DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK AND VETERINARY SERVICES

2017 ANNUAL REPORT to the COUNCIL OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

This report dwells on key issues relating to the Veterinary authority with an impact on the human resource, technical expertise and the quality of national Veterinary Services. These issues touch strongly on the purpose of Council Legislation on Veterinary personnel, and relate to transparency, information on the risk, occurrence, prevention and control of animal and zoonotic diseases and the sanitary safety of trade in animals and animal products.

1. Outbreak of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza on a Harare south poultry breeding farm

The occurrence in May, of the first outbreak of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza disease of poultry near Harare, shocked the animal health services which had not anticipated this development at a time when resources where a major challenge. This incursion exposed the weakness of internal technical capacity of the veterinary authority, which had been noted in the Performance of Veterinary services and Gap analysis reports of 2009 and 2014, respectively. Currently the establishment occupancy is lower than 28 %. It also highlighted the need for emphasis by the Veterinary Education Establishment in the areas of Disaster Preparedness and response, outbreak investigation, surveillance and risk communication.

Technical backup assistance was given by the FAO, further bolstered by technical training in emergency preparedness and response from the SADC and the Africa Union's Inter-Africa Bureau for Animal Resources, which strengthened the measures implemented towards a return to normal by the end of the year.

2. Veterinary Capacity

There is a strong need to link evolution of Veterinary science and current trends to capacity to the skills and knowledge imparted especially to veterinary paraprofessionals. Some opportunities arose in funded collaborative projects namely:

- CIRAD Dream multidisciplinary project
- The Fleming Foundation funded "One-Health" project on Antimicrobial resistance
- Animal Disease Emergency Preparedness plans by AU-IBAR and SADC

Various efforts were made through seizing capacity building opportunities in the EU- sponsored Better Training for Safe Food on-line courses, as well as replacement of essential laboratory equipment to begin addressing these issues.

Meanwhile, export prospects in cattle remained subdued by the ongoing FMD occurrence for which control by vaccination remained insufficient in the absence of effective re-definition of zonal boundaries. By end of the year however, the growing interest in the livestock sector, especially beefthrough the advancing development of the Special program for Livestock, Fisheries and wildlife production of Command Agriculture was providing hope for renewed and thrusts.

2.1The One-health national program on Anti-microbial Resistance (AMR)

Further developments were registered on this initiative, which followed national commitments made by the former Head of State at the World Health Assembly in 2016 pledging to allow national activities on this topic as a contribution to a global effort to slow down the development of AMR. Antimicrobials are essential for the treatment of a wide range of infectious diseases are being rendered ineffective due to overuse, abuse and through unintended exposure of microbes. This would result in a serious reversal of the gains which have been made over the last 100 years as a result of inability to treat very simple diseases in both animals and humans, leading to unnecessary deaths and food insecurity.

With further support provided by the UK Fleming Fund II, Zimbabwe as one of four African countries was awarded grant funding to complete a national status report and a national action plan involving Agriculture, human and animal health and environmental stakeholders. The two documents were formally launched in September, 2017. It would focus on activities in continuing to raise awareness among professionals and the general public, stepping surveillance on antimicrobial use and trekking the development of AMR in microbes, capacity building especially of laboratories and stewardship involving the mainstreaming of alternatives to antimicrobial use.

2.2. Strategy and Emergency Preparedness for Pestes des PetitRuminants (PPR)

This serious viral infection of sheep and goats now present in Zambia, Tanzania and Congo DRC threatens to spread to Zimbabwe especially through informal movements of small ruminants and transboundary transfers. All countries were advised to commit themselves to the global strategy for the eradication of this disease by 2030. Efforts were initiated to define a national strategy. As the disease had never been recorded in the country, an emergency Preparedness and Response Plan would also be prepared to prepare for a crisis in the event its incursion occurred. As implementation of such disease control strategies should be driven by both private and public veterinary professionals in concert with stakeholders, two stakeholder workshops were held to sensitise sheep and goat value chain players. Economic players in this subsector are expected to take advantage of an improved animal disease surveillance and control environment for these relatively unexploited commodities. A validation workshop will be held as soon as a draft is ready.

