



Book review

Veterinary laboratories for infectious diseases. *Scientific and Technical Review*, 17(2), August 1998. ISSN 0253-1933. ISBN 92-9044-467-3. 242 pp. FRF270/USD45

The Office International des Epizooties (OIE) is currently setting standards for the infrastructure and quality assurance of Veterinary Services in relation to international trade, and one of the key components of the infrastructure, especially as it relates to trade, is the veterinary laboratory. This special issue of the *Scientific and Technical Review* of the OIE provides an overview of the structure of veterinary laboratories that work with infectious diseases, addresses the role, organization and functions of these laboratories—the activities and role of research, vaccine control and diagnostic laboratories, the functions of national laboratories—and discusses the role of laboratories within the sphere of international trade.

The standardization of laboratory techniques has acquired greater international significance since the OIE was designated to provide the animal health criteria for international trade by the World Trade Organisation "Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures". Several papers in this volume examine important aspects of standardization, namely: quality assurance, test validation, international reference standards and enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) formats. The guidelines for laboratory quality evaluation, international

reference standards for antibody assays and laboratory proficiency testing, developed by the OIE Standards Commission between 1995 and 1998, are also included in this issue.

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, most significant achievements in the control of certain infectious diseases of animals, such as new vaccines, vaccination methods, diagnostic techniques for pathogenic agents and antibody detection techniques, have been the result of the work of veterinary laboratories. The work of these laboratories is likely to become even more critical in the future as the development of new technologies strengthens their capacity for diagnostic, vaccine control and research work. Trade-related activities will also expand to include not only the traditional function of testing animals for export, but also surveillance and monitoring testing to conform with new international requirements for the recognition of disease-free areas, risk assessment and regionalization.

Volume 17(2) of the *Scientific and Technical Review* offers a total of 16 papers by 21 authors and co-authors recognized internationally for their expertise in the field of veterinary laboratories for infectious diseases.