African Union/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

Policy on Community-based Animal Health Workers

April 2003

1. Introduction

The African Union/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) has many years of experience of strengthening primary-level veterinary services through the use of community-based animal health workers (CAHWs). This policy document details the bureau’s position on CAHWs and describes appropriate supervision and regulation of this type of veterinary worker. The policy has been formulated by reference to the International Animal Health Code of the Office International des Epizooties (the ‘OIE Code’). In addition, AU/IBAR recognises the recommendations of the conference Primary Animal Healthcare in the 21st Century: Shaping the Policies, Rules and Institutions held in Mombasa in October 2002, the expert consultation of the Food and Agriculture Organization in October 2002 and the OIE ad hoc committee in February 2003. The policy document supersedes any policy statements from specific AU/IBAR projects.

The policy document adopts the same terminology as the OIE Code and readers are advised to consult Chapters 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 of the code.

2. Policy Guidelines on Community-based Animal Health Workers

2.1 Organisation and structure of veterinary services

The bureau defines a ‘community-based animal health worker’ as a person who performs a limited range of veterinary tasks as defined by the statutory body in a given country. Within the OIE Code, a CAHW is regarded by AU/IBAR as a category of para-professional. The policy of AU/IBAR is that CAHW activities should be regulated by the statutory body. Definition of roles, levels of supervision and reporting relationships enables Veterinary Services to describe lines of command and formal relationships.

The bureau recommends that duties to ensure the quality of CAHWs are assigned to named officers of the statutory body and that these duties are defined in the job descriptions and performance assessment procedures for the named officers. The bureau also recommends that the statutory body is enabled to delegate tasks to government veterinary officers to ensure quality of CAHWs at field level. For the purpose of this policy document, such veterinary officers are termed ‘veterinary inspectors’.

2.2 Legislation

The policy of AU/IBAR is that the definition, roles, regulation and supervision of CAHWs should be defined in veterinary legislation. The bureau recommends that legislation specific to CAHWs is placed in subsidiary legislation.

2.3 Quality Control

Veterinary Services need to develop objective and transparent systems for the accreditation, monitoring and supervision of CAHWs.

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1 AU/IBAR experience is derived largely from the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign, the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology Unit and the Pan African Programme for the Control of Epizootics.
2.3.1 Training curriculum for community-based animal health workers
The training of CAHWs should follow a standard curriculum endorsed by the statutory body. The standard CAHW curriculum should comprise two components:
- a. Essential knowledge and skills required by all CAHWs regardless of their location.
- b. Area-specific knowledge and skills according to priority needs in different ecological zones and livestock productions systems.

2.3.2 Trainers of community-based animal health workers
The qualifications required by trainers of CAHWs should be defined by the statutory body. The statutory body should maintain a register of recognised CAHW trainers.

2.3.3 Inspection of training
Training courses for CAHWs should be assessed by veterinary inspectors. Statutory bodies should develop standardised methods for assessment of CAHW training courses. Indicators for assessment of CAHW training courses are available from AU/IBAR.

2.3.4 Examination of community-based animal health workers
The examination of CAHWs should be based on standardised tests endorsed by the statutory body and designed to assess both the technical knowledge and practical skills of CAHWs according to the standardised training curriculum. Veterinary inspectors shall ensure that examination of CAHWs is conducted according to standardised tests. Indicators for the examination of CAHWs are available from AU/IBAR.

2.3.5 Licensing of community-based animal health workers
The statutory body should license CAHWs and maintain a register of licensed CAHWs. Veterinary inspectors should issue licenses. A license should be location specific and name the veterinarian responsible for the activities of the CAHW. Licenses should be renewed annually according to annual assessment of CAHW knowledge and skills by veterinary inspectors.

