

To Report or Not to Report : A Socio-Psychological Investigation of Bottlenecks and Solutions to Facilitate Early Detection of Notifiable Animal Diseases (NADs)



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Introduction

In theory reporting a clinical suspect situation by farmers and practitioners to Veterinary Authorities can be an effective early detection tool.

Experience indicates that only a few clinical situations are reported annually, although more situations occur in which it would have been wise to rule out a NAD.

Several endemic diseases produce clinical signs identical to those caused by NADs, especially in early stage of disease process.

Diagnosis of Classical Swine Fever, Avian Influenza or Foot-and-Mouth Disease based solely on clinical signs is often difficult because they are exotic diseases, unfamiliar to both farmers and practitioners.

Farmers and practitioners are reluctant to report a suspect clinical situation due to the consequences: severe control measures and isolation of the farm until laboratory confirmation.

Research Method

- Brainstorm sessions with representatives of Livestock Industry, Veterinary Association, Ministry of Agriculture, and Food and Consumer Protection Agency.
- Interviews with a sample of farmers and veterinary practitioners.
- Mail-Questionnaire to investigate preferences of farmers and vets after a field experiment during a CSF-outbreak in Germany in March 2006 close to the border with the Netherlands

Bottlenecks for Reporting

- Severe social and economic consequences anticipated after reporting.
- Lack of trust in Authorities due to experience with earlier eradication campaigns.
- Lack of knowledge on notification procedures
- Lack of knowledge on clinical signs produced by NADs



Solutions to facilitate Reporting

- Possibility to submit samples directly to reference Lab to exclude NAD in case of aspecific clinical signs, without isolation of farm, using PCR-test.
- Availability of on-farm or pen-site diagnostic tests for practitioners to exclude NAD.
- Improvement of communication between Livestock Industry and Veterinary Authorities (building Trust).
- Internet-website with updated information on notification process, pictures and videos of clinical signs and behavior of sick animals caused by NAD

Experiment during CSF-outbreak in Germany (2006) close to NL borders

- Dutch pig farmers were encouraged to submit blood samples in aspecific clinical situations.
- Farmers paid for sampling and shipping of samples, Livestock Emergency Fund (50% government, 50% Industry) paid for PCR-test.
- In 9 weeks : 156 farms submitted samples via 50 veterinary practices



Farmer and practitioner opinions:

- Excellent first step to rule out CSF as possible cause for nonspecific clinical problems
- Huge advantage: no isolation of farm
- In this specific clinical situation one would not have reported a suspect NAD situation
- Highly discontented with costs : costs for sampling (vet), shipping of samples and diagnostic testing should be paid out of Livestock Emergency Fund, no costs for individual farmer. If distribution of costs is not changed, farmers are not willing to use this new possibility to rule out a NAD in case of a clinical suspect situation.