



## Webinar proceedings

# Health management of Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE: Successes and national aspirations

8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (10:00 am-11:30 am) UAE time

(via Microsoft Teams), [www.arabianoryx.org](http://www.arabianoryx.org)

**Organizers: Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi (EAD) and General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO)**



## Webinar Proceedings

### Health management of Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE: Successes and national aspirations

8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (10:00 am-11:30 am) UAE time

[www.arabianoryx.org](http://www.arabianoryx.org)

The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO) is a regional initiative with a key role of supporting all efforts to protect and conserve the Arabian Oryx, to agree regional criteria and standards, and to coordinate efforts between range states. GSCAO is hosted by the Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi.

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Cover photo: An Arabian Oryx herd at Sir Bani Yas Island of Abu Dhabi, © Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism

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## Executive summary

The webinar on *Health management of Arabian Oryx collections in the UAE: Successes and national aspirations* was held via Microsoft Teams on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021. It was attended by a total of 53 participants from Arabian Oryx and other wildlife institutions in the UAE. The key objectives of the webinar were to provide participants with detailed information on the Federal Law No. 8 of 2013 on the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases and its notification requirements. Additionally, the webinar highlighted the key steps of the process map for developing the regional Oryx disease survey. Participants were well-informed on the need to notify concerned authorities on any disease incident listed in Federal law number 8 of 2013 on the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases in the UAE. GSCAO urged local Oryx institutions to continue contributing to Arabian Oryx conservation through engaging with the GSCAO and being informed about national and scientific standards of herd and veterinary management practices.

## 1 Introduction

Promoting best health practices in Arabian Oryx management is one of GSCAOs' objectives as highlighted in its strategic workplan and mission (GSCAO, 2015). The GSCAO aims to achieve this by strengthening communication with national partners in the range states including UAE. The Arabian Oryx disease survey has been an effective tool that the GSCAO has established to determine the health status of Oryx populations at breeding facilities and nature reserves in the region. One of GSCAO's key recommendations to its partners and range states is to implement veterinary practices that are in line with national and international criteria and that help fulfil requirements including disease reporting to concerned authorities and establishing preventive measures.

This webinar was a good opportunity for raising awareness amongst conservation managers and veterinarians on the need to systematically report diseases to concerned authorities including the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment in the UAE. This reporting is a legal requirement in the UAE as per Federal law number 8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases. Adhering to legal and scientific requirements can effectively ensure Oryx populations stay healthy and sustainable. Additionally, the webinar was a platform to hear feedback and recommendations from participants on the disease survey and veterinary management practices implemented by local Oryx facilities in the UAE.

## 2 Objectives

- Present to participants the Federal Law No. 8 of 2013 on the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases and its requirements
- Highlight the key steps of the process map for developing the regional Oryx disease survey
- Identify institutional challenges in reporting Oryx diseases and seek solutions accordingly
- Collect feedback and recommendations from participants on improvement of future Oryx disease surveys in terms of contents, response rate and reporting.

## 3 Opening remarks and agenda

The webinar was opened with welcome remarks delivered by Ahmed Esmaeil Alsayed Alhashmi, Acting Executive Director- Terrestrial & Marine Biodiversity Sector (TMBS) of EAD. He welcomed participants to the webinar which was organized to enhance the national collaborative work on Arabian Oryx health management. Mr. AlHashmi hoped that through this webinar disease notification and reporting by local Oryx institutions can be more enforced to be consistent with local and federal requirements in the UAE.

He stated that the aim of this online gathering was to result intangible positive outcomes that can contribute to the sound health management and conservation of Arabian Oryx in the country.

