



Rethinking the use of antimicrobials in livestock production systems

Policy Brief n° 1

How to promote preventive approaches in veterinary medicine?

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This contributes to the main goal of the project which is to analyse the practices and decision systems of farmers, veterinarians and other professionals involved in managing the health of farmed animals ; and to the specific objective of identifying levers/incentives for adherence to prudent use principles by veterinarians and farmers.

Europe is the world's third largest meat producer after China and the United States. Globally there is a major market trend to increase demand for animal proteins which directly translates with specific needs and requirements from the farming sector and linked policies. Antibiotic-free meat production trends is expected to regularly increase in the coming years.

This policy brief should be particularly relevant for veterinarians, as well as farmers and animal health professionals, from any European country.

OVERVIEW

The reduction of AMU in veterinary medicine is nowadays largely associated with the development of preventive approaches to animal health. Roadmap has studied the transformation of practices, knowledge and working conditions of veterinarians in relation to the promotion of prudent AMU. The project has analysed the individual, organisational and structural factors favouring the development of preventive approaches. They are a central issue for the veterinary profession, which is facing major challenges in inventing and implementing new ways of managing animal health that meet the major health, environmental and economic challenges of this new century.



Two major surveys were conducted. A qualitative survey aimed at gathering the views and experiences of veterinarians in different national contexts: it highlights the difficulties encountered by veterinarians in implementing preventive approaches and promoting prudent AMU, and shows the profound transformations that the veterinary profession is currently undergoing. A quantitative survey aimed at understanding the variability of veterinarians' attitudes towards AMR and AMU: it identifies several clusters within the profession, which are differentially distributed according to countries, sectors and working conditions, and within which each veterinarian develops different ways of thinking and acting in relation to the AMR problem.

In this policy brief, we emphasise the major structural factors that we believe need to be supported in order to maintain the ongoing transition towards prudent AMU and preventive approaches to animal health, and we suggest different ways of mobilising the profession according to the different contexts identified.

RELATED OUTPUTS



- Fortané N., Comer C., Eberhart J. (2022) *Roadmap deliverable 2.3 "Report on the results of qualitative and quantitative research on veterinary practices"*.
- Fortané N. (2022) [*How to promote preventive approaches in animal health. Perspectives on the contemporary issues faced by the veterinary profession*](#), FVE General Assembly, Malta.
- Fortané N., Comer C. (2022) [*The emergence of new veterinary business models*](#), International Rural Sociology Association Conference, Cairns, Australia.
- Fortané N. (2021) [*Antimicrobial resistance: Preventive approaches to the rescue? Professional expertise and business model of French 'industrial' veterinarians*](#), Review of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Studies, 102, pp. 213-238.



RESULTS

Practice change

Preventive approaches rely on specific tools, knowledge and practices which need to be broadly shared and adopted within the profession. It requires to broaden the professional expertise from a too restrictive vision of animal health towards a more holistic approach encompassing non-veterinary specific domains, such as animal nutrition or farm equipment and infrastructures.



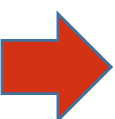
Standards and protocols

Preventive approaches need to be framed and regulated by care protocols which help practitioners to follow the right steps and reinforce social acceptability of such measures. Protocolization of care can take various forms and therefore impact veterinary practices differently.



New role for veterinarians

Implementing preventive approaches requires new forms of collaboration and labour division between animal health professionals. Veterinarians need to delegate more tasks and become animal health supervisors/managers.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Foster veterinary access to technical-economic data related to farm management

Broaden the scope of alternative/preventive solutions, in particular vaccination and complementary treatments and feeds (phytotherapy, pre- and probiotics)

Provide aid for the installation and maintenance of a dense veterinary network in the countryside to guarantee a good level of health monitoring and support for farmers

Strengthen preventive approaches in the career development of veterinarians (initial and continuing training, intern education, etc.)

Encourage the use of rapid diagnostic tests and antimicrobial susceptibility testing

Co-produce guidelines and standards with professional organizations, and ease the associated workload of the care protocols

Harmonise market-based standards and protocols (quality assurance scheme, antibiotic-free labels...)

Involve veterinarians in the design and implementation of indicators aimed at monitoring AMU and AMR at the farm level

Implement 'animal health visits' in every country and encourage veterinarians to take responsibility for developing collaborative farm health plans

Put prevention at the heart of veterinary medicine and encourage the delegation of practical tasks to other professionals, particularly through training.

Maintain a balance between audit processes (writing reports, monitoring indicators, compiling checklists) and clinical/technical advice. Avoid the risk of making the veterinarian a controller rather than a collaborator.



RESULTS

New business models for veterinary practices

The set of services that veterinarians need to be able to provide to their clients has considerably enlarged, thanks to the development of preventive approaches and the related extension of veterinary professional expertise. Veterinary practices have therefore to find ways to monetize these services and renew their business models to be less economically dependent on non-preventive interventions.



Considering the heterogeneity of the veterinary profession

European veterinarians are a fragmented professional group with different views and ways of caring for animals. All vets feel concerned by AMR and preventive approaches but their contextual issues (related to country, production sector, employment status, etc.) need to be taken into account in the way one might communicate and tries to mobilise the community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage the monetization of veterinarian's work and responsibility on the implementation and follow-up of care protocols (either public or private)

Promote new contractual ties between vets and their clients (follow-ups contracts, subscriptions, packages) that allow remuneration for advice and continuity of care based on global services for animal health and welfare

Support the development of new forms of veterinary companies capable of diversifying their sources of income (groups of practices, networks, partnerships, etc.) but keep ensuring a balanced distribution of means and services amongst all types of farms

Communicate on the benefits of prevention and strengthen social acceptability of preventive approaches

Better identify the different groups of the veterinary profession and their specific needs and issues

Adapt awareness campaigns and materials to each group to avoid stigmatizing veterinarians in some countries or causing veterinarians to feel disengaged in others.

Be aware that preventive approaches and related concepts such as alternative medicines, agroecology or biosecurity don't have the same meaning everywhere as they don't apply to the same contexts (i.e. cultural backgrounds, farming systems, professional habits...)



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