Aphtostania – *Where and how to start FMD control in an endemic setting?*

A table-top simulation exercise about the **Progressive Control Pathway for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PCP-FMD)** and developing **a risk-based strategic plan for FMD control** (RBSP), based on a hypothetical country called "Aphtostania"

Key learning elements are

- Conducting **risk analysis** using multiple sources of information
- Collaboration: **working in a team** (delegation of tasks, decision making, creative thinking)
- Consultation of **stakeholders (private and public)** to safeguard support for the FMD control plan

Summary

In this 1.5 days exercise, groups compete to develop a risk-based strategic plan for FMD control by interpreting data provided using a number of guided assignments, and additionally through stakeholder consultation.

Originally this simulation was developed as part of workshop activities used to support countries working to control FMD through the PCP, in order to engage staff of government veterinary services in applying the process of risk analysis and developing a RBSP in an active and entertaining way.

Additionally, Aphtostania is an instructive learning tool for students who will gain a better understanding about key issues of disease control management. It takes participants through the disease control process, from data collection, analysis and interpretation to decision making with authorities and consultation with stakeholders in order to safeguard compliance with control measures. It can be either used for undergraduate or MSc students with slight modifications of the assignments and the level of guidance to match either level.

Introduction

Aphtostania refers to a complete hypothetical country, endemically infected with FMD. Its livestock population consists of different production systems ranging from well-organised dairy farms to small holders and herder groups of small ruminants.

There is limited understanding of the FMD situation as the data currently available is scattered, the national veterinary services lack human and financial resources and have limited competencies to combat FMD effectively.

However with the launch of the Global Strategy for FMD control, there is regional pressure to improve FMD control and this is supported by international organisations such as FAO, OIE and World Bank. The Progressive Control Pathway (PCP-FMD) is the recognised tool for FMD control in endemic settings and it offers countries a framework to improve FMD control at their own pace as well as according to their own situation.

Gaining a thorough understanding of the FMD situationin a country is key to getting FMD control started. This involves gaining an understanding of the FMD serotype and strains circulating, the most prevalent routes of transmission and the impact of FMD disease on livestock production. Based on these three issues, risk analysis will help to prioritize FMD risks (identifying FMD risk hotspots) and subsequently to define targeted (or risk-based) FMD control measures.

Rules of the 'game'

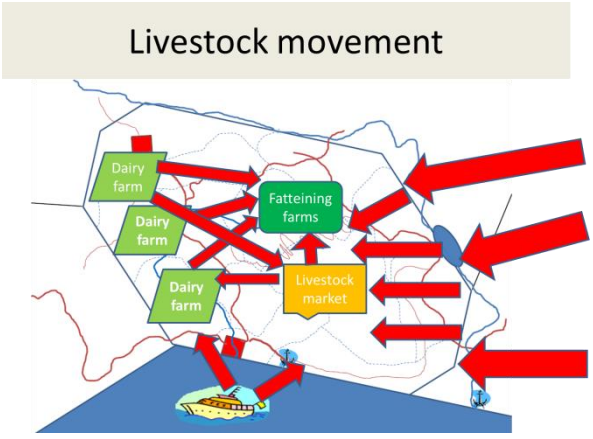
This exercise can be played with 2-5 groups consisting each of 4-6 persons. In each group, minimally the following positions are assigned: the Chief Veterinary Officer (team leader), veterinary epidemiologist, virologist and communication specialist.

Each team is given the same set of assignments in addition to a description of the situation in Aphtostania. Assignments include

- data analysis of FMD notifications
- interpretation of sero-survey results
- elaborating a value-chain analysis of dairy or beef sector
- filling out a PCP-FMD self-assessment questionnaire
- assessing the economic impact of FMD
- interpretation of WRL-Pirbright virology results
- detailing a risk-pathway for a FMD prioritized risk

Additional participants acting as stakeholders from different backgrounds move between the groups. One is the Minister of Agriculture, an important person for the final output as they need to be convinced that FMD control is beneficial to the country. A second stakeholder represents the various farmers (dairy, beef, smallholder, herder) in Aphtostania. In each capacity, they have different opinions and interests. And the third stakeholder represents the international organisations such as World Reference Laboratory in Pirbright, the EuFMD/FAO, the World Bank as well as the CVOs of the neighbouring countries (Greenstan, United Uguays, Northland and Easteria).

It is up to each of the groups to identify and consult these stakeholders. However it will be emphasized that stakeholders have hidden agendas that are best explored in order to make the Risk-based Strategy Plan for FMD truly feasible and acceptable for stakeholders.



After 4-6 hours, each group will present its Situation Analysis. In an 8-minutes presentation, they present their understanding of the FMD situation and the position of the stakeholders. This will allow all groups to consider a similar situation in Aphtostania for the second phase. Here, groups are given another 2 hours to develop the RBSP, to be presented in a 10-minutes presentation. Key is for groups to come up with specific (targeted) control measures that are both feasible and effective.

Extra credits can be earned when the RBSP is complemented with a method of monitoring and evaluation, or a financial budget. The winner of this exercise is the group that gets best overall scores for Situation analysis and RBSP. Scoring is performed by stakeholders and all of the "game" participants.