



‘ Vaccination of animals = Veterinary Act ‘

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Vaccination of all animals – both livestock and companion animals - is and should always remain a veterinary act. The reasons for this are numerous:

Vaccination is part of herd health management and through using risk assessment veterinarians are best placed to decide which animals require vaccination and when to vaccinate (or not).

Vaccines are veterinary medicines that require a veterinary prescription after examination and assessment of the animal(s) at risk.

Specific precautions apply with regard to the administration of vaccines.

Recording of adverse events and lack of efficacy (pharmacovigilance) is extremely important.

Veterinarians are trained to make sure vaccination is done in an optimised way and according to the vaccination plan.

In particular for notifiable diseases, veterinary certification is a cornerstone to disease prevention and control.

Veterinary vaccination should always stay a veterinary act. If this should be liberalised, there is a danger that this might compromise animal health, animal welfare and public health, with subsequent economic loss.

Introduction:

Disease is unpredictable in our increasingly globalised world, particularly diseases linked to infections caused by novel strains of microorganisms. We need to be alert to the threat posed to our companion animals, livestock, food chain and agricultural business by disease incursions. Disease outbreaks such as African Swine Fever, Lumpy Skin Disease, Rabies and many others can have huge economic and animal health and welfare consequences.

Therefore keeping an efficient disease control system needs to remain one of the most important priorities for the future.

Vaccination can be a vital way to prevent, form a barrier or stop a disease.

Vaccination of animals = veterinary act

The vaccination of animals in most countries is a veterinary act. FVE strongly warns that when veterinary acts are disrespected or become unregulated, there is a risk that animal health, animal welfare and public health as well as animal productivity will be compromised. Expanded animal vaccination directly contributes to the One Health approach for human protection.

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Arguments why the vaccination of animals is a veterinary act

- FVE strongly believes that the **acts of examination, diagnosis, health plans, recommendations** for subsequent action and the prescription of medicines or vaccines **are all strongly linked** and must be the exclusive preserve of the veterinarianⁱ;
- Vaccination cannot be recommended without a proper examination and a good knowledge of the farm animal health status. **Vaccination is part of (herd) health management**. The veterinarian should regularly visit the farm to draw up in collaboration with the animal owner an effective herd health plan. Using **risk assessment**, the veterinarian will be able to advise when and which animals to vaccinate (or not), as well as on the most effective product for each animal/ farm. Not all vaccine products are the same and veterinarians have the scientific background to decide and prescribe the product that include the right strain(s).
- Veterinarians are specifically trained in the technical aspects around vaccination: such as the correct storage of vaccines (respecting the cold chain), proper administration of the product (respecting sterility) and record keeping in order to ensure optimal immunisation of the animal(s);
- Veterinarians are trained in monitoring and recording **adverse events (pharmacovigilance)**. Vaccines products occasionally evoke anaphylactic shock that can even lead to the death of the vaccinated animal. It is also important to record **lack of vaccines efficacy** e.g. to discover the circulation of strains not covered by the vaccine;
- It is important to keep a **good veterinary network and coverage**, especially in remote rural areas, to ensure efficient and rapid disease control in terms of crises;
- In the case of emerging diseases, **temporarily authorised vaccines** are often needed. For these vaccines post-authorisation monitoring is even more vital, as such products do not go through the whole authorisation process. Therefore, potential adverse events have to be urgently reported through monitoring the vaccine closely when used;
- In case of vaccination against notifiable diseases, even more arguments are present to support vaccination being a veterinary act;
- For notifiable diseases, an **official veterinary certificate** has to guarantee the health status of the animal(s) and to officially certify freedom of certain diseases. Veterinarians should certify only those matters, which are within their own knowledge and can be ascertained or attested either personally or by another veterinarian, who has personal knowledge of the matters in question and is authorised to provide the certificate; ⁱⁱ
- For **notifiable diseases**, the **state is responsible and accountable** for disease control. As such, the state should only delegate this task to veterinariansⁱⁱⁱ, who have the competence and experience to perform control of the diseases in the most efficient way and who are accountable to the national competent authorities. Eradication

- programmes require veterinarians to respect specific criteria regarding which vaccine to use, when and for which animals;
- In case of urgent disease outbreaks, the government can decide to fund the establishment of vaccine banks. In cases of epidemic outbreaks, vaccine production may not be sufficient. It is therefore important that veterinarians can optimise the number of doses used, assuring the best logistical organisation whilst adhering to the vaccination plan;
 - Disease outbreaks can be very costly and greatly undermine public confidence with respect to the agricultural trade of animals and their products. It would be **detrimental to go for a short term financial gain** by lowering the efficacy of vaccination, as the long term effects could be more costly e.g. trade disturbance and negative public image of the trade.

ⁱ FVE Veterinary Act:

http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/bro_fve_code_of_conduct_2012.pdf

ⁱⁱ FVE 10 principles of certification:

http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/061_fve_10_principles_of_veterinary_certification_adopted.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See Animal Health Law article 14 about the possibility for the competent authorities to delegate to other veterinarians the carrying out of emergency vaccination. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32016R0429&from=EN>