



OFFLU STEERING AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

13 November 2024 (13h – 15h Paris/Rome time)

Participants:

Ian Brown, Marcela Uhart, David Swayne, Mia Torchetti, Frank Wong, Timm Harder, Gounalan Pavade, Amelia Coggon, Lidewij Wiersma, Mariana Delgado, Yanbing Li, Gregorio Torres

1. Welcome and update on OFFLU committees (status of term):

The Commission was presented with the status of term for the Steering and Executive Committee for information.

	Start date	First term end	Second term end
Steering Committee			
Ian Brown	8 October 2018	7 October 2021	7 October 2024 Extension until 31 October 2025
David Swayne	2 October 2019	1 October 2022	1 October 2025
Marcela Uhart	30 January 2024	29 January 2027	
Jiming Chen	20 January 2021	19 January 2024	19 January 2027
Executive Committee			
Frank Wong	13 October 2019	12 October 2022	12 October 2025
Mia Torchetti	18 October 2019	17 October 2022	17 October 2025
Timm Harder	17 February 2022	16 February 2025	
Yanbing Li	18 June 2021	17 June 2024	-

Prof Ian Brown's second term in the OFFLU Steering Committee ended on 7 October and the parent organisations FAO and WOAHA asked Prof Brown to continue with an extension until 31 October 2025 to allow identify the next Chairman of the Steering Committee. Dr Yanbing Li first term in the Executive Committee ended in June 2024 and the Steering Committee decided to fill this vacancy with a new member.

2. FAO and WOAHA update

Amelia will finish FAO assignment by end of 2024. Lorcan will work full time as OFFLU scientist from mid-December 2024 and will concentrate on VCM, AIM and the applied epidemiology group technical

activities. Fabien will support avian influenza technical activities. Lineke will continue supporting the wildlife technical activity group. Funding for the secretariat support for the swine influenza and socio economic technical activities will be explored.

WOAH focal point informed the Committees about the approval of funds for an *ad hoc* group meeting to draft avian influenza surveillance guidelines in small holder poultry settings in resource limited countries.

3. Update on AIM project (Ashley/ Amelia)

Ashley, APHA, UK updated the Committee on status of the project. Refer to the published executive summary in October 2024 [OFFLU Avian Influenza Vaccine Matching for poultry vaccines: H5Nx executive summary](#). Other discussion included the move towards RG to speed up the expansion of this sera and project. There is opportunity for FLI, Germany to raise sera. There is a need for more feedback from countries on the utilization of this project outputs. The committee discussed the need to produce a work plan of how much the project will cost annually.

Action: Organize regular calls with APHA and involved teams to follow a workplan and monitoring of what will be delivered by March 2025 to deliver the current funding commitments. Hold a satellite meeting in March 2025 to discuss progress and future of AIM. Check feedback for any success stories from countries. APHA to submit a future work plan of how much the project will cost annually.

4. OFFLU VCM updates - Sept 2024 and Feb 2025 (Amelia Coggan)

Amelia, Amy and Francesco were present in Melbourne Sept 2024 VCM representing OFFLU network. Three CVVs proposed from the OFFLU data. The OFFLU summary report from the meeting is available at <https://www.offlu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/OFFLU-Summary-S24.pdf>.

Lorcan to replace Amelia from February 2025 VCM onwards. Handover will be done over December. Invitation letters for data submission was sent out for February 2025 VCM. The OFFLU Secretariat will arrange a call early/mid-December inviting all reference and national laboratories from different regions to discuss avian influenza surveillance data and to motivate sequence sharing.

Permission for use of the Ghana CVV still not obtained, however efforts are on to find the best solution.

H5 nomenclature work is still pending. OFFLU offered support for this.

H9 nomenclature work integrated into WHO VCM zoonotic summaries.

Action: Follow up for the data collection for February 2025 VCM. Arrange a OFFLU zoom call to discuss the epidemiological and molecular data collection before the VCM. Follow up on Ghana CVV transfer and H5 nomenclature work.

5. USA avian influenza updates (Mia)

Dr Mia Torchetti presented avian influenza detections in USA between December 2021 and February 2024. The GenoFLU tool was developed to classify HPAI H5N1 goose/Guangdong clade 2.3.4.4b viruses detected in North American flyways <https://github.com/USDA-VS/GenoFLU> and includes detections in wild migratory birds, poultry species and non-dairy mammals. Only one sequence per poultry premises was included to represent the premises.

The detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Mammals is available at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/mammals>.

