ROLE OF COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT
IN ASSISTING VETERINARY SERVICES

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Summary: It is generally agreed that information and communication management is of strategic importance to Veterinary Services and to the harmonious development of agriculture and livestock farming.

In the current context of trade globalisation, growing consumer awareness of animal- and food-borne diseases, increasing international trade in animal products and the resulting need for knowledge and information, Veterinary Services have had to increase their capabilities and their human and technical resources in response to these needs.

Furthermore, the development of information and communication technologies now offers new possibilities for information collection, processing, storage and provision.

Communication has the potential to contribute significantly to disease control and surveillance systems, to risk management, to disease prevention and vaccination campaigns, to public awareness raising and training of livestock farmers, to the application of standards and regulations and also to clarifying animal health situations.

According to the results of a survey, most countries are fully aware of this need and, in particular, of the new possibilities offered by the information and communication technologies.

Between 30% and 40% of the countries that replied to the questionnaire have already set up a communication structure and regular communication activities.

Although the needs and expectations of the Veterinary Services were very clearly expressed, the answers to the questionnaire show a lack of a structured communication approach with objectives, methods, a financing plan and a strategy that allow a professional culture of communication to be developed.

The answers to the questionnaire point not only to the recurrent inadequacy of funding, but also to an acute lack of methodological and technical training for Veterinary Services managers in these fields. Member Countries also express a desire to introduce more professional communication management and practices.

Support from the OIE for these different areas could be envisaged and, where appropriate, support from specialised funding organisations.
1. INTRODUCTION

The epidemiological events of recent years have shown just how important it has become, both nationally and internationally, for all countries to master not only veterinary techniques in the strict sense, but also information and communication technology in the field of animal health and zoonoses.

Growing international trade in animal products and by-products calls for greater regulation and control capabilities, not only for individual countries themselves, but also for their neighbours and partners. These regulation and control capabilities must be based on fast and free-flowing exchanges of quality technical and scientific information and on raising the awareness of – and judiciously and effectively informing – professionals, livestock farmers and consumers.

The development of ICT\(^1\), as well as information gathering, storage, analysis and exchange capabilities, and particularly the development of the Internet, has been considerable.

This development can be used to help improve the operation of Veterinary Services and their scientific, technical and operational results.

2. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS AND REMARKS

- What are the current information and communication practices and needs of Veterinary Services?
- Which technical themes require information and communication support? How could a communication approach be used as a decision-making tool?
- How can developing countries take advantage of the growth of ICT in the animal production and health field, including zoonoses and food-borne diseases?
- How should the Veterinary Services deal with the often legitimate concerns of the press and information sector and consumer associations? How should they communicate with the political world?
- In some countries or regions, restoring a balance between the functions of the public and private animal health sectors requires the public and animal health professionals to be provided with information regarding legislation and the respective roles of the central government, the private sector and the civic and voluntary sector.
  - What information role might the Veterinary Services play in this field?
  - Are existing animal health services and future veterinarians being trained to meet this information and communication challenge?
  - ICT clearly disrupts established ways of working. What progress has been made with providing the necessary new skills and qualifications and their associated training, in order to develop a culture of information and communication and to foster the emergence of new professional attitudes?

“...our communication philosophy,” replied one Veterinary Services Director, “is that the professional authorities should be responsible for information and communication to the general public and that this information and communication responsibility must allow information/communication systems and other activities to be set up, including (communication) training for veterinarians and professionals”

National Veterinary Services, in collaboration with their partners and the competent international organisations, face a challenge that needs to be met today.

This paper and the summary results of the questionnaire sent to the OIE Member Countries should open up a dialogue on the role of information and communication in supporting Veterinary Services, and the possible role of the OIE in this field.

\(^1\) ICT: Information and communication technologies.
From the Member Countries’ replies, it emerges that, for most countries today, communication activities are among the most important aspects of managing Veterinary Services and one of their primary concerns.

In their replies, Veterinary Services took a very mature approach to the importance of integrated communication, extending their scope well beyond the usual hardware considerations, they recognised that the main impact comes not from the technology itself but from the information it conveys. However, it is clear that the communication approach is not yet structured enough either from an institutional or operational standpoint, and that in very many cases there is lack of skilled human resources, methods and strategies rather than a lack of funding.

