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Book review — Boekresensie

International animal health code – mammals, birds and bees (8th edition)

1999. Office International des Épidémiologies, Paris, 420 pp, soft cover. Price C45. ISBN 92 9044 484 3.

The International Animal Health Code represents a set of standards for the control of animal diseases, compiled by experts, to support international trade in livestock products. It is universally accepted that animal products can pose risks, in terms of both animal and human disease. These risks are increased when trade results in animals and animal products crossing international boundaries, with the concomitant possibility of introducing diseases into countries where they were previously unknown. Failure to recognise the disease and institute appropriate control measures can have far-reaching consequences. Importing countries therefore need to draw up protocols that will protect them from introducing diseases without placing unnecessary restrictions upon trade. The Code serves as a guideline for such protocols, collating in a concise manner the vast amount of information about each disease that is relevant for its control. First produced in 1968, subsequent editions of the Code appeared at irregular intervals until 1998, when it was decided that the quantity of updates justified annual revision and publication.

The text comprises four parts. Part 1 provides useful general information under the following headings: definitions, notifications and epizootiological information, veterinary ethics and certification for international trade, import risk analysis, import/export procedures, and risk analysis for biologicals for veterinary use. Part 2 consists of 15 chapters, each devoted to a List A disease (diseases with high potential for transboundary transmission and with serious consequences). In part 3 the more numerous List B diseases (diseases of socioeconomic or public health importance) are covered in 8 sections, relating to multiple species diseases, and diseases of cattle, sheep and goats, equines, pigs, birds, rabbits and bees. Part 4 comprises appendices relating to diagnostic tests for the purpose of international trade, general requirements for health and hygiene, destruction of pathogens and insect vectors, transport of animals, and epidemiological surveillance systems. Part 5 consists of 11 model

international certificates approved by the OIE and includes international animal health certificates for dogs and cats originating from countries infected with rabies, for the movement of cloven-hoofed animals, for the movement of a wide range of animal products destined for various uses, for the movement of birds, rabbits, bees and brood-combs, and a model passport for the movement of competition horses. Part 6 contains the full list of diseases (Lists A and B) notifiable to the OIE.

The Code contains a wealth of information and is a compulsory reference work for state veterinarians who deal with import and export, veterinarians employed in zoological gardens and other wildlife conservation areas, as well as for veterinarians in diagnostic laboratories that perform the tests required for different diseases. Private veterinarians whose clients wish to import or export animals or animal products, and who may be involved in quarantine of animals, will find this text invaluable, as it provides the basis of the protocols within which they will need to work.

Evidently, it would be impossible to update all the chapters every year, and it is likely that in any given edition some of the information on particular diseases will be out of date, or may contain problems of syntax that are open to misinterpretation. Thus, in the chapter on African swine fever (ASF), the recommendations relating to import of domestic and wild pigs from countries considered infected with ASF could be interpreted as implying that such animals could not be imported at all, although this is clearly not the intention. Users of the Code should keep in mind that the purpose is to facilitate safe trade and to underpin rather than override local wisdom with regard to the level of control of animal diseases.

For the amount of work entailed in the production of such a comprehensive technical publication, the price is modest.

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