Key findings for B3.13 genotype detection: The virus genotype found in dairy cattle emerged in wild birds in the fall of 2023. A single spillover event likely occurred in late winter of 2023 followed by limited local circulation which preceded the first evidence of cattle falling ill in January/February 2024. A small number of molecular markers were identified in virus populations that have potential to lead to changes in how the virus behaves and its transmission potential in mammals.

Genotype D1.1, a new reassortment of a currently circulating Eurasian H5 2.3.4.4b virus with North American virus. This is the first detected reassortment of the A3 genotype which has been circulating in the Pacific flyway since April of 2022. Genotype D1.2, a second detected reassortment of the A3 genotype which has been circulating in the Pacific Flyway since April of 2022. A third reassortant has just been identified with A3.

Other spillovers: In March 2024, several newly kidded farmed goats developed acute neurological signs prior to death. The goat herd shared the pasture and water source with a flock of chickens and ducks, which had been recently depopulated due to HPAI. Genotype 3.6 (related to B3.13) identified. In May 2024, HPAI still births and abortions were reported among alpacas on an Idaho farm. The alpacas on the farm shared the same pasture and water source with infected chickens and ducks, which were depopulated. The virus belongs to genotype B3.13.

6. Update on OFFLU global technical meeting in July 2024 (Gounalan Pavade)

The Committee discussed some of the comments that are pending to be addressed. The Secretariat worked offline to address the comments and posted the document on the website https://www.offlu.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024_07_OFFLU-Global-Meeting-Report-final.pdf

As a follow up to the meeting, the terms of reference for the following technical activities was presented to the OFFLU committees for comments and validation.

- OFFLU avian influenza technical activity (led by Erik Karlsson, Frank Wong)
- OFFLU socio economic technical activity (led by Robyn Alders, Mehroosh Tak)
- OFFLU wildlife technical activity (led by Thijs Kuiken, Andrew Breed)
- OFFLU applied epidemiology technical activity (led by Guillaume Fournie)

The Committee provided comments on the terms of reference of each activity and asked to finalise the core and extended membership of each activity.

Action: OFFLU Secretariat to work with the focal point leads of various technical activities to finalise the terms of reference (avian influenza, socio-economics, wildlife, applied epidemiology) and membership.

7. IABS-WOAH meeting on avian influenza vaccination and surveillance (David Swayne)

The Committee was updated on the IABS technical meeting that took place in October 2024 at WOAH Headquarters on Vaccination and Surveillance for HPAI in poultry: Current situation and perspectives, <https://www.iabs.org/~documents/route%3A/download/2278/>. Many of the OFFLU experts participated and contributed to the meeting.

The meeting conclusions and recommendations were finalized and available at <https://www.iabs.org/~documents/route%3A/download/2542/>

8. CEPI participation in OFFLU activities as observer

Dr Radhika Gharpure from Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations **CEPI** (<https://cepi.net/>) joined for this agenda point. She updated the Committee about CEPI and the possibility to participate in OFFLU technical activities as observer. CEPI has stood up an H5 Response as of June 2024, with a focus on immunogen design and manufacturing preparedness for human vaccine development, so that vaccines could be rolled out quickly if the need arises. While CEPI focus is on human vaccines, it recognize the importance of One Health for several of its priority pathogens and for pandemic influenza. CEPI is interested in information sharing at the human-animal interface, particularly as related to early outbreak alert triggers and sequencing data. CEPI is interested in opportunities to connect with OFFLU on this topic – either through general information sharing or listening in to some of the technical group discussions.

The Chair of the OFFLU Steering Committee explained the various OFFLU technical activities that is focused to vaccines/vaccination like VCM, AIM and close relationship with WHO. CEPI informed that it does not have funds for animal influenza vaccines activities in the current cycle.

The OFFLU committee members agreed to invite and engage CEPI in the technical virtual meetings that have one health dimension and explore mutual reflections for future collaborative areas.

Action: *The OFFLU Secretariat to invite CEPI representative for OFFLU zoom technical meetings like the epidemiological global update meetings, VCM updates etc.*

9. OFFLU website development (Mariana)

The committees was updated on the progress to develop a new OFFLU website. The Secretariat presented an outline of OFFLU website skeleton for committee comments.

Action: *The OFFLU committees to comment on the OFFLU website structure in one week time.*

10. 11th International symposium on avian influenza, June 2025

The Committee discussed about the possibility to have an half day OFFLU technical meeting during the 11th International symposium on avian influenza (ISAI) scheduled during 24 – 26 June 2026, Canada. Ian Brown and David Swayne who are in the international advisory committee of the ISAI will speak to the organisers for a meeting hall to have the OFFLU meeting on the afternoon of 23 June 2025.

11. Next meeting: Doodle to be circulated for fixing it in March/April 2025