

Evaluating the resources of Veterinary Services

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Summary

The assessment of human and material resource capacity and capability remains a critical component of the evaluation of Veterinary Services.

Human resource evaluation examines the skills, qualifications and competencies of staff members and helps to determine the optimum number of staff needed to provide an efficient and effective service. Organisational arrangements, ongoing training and performance evaluation are important. Material resources include funds for operational activity, accommodation (including laboratory facilities), equipment, communication and transport.

Evaluation is a complex process. The structure and service delivery arrangements of Veterinary Services must be taken into account. Evaluation can be based principally on input, infrastructure and quality systems or on outputs and outcomes. It may be based on a combined approach involving all of these components.

Keywords

Biosecurity – Competencies – Evaluation – Human and material resources – Output-based performance assessment – Quality system – Veterinary Service.

Introduction

In the process of evaluating the Veterinary Service of another Member Country, the Member Country which is conducting the evaluation is entitled to take into account the resources that contribute to that Veterinary Service. Resources include the following elements:

- a) the people who are actively engaged in providing these services
- b) the physical infrastructure of the Veterinary Service, for example:
 - accommodation
 - laboratory facilities
 - equipment
 - communications
 - data systems
 - transportation
- c) the financial budgets which determine the parameters of veterinary operations.

Providing adequate resources enables a Veterinary Service to perform to optimal effect. The performance of a Veterinary Service is measured not just by assessing the adequacy of its resources but by several other criteria as well. These criteria include the quality and levels of the results achieved ('outputs'), as well as the ability to demonstrate appropriate service goals and to measure its performance against those goals.

Human resources

Skills

The capabilities and effectiveness of a Veterinary Service depend primarily on the skilled staff (human resources) who constitute the organisation.

Range

Staff must demonstrate an adequate range of skills to assure the officials who are conducting the evaluation that adequate support is provided for effective surveillance and disease

control functions, including field operations and scientific laboratory services. Infrastructural support skills must also be adequate in the areas of data and information systems, communications and regulatory compliance. Management of human resources and quality systems must be adequate.

Qualifications

The Veterinary Service of the Member Country should be staffed by those who have formal educational qualifications relevant to the necessary range of skills and responsibilities. These will include many staff members with scientific and/or technical discipline-based skills (for example, veterinarians, microbiologists and information systems technologists).

Competencies

An adequate range of qualifications and skills does not automatically ensure that these personnel will achieve work results or outputs of sufficient quality to guarantee an effective Veterinary Service. Knowledge and experience are also important factors in an effective performance.

The levels of competence of the personnel who are working alone or in teams to perform the functions of the Veterinary Service must be adequate for each function. Competence is the demonstrable capability of personnel to perform an activity to defined standards. Staff members of the Veterinary Service should have a range of competencies to suit the activities for which they are responsible.

Competencies must be built through adequate training programmes, which have defined standards and procedures, and by monitoring performance. The managers of the Veterinary Service should be able to demonstrate that they have such systems in place.

Training

The maintenance of skills requires continuing training. Such training includes the discipline-based skills that are associated with the formal qualifications of the officers concerned.

Training also applies to the systems skills that are required to ensure the effective planning, resourcing and delivery of services. These systems skills include, but are not limited to, the following:

- administrative skills
- inspection skills
- information systems skills and knowledge management skills
- communication skills
- quality assurance skills.

Assessment should take into account the range and depth of training provided to personnel in those areas which are most

crucial to providing an effective Veterinary Service in the particular Member Country concerned.

Performance evaluation

A key area for evaluating Veterinary Services is their performance. Adequacy of human and material resources alone does not ensure effective performance.

Performance can be measured against national and international standards or benchmarks. Veterinary Services must demonstrate an adequate performance in those areas which are appropriate to the needs of the Member Country and its trading status.

Organisation of human resources

Member Countries use a variety of organisational models for their Veterinary Services. There is no single, preferred model for the purpose of international evaluation.

Management frameworks

A wide range of organisational and structural frameworks may be suitable for delivering an effective Veterinary Service.

An official Veterinary Service must have comprehensive policy, legislation and certification responsibilities within the official national government framework of the Member Country concerned. Other major components of the Veterinary Service (such as field operations and/or laboratory services) may also be provided in the following ways:

- entirely within the official government framework
- by a statutory organisation directly subject to government regulation
- by a non-governmental organisation or private sector body or bodies under formal agreements with the government.

It may also be possible to provide effective services through a combination of the above structural arrangements.

Resource size

Member Countries must demonstrate that each officially defined organisation which forms part of their Veterinary Service has sufficient numbers of staff to perform its functions effectively. This is essential for the Veterinary Service outputs and outcomes expected of that Member Country.