Training needs in this field were therefore expressed chiefly in relation to the current staff of the Veterinary Services and to future professionals. An imperative need was also expressed to develop the use of modern communication tools and technologies in all the different areas of Veterinary Services activities, as well as a need to develop a culture of communication within Veterinary Services and to make these activities more professional.

3. INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION AND OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Veterinary Services’ institutional communication can be defined as its ability to present itself to the public, institutions and the different professional operators as being responsible for carrying out the central government’s role and functions in the animal health field.

Even though the history of raising the public’s awareness of agricultural practices is extremely rich and varied, Veterinary Services managers have often considered the role of information and communication to relate to public awareness raising or training activities for livestock farmers, or to the administrative field (transmission of internal memorandums and instructions through administrative channels), or to researchers in liaison with scientific institutions, or to contact their political hierarchy.

The combined effects of scientific advances, especially in the field of epidemiological surveillance systems, of technological development (ICT) and the professional uses of technology, of the growing need for information relating to international trade, of the emergence of new diseases, together with a desire for a more responsible form of agriculture and to satisfy the needs of livestock farmers and consumers, are all leading towards the view that the potential contribution of information and communication to the Veterinary Services is not only useful and necessary but also strategic. However, in order to meet these needs it is necessary to widen the scope of communication activities and intervention.

International organisations and institutions, as well as a growing number of countries, have gradually become aware of this need and have adopted objectives and resources to satisfy it. However, for most countries, major efforts are required to respond to such needs.

First, there is a need for an avowed political determination to consider the livestock farming and animal health sector as a national, socio-economic and often cultural asset. The same determination is needed to promote and develop the sector through a communication and promotion strategy and through appropriate information techniques, as well as to meet the animal health requirements of both the country and its neighbours.

The application of such a policy calls firstly for the Veterinary Services to have qualified and competent staff who are capable of both devising, preparing and organising the collection, storage, distribution and exchange of quality scientific and operational information and of accommodating the media, the political world, professionals, and the public, in normal as well as crisis situations.

Such a policy also requires there be an institutional section within the Veterinary Services management that is responsible for such activities – a unit, office or component that is included in the organisational chart and is given operational and functional responsibilities.

Furthermore, it requires an information and communication plan or, better still, an information and communication strategy, aimed at supporting the activities of the Veterinary Services management, of disseminating, or in some cases even popularising, technical and scientific themes and preparing the Veterinary Services’ national and international institutional communication activities.

Finally, it requires budgetary and financial decisions.
4. WHICH VETERINARY SERVICES ACTIVITIES CAN BE SUPPORTED BY AN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION POLICY?

The following Veterinary Services’ technical and operational activities, as well as their scientific and institutional relations, can be supported by an appropriate information and communication policy:

i) **Technical and operational activities**, which primarily cover all aspects of surveillance, emergencies, epidemiological monitoring, risk information, expanding animal production and the application of laws and regulations.

ii) **Scientific activities**, which cover all aspects of research and the active exchange of scientific information both within and between Veterinary Services, as well as with the scientific community, in both normal and crisis situations.

iii) **Institutional relations activities**, which mean promoting the activities of the Veterinary Services among livestock farmers and users/consumers, as well as among national institutions, in order to raise the institutional profile. Institutional communication activities also include contacts with professional veterinary organisations, with the private and civic and voluntary sectors and with the political world, as well as relations with key international organisations and institutions.

5. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Communication support activities can be grouped under 12 basic areas or specific objectives:

1. Contributing to the introduction and smooth operation of exchanges of quality information within epidemiological surveillance and monitoring systems and networks by means of conceptual, as well as methodological and technical, support (quality, reliability, speed, decentralisation, dialogue with livestock farmers and informing them about objectives and procedures, etc.).

2. Contributing to risk prevention and crisis management by boosting the Veterinary Services’ technical and human relations skills through public awareness raising services, trade associations and livestock farmers, as well as by implementing an appropriate communication strategy that includes relations with the political world and the media.

3. Contributing to a thorough knowledge, and the application by all professionals and technical operators, of national and international laws and regulations by disseminating the necessary information to professionals, livestock farmers, traders, and practitioners in a timely manner (objectives, risks, issues) and ensuring that they are clearly defined.

4. Contributing to the development of a harmonious technical dialogue with the political world, the press and consumers, by disseminating quality reference information suited to the needs of the general public and professionals.

