

Preface

Invasive species

Part 1: general aspects and biodiversity

Part 2: concrete examples

The World Organisation for Animal Health was created in 1924. The initial name of the Organisation was the *Office International des Epizooties* and the original acronym, OIE, has been retained. It is one of the oldest and, with its 175 Members, one of the most representative of all intergovernmental organisations. The OIE operates at the interface between animal health, human health and the environment, and therefore recognises the validity of the concept 'One World, One Health'. In its capacity as the international intergovernmental reference organisation for animal health and welfare, the OIE develops health and welfare standards, with particular emphasis on safeguarding the food supply by combating animal diseases, and ensuring the health security of world trade in animals and animal products.

The OIE was primarily created with the aim of controlling the international spread of infectious animal diseases. This original mission has been expanded, and the new mandate is now to 'improve animal health worldwide'. To succeed, the OIE must provide policy-makers with the information, arguments and tools that will enable them to pursue this aim in a sustainable manner. In working towards this goal, the OIE is increasingly involved in wildlife issues, as wild animals are the source of many new emerging and re-emerging animal and human diseases (zoonoses). This is why the OIE stresses the importance of the continuous surveillance of animal diseases and pathogens in wildlife populations. However, at the same time, the OIE strongly supports maintaining biodiversity and a stable ecological balance, which is one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Invasive species are a constant threat to the biodiversity of the planet, as exemplified in many articles in the thematic issues of the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review* this year, both of which are devoted to this topic.

The mechanisms by which invasive species are introduced and are enabled to expand are numerous, but humans have been the principle cause of numerous invasions and they themselves are the main invasive species. Many invasions of domestic species, and their associated pathogens and parasites, have been the result of human invasion.

Among invasive species there are many feral animals, i.e. domestic species that have returned to the wild. The OIE, which is deeply involved in animal welfare, intends to create an expert group in charge of writing guidelines for the control of animal populations that are considered undesirable. It is important that national authorities control populations of invasive species, as they can often constitute a reservoir of pathogens that pose a threat to humans, domestic animals and wildlife.

As part of its increasing involvement in issues connected to wildlife and biodiversity, the OIE recommends that veterinary education should include an introduction to animal taxonomy (both of terrestrial and aquatic animals and arthropod vectors).

When dealing with biodiversity and biodiversity loss, one must also take into account the biodiversity of domestic species. With the development of genomics and the availability of many animal genomic sequences, it is important to maintain this biodiversity for comparative genomics, as this could have a significant impact on important sectors of biological research, for both human and animal health.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the authors who contributed to these two issues of the *Review*. In this International Year of Biodiversity I am certain that these timely publications, which are on a subject of great importance for the OIE and its Members, will help all those involved in biodiversity, animal welfare, and animal and public health.

I am sure that these issues of the *Review* will be appreciated by those working to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and by the countries that have signed the Convention. The publication of these special issues highlights the extent to which the OIE supports the CBD Secretariat and their mandate to protect biodiversity, an essential component of which is the control of invasive species.

I would especially like to thank Professor Paul-Pierre Pastoret and Doctor François Moutou for accepting our invitation to coordinate these issues of the *Review*. I am very grateful for the way in which they undertook this task and for their contribution to the development of these publications.

Bernard Vallat
Director General

