

Japan's comments on the Report of the meeting of WOA Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission in February 2024

The WOA Aquatic Animal Health Code

Annex 47 Item 7.4. – Assessment of default periods in Articles X.X.4. – X.X.8. for disease-specific chapters

Results and Recommendations 内

Pathway 4: returning to disease freedom

In Chapter 1.4. of the Aquatic Code a default minimum period for basic biosecurity conditions (BBC) before targeted surveillance (TS) to regain freedom is not specified. Instead the guidance requires that 'the pathway of disease introduction should be investigated and basic biosecurity conditions should be reviewed and modified' and that 'mitigation measures should be implemented following eradication of the disease, and prior to commencement of any targeted surveillance'. As the circumstances of each disease outbreak leading to a breakdown in disease freedom are unique setting periods for BBC (preceding TS to regain freedom) on a pathogen basis is not required.

Chapter 1.4. of the Aquatic Code suggests that for 'a country or a zone, the default minimum period of surveillance to regain freedom is consistent with the requirements for pathway 3', and thus the periods of TS recommended in this paper can be used for pathway 4. However, it should be noted that guidance in Chapter 1.4. allows for earlier self-declarations of freedom 'if the relevant Competent Authority can demonstrate that the approach would provide an appropriate standard of evidence for the circumstances of the outbreak and the disease'. As outbreaks leading to a breakdown in disease freedom will vary considerably in size and circumstance, flexibility in applying periods of TS to regain a disease free status is justified. (Omitted)

Comments:

Japan requests Commission to clarify the default period of targeted surveillance for "compartments" when using Pathway 4, which is missing in the Commission's report, while those for "countries or zones" are clearly stated. Since such period is provisionally indicated at each chapter for specific diseases such as 'at least [six months]' at this point, we would like to seek Commission's views on whether such provisional description will remain or whether additional discussion will be made in the future.

Furthermore, Japan would like to point out that the shorter/flexible TS period than the default minimum period should be justified for compartments when returning to disease freedom, as well as countries and zones, since the premises* for applying such flexibility, which are set out in the Code, are more easily provided for compartments than countries or zones.

* "if the relevant Competent Authority can demonstrate that the approach would provide an appropriate standard of evidence for the circumstances of the outbreak and the disease" (Article 1.4.14)