



## OFFLU STEERING AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

**21 October 2022 (14h – 15.30h Paris/Rome time)**

### Participants:

Ian Brown, David Swayne, Les Sims, Jiming Chen, Mia Torchetti, Frank Wong, Yanbing Li, Timm Harder, Gounalan Pavade, Amelia Coggon, Lidewij Wiersma, Artem Metlin

### OFFLU committee term updates :

	Start date	First term end	Second term end
<b>SC members :</b>			
Ian Brown	8 October 2018	7 October 2021	7 October 2024
David Swayne	2 October 2019	1 October 2022	1 October 2025
Les Sims	9 November 2020	8 November 2023	
Jiming Chen	20 January 2021	19 January 2024	
<b>EC members :</b>			
Mia Torchetti	18 October 2019	17 October 2022	17 October 2025
Timm Harder	17 February 2022	16 February 2025	
Frank Wong	13 October 2019	12 October 2022	12 October 2025
Yanbing Li	18 June 2021	17 June 2024	

The Committee followed up with the first term completion of Dr David Swayne, Dr Mia Torchetti and Dr Frank Wong in October 2022 and agreed for next term renewal. Dr Mia Torchetti asked the Committee to consider her relieved from Chairman of Executive Committee duties due to increased workload of AI outbreaks in Americas. In view of this, Dr Frank Wong was chosen as the new Chairman of the Executive Committee by the Committee and Dr Mia Torchetti will continue as member in the Executive Committee to provide inputs.

Action: The OFFLU Secretariat to issue confirmation letters following the procedures set in the OFFLU modus operandi.

### New FAO-OFFLU focal point/OFFLU scientist appointment:

Dr Lidewij Wiersma introduced to the Committee the new FAO-OFFLU focal point, Dr Artem Metlin and the selection of Ms Amelia Coggon as the OFFLU scientist. The Committee welcomed both.

### WHO VCM update of September 2022 meeting reports and follow ups from the meeting:

The Committee was updated on the OFFLU contribution to the WHO vaccine composition meeting of September 2022. Data for 588 HPAI H5, 60 LPAI H7 and 89 H9 avian influenza genetic sequences were contributed by animal health laboratories in countries representing Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Additionally, data for 345 swine H1 sequences from 18 different clades and 116 swine

H3 sequences from eight different clades were analysed and submitted. Antigenic characterisations were undertaken by OFFLU contributing laboratories and subsequently there were updates to the WHO recommendations for the development of new candidate vaccine viruses for pandemic preparedness purposes. Based on this contribution, two new candidate vaccine viruses for an H5 clade 2.3.4.4b-like virus and an H3N8-like human, avian lineage virus were proposed against avian origin viruses.

<https://www.offlu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/VCM-roundup-Sept22-Final.pdf>

The Committee discussed how to facilitate sharing of strains and that of the derived reagents like ferret sera/antigen for antigenic characterization and for potential CVV development. Once a strain is selected for development of CVV, the concerned laboratory will be contacted through the OFFLU secretariat in collaboration with the Reference Laboratory who handled the samples to get the consent. Any official procedures that involve in this process have to be followed up involving the regional and sub regional WOA and FAO staffs.

The Committee discussed the number of laboratories that are willing to receive the derived ferret sera and homologous inactivated antigens for seven selected viruses. The Committee asked the Avian VCM technical activity to discuss with eligible laboratories and decide accordingly.

**Next chair for the OFFLU VCM technical activity:**

Dr Nicola Lewis who was leading the OFFLU-WHO VCM technical activity, recently shifted positions to move to Crick institute as WHO CC expert. In light of this, she asked the OFFLU Steering Committee to step down from leading this technical activity. The OFFLU Committees thanked Dr Nicola Lewis for her invaluable contribution and support to lead this activity successfully for more than five years.

The Committee discussed to select the next expert based on current rotation process among Reference Laboratories to lead this activity on three-year term. Dr Nicola Lewis was handling both avian and swine influenza data sets for contribution to WHO VCM. The Committee found that there are not suitable experts available to handle both avian and swine influenza data sets. So, the Committee proposed the name of Dr Francesco Bonfante, IZSve, Italy as the new lead to take over the avian influenza data contribution. To assist with swine influenza data sets, the OFFLU committee also identified Dr Amy Vincent, USA as the co-lead for this technical activity.

Action: OFFLU Secretariat to follow up with Dr Francesco Bonfante and Dr Amy Vincent for the confirmation. And to follow up with WHO for providing their names for the next VCM and to request participation of three OFFLU representatives to the WHO VCM instead of currently agreed two representatives.

**Characterisation of avian influenza viruses to support poultry vaccination (Avian influenza vaccine antigen updates):**

OFFLU embarked on a project called avian influenza matching (AIM) for characterisation of circulating avian influenza viruses in different regions to support poultry vaccination. Annual reports will be published to provide up-to date information to the animal health sector, governments, and poultry vaccine manufacturers on antigenic characteristics of circulating avian influenza viruses including comparisons with vaccine antigens. This information will facilitate selection of appropriate vaccines for poultry and updating of poultry vaccine antigens in places where vaccines are being used.

<https://www.offlu.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/OFFLU-AIM-Pilot-Feb23.pdf>

<https://www.offlu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Concept-note-OFFLU-AIM.pdf>

**H9N2 nomenclature activity update:**

Dr Frank Wong gave an update on behalf of the IZSve lab which is leading this activity. A core group of experts from different geographical representation who are routinely involved in H9 activities are working together and finding solutions to merge different works from different regions to a unique one. The task is quite challenging and the team is trying hard to recognize all the recombinant strains, remove them, define the best dataset possible and merge all the efforts in a unique paper.

**GF-TADs Global avian influenza strategy revision updates:**

The Committee was updated on GF-TADs efforts to revise the global strategy on avian influenza which was last updated in 2008. A taskforce has been created under GF-TADs. Experts from the OFFLU network will be approached to support the revision of the strategy.

**IABS meeting update:**

The Committee was update on the OFFLU experts participation in the International Alliance for Biological Standardization (IABS) meeting on 'High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Vaccination Strategies to prevent and control HPAI: Removing unnecessary barriers for usage, 25 – 26 October 2022.

**Updates WOA and FAO regional meeting on AI, Australia – OFFLU inputs:**

The Committee was updated on the program of forth coming meetings on avian influenza in Geelong, Australia and OFFLU inputs to the meeting agenda. Several OFFLU experts of Asia Pacific region are set to participate and contribute to the below two meetings.

WOAH Regional expert group meeting for avian diseases in Asia and the Pacific region, ACDP, Geelong, Australia, 31 October – 2 November 2022.

During 2-4 November 2022, FAO RAP organizes a follow-up expert meeting in Geelong, Australia to continue addressing the ongoing challenges posed by AI in Asia, and assess progresses made since the 2021 meeting.

**Next meeting:**

The Committee suggested to hold the next meeting in March/April 2023.

Action: The Secretariat to send a doodle to find a suitable date.