



## I. INTRODUCTION

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At the 2000 EAZWV congress in Paris there was a proposal to establish an Infectious Diseases Working Group (IDWG) within the EAZWV. This idea emerged when the problems of diagnosing and handling paratuberculosis were discussed in a presentation. It was obvious that commonly agreed recommendations were urgently needed for improved control of the infectious diseases that threaten our collections. Also, as Europe becomes more and more united it is necessary to deal with European politics and legislation, and intensify international collaboration.

The Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in 2001 clearly underlined the importance of this initiative and made agreement on European standards a matter of even more urgency. During this outbreak we saw how difficult it was to control a disease in domesticated animals - because of public opinion, politics, money and difficulties in understanding the disease and agreeing on legislation. With this in mind it is obvious that in lesser-studied animals, like our exotics, even more misunderstandings may arise when dealing with such diseases. In 2006 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza spread across Europe and threatened zoo collections. Outbreaks of Classical Swine Fever now and then occur. Blue Tongue has made serious problems in the ability of transporting our hoof stock and thus jeopardizing our endangered species programs. African Swine Fever, and maybe in the near future diseases like West Nile Virus, African Horse Sickness, and Monkey pox may also threaten our collections. In recent history even the SARS epidemic (related to an animal Corona virus) indeed confirmed the above and made the concept and ideas of The Transmissible Diseases Handbook even more important.

European laws (e.g. the Balai Directive) are still under discussion and in development. Different attitudes in Europe (e.g. vaccination vs. non-vaccination against FMD and Avian Influenza), different levels of veterinary faculties and laboratories, and thus differences in the possibility of diagnosing diseases, pose further problems for European zoo veterinarians. As a consequence, we have to deal with different approaches to infectious diseases. Standardising our work is therefore in the interests of us all. To achieve this goal we need to work together to define procedures for transmissible diseases and propose recommendations for people dealing with exotic animals. Only in this way will it be possible to make comparisons, and to statistically analyse our similarities and differences.

The IDWG brings together experienced zoo veterinarians and specialists in infectious diseases from several European countries and even from countries on the other side of the Atlantic. The idea of the Group is to combine our knowledge in order to help our animals by dealing more efficiently with future disease outbreaks which may threaten our collections. Putting efforts into the creation of a reference manual published under the umbrella of our Association is an important step in the process of European standardisation, and should provide a useful tool for zoo practitioners, zoo managers and European legislative authorities dealing with wildlife and zoo animals.