

92nd WOAH General Session. The Animal Health Forum

Policy to Action: Vaccine and vaccination. Reflections for change

Introduction

Animal diseases management strategies are increasingly influenced by complex socio-economic, political, ethical and environmental challenges. The growing demand for sustainable domestic and wild animal-derived food products, the increased risk of zoonotic diseases, climate change, and the society demand underscore the importance to develop sustainable disease prevention & control strategies where vaccination plays a pivotal role as complementary disease control tool.

Vaccination programmes do not only protect animal populations, but also safeguard public and environmental health. Decreasing the burden of animal diseases contributes to mitigate the risk of zoonoses, reduce the need to use antimicrobials, preserve biodiversity and reduce environmental impact from livestock, and positively contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite obvious benefits, there remain significant technical, regulatory, economic, political and social barriers to implement vaccination programmes for priority animal diseases. The recent global animal health events and (re)emerging events (avian influenza, African swine fever, foot and mouth disease, peste de petits ruminants, lumpy skin disease, bluetongue, etc.), as well as global multisectoral threats such as antimicrobial resistance, have shown that there are societal, welfare, economic and environmental expectations to increase the sustainability of disease control strategies while limiting certain practices such as mass culling and reducing antimicrobial use and misuse. The current socio-economic and epidemiological context requires a debate around the shift of paradigm from elimination of disease (living without diseases) to disease management (living with diseases).

There is an urgent need to explore how to better integrate vaccination in our disease control strategies that should remain science-based, economically viable and environmentally friendly while avoiding unnecessary trade barriers.

Problem statement

Vaccines are one of the most cost-effective tools within an animal health strategy. However, there are numerous strategic challenges impeding their optimal development and use:

1. **Vaccine development and production:** The development and production of vaccines are often slow and expensive. The limited research funding, competing manufacturer priorities, intellectual property barriers, lack of harmonisation of protocols and data produced by laboratories, challenges in considering suitability of vaccines in field conditions, and production inefficiencies impact the quality or suitability of the final product.
2. **Regulatory barriers:** Vaccine registration processes are fragmented and there is a lack of consistency across regions. Vaccines are licensed based on prevailing demand and may create problems with access when diseases emerge and there are delays with registration and procurement. The absence of equivalence registration systems delays the availability of vaccines, and disincentivises manufacturers, making disease control more dependent on poor quality vaccines or use of antimicrobials.

3. **Access and use** of vaccines are regularly constrained by logistical challenges, including distribution, cold chain, reaching the last mile, financial limitations and inadequate public private partnerships. The impact of vaccination campaigns is not always monitored and evaluated.
4. **Trade barriers:** National animal health policies do not often account for the risk-based safety of vaccinated animals and their products. Despite the existence of science-based standards they do not always promote the use of vaccination as a prevention/control tool. In some cases, its inadequate implementation leads to unjustified trade restrictions, market protectionism and economic losses.

Objectives

The forum will create a platform for dialogue between WOAAH Delegates, subject matter experts and concerned stakeholders on the barriers that are currently impeding the development and use of vaccines in disease prevention and control strategies. With the objective to establish a 2-3 year roadmap with concrete actions, the forum will specifically aim to:

- Identify current technical and policy challenges in the vaccine life cycle (development, production, registration, distribution and use) and propose short and medium-term strategies to address them;
- Strengthen public-private partnership to enhance vaccine accessibility, in particular in LMICs;
- Explore the role of WOAAH in facilitating the harmonisation of international and national regulations to facilitate efficient use of high-quality vaccines while avoiding unjustified trade barriers;
- Highlight best evidence-based vaccination and post-vaccination monitoring practices.

Expected outcomes

By the end of the forum, the General Assembly of WOAAH Delegates will have:

- Clear understanding of the critical role vaccines play in sustainable disease prevention & control, AMR containment and public health protection;
- Provided specific recommendations to WOAAH, Delegates and public and private stakeholders to improve the critical aspects in the vaccine life-cycle;
- Actionable strategies for advancing the integration of vaccination in national disease control programmes while preserving safe international trade of animals and their products;
- An agreed framework to consider animal vaccination policies into a broader context including AMR, wildlife health, and other One health priorities.

Participants

- Secretariat: Science Department and AMR&VP Department
- Rapporteur/s : Dr Batty Dungu and Dr Meritxel Donadeu
- Selected panellists and speakers: Delegates, Council members, Experts of Reference and Collaborating Centres, members of the Specialist Commissions, key stakeholders, etc.
- WOAAH Delegates.

Format

The Technical Item of the 92nd General Session on '*Policy to Action: Vaccine and vaccination. Reflections for change*'. will set the scene for the forum which will include a high level panel discussion. It will also include formal presentations and round table discussions in the five distinctive sections covering the strategic challenges identified above.

The conclusions and recommendations of the forum will be included in a resolution. A 2-year result framework will be developed for the implementation of the recommendations of the resolution.