events or mortality occur in wildlife
* To include hunters in national expert groups when diseases concern wildlife
* Include hunters in the production of information materials from veterinary authorities concerning wildlife diseases
* Veterinary authorities to communicate with hunting associations concerning the distribution of information wildlife diseases

**COMMUNICATION
HUNTERS – VETERINARY AUTHORITIES
INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

* The hunting associations to nominate a contact person responsible for Wildlife Diseases.
* To establish communication between the hunting association and the OIE Focal points of Wildlife.
* To enhance the cooperation between OIE and CIC based on the existing agreement between the organisations.
* International veterinary authorities to consult international hunting organisation (CIC, FACE) when issues involving hunting are discussed for wildlife disease control measures.

**SURVEILLANCE ASF**
The role of hunters

* Hunters should be involved in the surveillance in ”peace time”
* Hunters to be recognised and motivated for their participation in the surveillance work
* Veterinary authorities to inform hunting associations when the risk for introduction of ASF has increased
* Hunter associations to inform the hunters and especially the WD contact person when the risk for introduction of ASF has increased
* Veterinary authorities to prepare a contingency plan and immediately involve the national hunting associations in this work to foresee the role of hunters.
* Organising a joint simulation excersize

**FEEDING**

* Carefully evaluate the role of feeding in driving population dynamics and disease transmission based on local conditions and disease situation
* Involve hunters and landowners in the discussions concerning feeding/baiting (for hunting purposes)
* The terms baiting and feeding needs to be defined

**HUNTING**

* Carefully evaluate the role of hunting based on local conditions and disease situation
* Involve hunters and wildlife scientists in the decision-making on possible hunting bans or restrictions
* Adapt legislation to fascilitate effective hunting methods and instruments (night vision, thermo cameras, sound surpressers etc.)
* unmotivating restrictions in hunting can lead to reduced interest in taking part in the surveillance and management work

**HUNTING WITH DOGS**

* Scientific evidence is needed to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using dogs in hunting, considering the epidemiological situation
* Consider developing methodologies for training and applying dogs for finding carcasses
* Banning the use of hunting dogs reduces the hunting success

**DRIVEN HUNTS**

* Carefully evaluate the role of driven hunts based on local conditions and disease situation
* Scientific evidence is needed to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of driven hunts, considering the epidemiological situation
* Banning driven hunts reduces the hunting success – especially in wild boar
* In the context of driven hunts, biosecurity measures are particularly relevant

**TRAPPING**

* Carefully evaluate the role of trapping based on local conditions and disease situation
* Adapt legislation to fascilitate effective trapping and culling methods
* Encourage most efficient trapping methods.

**COSTS**

* Create – if not already available – emergency fund together with veterinary agencies, government authorities, pig industry, hunters etc.
* Experiences of present outbreaks demonstrate the advantages of the motivation by economic means of hunters to take part in the field work (retrieving carcasses, selective hunting, sampling etc.)

**BIOSECURITY**

* Biosecurity is seen as a crucial tool in wildlife disease control
* Prepare and establish legal requirements for biosecurity measures in hunting ASAP
* Train hunters in the implementation of proper biosecurity measures (equipment, clothing, transportation, disposal, etc.)
* Fascilitate the investment in biosecurity equipment and infrastructure to prepare for disease emergence

**OTHER ISSUES**

* Prepare a manual for (online) training courses for hunters for wildlife diseases at the national level (train the trainers)
* Support the training of hunters in disease surveillance, prevention, and control at the international level
* Encourage integrated training of hunters and veterinarians and organise international and national workshops.