

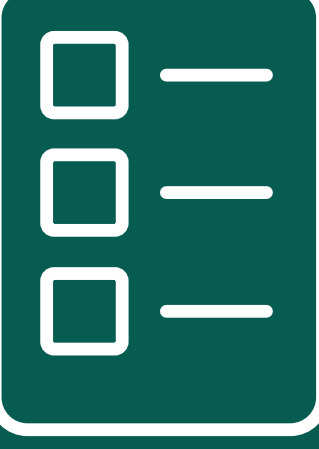
What is the perception and attitude of the veterinary staff about African Swine Fever and its control measures in Estonia?

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Background: Veterinary staff are the key in fighting African Swine Fever (ASF), yet their perspectives are often unknown. This study used participatory epidemiology (PE) approach to understand Estonian veterinary staff' awareness and perceptions of ASF. This is crucial, especially in Estonia where ASF has persisted for almost 10 years. Their insights can reveal gaps in current communication strategies and potential blind spots in biosecurity practices.


Aim: To understand the awareness, perceptions and attitudes of veterinarians and veterinary technicians working in Estonian pig farms regarding ASF and its control measures.

Materials & Methods:




Study design & tools

- Semi-structured interview
- Proportional piling
- Emojis



Data collection

- 5 focus groups
- 15 participants
- 11 females & 4 males



Data analysis


Semi-quantitative analysis

Importance & attitude attribution

$$S^i = \sum_{j=1}^5 GB_j^i \frac{N_j}{N_{\text{distinct}}}$$

$$A^i = \sum_{p=1}^{15} \text{😊}^i_p$$

$$\text{😊} \in \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{😊} \equiv 1, \\ \text{😐} \equiv 0, \\ \text{😞} \equiv -1 \end{array} \right.$$



Previous studies

Results:

First disease signs that would raise the suspicion of ASF in pigs/herd

- Haemorrhages on skin, mucosa and organs.
- Fever. Loss of appetite. Increased mortality.
- Spleen anomalies.


Transmission routes with highest risk for ASF introduction to the herd

Humans are the main factor in the ASF spread

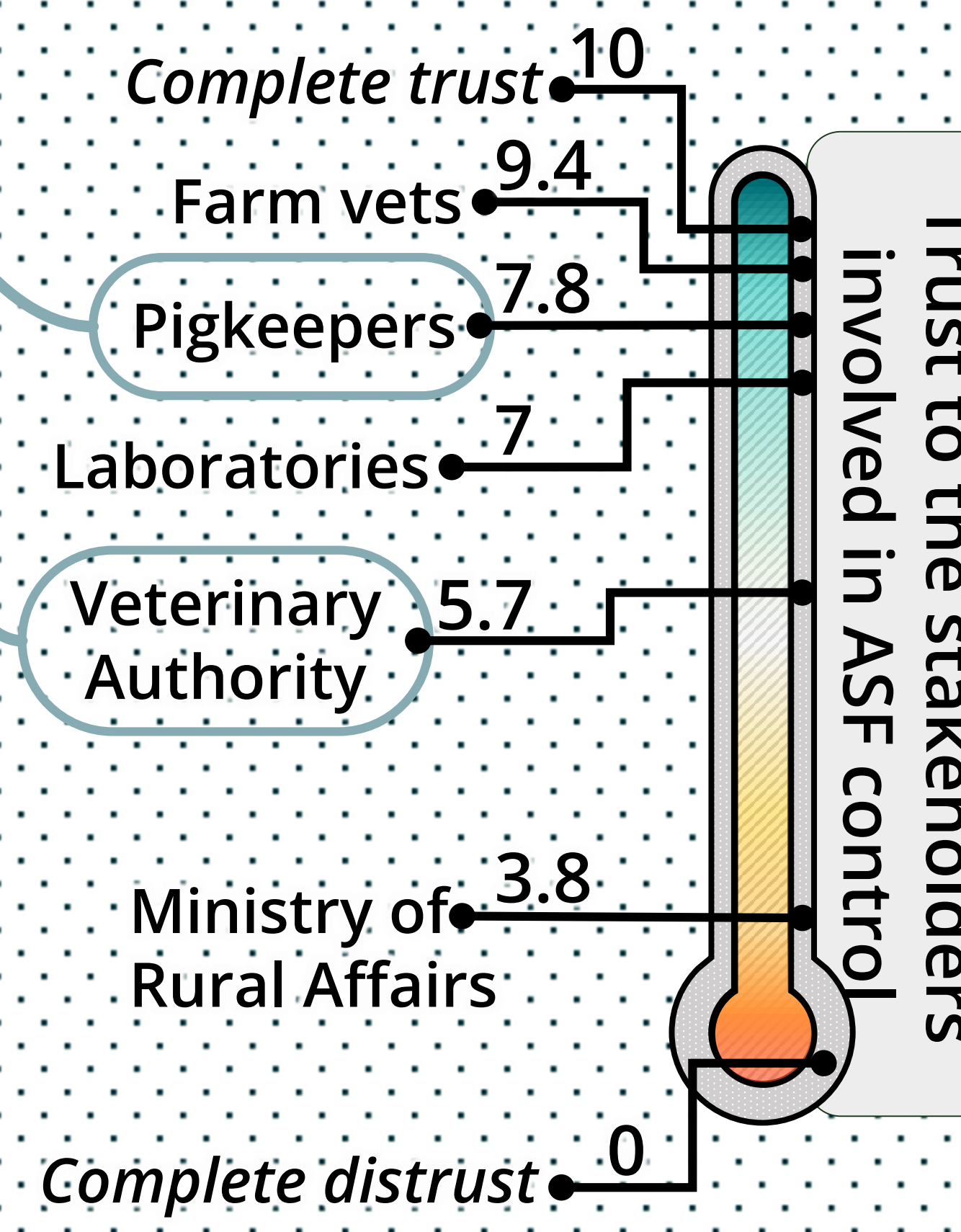
- People
- Transport vehicles
- Bedding material