5. Contributing to training and raising the awareness of livestock farmers by collaborating with public awareness raising services, trade associations, partners in the field (e.g. nongovernmental organisations [NGOs]) and private, public and community media, by providing them with reference information and technical themes and, if required, by offering methodological expertise in matters of communication, and awareness raising.

6. Contributing to exchanges of information between the public and private veterinary sectors (legislation, scientific information, standards and quality, surveillance and monitoring, etc.).

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3 Hendriks P. (2000). - Surveillance protocols and the practical establishment of networks. In: An Epidemiological surveillance network is first and foremost a network of collaboration and communication between people and institutions that are not always accustomed to this. CIRAD (Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement [International Cooperation Centre for Agronomic Research and Development], France.
7. Contributing to the production of multimedia documents and aids necessary for the Veterinary Services’ technical and institutional activities, or producing them internally; preparing agreements with or subcontracting to external media services.

8. Contributing to the development of exchanges with neighbouring countries and with international organisations and institutions by providing technical support (access to the Internet for finding information, Web site, electronic mail, etc.).

9. Providing the Veterinary Services management with all of the technical and methodological possibilities for improving productive exchanges, work quality and the relationship of trust with livestock farmers and partners (field research, geographical information system, methods for training livestock farmers, use of traditional or community media, participatory processes, etc.).

10. Contributing to raising the awareness of managers and training them in communication skills.

11. Proposing a budget; managing and developing the communication facilities of the Veterinary Service; helping to develop resource centres.

12. Contributing generally to the Veterinary Services’ work to promote quality livestock farming and production as part of responsible farming practices.

These specific objectives, which are akin to a set of specifications for providing a country’s Veterinary Services with communication support, can be used as a framework for preparing and executing an information and communication strategy.

However, before a communication strategy can be prepared and applied, there needs to be an institutional anchor point (a communication unit, service or office), coupled with human resources, technical skills, tools and financial resources. Indeed, this unit will work under the responsibility of, and in close collaboration with, the Veterinary Services management, where appropriate, in liaison with the higher authorities.

6. SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

In order to support the work of the Veterinary Services, an information and communication component or service should not be merely a press or public awareness raising service, or a technical service for supplying communication equipment, or a multimedia production centre.

Working within a Ministry of Agriculture Department or a Veterinary Services department, its role is: to promote the various technical themes in the national policy for developing livestock farming and/or animal health; to identify target groups and representatives; to identify any deadlocks or misunderstandings and formulate facilitative technical or institutional messages; to seek appropriate channels or means of communication; to organise the task of producing communication material with the media or the technical partners; and to prepare and submit the budget.

The role of a communication unit also includes organising and managing the Veterinary Services’ basic information and communication equipment.

Lastly, it should also play the role of facilitator or mediator for developing relationships and exchanges with technical partners and institutions, both nationally and internationally.

Five principal skill areas are needed to successfully carry out these activities:

a) A qualification in communication.

b) Skills or a qualification in information and communication technologies and the production of multimedia aids.

c) Confirmed veterinary knowledge (without necessarily being a qualified veterinarian).
d) A thorough knowledge of the sector and networks of professionals and the ability to engage in dialogue with the authorities, professionals and the media.

e) Human relations and organisational skills.

7. EQUIPMENT AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of a Veterinary Services’ communication office or component is to prepare and implement the communication strategy of the Veterinary Services management. It is not meant to take the place of the media for the large-scale production of communication material or aids.

The communication unit’s multimedia equipment must therefore be suitable for the small-scale, internal production of models and other prototypes which, after evaluation, will be produced and distributed on a wider scale through subcontracting to the media where appropriate.

The following equipment is therefore necessary or useful:

- Basic video equipment (video recorder, camcorder, television set and video monitor).
- Photographic equipment (conventional and digital).
- Computing equipment powerful enough to download, work with and store images or large data files (fixed or portable computer, 17 inch screen, scanner, printer).
- Basic audio equipment (cassette recorder, radio cassette player).
- Presentation and copying equipment (slide projector, overhead projector, different types of screen, electronic projector, photocopying machine).
- A modem and telephone access.
- Standard software (word processing, spreadsheet, database, antivirus, etc.), plus specialised software for image processing, geographical information or data processing.
- Field equipment for communication and dissemination (with an electrical power unit if required).
- Peripheral equipment for protection and maintenance.