Organisational charts and budget details should be available for assessment.

Definition of role and responsibilities

The organisational structure of the Veterinary Service should promote effective communication and function. People in positions of responsibility within the organisation should have their roles and responsibilities clearly defined.

In the case of a Veterinary Service in which some functional responsibilities are delivered by non-government parties or organisations, there must be detailed service agreements and/or contracts in place which provide clear definitions ('transparency') of their respective roles and responsibilities.

For evaluation by another Member Country, the Veterinary Service under assessment must provide access to the relevant personnel employed by the non-government party or organisation. Those who are conducting the evaluation must be able to view these service agreements and/or contracts.

Accreditation and auditing of standards

The evaluation process should include the performance standards and performance monitoring systems which apply to those personnel involved in the Veterinary Service. This evaluation of standards and monitoring systems for staff should apply equally to those employed by the government and also to the relevant staff of the non-government parties or organisations.

In some Veterinary Services, private veterinarians and para-professionals are employed to undertake activities which contribute to the overall official responsibilities of the Service. The evaluation of relevant accreditation standards and performance monitoring systems is a valid part of the overall evaluation process.

Reporting

Officers who have roles within the Veterinary Service of a Member Country should have clearly described lines of responsibility for the duties which they undertake. This includes clear arrangements for the supervision of their work, as well as for the reporting of data and information within the organisation.

Accountabilities

Officers of the government component of the Veterinary Service should operate in a system which defines their accountability to the rules and standards of their organisation and preferably to the wider public sector. The management of the Veterinary Service must be able to provide a system of accountability and demonstrate its effectiveness to the officials of another Member Country.

Other organisations or individuals which provide services to the Veterinary Service at a national or regional level should also be subject to a level of accountability which meets the defined national standards.

The overall effectiveness of a Veterinary Service can also be influenced by organisational strengths and weaknesses in the human resource management systems governing staff employment conditions. Work quality can be significantly influenced by the adequacy or otherwise of the following:

- remuneration and entitlement (pay)
- workplace health and safety
- systems for managing staff performance
- employment equity and fairness.

In general, any of these systems would be expected to meet at least those standards operating at the national and/or regional government level of the Member Country concerned.

Evaluation may take into account the above systems where they have a demonstrable influence on the effectiveness of the Veterinary Service in a Member Country.

Material resources

Capital infrastructure

The Veterinary Service must be able to assure an evaluating Member Country that the performance of its key responsibilities is not significantly limited by a lack of crucial capital infrastructure. This capital infrastructure consists of the following areas:

- accommodation, for example, administration offices, inspection centres and treatment facilities
- laboratories, for example, necropsy facilities, laboratory rooms and bench space, laboratory bio-containment facilities and waste disposal
- transport and communications, for example, vehicles and telephone and electronic communication networks
- animal management facilities, for example, animal accommodation and animal feeding and handling systems.

Equipment

The Veterinary Service should be able to demonstrate that it has adequate equipment to function effectively in the field, as well as in the laboratory, and to provide efficient information systems. Equipment inventories and maintenance and replacement schedules should be available for assessment.

Operational funds

Adequate funds must be available to the Veterinary Service to ensure that services are delivered throughout the year in

response to the annual patterns of service demands. Provision must also be made for an emergency response capability fund.

Operational funding requirements include, but are not limited to, the following items:

- a) travel and accommodation costs for staff
- b) the costs of laboratory reagents and consumables
- c) maintenance and overhead costs for all facilities, including:
 - energy supplies
 - forms and documents
 - communication systems
 - building leases
 - depreciation of buildings and/or equipment.

Field service funding requirements include the costs of equipment and consumables, such as the following:

- ensuring the availability of effective transport
- maintaining vehicles
- providing transportation fuel
- providing sample collection containers, transport containers, livestock restraint devices and post-mortem kits.

Communications network

All elements of the Veterinary Service must be linked by an effective and continuous communication system. Access to the necessary equipment and funds are crucial in ensuring this continuous communication capability. The evaluating Member Country should be provided with sufficient information to assure its officials that an adequate communications infrastructure and operation exists within the Veterinary Service under consideration.

Scientific requirements

Scientific requirements include the following:

- a library and/or internet access
- the adequate provision of equipment, reagents and consumable laboratory supplies
- effective data recording and storage/retrieval systems.

Transport

Adequate transport means that the conducting of surveillance activities, disease investigation and control, emergency responses, laboratory services and overall management are not unduly restricted by deficiencies in the transportation infrastructure, for example, not having enough vehicles or having the wrong type of vehicles or vehicles being off the road due to inadequate maintenance or limited fuel supplies.

