

## **Veterinary Epidemiologist/Para-epidemiologist (VEP) Project** **Recommendations from the Third Meeting of the CaribVET Network Steering Committee**

**The meeting agreed that the Project should include the following:**

### **Objectives**

#### **General objective**

To establish an early detection and rapid response system in the Caribbean region through the implementation and reinforcement of harmonised and sustainable epidemiological surveillance systems for the Tropical Bont Tick (TBT), Tick Borne Diseases (TBD), Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) and other priority / emerging diseases. The project will be initiated in the original Caribbean Amblyomma Programme countries.

#### **Specific objectives**

- Develop and reinforce national surveillance systems;
- Encourage private-public partnership;
- Encourage animal health-public health partnership;
- Develop and initiate harmonised surveillance protocols for animal diseases, with a focus on priority diseases;
- Create, strengthen and maintain coordinated and harmonised national and regional databases;
- Human capacity building and infrastructure enhancement;
- Support and operate a rapid national and regional emergency response task force;
- Strengthen the existing CaribVET network and the collaboration between the member countries and regional/international organisations.

### **Expected outputs**

1. Clinical diagnosis, sample collection & transportation and analysis capabilities strengthened for priority diseases in the different countries of the region;
2. Availability and sustainability of the efficient functioning of a national and regional surveillance system that guarantees linkages among the public-private sector and other public sector agencies, including public health, in order to support food safety and security and to facilitate trade (compliance with the international standards);
3. Harmonised surveillance protocols for priority diseases;
4. Utilization of a national harmonised database, coordinated at a regional level for the strengthening of epidemiological surveillance with the support of CaribVET;
5. Availability of human resources (national and regional) trained in quantitative and qualitative epidemiology, risk analysis, geographical information systems (GIS), animal health economics, quarantine and biosafety;
6. Personnel trained in disaster management situations (prevention, rapid response and rehabilitation), involving animal and human diseases (TADs, including zoonotic diseases) who will form part of an emergency disease preparedness and response team;
7. Have available a national epidemiological unit equipped with a good communication and information systems;
8. CaribVET network forming the basis of the regional surveillance system and operating the regional database with the information of the member countries. This instrument will help with epidemiological surveillance of the priority diseases in the region.

## National activities & practical activities

### Activities carried out by VEP

1. Prepare a work programme and budget, in collaboration with the CVO, to meet the objectives outlined above;
2. Participate in the Surveillance Network Assessment Tool (SNAT) assessment in the country or upon request by the CaribVET Epidemiology Committee (CEC) in another country;
3. Assist in the building of the epidemiological surveillance network by adapting surveillance protocols on the basis of models established by the CaribVET working groups;
4. Coordinate sample collection, preparation and submission to national laboratories in the region;
5. Management of the epidemiological surveillance database, GIS systems and according to the country, contribute to farmer register and livestock census databases;
6. Conduct prioritised disease prevalence surveys;
7. Review of national animal disease emergency plans and adapt them on the basis of models established by the CaribVET working groups;
8. Assist with the planning, development and conducting of simulation exercises;
9. Be available for regional work in the case of an emergency and when requested by the CVO of a country through the CEC (perhaps utilizing the CDERA structure);
10. Establishing contacts with farmers, producers, producer organizations, suppliers, private veterinarians and other stakeholders
11. Prepare and submit activity reports to the CVO;
12. Improve public awareness and education with respect to priority diseases.

### Practical implementation

It is recognised that the government will have their own domestic procedures for hiring selected candidates. It is noted that funds will be made available by the project to contribute to salaries, incentives, and allowances as agreed by the CaribVET Steering Committee. The final agreement on the hiring of candidates will be worked out in agreement with the governments and the funding agency.

For sustainability of the programme, it is envisaged that governments will seek to incorporate the position of the epidemiologist in the permanent establishment of the Veterinary Services upon completion of the project.

Possible options for employment of the selected candidate include:

1. A permanent employee in the Veterinary Services, who will be dedicated to carry out the activities of the VEP on a full-time basis (with incentives to be paid by the project for the additional duties (24-hr on call and weekend duty)'

Suitable candidates, in order of preference:

- a. A veterinary epidemiologist,
- b. A veterinarian (to be trained in epidemiology with support of the project and CaribVET),
- c. An Animal Health Technician (to be trained in epidemiology with support of the project and CaribVET).

2. The National Veterinary Services hires a local veterinarian to serve as the VEP, his/her salary being paid for the duration of the project, half by the government and half from the project funds.
3. In the absence of the availability of a suitably qualified national, the National Veterinary Services hires a veterinarian from outside of the country to serve as the VEP, the salary (consistent with local salary scales) being paid for the duration of the project, half by the government and half from the project funds.

After assessment and according to the needs of each country, the project will provide the funding for the acquisition of, *inter alia*:

- Equipment, supplies and materials;
- Vehicle and/or travel allowances;
- Computer and GIS systems (hardware and software) and communication facilities;
- Office and field equipment and supplies;
- Rapid field tests and kits for the transport of samples

## RECOMMENDATION

The 3<sup>rd</sup> CaribVET Steering Committee meeting:

**Agreed** that the foregoing proposal will be forwarded to IICA and the USDA as the definitive summary document of the proposed VEP project;

**Agreed** that the project document be circulated to the CaribVET members for final comments prior to forwarding officially to the participating member states;

**Agreed** that Nevis will be treated separately from St Kitts and that Montserrat and Grenada will be considered for full participation;

**Agreed** that consideration will be given to the participation of non CAP countries who wish to participate in the VEP project.

The CaribVET Steering Committee agreed that with respect to policy, strategy and implementation, that the project will be organised as follows:

1. **POLICY:**

The CaribVET Steering Committee will be responsible for the policy determinations of the project and will meet once a year in that regard.

2. **STRATEGY:**

The CaribVET Epidemiology Working Group will be responsible for the strategic planning of the project, meeting two to four times a year

3. **IMPLEMENTATION:**

Implementation at the regional level will be supported by USDA, IICA and CIRAD and is envisaged to dialogue on a weekly basis

4. **IMPLEMENTATION:**

Implementation at the national level will be effected on a daily basis by the VEP, reporting to the CVO and communicating on an as-needed basis with the IICA country office and CIRAD epidemiologists.