Biosecurity in French cattle farms: attitude and expectations of farmers, ways to improve

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Biosecurity: a challenge for cattle farmers?

- Cornerstone of the EU Animal Health Law project
- Key point of French ECOANTIBIO 2017 plan
- Difficult to implement in cattle farms (EU review)
  - ex: <12% dairy farmers implement quarantine (Belgium, Sarazin et al, 2014)
  - ex: <50% farmers implement double fences (Great Britain, Toma et al, 2013)
  - blockers: open premises, working routine and attitude (France, Frappat et al, 2012)

Issues to investigate to instigate the progress:
- Cattle farmers’ motivations and expectations
- Practical solutions and innovation

⇒ to find out means and ends of improvement
Objectives: better understanding

44 Face-to-face interviews of farmers
- April/June 2014
- Indirect then direct questions: knowledge, attitude, needs…

Online survey of 127 farm vets
- May/June 2015
- Direct open questions to collect innovative farmers practices, tips and tricks…

With support

to find out ways of progress
Farmers’ attitude

Economy is the first motivation of farmers for biosecurity

- Never had any problem: why would I change anything?
- I would improve to reduce vet costs
- How can I do better with existing premises?
- Can I change my usual way of doing? Will my colleagues change also?

but work habits and lack of facilities is often an obstacle
Farmers’ opinions

Two key points for biosecurity: secure cattle movements and safe management of sick animals

- Colleagues’ experience can be incentive to improve
- To improve alone is useless: neighbors, vets, retailers…
- Need practical solutions, innovation

If I had a problem, I would improve
If my fellow farmers had a problem, I would consider improving
If a colleague improves, I may try myself

But not so easy to talk about health problems with colleagues
Vets opinion: as many attitudes as farmers... and changing in time

Some efforts (56% of answers) ... often later abandoned by farmers because no visible impact

Little innovation: what was recommended (by vets or technicians) or what was sold to farmers or what neighbors use.

Few tips and tricks: work organization

- Some efforts when problems occur to them or close enough
- Footbath: can be a danger rather than a solution...
- Single-use equipment: often a vet initiative
For Vets, progress may be gained in the prevention of intra-herd contamination (internal biosecurity)

- Farmers mainly focus on emergency situations: sick and dead animals

  Isolation of sick animals: still some progress...

  Precaution in colostrum use, milking order of sick cows: still rare

  Farmers are not fully aware of intra-herd risks...

- Prevention on contamination between categories: nothing to report in 60% of vets answers…
Perspectives: ways to progress

Issues to heighten awareness of cattle farmers
- Cost/benefits of biosecurity ➡️ to be further explored? Not so easy…
- Building and facilities: one key point ➡️ in progress: French Guides of recommendations to better design and manage cattle housing in relation with health prevention
- Work organization: another key point ➡️ closely related to attitudes and to systems

Promote biosecurity by all possible means
- Introduce biosecurity as a “new” topic of discussion between vets and farmers
- make better use of technician-farmer relationship
- Organize farmer groups to share experiences ➡️ “innovation brokers”, “think tank”…
- Large scale communication campaign to change attitudes first … then practices

Ways to improve
- Improve together
- Include Biosecurity in Quality Scheme
- Develop innovation

Biosecurity ≠ biosafety

More relevant in pig farming

Maybe some global health management

Don’t know exactly…
Thank you for your attention

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