

Introduction to the OIE Guidelines for the Welfare of Live aquatic Animals (Annex XII)

General comments

With regard to paragraph 2.10 of the report, Japan appreciates and supports the view of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (the Commission) that, in regard to development of aquatic animal welfare guidelines in the Aquatic Animal Health Code (the Aquatic Code), the Commission remained concerned that the scientific basis for the guidelines on farmed fish had not yet been clearly established. For this reason, Japan believes that OIE should proceed with this work when scientific basis for the guidelines become clearly established.

Finfish, crustaceans and mollusks have significantly different nervous systems from mammals and birds and therefore sensitivity for hunger, thirst, fear, distress or pain is different. There are even big distinctions among three aquatic animal classes. Japan considers that provisions of the Aquatic Code on animal welfare should appropriately reflect these facts.

Aquatic animals are getting increasingly important as a source of protein in the diet, and meeting such nutritional needs for aquatic animals should be fully taken into account. Japan supports the Commission's effort to allow flexibility in the Aquatic Code on this issue since food habits and fishery industry in member countries vary according to cultural (including culinary), geographical and ecological factors of each country.

Specific comments

(Paragraph 5 of Article X.X.X.1, Annex XII)

Japan is concerned that some "freedoms" recognized in paragraph 5 is not based on enough scientific grounds. For example, there is no established view on sensitivity for hunger, fear, or distress of finfish, crustaceans and mollusks. Therefore, even though Japan can agree with a part of the proposed text, it does not support the inclusion of all of the "five freedoms" into the "Guiding principles for aquatic animal welfare" and request to modify this paragraph as below or delete the whole paragraph at this stage.

Article X.X.X.1.

Guiding principles for aquatic animal welfare

5. That some of the internationally recognised 'five freedoms' (such as freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort and; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour) provide valuable guidance in *aquatic animal* welfare.

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Definitions (Annex III)

Guidelines for aquatic animal health surveillance (Annex XVII)

Definition of “Outbreak of disease”

Japan understands the new definition of “Outbreak of disease” is proposed to reflect the use of this term in the proposed “Guidelines for aquatic animal health surveillance”. However, Japan is concerned about the proposed change of definition of “Outbreak of disease” substantially affects instructions in other parts of the Aquatic Code, such as Article 1.4.4.2. Harmonized terminology in the Aquatic Code and the Terrestrial Code is also important. Japan therefore proposes to keep the definition of “Outbreak of disease” as it is, and to replace the proposed uses of “outbreak of disease” in the “Guidelines for aquatic animal health surveillance” by other words/phrases as appropriate.