Table 1. Agenda of the webinar

<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Time</b>
Welcome speech	10:00 a.m-10:05
EAD management	
Overview talk about the webinar, objectives, expected outputs and forward actions	10:05-10:10
Rajeyah Binkulaib, EAD	
Overview talk about The Federal Law No.8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases: Objectives, notified diseases per the law and the notification mechanism	10:10-10:30
Ministry of Climate Change and Environment	
The process map for developing the regional survey of Arabian Oryx diseases in the range states	10:30-10:40
Yassir Al Kharusi, EAD	
Identify institutional challenges on Oryx disease notification and reporting with proposed solutions	10:40-11:10
Panel discussion facilitated by Nessrine Alzahlawi, EAD	
What needs to improve in the current Oryx disease survey: - Content - Design - Communication - Timing - Final report	11:10-11:25
Panel discussion facilitated by Nessrine Alzahlawi and Yassir Al Kharusi, EAD	
Webinar summary and closing remarks Nessrine Alzahlawi, EAD	11:25-11:30 a.m.



#### **4 Abstracts of oral presentations**

##### **Overview talk about The Federal Law Number 8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases: Objectives, notified diseases per the law and the notification mechanism**

Dr. Ahmed Zahran

Ministry of Climate Change and Environment

This presentation highlighted the objectives, key contents and reporting procedures of the Federal Law No.8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases. It detailed the notification procedures of animal diseases and required measures to be taken when suspect animal diseases. It also aimed to bring all partners together to implement the law, identify the animal health priorities to ensure that national animal health practices are in line with international standards and mandates. To maximize the health standards of Arabian Oryx populations in the UAE, breeding facilities and release programmes were required to be more actively involved in implementing this law.

##### **The process map for developing the regional survey of Arabian Oryx diseases in the range states**

Yassir H. Al Kharusi, EAD

The Regional disease survey of Arabian Oryx populations in the range states is an important initiative of GSCAO and the only such initiative for a species in the region. The survey targets Oryx collections in the range states with a goal of monitoring health management practices and exchange of information amongst veterinarians and conservation managers to limit the risks of Oryx diseases through sharing information and establishing guidelines and protocols. Developing the disease survey involves three key stages including questionnaire construction, questionnaire administration and writing-up the disease report. Throughout the versions of the disease report from 2011-2018, the percentage of response rates was high with more than 80%. Three key challenges have been encountered during the various versions of the survey including 1) difficulty in finding and approaching new collections; 2) some approached collections do not have veterinarians or wildlife managers to answer the questionnaire and 3) data loss due to lack of proper record keeping systems for some Oryx collections. During the previous years, GSCAO has organized technical workshops and developed guidelines on proper herd and veterinary management practices. GSCAO also encourages Arabian Oryx collections to meet the minimum requirement of veterinary

management guidelines which were designed to maintain the health of captive and released populations.



Wild Arabian Oryx At Abu Dhabi Emirate of the UAE (© EAD).

## 5 Recommendations

- Arabian Oryx collections are encouraged to meet the minimum requirements for developing healthy Oryx populations including reporting diseases to concerned authorities as per requirement of Federal law number 8/2013, hiring wildlife veterinarians and having adequate record keeping systems for Oryx data.
- Conservation managers, wildlife biologists and veterinarians are urged to contribute to GSCAO conservation efforts more actively through periodically sharing Oryx numbers in their facilities and media materials (e.g., photos and videos), participating in the regional Oryx disease survey and communicating to GSCAO about Arabian Oryx conservation efforts and initiatives in their respective institutions.

