

**Report on OIE/ IICA Rapid Assessment of Veterinary Services in CARICOM:
Identifying High-risk Practices and Regulatory Control Gaps**
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Joint Meeting Series
Animal Disease Surveillance and Preparedness
Focus on Avian Influenza (AI) in the Caribbean

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**Instrument employed to
attempt assessment**

- OIE/IICA Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) for National Veterinary

What is the PVS

- An instrument suggested to be used:
 - to establish the current level of performance
 - form a shared vision
 - establish priorities and
 - facilitate strategic planning for the National Veterinary Services

What is the PVS

- The PVS consist of four fundamental components:
 - technical capability
 - human and financial capital
 - interaction with the private sector
 - ability to access markets
- Which have all been analyzed as the common ingredients found in those countries whose National Veterinary Services are more developed and credible in the eyes of the users, trading partners and other countries.

What is the PVS

- **Additionally,**
A series of 5-8 variables have been developed for each of the four fundamental components
- For each variable, qualitative levels of advancement are described
- Additional space has been provided after each variable to expand upon or clarify responses, if so desired.
- The instrument also contains a small glossary at the end, providing definitions for some of the terms so as to provide some clarity.

**Fundamental Components and
Variables**

- **Technical Capability**
 - Diagnostic capability
 - Emergency Response Capability
 - Quarantine
 - Surveillance
 - Emergency issues
 - Risk Analysis
 - Technical Innovation

Fundamental Components and Variables

○ Human and Financial Capital:

- Human talent
- Training
- Funding sources
- Stability of policies and programs
- Contingency funds
- Technical Independence
- Capability to invest and grow

Fundamental Components and Variables

○ Interaction with the Private Sector:

- Information
- Communication
- Official representation
- Accreditation
- Capability to respond

Fundamental Components and Variables

○ Access to Markets:

- Compliance with regulatory norms
- Formulation of regulatory norms
- Harmonization
- Certification
- Equivalency Agreements
- Traceability
- Transparency
- Regionalization

Response to Instrument

- Five (5) countries responded positively in the Caribbean but one (1) did not quite use the responses given in the document.

Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago

○ Some constraints and problems:

Time issues - conflicted with preparations for WTO/SPS Meeting in Geneva Private Sector availability

Misinterpretation of intention of document

Availability of the private sector to contribute tangibly

Could not get the document opened so as to respond directly on the computer

Technical Capability: Interpretation of the Results

- **Diagnostic capability:** All had clinical diagnostic capability but varying degrees of laboratory diagnostic capabilities in country. One country had no laboratory diagnostic capability at this point.
- **Emergency Response Capability:** Most countries were fortunate enough to have mechanisms in place to respond to emergencies. The effectiveness of these mechanisms remain to be tested.

Technical Capability: Interpretation of the Results

- **Quarantine:** Countries boast a quarantine service which is active, however, the level of staffing appears to be a limitation in some cases.
- **Surveillance:** Surveillance capability and authority again vary but the majority had some capability and authority

Technical Capability: Interpretation of the Results

- **Emerging Issues:** All the countries report capability and authority to gather and summarize intelligence on emerging issues, however level of competence varies and partnership with other State institutions was mentioned in only one case.
- **Risk Analysis:** On this issue, countries can either access relevant information or have information but all use the information to determine to manage risk.

Technical Capability: Interpretation of the Results

- **Technical Innovation:** The majority of the countries maintain an information base on technical innovations and international norms through subscription to journals and electronic media. Only one did not.

Human and Financial Capital: Interpretation of the Results

- **Human talent:** Countries were in very good shape in this area with more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of their professional personnel holding university degrees. Only one country reported less than 10%.
- **Training:** Only one country reported an annual training plan which covers practically all of the personnel. In most cases this only occurs when resources are available.

Human and Financial Capital: Interpretation of the Results

- **Funding sources:** One (1) country's service is funded from a particular line item within the national budget. Others compete with other State Institutions and rely on financial sources from the general treasury.
- **Stability of policies and program:** The entire National Veterinary Services are reorganized every 8-10 years in most cases, with one done every 4-5 years.

Human and Financial Capital: Interpretation of the Results

- **Contingency Funds:** In the majority of cases no contingency funds exist and any extraordinary resources can be obtained through legislation or presidential decree. In one case a contingency fund with limited resources has been established, but additional resources must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture.
- **Technical Independence:** Happily there are no political appointees in the services. Technical decisions are for the most part based on scientific principles but are subject to possible review and modification on political considerations except in one case.

Human and Financial Capital: Interpretation of the Results

- **Capability to invest and grow:** Countries have reported varying degrees of investment in the overall structure of the National Veterinary Services which range from none to significant either from cooperation, donor agencies, general treasury or special line items.

Interaction with the Private sector: Interpretation of the Results

- **Information:** Countries maintain official communications outlet which users can consult regarding standards, regulations and notifications. One of the countries even publish the results of their activities and in one case the information is managed entirely at the Ministerial level.
- **Communication:** Some Services establish and promote official dialogue with various users and another maintains informal channels of communications with both State Institutions and the private sector.

Interaction with the Private sector: Interpretation of the Results

- **Official Representation:** The countries are split evenly regarding the participation in or follow-up on Meetings of the WTO/SPS, OIE and Codex Alimentarius. They either do not participate in or they do take into consideration the opinions of its users and participate regularly and actively in the Meetings mentioned.
- **Accreditation:** Only one country has the authority to accredit third parties but no specific accreditation activities exist.

