

BELGIUM

Improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernisation

Location
Wallonia

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Axis / Priority
P2 - Farm Viability and Competitiveness

Measure
M1 – Knowledge transfer and information actions

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 38 000
EAFRD 15 200
National/regional 22 800

Project duration
2017 – 2018

Project promoter
ARSIA

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A project offering training modules targeting bovine breeders to promote alternative methods to maintain healthy livestock and decrease the use of antibiotics

Summary

The Regional Association of Animal Health and Identification (ARSIA) delivers training for livestock breeders throughout the year 2017, with the aim of reducing the use of antibiotics. The sessions also provide advice on how to better manage animal health through concrete preventive solutions that are reducing the development of diseases in cattle breeding.



Results

75 training sessions were implemented during the project implementation period.

By the end of September 2017, 371 trainees attended the sessions. The target is to reach 450 breeders by the end of the project.

A cumulative reduction of 20 % is achieved since 2011.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The current situation concerning antimicrobial resistance, is certainly not limited to clinical microbiology; it is rather a complex problem requiring concerted efforts of microbiologists, ecologists, health care specialists, educationalists, policy makers, legislative bodies, agricultural and pharmaceutical industry workers, and the public to deal with.
- ❑ The training sessions reveals a genuine interest from breeders to engage into a reduction of antibiotics consumption on the farm. The motto is spreading fast during agricultural shows, breeders' union meetings and veterinary organisations.

Context

Wallonia has an important bovine sector with over a million livestock units. Reducing the use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals, replacing them where possible and re-thinking the livestock production system is essential for the future of animal and public health. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the world's most pressing public health issues and the use of antimicrobials in animals contributes to this problem, so limiting their use to the minimum necessary to treat infectious diseases in animals is crucial.

Since 2012, the Centre of Expertise on Antimicrobial Consumption and Resistance in Animals (AMCRA) has the mission to collect and analyse all data related to antimicrobial use and resistance in animals in Belgium and to communicate its outcomes in order to achieve a durable policy of veterinary antimicrobial use in Belgium. They publish an annual report called the 'BelVet sac' showing the progress in the field. On the institutional side, a federal agreement came into force in August 2016, with the aim to (i) reduce by 50% the general use of antibiotics by 2020; (ii) reduce by 75% the use of specific antibiotics by 2020 and (iii) reduce by 50% the use of medicated feed containing antibiotics by 2017. Animal welfare also became a regional responsibility in 2014 and falls under the regional law for Environment.

Objectives

The aim of the project is to propose training modules targeting bovine breeders in order to promote alternative methods to maintain healthy livestock and decrease the use of antibiotics.

Activities

The name 'ALTI BIOTIQUE' stems from the contraction of ALTernative and antiBIOTIC.

It is part of a larger strategy of antibiotic management carried on in partnership with the regional breeding association (AWE), the veterinary union (UPV), the milk committee (CDL) and the agricultural federation of Wallonia (FWA), with the technical expertise of specialists in the field.

Training is free and covers various topics such as biosecurity, animal feed, breast health and vaccination. The idea is to develop a wide portfolio responding to the diversity of needs.

Two modules were proposed, both requiring a minimum of six participants:

- Classroom training with presentation and case studies
- Field visits in partnership with the veterinarian of the farm

The theoretical strand presents the state of the art on scientific knowledge about diseases linked to specific bacteria. The practical strand is proposing field visits in agricultural holdings, accompanied by the referring veterinarian, where good practice has been identified.

Developing preventive or alternative methods to the use of antibiotics does not mean the suppression of it. The antibiotic effect is more efficient when used in smaller quantities, only in cases of real need.

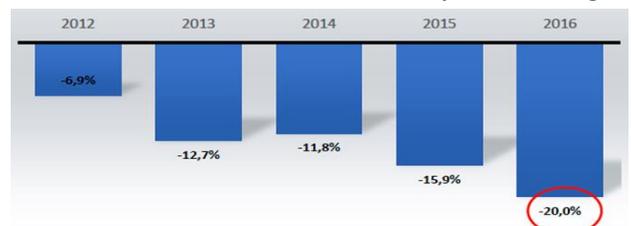
Main results

The planned number of training sessions amounts to 75 for the whole period.

So far (end of September 2017), 371 trainees attended the sessions. The target is to reach 450 breeders by the end of the project.

At national level, the BelVet-Sac annual report results for 2016 are encouraging and show a positive evolution. Regarding total consumption, a cumulative reduction of 20.0% is achieved since 2011 (used as reference year for the AMCRA 2020 goals), as illustrated in the graph below.

Evolution of the total use of antibiotics in veterinary medicine in Belgium



source: www.afsca.be/professionnels/publications/thematiques/rapportamcra

Key lessons

The current situation concerning antimicrobial resistance, is certainly not limited to clinical microbiology; it is rather a complex problem requiring concerted efforts of microbiologists, ecologists, health care specialists, educationalists, policy makers, legislative bodies, agricultural and pharmaceutical industry workers, and the public to deal with.

The training sessions reveals a genuine interest from breeders to engage into a reduction of antibiotics consumption on the farm. The motto is spreading fast during agricultural shows, breeders' union meetings and veterinary organisations.

Additional sources of information

n/a