Many countries use the term exotic or foreign animal disease to designate those
diseases that would have a disastrous consequence if they were to enter their
territory, either because of the direct losses to the domestic population suffering
the disease or required counterepizootic measures, loss in trade, or possibly the
potential zoonotic spill over. From a United Nations point of view the preferred
term is transboundary animal diseases (TADs) as nothing is per se exotic or
foreign in the global theatre. TADs are defined by FAO as those diseases that are
of significant economic, trade and/or food security importance for a
considerable number of countries; which can easily spread to other countries
and reach epidemic proportions; and where control/management, including
exclusion, requires cooperation between several countries. Such definition
should include emerging infectious diseases (EIDs), most of which will likely be
zoonoses, but of uncertain impact. FAO’s Emergency Prevention System for
animal health focuses on some 12-14 diseases of a transboundary nature (foot-
and-mouth disease, rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, sheep
and goat pox, peste des petits ruminants, highly pathogenic avian influenza, Rift
Valley fever, Newcastle disease, African and classical swine fever, equine
encephalitidies, and under certain circumstances rabies and brucellosis). The
links between wildlife and livestock are seamless and knowledge on
management issues is imperative for the future practitioner in understanding
disease ecology. The key aspect to detection and containment of TADs and EIDs
is to have all actors within the production and marketing chain linked with
veterinary systems (encompassing those that teach at veterinary faculties, rural
and urban practitioners, and regulatory authorities) to learn to clinically suspect
these diseases and call upon specialists in the case of uncertainty, and count on
their active participation during emergency simulation exercises - local or central
level. The common denominator for lowering risk and threat management of
TADs (or other infectious diseases) is epidemiology and encompasses efforts
into heeding warnings, communication of risk factors, disease recognition,
detection and diagnosis, and cross-occupational efforts for response and
eventual recovery. The role of the educator is to place importance in training
future practitioners in investigative skills, open mindedness in developing
differential diagnosis lists, sample taking, risk analysis, care in not vectoring
disease off a premise, and knowing who to contact in the event of an
uncertainty. The new graduate should be well equipped to play a key role in
globalised societies in the context of developed as well as developing counties.