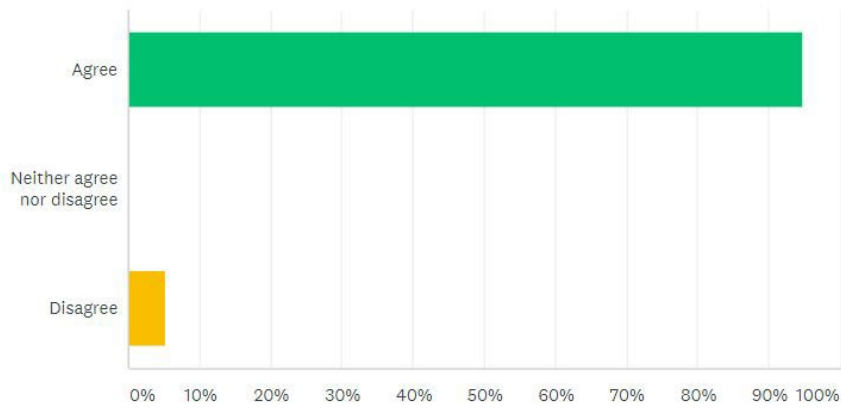
## 6 Next steps

GSCAO will continue to monitor health status of Arabian Oryx populations at both national and regional levels through its disease survey conducted every three years, with the next edition due out in late 2022. In 2021, GSCAO will carry out a regional assessment of Arabian Oryx populations in protected areas and part of this assessment will cover how management measures help maintain the health of the species. Finally, in 2022-2023, GSCAO is planning to assess the implementation status of its housing and husbandry guidelines in the UAE.

**Appendix I:**  
**Participants' feedback on the webinar**

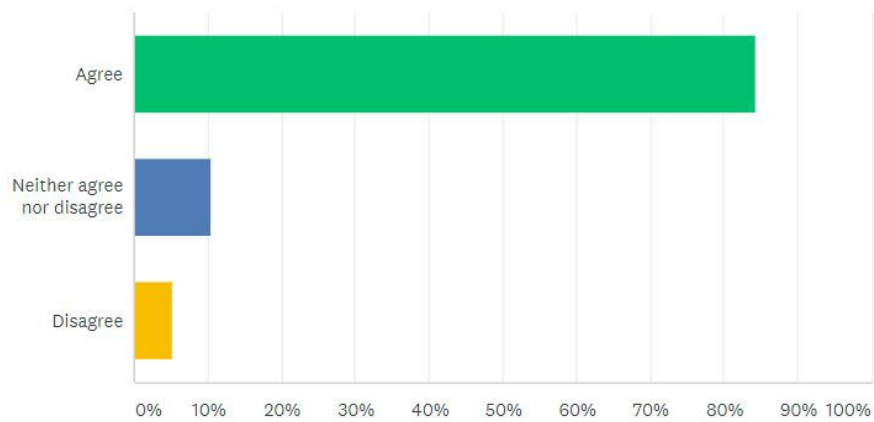
## Webinar objectives were stated and related to its topics

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



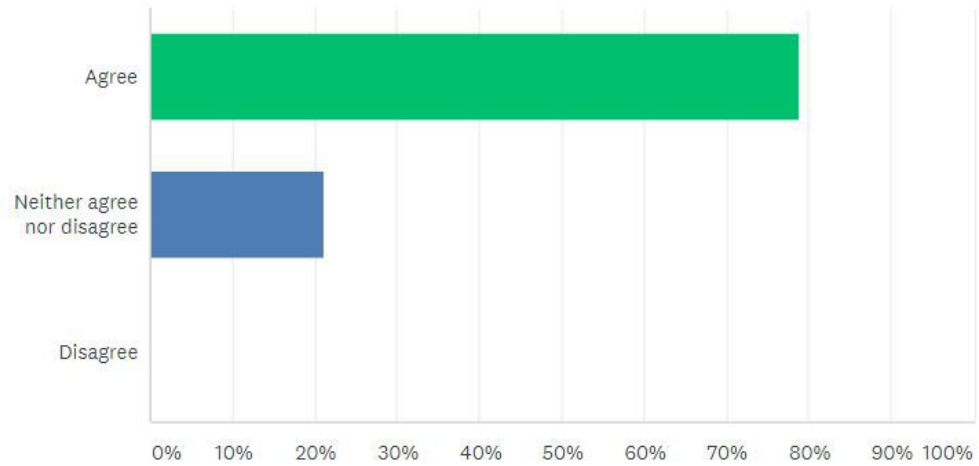
## The information presented and discussed was of value