8. FUNDING

Nowadays most countries, as well as international organisations and fund-providers, consider communication to be of strategic importance.

What is more, communication should be considered as an investment: an investment in developing knowledge and improving everybody’s professional attitudes and practices, in particular those of livestock farmers; an investment in quality; an investment in encouraging compliance with national and international legislation, standards and regulations; and an investment in defining health situations more clearly in order to facilitate decision-making.

National Veterinary Services wish to reinforce their communication sector and retain control over it. However, current information indicates that the funding available, or allocated, for information and communication is both modest and uncertain and that there is inadequate budgetary planning.

According to available information, communication funding for Veterinary Services comes, either directly or indirectly, from public funds mainly.

9. COMMUNICATION TRAINING FOR FUTURE VETERINARIANS AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

One of the weaknesses of Veterinary Services in terms of information and communication relates to the lack of methodological and practical training for managers and users in this field.
The vocational training courses provided by institutions, universities or veterinary training colleges offer very little in the way of acquiring and developing professional communication skills.

Many Member Countries have filled these gaps either by recruiting communication and/or information technology graduates or by providing in-service training to veterinary managers or livestock specialists (either in the country or abroad). Other countries make use of external skills or expertise (e.g. NGOs/partner institutions or specialised journalists).

However, it is desirable to define and develop a set of core communication skills or qualifications as part of the initial training curriculum of future veterinarians, as well as for the in-service training of veterinary managers already in office.

These core communication and information technology skills would: improve the results and consolidate the professional practices of private- and public-sector veterinarians; develop the information and communication process within the Veterinary Services (institutional, operational and scientific communication); and facilitate technical dialogue with the media.

The countries consulted made numerous suggestions concerning the content of these core communication qualifications. The following themes or key terms were highlighted:

- Strategic information and communication management.
- Applied communication technology (including computing).
- Organisational and human relations skills.
- Writing and oral communication techniques.
- Basic knowledge of social sciences and communication methodology.

**CONCLUSION**

Most of the countries have taken on board the need for, and the strategic importance of, communication to support the Veterinary Services.

However, an analysis of the Member Countries’ answers to the questionnaire reveals that fewer than 40% of Veterinary Services as yet possess an institutional and operational framework, or the professional qualifications, to enable them to develop activities, still less to elaborate a communication strategy.

Insufficient financial resources are available or allocated to such activities, particularly in developing countries.

Although the needs and expectations of the Veterinary Services were very clearly expressed, the answers to the questionnaire show a lack of a structured communication approach with objectives, methods, a financing plan and a strategy.

In spite of the various difficulties encountered, the new possibilities arising from the development of information and communication technologies now offer all countries a real opportunity to reconsider and improve their professional practices for processing and exchanging information with all their partners, including with the Office International des Epizooties. They also provide them with an opportunity to:

- expand their contacts, find other sources of information and improve their performance and training,
- define more clearly the animal health measures that they conduct in their country and publicise them more effectively abroad.

Most of the countries consider that the Veterinary Services should manage and produce their communication function themselves and that this should not be entrusted to an external operator.

A more structured, professional and open communication approach, communication training for Veterinary Services managers and significantly more financial resources are, and will be, necessary in order to meet this challenge and to respond to the new needs, particularly with respect to growing public fears about food safety and health.
The possibility of support for these different aspects being provided by the OIE, by competent international organisations and, where appropriate, by specialised funding organisations, should be explored.

…/Appendix
APPENDIX

Questionnaire Results

Introductory Note

List of countries whose questionnaires were processed

Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taipei China, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

To serve as a guideline only, the 81 questionnaires received were classified according to the UNDP’s ‘Human Development Report 2000’.

Accordingly, 40% of the questionnaires came from countries classified by the UNDP report as HHD (High Human Development); 45% came from countries classified as MDH (Medium Human Development); and 12% came from countries classified as LHD (Low Human Development).

1. Technical themes

An examination of the questionnaires received has shown that the main recurrent technical themes (or Veterinary Services functions) that require information/communication support are:

• Both active and passive epidemiological surveillance systems, the application of procedures, emergency situations, knowledge of and prevention of risk, collecting information in the field, reporting and feeding information back to the field.

• The exchange of information between countries and institutions and with international organisations such the OIE, particularly technical and scientific information and information concerning national and international regulations.