2.3.6 Supervision and responsibility for community-based animal health workers
Statutory bodies should define systems for supervision and responsibility of CAHWs. Supervision by veterinary inspectors should include measures of CAHW knowledge of disease diagnosis and use of veterinary pharmaceuticals, and CAHW practical skills. Two types of statutory supervision can be defined:

- a. Post-training supervision
  The experience of AU/IBAR indicates that most technical or communication problems with CAHWs occur within three months after training. After CAHWs have been trained and working for no more than three months, post-training supervision should be conducted using a standardised method. The post-training supervision is a more comprehensive assessment of CAHW performance than routine supervision (see b. below). Indicators for post-training supervision are available from AU/IBAR.

- b. Routine supervision
  Routine supervision is regular monitoring of CAHWs by veterinary inspectors. A standardised system of routine supervision should be established to provide objective measures of CAHW performance. Sample sizes and sampling methods should ensure statistical confidence in the overall system. Indicators for routine supervision are available from AU/IBAR.

Veterinarians responsible for CAHW activities, such as those working for non governmental agencies, the private sector or associations, will be named on CAHW licences as detailed under item 2.3.5.

3. Coherence with Policies on Veterinary Service Restructuring and Privatisation
Implementation of quality CAHW systems at national level will be highly dependent on clear policy on veterinary service restructuring and adequate government support to statutory bodies and veterinary inspectors to fulfil their regulatory roles. The policy of AU/IBAR is that national veterinary services should review the capacity and structure of statutory bodies and ensure that restructuring leads to strengthened regulatory capacity.

At field level, viable privatised veterinarian-CAHW networks partly depends on clear policy on veterinary privatisation and the contracting out of public sector tasks to the private sector.
Indicators for the Assessment of Community-based Animal Health Workers (CAHW) within Veterinary Services

Introduction

The following indicators are designed to assist Veterinary Authorities to assess the coordination, quality and monitoring of CAHWs. The indicators can be adapted to the particular needs and resources of a given country. However, according to the principles of the OIE Code a Veterinary Administration should be able to describe and demonstrate how personnel, resources and procedures are arranged in order to ensure adequate control of para-professionals such as CAHWs.

The indicators assume that at field level:

a. specified government veterinary officers act as veterinary inspectors on behalf of the statutory body;

b. the immediate supervisors of CAHWs are either veterinarians or cadres of para-veterinary professionals with higher qualifications than CAHWs and who are authorised by the statutory body to act as CAHW supervisors.

c. CAHW supervisors may be positioned in either the private or public sector.

1. General indicators for the coordination and control of CAHWs by Veterinary Authorities

In order to demonstrate effective coordination and control of CAHWs, a Veterinary Authority should refer to the following indicators:

1.1 The Veterinary Authority should assign community-based animal health delivery system (CAHS) coordination and quality control tasks to named officers at central level and these tasks should be detailed in the job descriptions and performance assessment procedures for these officers.

1.2 The role and specific tasks of CAHWs should be defined in veterinary regulations of the statutory body.

1.3 The statutory body should delegate field-level CAHW supervisory and quality-control tasks to government veterinary officers. Clear written procedures should exist for the specific CAHW supervisory and regulatory tasks to be performed by these officers.

1.4 A procedure should exist for ensuring that all proposals for new CAHW projects by non-governmental organisations, private vets and governmental agencies are screened by the Veterinary Authority to ensure adherence to quality control indicators and minimum standards (as devised by the Statutory Body in collaboration with the Veterinary Authority). Specifically:

1.4.1 The Veterinary Authority should establish and maintain a relationship with the government agencies responsible for registration of non governmental organisations and approval of proposals by these agencies. All proposals with an animal health component should be evaluated by the Veterinary Authority.

1.4.2 In some countries, non agriculture or livestock government agencies establish CAHW systems in isolation of the Veterinary Authority. The Veterinary Authority should establish and maintain a relationship with these agencies and ensure that all proposals with an animal health component are evaluated by the Veterinary Authority.

1.4.3 Proposals for new CAHW projects that are assessed to be of sufficient standard should form the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Veterinary Authority and the implementing agency.

