



Preparedness and Response to Emerging Veterinary Disease Outbreaks

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Experiences in the Netherlands

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INTRODUCTION

The Netherlands has experience with outbreaks of many animal diseases, including zoonoses. The most recent experience was with bluetongue virus 3 and 12, and with highly pathogenic avian influenza. BTV3, a vector-borne disease, cannot be controlled by measures we are used to e.g. for HPAI or FMD. The Netherlands sees vaccination as only effective tool to control this disease and reduce the impact. With respect to HPAI the Netherlands would like to come to a more sustainable solution to combat the continuous threat of infection from wild bird populations.

ISSUES

For BTV-3 the main challenge was the availability of suitable vaccines. The role of the Dutch government in development, production and marketing of BT vaccines is limited. We had ample discussions with pharmaceutical companies about a quick production of vaccines. And they did: in April 2024 vaccines were brought on the market. Another challenge was to evaluate the vaccines quickly, with limited data about the efficacy.

For HPAI there are other challenges now we have promising vector vaccines. One vaccine has EU market access, but vaccination of poultry results in the implementation of an intensive surveillance programme, together with high costs and effective infrastructure. Another issue is the trade of products of vaccinated poultry within the EU and to third countries. So far, many third countries seem reluctant in importing products from vaccinated poultry. There is a long way to go.

LESSONS LEARNED

When the problem is large, we can manage the rapid production of vaccines against certain diseases. However, it is difficult to predict which disease will be next. BTV12 is in the Netherlands, but we do not know how this virus will spread this season. So far, we have not received messages that manufacturers are working on a vaccine. Another challenge are certain platform vaccines, that are yet not authorised in the EU. For HPAI the challenge is suitable vaccines that work against all variants of H5 (or H7), a cost-effective surveillance programme, and trade issues. We will continue promoting vaccination as one of the measures to reduce the number of infections and their impact.