• Providing information to (or raising the awareness of) livestock farmers and producers about issues such as vaccination, emerging diseases, epidemiological surveillance, environmental issues and basic trade regulations.

There was also a widely expressed need for quantitative and qualitative improvements to the basic technical knowledge of not only livestock farmers and producers, but also livestock specialists and professionals, in order to act or react more effectively. According to the replies, communication has a decisive role to play in these areas.

Very little mention was made of the need for communication to support quality issues, the Veterinary Services’ relations with the political world and the press and media, the promotion of livestock farming and of its socio-economic importance, nor for the institutional communication of Veterinary Services to promote themselves and raise their professional profiles.

In the countries concerned ‘support for the privatisation process’ did not emerge as a significant theme requiring communication support.

4 UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
2. Expressed needs

To respond to these requirements and develop communication activities within an institutional framework suited to the needs expressed, apart from the essential need for national administrators to recognise the value of organising effective communication as a driving force behind their activities, five types of need were expressed:

- Developing the technical skills of Veterinary Services by training current and future managers in communication concepts, methods and techniques, as well as in the working methods that use these skills (work organisation, institutional communication, operational communication).
- Developing the quantity and quality of information produced and exchanged.
- Developing exchange networks and the use of modern communication and information processing technologies (applied computing, creation and access to databases and geographical information systems).
- Availability or acquisition of information and communication equipment (and updating it) in order to respond to specific needs.
- Significantly more funding for such activities.

The principal difficulties expressed by Veterinary Services in meeting these needs are:

- Lack of awareness of such matters among national administrators in some countries and the frequent lack of an institutional framework for communication.
- Lack of specific training for managers, officials and users in the new technologies and lack of methodological expertise in communication.
- The lack of a communication action plan or strategy to cope with the full range of needs, especially those of livestock farmers and consumers, or to cope with crisis situations.
- The lack, obsolescence, unsuitability or poor management of communication equipment and the poor level of computerisation (equipment, software, skills) of the Veterinary Services in some countries, with sometimes deficient national communication infrastructure and financial or technical difficulties in accessing the Internet.
- Funding.

The factors mentioned also included a number of more structural difficulties, such as the compartmentalisation of services, what was deemed the excessive centralisation or the dispersal of activities over vast areas, or else the lack of an institutional framework and of a communication manager for developing this process.

In spite of these difficulties, 80% of the Veterinary Services of the countries that replied to the questionnaire pointed to the existence of a structured communication plan for emergency situations, and in 62% of cases, to a communication plan forming part of the Veterinary Services’ regular activities.

3. Information and communication means

The means used for information conveyance to and communication with the public, livestock farmers and professionals include:

a) Conventional information and communication means, such as the national media, professional information documents (brochures, information letters), networks of associations and on-site inspections, are the most commonly used.

b) The importance of national, sub-regional and international seminars or meetings as major forums for exchanging scientific and technical information, particularly with neighbouring countries is also apparent (80%).

c) Use of electronic mail (77%) and the Internet is growing, particularly in less advanced countries. The fax is still the most commonly used technology for official communication between institutions and with international institutions.

d) Most countries have basic communication equipment, although it is sometimes obsolete.
4. Communication organisation and management

Veterinary Services address the public primarily through the public media (84%) or through administrative structures. The private media is used much less (30%).

In answer to the question about whether Veterinary Services could entrust their communication function to a private/independent agency, most replied that it could not (68%). Those in favour (27%) made it conditional upon strict rules and conditions of control by the Veterinary Services management and upon the proven professionalism of the contracting agency. Financial, security and confidentiality concerns were also seen as limiting factors.

In the Veterinary Services of countries that expressed their views on this subject, communication decisions (themes and procedures) are taken at management level, mostly by teams of professionals and, where required, with the aid of the communication manager.

However, 31% of national Veterinary Services admitted that they did not have full control of their communication function.

Sixty-six per cent of Veterinary Services said that they would be prepared to call upon external or international communication expertise in the event of an emergency or necessity.

Around 60% of the national Veterinary Services had a communication office, service or component whose activities were included on the agenda of the Veterinary Services management’s institutional and technical meetings (60%) and formed part of the annual budget.

In cases where there is a communication manager in the Veterinary Service, the latter has specific initial vocational training in information/communication in only 24% of cases.

