

THE OIE OFFICIALLY RECOGNISES BELIZE AS FREE OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The International Committee of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) approved at its 76th General Session held in Paris, France from the 25-30 May 2008, the official OIE recognition of Belize's sanitary status as free of foot and mouth disease (FMD) without vaccination. Belize had applied for this recognition last year. Its application was studied following a very democratic process that involved renowned international experts and the elected members of the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases. The Scientific Commission concluded that Belize fulfilled the conditions to be considered free from FMD without vaccination in accordance with Article 2.2.10.2. of the Terrestrial Code. Member countries were given 60 days to request any information substantiating this decision should they wish to do so. As there were no objections, the Scientific Commission submitted the recommendation to the International Committee comprised of 172 delegates who then approved the official recognition. The Honourable Rene Montero, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, received the certificate on behalf of Belize.

The OIE is the sole world organization to grant an official status on freedom from specified animal diseases including foot and mouth and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). At the May 2008 76th Annual General Session, five member countries or zones of member countries were newly recognized as free of FMD with or without vaccination. The Dominican Republic was also officially declared free of foot and mouth disease without vaccination. Belize is the second CARICOM country (first one is Guyana) to receive such recognition. Belize's recognition now puts all countries in North America and Central America (Canada to Panama) in the list of countries with OIE official recognition, as free of foot and mouth disease without vaccination.

Belize, a member of the OIE since 2001, has been very active in the OIE: Belize serves as the secretary general (2007 - 2009) of the regional OIE commission for the Americas, has declared itself free of classical swine fever in accordance with the OIE terrestrial Code, its veterinary service has been recently evaluated by OIE experts using the OIE Performance of Veterinary Services instrument, the Honourable Rene Montero took the floor during opening ceremonies of the 76th General Session and now this recent official recognition of FMD free without vaccination status.

