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BiH Makes Progress in Controlling Brucellosis

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On March 15-16, the Sarajevo Faculty of Veterinary Medicine held a National Workshop on the Control of Brucellosis. The workshop is part of a technical cooperation project entitled “Reducing the Incidence of Brucellosis in Animals and Humans by Surveillance and Control”, which is implemented with assistance from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency. The project goal is to help BiH develop efficient surveillance plans and part of the funding will go towards modern equipment for brucellosis analysis in two laboratories: one in Sarajevo and the other in Banja Luka. By the end of 2013, BiH is expected to have fully developed its disease control system, including its technical capacity (i.e. laboratories, technical experts and monitoring program) to effectively implement and reduce/control the incidence of Brucellosis. BiH has had to slaughter more than 75,000 infected animals and accumulated economic losses of more than \$9.8 million due to the disease. In 2009, the State Veterinary Office started a small ruminant vaccination program to replace its test-and-slaughter policy.

General Information:

On March 15-16, the Sarajevo Faculty of Veterinary Medicine held a National Workshop on the Control of Brucellosis. The workshop is part of a technical cooperation project entitled “Reducing the Incidence of Brucellosis in Animals and Humans by Surveillance and Control”, which is implemented with assistance from the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency. The project, value at \$ 270,000, started in the Summer 2012 and will end by Winter 2013. The project promotes the benefits of nuclear technology, as a basis for modern diagnostic methods in human and animal diseases. It includes modern laboratory equipment to conduct brucellosis testing at the Veterinary Faculty of Sarajevo and at Vaso Butozan Veterinary Institute in Banja Luka. By the end of 2013, BiH is expected to have fully developed its disease control system, including its technical capacity (i.e. laboratories, technical experts and monitoring program) to effectively implement and reduce/control the incidence of Brucellosis. For more than two decades, BiH has suffered from sporadic outbreaks of Brucellosis in small ruminants. Serbia has 1,021,000 sheep and 65,000 goats. In 2008, there were 21,477 infected animals and 994 infected humans reported with Brucellosis. By 2011, the total number of slaughtered animals (mainly sheep) reached 75,000 causing an economic loss of \$9.8 million. Thus, in 2009, BiH’s State Veterinary Office (SVO) started a small ruminants vaccination program to replace its test-and-slaughter” policy. Following the vaccination, the number of infected animals declined from 21,477 to 398 and the number of infected humans declined from 994 to 68.

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of Infected Animals	21477	2426	841	168	398
No. of Infected Humans	994	458	168	72	68

Source: BiH State Veterinary Office

There are a number of factors that have contributed to the spread of the disease from animal to animal and from animal to human. The nomadic grazing system makes animal identification and localization very difficult. The Government oversight for farm registration, animal identification, and animal movement control is still very weak. BiH has a complex administrative setup that makes collaboration among different sectors and administrative units very difficult and thus enforcement of regulations and animal movement controls are not always consistent. . The reasons include shortage of personnel, shortage of equipment, insufficient animal health control funds, lack of communication between the veterinary subunits, and even a lack of engagement by the producers.

There are three veterinary services, the two Entities’ and the Brcko District (BD), and they function as three independent parallel organizations within the same country, each operating in their respective territories. Although there is no physical border between the entities, an administrative ‘border’ between BiH authorities exists with regard to animal disease control and surveillance, and general policies in the veterinary sector. This not only affects the public health and food safety in the country, but also prevents exports of foods of animal origin and is in itself a barrier to trade with other countries in the region. The SVO’s main task is to coordinate the entity veterinary services. It was only in 2009 that the SVO began implementing a common brucellosis control program and a public awareness campaign (supported by the Swedish Agency for International Development). Before that, the entities applied different brucellosis policies.

The situation is further complicated by a complex human health sector structure. BiH has thirteen ministries of health for a population of less than 4 million – one for each entity, one for the BD and one for each of the ten cantonal ministries in FBiH. These ministries of health have institutes of public

health which are responsible for communicable disease health monitoring, prevention, and control activities within their epidemiology departments. The RS system is centralized, with planning, regulation and management functions being the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The state-level Health Sector within the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) has limited resources and a narrow mandate that does not include communicable disease control and prevention. All of these factors have hampered eradication efforts, although the CVO small ruminant vaccination program has clearly shown results since it began in 2009.