

India Joins Elite Global Group for Rinderpest Virus 'Cattle Plague' Containment; ICAR-NIHSAD Bhopal Designated as Category A Rinderpest Facility by WOA – FAO

“India’s Role in Preserving the Rinderpest Eradication Legacy is Vital, a testament to the Nation’s Readiness and Global Leadership in Animal Health” : Secretary Ms. Alka Upadhyaya

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India has achieved a significant milestone in the realm of global animal health and biosecurity with the **recognition of the ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, as a Category A Rinderpest Holding Facility (RHF)** by the **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of the United Nations. The announcement was made during the 92nd General Session of the WOA held in Paris on 29th May 2025, where Ms. Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and India’s WOA Delegate, was formally presented with the certificate of designation by the Director General and President of WOA.

Rinderpest, once known as “cattle plague,” was one of the most destructive livestock diseases in history before its global eradication in 2011. However, Rinderpest Virus-Containing Material (RVCM) still remains in a few laboratories, posing potential risks if released. To preserve global freedom from the disease, FAO and WOA have implemented strict measures to limit the storage of RVCM to a small number of high-security laboratories worldwide. In alignment with this global initiative, India had designated ICAR-NIHSAD, a high-containment BSL-3 facility and WOA reference laboratory for avian influenza, as its national repository for RVCM back in 2012.

India formally submitted its application for RHF status in 2019. A joint inspection of ICAR-NIHSAD was conducted in March 2025 by international experts appointed by FAO and WOA. Following a comprehensive evaluation, the institute has now been officially approved as a **Category A RHF for a one-year term, in recognition of its robust biosafety protocols, effective inventory management, and state of readiness for emergency situations. This recognition places India among a distinguished group of only six facilities worldwide entrusted with the critical responsibility of securely holding rinderpest virus material.** It reinforces India’s pivotal role in global animal health, biosecurity, and the One Health framework. **“India’s role in the eradication of rinderpest was historic. Today, its role in preserving that legacy is equally vital. This recognition is not just about containment; it is about responsibility and readiness”** remarked Ms. Alka Upadhyaya. The committee has also encouraged India to engage further on matters related to vaccine seed material, which will bolster its application for **Category B designation** in the future.

The designation of ICAR-NIHSAD as a Category A RHF is a testament to India’s continued leadership in safeguarding global animal health and reflects the country's unwavering commitment to international standards of disease control and prevention.



Aditi Agrawal

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