

VetBioNet – H2020 n°731014

**VetBioNet Guidelines of minimum requirements and
criteria for training provision and competency
assessment.**

Deliverable 3.4/WP3

Version 01 (June, 2021)

Addendum Fish experimental facilities (ANNEX 3)



As outlined in D3.4 “Guidelines of minimum requirements and criteria for training provision and competency assessment”, an Excel questionnaire was sent to all partners (n=17) involved in WP3 Task 3.5 “Competence, training and health monitoring of staff”. This questionnaire looked at the staff roles indicated in the CWA 15793:2011 and the training and competence requirements that were considered critical by the VetBioNet partners for running high containment farmed animal facilities (HCFAFs).

Thirteen replies were obtained; 12 out of these came from partner organisations running HCFAFs for terrestrial animals; one reply came from a partner organisation (Marine Scotland/MS) working on aquatic animal diseases, and it became evident that additional work must be dedicated to define specific competence and training requirements for running aquatic animal/fish facilities. Such requirements are listed in the present addendum to the “Guidelines of minimum requirements and criteria for training provision and competency assessment for operating high containment farmed animal facilities”.

Competence and training requirements for running aquatic animal/fish facilities

Regarding positions and the respective staff qualifications, admission criteria appear less restrictive (when compared to HCFAFs). Few indications were given about academic qualification or years of experience requirements. The only staff position for which requirements were indicated was the “Animal Caretaker staff” requiring a personal license.

With respect to the required knowledge of SOPs (as a key indicator for competence/training requirements), three positions are standing out: “Building Officer”, “Biosafety Officer” and “Animal Caretaker Manager”. The survey results indicate that the two former positions are critical for the operational performance of the facility, because either or both of them need to be trained on “Safe entry /exit”, “Critical barrier equipment”, “Donning and doffing PPE”, “Lab Disinfection & decontamination”, “Lab waste management”, “Facility Disinfection &



VetBioNet – H2020 n°731014

decontamination”, “Fumigation”, “Facility waste management”, “Emergency/Contingency Plan”, “Commissioning/Decommissioning”, “Security” and “Transport of biological agents”. Unsurprisingly, Specific training requirements for the “Animal Caretaker Manager” concern “Animal care” and “Animal welfare”. In contrast to HCFAFs, in aquatic animal facilities, the “Animal Caretaker staff” is not required to be trained on, or with the aid of, SOPs. Finally, another staff position with considerable requirements regarding SOP knowledge is the “Technician”, notably in “Lab Disinfection & decontamination”, “Lab waste management”, “Maintenance”, “Calibration”, “Validation of devices” and “Transport of biological agents”. Overall, for aquatic animal facilities, requirements are less stringent than for the surveyed HCFAFs.

Regarding training methods, these are largely matching those being applied in HCFAFs. The main training provision methods are SOPs and physical/in-person courses. Supervision is provided until the required competence is demonstrated. No time periods are indicated for refresher trainings, except for the “Animal Caretaker Manager” and “Animal Caretaker staff” (5 years or less). Again, in this respect, HCFAFs, probably because of the elevated risks posed by the pathogens handled, are stricter about the frequency of refresher trainings.

As for competence assessment, there are both similarities and differences between the practices in HCFAFs and aquatic animal facilities. The practice for assessing competence is the same, direct supervision by the institutional trainer/training provider. For two types of SOPs, “Animal care” and “Animal welfare”, supervision or monitoring is provided by external trainers/examiners. Moreover, knowledge of these SOPs is subjected to a written exam, which further highlights the importance of the two staff positions for aquatic animal facilities. Of all other SOPs/activities, only “Maintenance”, “Calibration”, “Validation of devices” and “Transport of biological agents” require supervision by an external training provider/examiner.

Record keeping is barely formalised the surveyed aquatic animal facility. Only records for trainings on SOPs related to “Animal care” and “Animal welfare” are kept in the personal checklist for the concerned staff, in a General facility checklist



VetBioNet – H2020 n°731014

and a General facility electronic checklist. Records for trainings on “Maintenance”, “Calibration” and “Validation of devices” are kept in a General facility checklist and a General facility electronic checklist. The responsible of these checklists are the concerned technicians and/or the institutional QA staff. Again, rules regarding training record keeping (which, how, who) are more stringent in HCFAFs than in aquatic animal facilities.

Finally, regarding occupational health issues, the exigencies in HCFAFs and aquatic animal facilities are, quite logically, substantially different. For the work with fish pathogens (which are rarely zoonotic and not readily transmitted outside the aqueous environment), vaccination is neither recommended nor compulsory, and the collection of baseline serum samples is not considered.

