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The Biobank of the ‘Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale’ of Sicily: an important resource in medical research for safe and quality storage of biological specimens

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The Mediterranean Biobank has been recently launched at the ‘Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale’ (IZS) of Sicily in Palermo. The main aim of the Biobank is to collect and store, under standardised conditions and in a centralised system, several types of certified animal and zoonotic biological resources such as bacterial and viral strains, parasites, nucleic acids, positive/negative sera, cell cultures and tissues, in accordance to Quality System procedures as regulated by UNI CEI EN ISO/IEC 17025:2005. Presently, the Biobank is used to store biological material from the ‘*Office International des Epizooties*’ (OIE) reference laboratories and national reference centres of the IZS of Sicily. Prior to storage, the most representative biological materials collected from the Institute’s laboratories are selected and catalogued.

This Biobank, together with four other IZSs (IZS Emilia Romagna and Lombardy, IZS Piedmont, Liguria and Aosta Valley, IZS Venice and IZS Abruzzo and Molise), is part of a network of Veterinary Biobanks, recognised as the ‘OIE Collaborative Center for Veterinary Biological Biobank’ by the OIE. The samples in the Biobank may be used for diagnostic work, research, vaccine and drug development, epidemiological studies as well as other applications.

The objectives of the Biobank are the promotion and implementation of collaborations with the scientific community in order to harmonise and standardise biobanking practices, according to international OIE guidelines and the development of scientific and technological research to provide services to the scientific and the business world.

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