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Evaluation of Veterinary Public Health Policies – Why and how?

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BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

Policies relevant to public health are developed, implemented and reviewed following standardised processes. Increasingly, this is expected to include a formal or informal review to answer questions such as "Can it be improved?", "Is it worth it?" or "Should it be continued?"

Resources available for risk management policies in veterinary public health are increasingly limited. Therefore, the pressure to verify the utility of interventions, programmes and policies gains in importance. Evaluation provides an established process and tools which are already applied by many national and international agencies.

GOOD EVALUATION PRACTICE

Evaluation is applied to assess policies in all disciplines. Its methods are therefore not specific for veterinary public health. The generic elements of an evaluation project are shown in Fig. 1.

The design of an evaluation should assure that views from all stakeholders are considered. It is therefore an important first step to identify all relevant target groups. It is also recommended to implement an advisory group to direct the evaluation and to assure comprehensiveness and balance between interest groups. The evaluation question defines the focus and scope of the exercise.

METHODS AND TOOLS

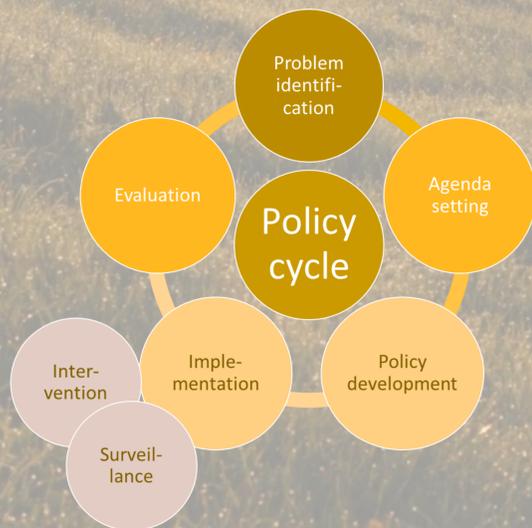
Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods are applicable. Methods should be selected such that robust evidence can be obtained within the available time and budget.

Epidemiologists tend to focus on quantitative methods, but often the database is not sufficient for their application. It is therefore recommended to carefully design the evaluation according to its objectives.

A number of projects have assessed and developed evaluation methods over the last few years. Their outputs provide a range of references and tools that can facilitate evaluations (see references below).

Figure 1: How does evaluation fit into the policy cycle?

The policy cycle describes all steps necessary from moving an issue onto the agenda to the decision about mitigating measures and their implementation.



| Evaluation question | Commissioned by | Focus | Year |
|--|--|--|------|
| Are the measures implemented to reduce antimicrobial resistance in livestock in Germany effective? | Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture | Antimicrobial usage and resistance, perception of farmers, field veterinarians, vet authorities | 2019 |
| Are the measures implemented to reduce antimicrobial resistance in the UK effective? | Department of Health, England | Implementation of a one-health approach, strength of evidence, policy effectiveness using a One Health approach. | 2019 |
| Is the Global Framework for Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) effective? Can it be improved? | UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) | Effectiveness of collaboration and implementation, value perceived by stakeholders at national and international level | 2018 |

CONCLUSIONS

In order to assure access to and availability of the information and data required for a robust evaluation, prospective planning is essential. Capacity in designing and running of evaluations should become a core competency of ECVPH specialists. The training in qualitative methods is of particular relevance.

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ECVPH AGM 2019 – Edinburgh, Scotland