Interaction with the Private sector: Interpretation of the Results

- **Capability to respond:** The countries span the range of options provided in this instrument as it relates to collaboration with users - from not engaging them to discuss changing priorities and opportunities to informal dialogue to hosting of Meetings and forum to active participation and contribution.

Access to Markets: Interpretation of the Results

- **Compliance with regulatory norms:** Most of the countries implement a compliance programme which consist of inspection and verification. Only one country has no programme to ensure compliance with regulatory norms. However, of the ones which have, only two (2) can impose sanctions.
- **Setting regulatory Norm:** Most countries have the technical capability to formulate regulatory norms. This is sometimes done in consultation with other State Agencies or with them stakeholders

Access to Markets: Interpretation of the Results

- **Harmonization:** Most countries are in the process of reviewing national regulatory norms and harmonizing them with international norm, guidelines and recommendations but one country has identified those national regulations that are not in line with international norms, guidelines and recommendations.
- **Certification:** On this topic, one country carries out certification programmes for selected services, products and processes, two has the authority to certify selected products etc. and one has neither the capability nor authority.

Access to Markets: Interpretation of the Results

- **Equivalency agreement:** The National Veterinary services have the authority to negotiate and approve equivalency agreements with other countries or implements equivalency agreements with other countries on selected products and processes.
- **Traceability:** Countries are divided equally in the area of traceability. While two can inspect and document the sanitary status at specific points across the agri-chain for selected animals and their related products. Two countries have no programme to inspect or tract animals and their related products.

Access to Markets: Interpretation of the Results

- **Transparency:** Countries are divided equally among four of the 5 options regarding notification of the WTO/SPS and the OIE, indicating varying levels of interaction with these two bodies.
- **Regionalization:** Two countries cannot establish pest- or disease free areas or areas of low pest or disease prevalence while two can identify areas to be regionalized and establish the current sanitary status of selected animals and their related products originating from these prescribed areas.

High Risk Factors and *Regulatory Gaps-Avian - Avian Influenza

- Absence of bio-safety systems on mot farms
- Existence of Integrated farming systems - multi-species of livestock in small areas with many opportunities for contact etc.
- Wide-spread uncontrolled back yard rearing and slaughtering

High Risk Factors and *Regulatory Gaps-Avian - Avian Influenza

- *Free uncontrolled movement of animals around a country and even across borders of countries without declaration.
- *Lack of information on location and population size of back yard and in some cases commercial flocks.
- Unlimited co-habitation between commercial and/or back yard flocks with migratory/wild birds

High Risk Factors and *Regulatory Gaps-Avian -Avian Influenza

- *Lack of information regarding the type and migratory patterns of the migratory/wild birds.
- *Inadequate quarantine measures and system for enforcement.
- *Absence of defined compensation mechanism which would encourage dishonesty and increase the chances of spread of the disease through increased movement, slaughter and sale of birds.

High Risk Factors and *Regulatory Gaps-Avian Influenza

- * Constant free association of domestic animals, birds and humans in the absence of vaccination etc.
- Absence of formalization and implementation of Animal Disaster Preparedness Plans and its incorporation into National Disaster Preparedness Plans - Identification and regular consultation of the multi-sectoral National Disaster Preparedness Committee.

Conclusion

- **Based on limited information available:**
Some Countries in the Caribbean would have to make significant efforts to meet minimum standards of operation, in order to provide some of the basic services for which they were intended.

In most cases a Legal frame work (including the enforcement of regulations) would have to put in place or updated, to support the effective operations of the Services being provided.

Upgrade of the personnel in the services needs to be formalized and ongoing so as to improve capacity opportunities for personnel.

Conclusion

Quarantine services need to adequately staffed and upgraded and must be supplemented by active Surveillance, effective extension education, informative public awareness programmes and some basic laboratory diagnosis capability.

National Surveillance programmes require more input and need to be given a higher level of priority. Information garnered should be used to plan national programmes and strategies for disease prevention.

Conclusion

In cases where political decisions are taken in place of or after scientific determinations, there is the inherent danger of inadequate provision of safeguards.

It is also clear that national consultations are infrequently held among stakeholders and the danger of loss of valuable information and intelligence is often the result thus minimizing the effects on measures intended to provide security.

Conclusion

The occurrence of regional actions appear to result in some complacency on the part of Governments at the expense of national activities, instead of strengthening them as they were intended.

A National Veterinary Service without a documented and active mechanism for responding to emergencies and emerging issues is like a bird without wings, prone to being thrown into chaos in the face of danger. Planned emergency response reduces the risk of making mistakes and maximizes the use of limited resources.

Reminders

There is need to establish contingency funds for Animal Disease Prevention and to establish the disease status of the areas of the country where the animals reside so as to be better informed about prevention mechanisms to be employed should that become relevant .

The information provided by a Livestock population census is relevant to disease control and eradication and must be updated regularly.

The building of relevant partnership is also useful especially where scarce human and resources have to be utilised.

Please NOTE

- This is a useful tool to perform self-analysis and obtain input from the users of your service and should not be viewed as just another questionnaire.
- It provides a basis evaluate performance, vision and strategy of your National veterinary Services

My sincere Appreciation is

- Expressed to the Organizers for the opportunity
- Given to my employer for facilitating the process
- Being sent to my colleagues who responded positively to my request for relevant information