MODEL CERTIFICATES OF VETERINARY INSPECTION (HEALTH CERTIFICATES) FOR DISEASE FREEDOM OF AQUATIC ANIMALS: INCREASING GLOBAL BIOSURVEILANCE AWARENESS AND ENHANCING BIOSECURITY

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Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) or “Health Certificates”, are pivotal for ensuring translocated animals are not diseased or harbour significant pathogens. Model CVIs for aquatic animals are being developed, but are not well refined, understood or used, despite the availability of several certification programs, including the OIE model health certificates. CVIs issued by a qualified independent third-party (typically a licensed and government accredited veterinarian) provide the official level of assurance necessary for intrastate, interstate and international trade. Correctly designed CVIs provide the single most economical and effective assurance of the disease status for individuals or lots of animals, at any point in time. Furthermore, the interaction of CVI users (e.g. owner) and issuers (e.g. veterinarian) through the act of issuing the CVI likely increases biosecurity and disease awareness of the involved parties. CVIs Electronic databases are being developed to address human and animal public health biosurveilance in the U.S., accelerate identification of, and reduce response time to potential public health hazards. With the development and implementation of electronic animal identification systems, as well as continuous education programs for veterinarians and other professionals, the secured electronic collection and transfer of data between the issuers and users of the CVIs would increase the utility of any CVI system and be in accord with the OIE standards. Currently no system for issuing electronic (e)-CVIs for aquatic animals is in place, but several systems are in development in the U.S. (GlobalVetLink e-OCVI; USDA’s VSPS). The process of integrating U.S. and other nation’s e-CVI systems with CDC, OIE, and USFWS designated centers and institutes could lead to development of national surveillance program to potentially reduce health risks associated with spreading of the infectious diseases and aquatic nuisance/exotic species through movement of aquatic animals.