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



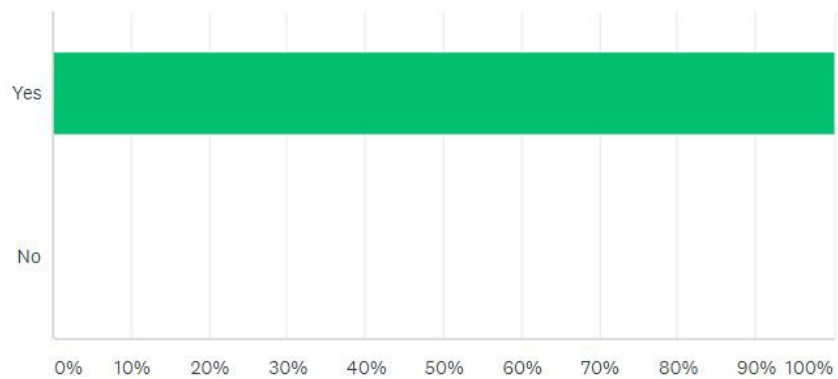
## The facilitator and presenters maintained my interest

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



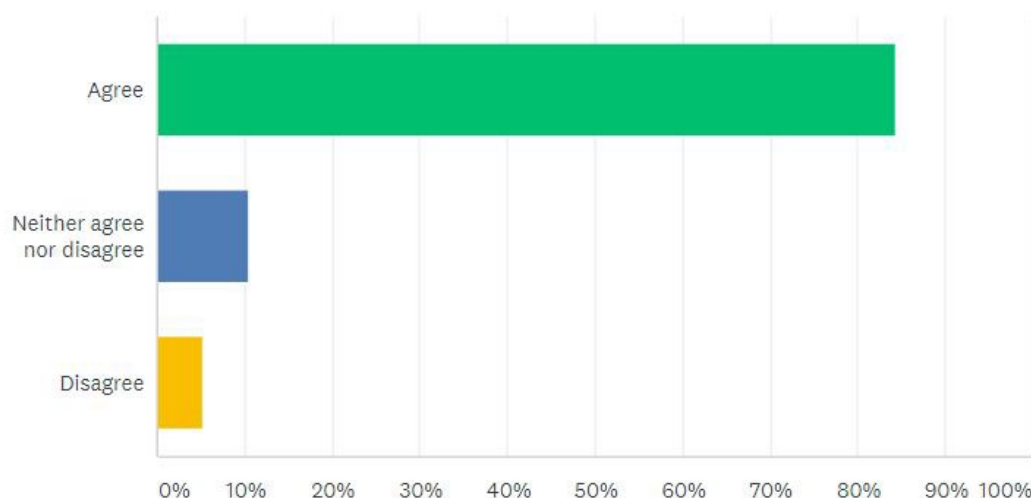
## Do you feel that the Arabian Oryx disease survey report is beneficial to you?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



Overall, I would rate the webinar as excellent and beneficial

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



**Are there any challenges that your institution/facility encounters in Arabian Oryx disease reporting? Please list them (if any).**

- Oryx collections should be notified beforehand on any disease communicated to concerned authorities, so that they can have enough time to establish preventive measures
- Management authorization is needed on disease notification. This is particularly applicable for private collections
- Data confidentiality
- Difficulty of surveying and monitoring Oryx populations in protected areas which their terrain is characterized by sand dunes that are difficult to drive through.

**What kind of support that your institution/facility would like to receive from GSCAO to enhance and enforce Arabian Oryx disease reporting at both local and federal levels?**

- Sharing disease information
- Regular visits and data exchange between collection managers
- Veterinary protocols and guidelines
- Continuous interaction through Webinars, documents, and updated information to enable better management of diseases and reporting.



A captive herd of Arabian Oryx at Al Ain Zoo (© Al Ain Zoo).



## **Appendix 2:**

**Presentation on The Federal Law Number 8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases: Objectives, notified diseases per the law and the notification mechanism**

## **Appendix 3:**

### **Arabic copy of The Federal Law Number 8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases**

## **Appendix 4:**

**English copy of The Federal Law Number 8 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Control of Contagious and Epidemic Animal Diseases**

## Appendix 5: List of webinar participants

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**References:**

The General Secretariat for the Conservation of the Arabian Oryx (GSCAO), 2015. Strategic work plan (2015-2019). Available for download at [www.arabianoryx.org](http://www.arabianoryx.org)