

EXPERIENCES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF VETERINARY LEGISLATION IN CUBA

Emerio Serrano Ramírez

Director General of the Institute of Veterinary Medicine of Cuba, OIE Delegate for Cuba

The veterinary services in Cuba have been substantially reinforced and transformed since the victory of the Revolution in 1959, obtaining positive results in terms of prevention, control and the eradication of various diseases found in the country.

The animal health situation is very favourable because 75% of the notifiable diseases that must be reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) are not present, as a result of the priority given by the country to the animal health situation, to respect for international standards, to disease prevention and control programmes and to the constant upgrading of its veterinary services.

The need to strengthen the management and effectiveness of the competent authority has prompted us to modify and update the veterinary legislation, which was very fragmented and included some obsolete decrees. In April 1993 the Council of State approved the Decree-Law No. 137 concerning Veterinary Medicine, accompanied by a Decree of Contraventions that defines the penalties for non-compliance.

Despite being promulgated well before the OIE, the directives in this field largely correspond in scope with this goal, stating in article 1 that: "The veterinary medicine service will cover all veterinary preventive, assistance and health activities and measures designed to ensure, on national territory, the health of animals in general and optimum conditions for both products of animal origin and raw materials from this source, as well as those of vegetable or animal origin for animal feed, with the ultimate objective of helping to ensure human health and well-being."

The main objectives of the Decree are: to protect the national territory against the introduction and spread of diseases of animal origin; to ensure a satisfactory animal health situation in the country, to establish basic standards for animal health, which includes international trade and the rearing, reproduction, feeding and slaughtering of animals; to define the field of application of the veterinary service measures, and to regulate the imposition and lifting of quarantine and veterinary health alerts and emergencies.

Its implementation has had a big impact on the animal health results already mentioned and the greatest difficulty is not having a regulation that consolidates the resolutions issued by the ministries and competent authorities to ensure their enforcement.

This aspect is on the way to being solved with the updating of veterinary legislation, which will bring about its modernization, incorporating the OIE directives in this field, and the great challenges facing animal health worldwide, and in particular in Cuba, where we are working towards the goal of guaranteeing the food security and safety of our people.

Keywords: Veterinary legislation– Animal health.