2.3 The completion of sanitary supervision and disinfection of HPAI affected poultry units at Lanark Farm and the approval of a new Biosecurity plan for compartment re-registration by year end

2.4 Competence and knowledge sharing opportunities

2.4.1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

A team of experts from the FAO emergency disease centre visited to study and advise on the HPAI giving valuable advice on outbreak epidemiology and management and on communication

A regional workshop on emergency preparedness was organized in South Africa attended by 3 officers of the DVS

2.4.2 OIE meetings

- The OIE held its 22nd Africa regional Commission conference in Namibia at which PPR, AMR and Rabies control were some of the key topics.

- The second Global conference on Biological threat Reduction was held in Ottawa, Canada in November, 2017.

  This event examined the recommendations and activities undertaken since the 1st Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction that took place in June 2015 in Paris (France).

  The first Conference brought together international experts in the security sector with those in animal, ecosystem and public health sectors with the aim of “building cooperation for efficient health and security systems worldwide” to reduce biological threats. Since then, cross-sectoral partnerships have been forged and collaborations continue to be explored.

  As biological threats continue to be a concern to us all, the second Conference will allow participants to continue to foster awareness around the mechanisms in place to reduce biological threats, explore potential dual use technologies, as well as highlight where the sectors have contributed globally to biological threat reduction. In this regard, the overall theme for this Conference is “enhancing health and security for all” by establishing ways to reduce hazards in the handling of potentially harmful microorganisms accidentally, through unregulated development and through criminal practices.

2.5 Antimicrobial Resistance national action Plan Launch

The AMR national Action plan was launched jointly by the “One Health” sector ministries namely: Ministry of Health, Agriculture and environment and observed by the country WHO, FAO and OIE office bearers. The plan lays out a program emphasizing public and stakeholder awareness about the hazards of AMR emergence, capacity for “one health surveillance, technical capability towards slowing down AMR. An in-depth review of related veterinary legislation is now in progress with funding under the Fleming Fund II.

The Central Veterinary Lab was among the ‘one-health laboratories which underwent an ATLAS evaluation for competence in rendering surveillance support for the AMR global initiative. One of the Laboratory diagnosticians

was subsequently incorporated into an ATLAS evaluation team for similar exercises in other countries in the region.

2.6 Development of a National Livestock Strategy (ZIMLIVES)

Following the deveopment of a national livestock policy in 2014, an opportunity was seized to develop a strategy which drilled from this policy fundamentals, national development goals, the AU's Livestock Development Strategy (LIDESA) and Vision 2063 as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The strategy, which like the policy awaits formal endorsement. therefore aims to address social, economic, public health and environmental aspects while imrpoving the performance of the livestock sector.

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Foot and Mouth Disease

In the absence of disease control zonal fences, FMD outbreaks remained a challenge to the animal health program, especially when vaccine availability remained unpredictable partly due to foreign currency strictures, and again due to rising non-compliance of economic players in the cattle industry, with animal movement restrictions in endemic and outbreak areas.

The situation however improved with the agreement by the fiscal authorities to cover past debts to the vaccine supplier in Botswana, which had remainedoverdue for nearly 2 years or more. Although coming late, the vaccination cover in a large number of affected areas where the infection kept festering, gave hope to reducing the frontiers of infection, especially in Masvingo, Manicaland (Chipinge area). Inclusion of an $80 million public infrastructure component in the resource input envelope of the Special program on Livestock, fisheries and wildlife production of Command Agriculture gave promise to the restoration of game and cattle disease control fences.

3.4 High vacancy rates in critical technical posts

The vacancy rates of public service Veterinarians remains high at nearly 70% due to inability by Treasury to fund posts. This position is worsened by inability to adequately fund recurrent and capital budgets. Most programs are therefore not meeting their targets.

3.5 staff not provided with protective clothing for handling high pathogen risk, rough field work. This lowers staff morale.

3.6 General decline in the quantum and quality of mentorship resulting from natural attrition and non-availability of opportunities for recapacitation in key areas.

4. PUBLICATIONS

4.1 People, Patches and Parasites: The cases of trypanosomiasis in Zimbabwe. Journal of Human Ecology

4.2 Age-specific trypanosome infection rates in tsetse(Diptera: Glossinidae) in the Zambezi Valley (Paper submitted PLOS NTD)Presentation at the 34th ISCTRC conference in Livingstone, Zambia

4.3 Spatial Distribution and trypanosome infection of tsetse in the sleeping sickness focus of Zimbabwe,
Hurungwe District. Presentation at the 34th ISCTRC conference in Livingstone, Zambia

4.4 A Pilot study to delimit tsetse target populations in Zimbabwe. PLOS NTD.