In most cases (70%), those in charge of communication are veterinarians or livestock specialists with communication training gained through everyday experience or through training placements in the country (30%) or abroad (18%). In other cases (around 30%), those in charge are communicators, journalists and sometimes teachers, who have become specialised in the animal health field and collaborate with the Veterinary Services management or with their competent ministry. The profession is therefore not clearly identifiable, structured and defined within Veterinary Services departments.

5. Communication training for young veterinarians

In 70% of the countries that replied to the questionnaire, there are one or more institutions (college or university) for training future veterinarians. In only 25% of cases do such institutions include ‘information and communication’ in their training curriculum5.

Eight-five per cent of Veterinary Services expressed the desire for communication to be introduced into the curriculum. The course contents they proposed were numerous and very varied.

Defined in terms of **Skills in…**, these course contents can be divided into six major categories:

- Skills in managing and supervising an information and communication strategy, including in a crisis situation.
- Specific operational knowledge and skills in information/communication applied to epidemiological surveillance networks, to risk prevention and to other technical themes.
- Social and human relations skills to improve dialogue with professionals, particularly with livestock farmers and their associations.
- Institutional communication skills for improving technical and professional dialogue with the political world and the press and media.

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5 Unrelated to the questionnaire, note that NGOs and Projects regularly provide veterinarians with in-service training in communication.
• Technology knowledge and skills to make effective use of modern communication technologies (applied computing and specialised software, telecommunications, Internet).

• Writing skills and the ability to put across ideas (both in writing and orally) for improving the quality of relations and exchanges of information.

Other training needs were also expressed not directly relating to communication.

6. Access to the media and sources of information

Two-thirds of the Veterinary Services from the countries that replied to the questionnaire regularly publish an information bulletin or letter in the official language of the country. Fifty per cent of the Veterinary Services reported having a Web site either in operation or under preparation. However, in only 42% of cases is the site updated.

In spite of the fact that they call chiefly upon the services of the public media for their communication, only 44% of Veterinary Services have regular broadcasting time on radio or television. The problem of funding broadcasting time is a crucial one, even where this forms part of the Veterinary Services’ public service missions and even in emergencies.

Only 43% of countries are given access free of charge to broadcasting (not to production), for an average of around 80 minutes per week.

Professional information sources mainly consist of the Veterinary Services’ internal documentation. Sixty-two per cent of Veterinary Services have a resource centre. However, it appears that resource centres may have problems in supplying up-to-date information.

In this case, 80% of replies mentioned access to the Internet and the databases of international institutions or specialised agencies.

7. Equipment

Most Veterinary Services reported that they possessed, or had access to, basic information and communication equipment (between 50% and 85%, depending on the type of equipment).

The latter (85%) have computing equipment. However, the needs expressed often indicated the obsolescence of such equipment and the lack of appropriate software and proper training in their effective use.

The Veterinary Services also expressed the need to decentralise information by setting up networks of exchanges with field workers in a bid to improve data feedback and interactions with partners. According to the replies, these requirements, as well as the desire for national databases to be created, call for equipment and technical and methodological capabilities to be strengthened and developed.

8. Funding

The answers from the Veterinary Services of less advanced countries, and indeed many others, frequently refer to a lack of funding for developing communication activities.

Sixty-two per cent of Veterinary Services set aside less than 5% of their budget for communication (as a portion of all costs). These funds come primarily from public resources or from the internal resources of the Veterinary Services management.

Various forms of cooperation provide some countries with a portion (20%) of the funding they need for communication. Other sources, such as producers’ associations or pharmaceutical companies, also contribute to a lesser extent.

More than 60% of the Veterinary Services include information and communication in their annual budget. However, some countries report that they spend this funding on paying the Veterinary Services’ telephone bills, travel expenses or other costs unrelated to communication activities.
Around 10% of the Veterinary Services also replied that they look for funding on a case-by-case basis as the need arises.

Less than 5% of Veterinary Services devote 10% of their resources to information and communication.

9. Other comments and observations

- The importance of communication is not yet sufficiently appreciated by decision-makers (Madagascar).
- Communication today calls for a professional approach and professional qualifications (Algeria).
- “Our communication philosophy is that professional personnel should be responsible for information/communication to the general public and society in general …” (Norway).
- Communication must take all partners into account, including illiterate livestock farmers and consumers (Sahelian countries).