1.4.4 The Veterinary Authority should ensure that all donors, non governmental organisations and relevant government agencies are informed about the requirements for the establishment of
CAHW systems. Written guidance on these requirements should be disseminated to all relevant organisations and agencies annually.

2. **Indicators for the inspection of CAHW training courses**

Veterinary inspectors nominated and trained by the Veterinary Authority and the Statutory Body are responsible for ensuring that CAHW training courses are designed and implemented according to the following indicators:

2.1 **Training and registration of CAHW trainers**

The Veterinary Authority should ensure that any person training CAHWs is registered as a CAHW trainer by the statutory body. The required academic qualifications of CAHW trainers should be defined by the statutory body and trainers should have themselves been trained in participative training techniques.

2.2 **Use of a national CAHW curricula**

Training of CAHWs should be based on a national CAHW curriculum that is endorsed by the statutory body. A participative training methodology should be used. The national CAHW curriculum should comprise a standardised component required by all CAHWs, and a location-specific component to account for variations in the livestock disease situation in different ecological zones and production systems.

2.3 **Ratio of trainers to trainees**

The number of trainees per trainer should not exceed 15 trainees.

2.4 **Location of training**

The training should take place in the location to be covered by the CAHWs and near to the communities they will serve.

2.5 **Duration of training**

The duration of training will depend on the national CAHW curriculum but should not be less than 14-21 days for the initial training course and 5-10 days for subsequent refresher courses.

2.6 **Use of translators**

The use of translators during training should be avoided; training should be conducted in the mother language of the trainees.

2.7 **Practical content of the training**

At least 50% of the training duration should consist of practical sessions. The practical sessions should include use of livestock for clinical examinations and practising the use of treatments or vaccines under the supervision of the trainer(s).

2.8 **Examination of CAHWs**

The statutory body should endorse the use of a standardised procedure for the examination of CAHWs. In line with the national curricula, the examination will comprise a standardised component for use with all CAHWs and a location-specific component according to disease problems in specific areas. The examination should comprise oral interviews with CAHWs to assess knowledge and practical tasks to assess skills. Each CAHW should be asked the same questions and requested to demonstrate the same practical skills. The examiners should include the registered trainer and the CAHW supervisor. Certificates should be issued to qualified CAHWs by a veterinary inspector.

3. **Indicators for monitoring CAHWs**

3.1 **Post-training assessment**

A post-training assessment of CAHWs should be conducted by a veterinary inspector between two and four months after the initial training course. This assessment should comprise:

3.1.1 Assessment of CAHW knowledge and skills using a similar standardised methodology to the examination of CAHWs developed under indicator 2.8.

3.1.2 Standardised interviews with CAHW supervisors to cross check results obtained from 3.1.1.
3.2 **Routine monitoring of CAHWs**

3.2.1 CAHWs should provide, in person, a completed reporting format to their supervisor on a regular basis. The frequency of reporting shall depend on operational factors but should not be less than every two months.

3.2.2 CAHW supervisors should compile CAHW reports and submit to a veterinary inspector on a regular basis. The content of these reports should be defined by the statutory body in consultation with the Veterinary Administration.

3.3.3 All CAHWs shall receive refresher training at least once per year. The refresher training should be assessed by a veterinary inspector according to the training indicators listed under ‘2. Indicators for the inspection of CAHW training courses’.

**Note on definitions**

*Veterinary Administration* means the governmental *Veterinary Service* having authority in the whole country for implementing the animal health measures and international veterinary certification process which the OIE recommends, and supervising or auditing their application.

*Veterinary Authority* means a *Veterinary Service*, under the authority of the *Veterinary Administration*, which is directly responsible for the application of animal health measures in a specified area of the country. It may also have responsibility for the issuing or the supervision of the issuing of *international veterinary certificates* in that area.

*Veterinary Services* the Veterinary Services comprise the *Veterinary Administration* and all the *Veterinary Authorities*.