A Regional Seminar for OIE National Focal Points for Veterinary Laboratories was held from 28 to 30 June 2016 in Buenos Aires, with the financial and logistical support of the Government of Argentina. This was the second seminar to take place in the Americas, since the nomination of National Focal Points for Veterinary Laboratories began as a pilot project in this region, and the very first seminar was held in Mexico in 2012.

The meeting was attended by 56 participants, including National Focal Points from 22 Member Countries, local participants, OIE experts, various speakers and OIE staff. Dr Jorge Dillon, Delegate of Argentina to the OIE, opened the session, and the Delegate of Suriname, Dr Gianna Karg, participated as well as an OIE National Focal Point.

Newly appointed Focal Points had been given the chance to undergo Web-based training before the seminar, consisting of a basic introduction to the OIE’s objectives and missions, as well as their own terms of reference as their country’s National Focal Point for Veterinary Laboratories.

At the seminar, participants were given the opportunity to discuss the role of laboratories in Veterinary Services; specifically, their part in outbreak investigation, risk analysis, disease surveillance and international trade, review of case studies, and identifying the role of their national laboratory network, as well as current limitations and opportunities for improvement. This discussion was followed by a debate on future opportunities and activities for increasing networking in the region.

As the terms of reference for these Focal Points include their participation in the OIE standard-setting process with their National Delegates, a session was devoted to the OIE Manuals of Diagnostic Tests and the adoption of standards. The Focal Points took part in a working-group session, focusing on the preparation of comments for their OIE Delegates on draft OIE standards.

National Focal Points for Veterinary Laboratories are also expected to provide updated information in the form of an Annual Report, through the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS), in collaboration with their National Focal Point for Animal Disease Notification. Participants reviewed the information that must be included, sharing information on their activities and capabilities with other OIE Members in order to request support or assist other Members with their expertise.

OIE capacity-building activities were also presented, including the OIE PVS Laboratory Missions, as well as the OIE Laboratory Twinning Programme. A PVS Laboratory Expert, who has participated in several PVS Laboratory Missions, shared her experiences, as did the designated expert of an OIE Reference Laboratory which gained its OIE Reference status after taking part in the Twinning Programme.

Participants were also able to visit the Central Laboratory of the National Agrifood Health and Quality Service (SENASA), which holds the position as OIE Reference Laboratory for several diseases. The visit was hosted by

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1. See details on pp. 62-63
Dr Carlos Zenobi, General Director for Laboratories and Technical Control, as well as by the laboratory’s expert team, who explained the different departments and their duties, followed by a tour of various parts of the laboratory.

In conclusion, those who attended the seminar seemed to feel that it had been a valuable experience. Their comments on any strengths and weaknesses will be taken into account when planning the second cycle of seminars.

Training in wildlife disease surveillance in Argentina
Replication at national level of regional workshops for OIE Focal Points

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The OIE held workshops for OIE National Focal Points for Wildlife in the Americas region in Panama in 2009 and in Argentina in 2011. The 2009 workshop focused on the importance of wildlife pathogens, notification and evaluation of the presence/absence of wildlife diseases. The 2011 workshop focused on the development of systems for epidemiological surveillance, both general and targeted at wildlife diseases.

Two of the tasks listed in the terms of reference for OIE National Focal Points for Wildlife are to establish a network of wildlife experts within their country and to establish and maintain a dialogue with their country’s competent authority for wildlife. At the 2009 and 2011 workshops, it was therefore proposed to replicate the OIE regional workshop subjects at national level. To accomplish this and facilitate and improve cooperation and communication among the various authorities involved in wildlife health and conservation in Argentina, in 2013 special courses were scheduled for implementation in 2013 and 2014.

In Argentina, the authority responsible for animal health is the National Health and Agrifood Quality Service (SENASA). The authority responsible for the conservation of wildlife species nationwide is the Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Directorate, while the authorities responsible in each province are the provincial wildlife directorates. There is also a National Parks Administration whose role is to conserve and manage national parks, natural monuments and national reserves.

Curriculum design and subsequent teaching were coordinated by Dr Andrea Marcos, OIE National Focal Point for Wildlife in Argentina, with the participation of Dr Marcela Uhart from the University of California, Davis, who had taught the previous OIE workshops. The content of the workshops consisted of an introduction first to the ‘One Health’ concept, then to the concepts of general and targeted surveillance, including the definition, components and objectives of each concept. This involved replicating a practice exercise set at the OIE Focal Points’ workshops, where participants were required to analyse animal health information from a fictitious country and use it to establish