Most effective preventive measure

- Biosecurity plan, instructions, training
- Disinfection and washing
- Movement restrictions
- Fencing
- Changing of clothes and footwear



Most important stakeholders involved in ASF control

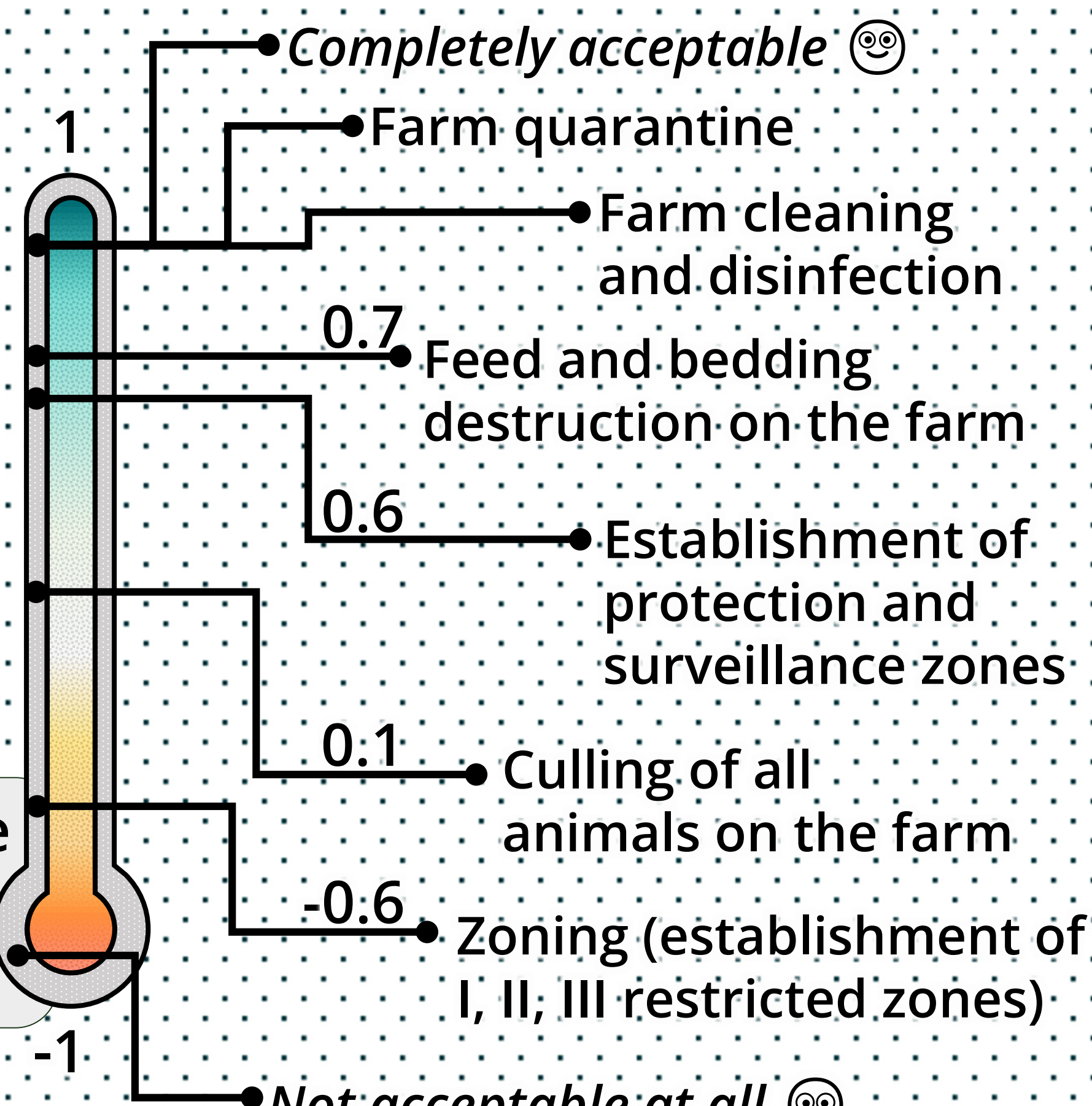


Stakeholder	Trust Score
Complete trust	10
Farm vets	9.4
Pigkeepers	7.8
Laboratories	7
Veterinary Authority	5.7
Ministry of Rural Affairs	3.8
Complete distrust	0

Impactful barriers to implementing biosecurity measures against ASF

- Motivation and attitudes of staff
- Financial constraints

Acceptance of control measures



Measure	Acceptance Score
Completely acceptable 😊	1
Farm quarantine	0.7
Farm cleaning and disinfection	0.7
Feed and bedding destruction on the farm	0.6
Establishment of protection and surveillance zones	0.6
Culling of all animals on the farm	0.1
Zoning (establishment of I, II, III restricted zones)	-0.6
Not acceptable at all 😞	-1

We keep saying that inside the farm is the clean zone, outside is the 'dirty' or contaminated zone!!!

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Veterinarians and veterinary technicians working in Estonian pig farms demonstrated good awareness of ASF signs, transmission routes, and preventive measures.
- The herd-level control measures of ASF are more accepted than regional ones (restriction zones).
- Veterinary staff have an incomplete understanding of stakeholders in ASF control, requiring improvement.
- Veterinary staff place the highest trust in themselves and pigkeepers in ASF control. Trust in veterinary authorities is moderate, while trust in other government institutions remains low.
- The need for further training of veterinary staff in ASF epidemiology and control remains relevant to ensure effective implementation of measures.

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