Legislation and regulations

The effective performance of animal health and biosecurity services relies fundamentally on the legislative base provided by the government of the Member Country. Complete disease control and core national biosecurity can be delivered only when comprehensive legislation is in place to empower these organisations to perform their functions adequately.

In Member Countries which already have such relevant legislation at the national and regional levels, demonstrable processes should be in place to ensure policy co-ordination and complementarity between national/federal and regional/state legislation.

When assessing the adequacy of the legislative base, the following elements should be taken into account:

- the comprehensive identification and categorisation of diseases which affect animals
- defining the legal obligations of people who raise, farm, keep, take care of or are otherwise responsible for animals
- the provision of the empowering measures necessary for disease prevention, detection, containment and control
- defining the powers of officers who are authorised by the legislation
- the definition of penalty provisions
- the definition of compensation provisions.

Other components of the legislative base of a Veterinary Service may be included in primary animal health/biosecurity legislation or in other related legislation. These components include but are not limited to:

- a review of the decisions made by authorised persons
- protection for the authorised decision-makers from personal liability
- appeal provisions
- quality assurance systems.

The legislation which enables the Veterinary Service to plan, implement and review its functions may be within the jurisdictional responsibility of national and/or regional or state governments.

To assist other Member Countries to evaluate such legislation, the Veterinary Service concerned must provide access to the relevant legislative documentation and to the monitoring and compliance systems (and the documented records of these systems) which have been put in place.

Current guidelines and possible future developments for animal health

Current guidelines for the evaluation of Veterinary Services are based on those published by the OIE (World organisation for animal health) (1). These guidelines are principally related to the assessment of inputs and infrastructure which constitute a modern and effective Veterinary Service.

The adoption of formal quality assurance systems in the management and delivery of Veterinary Services has led to the extending of evaluation principles to take account of this new direction. Not all Member Countries use formal quality assurance systems and procedures in their Veterinary Services. In the case of these countries, especially, the input and infrastructure assessment model is still relevant. ■

A third method of assessment has been emerging in recent years: an output-based performance assessment model. This model measures the outputs and outcomes of Veterinary Services, and is not necessarily linked to a formal quality assurance approach. Many Member Countries now have formal performance management systems in place which assess the achievements of Veterinary Service activities and projects against pre-determined performance targets and the resources invested.

To complement the evaluation guidelines for inputs and infrastructure and quality assurance systems which have already been endorsed by the OIE (2), new evaluation guidelines will be developed to recognise and provide international assessment standards for the output-based performance assessment model.

Évaluation des ressources des Services vétérinaires

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Résumé

L'évaluation des capacités et aptitudes des ressources humaines et matérielles demeure une composante critique de l'évaluation des Services vétérinaires. L'évaluation des ressources humaines examine les habiletés, les capacités et les compétences des membres du personnel et aide à déterminer le nombre optimum de personnes nécessaire pour offrir un service effectif et efficace. Les mesures organisationnelles, la formation continue et l'évaluation de la performance sont importantes. Les ressources matérielles prévoient des fonds pour les activités opérationnelles (incluant les installations de laboratoire), l'équipement, la communication et le transport.

L'évaluation est un processus complexe. On doit tenir compte de la structure et des procédures de prestation de service des Services vétérinaires. L'évaluation peut être basée principalement sur les intrants, l'infrastructure et les systèmes de qualité, ou sur les résultats et les rendements. Elle peut également se baser sur une approche combinée englobant toutes ces composantes.

Mots-clés

Biosécurité – Compétence – Évaluation – Évaluation basée sur la performance – Ressource humaine et matérielle – Service vétérinaire – Système de qualité. ■

Evaluación de los recursos de los Servicios Veterinarios

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Resumen

La evaluación de las capacidades y de las aptitudes de los recursos humanos y materiales suele ser un componente crítico de la evaluación de los Servicios Veterinarios. La evaluación de los recursos humanos examina las habilidades, calificaciones y competencias de los miembros del personal y ayuda a determinar el número óptimo de personas necesarias para ofrecer un servicio eficiente. Las medidas organizacionales, la educación continua y la evaluación del desempeño son importantes. Los recursos materiales incluyen fondos para las actividades operacionales (incluyendo las instalaciones de laboratorio), el equipamiento, la comunicación y el transporte.

La evaluación es un proceso complejo. Se debe tener en cuenta el procedimiento para la prestación de servicios de los Servicios Veterinarios. Se puede basar la evaluación principalmente en insumos, infraestructura y sistemas de calidad, o en resultados y rendimientos. También puede basarse en un enfoque combinado que engloba todos los componentes.

Palabras clave

Bioseguridad – Competencia – Evaluación – Evaluación basada en el rendimiento – Recursos humanos y materiales – Servicio veterinario – Sistema de calidad.



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