

Integrated zoonotic disease surveillance in western Kenya: Opportunities and challenges within the context of resource constraints

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Background

The twin threats of zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance require that data are collected, analysed and disseminated in a coordinated fashion across the human and animal health sectors.

Kenya has been at the forefront of the One Health agenda in Africa with the inception of the Zoonotic Disease Unit in 2011¹. Despite this proactive step, there are delays in the adoption of these principles at the sub-national level, where, through devolved sub-national governments, resource allocation to disease surveillance occurs.

Aim

To explore the drivers of and barriers to operationalization of inter-sectoral collaboration within disease surveillance at the sub-national level in Kenya

Methods

Semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with 27 government disease surveillance officers from the human and animal health sectors in Busia, Bungoma and Kakamega counties where the 'ZooLink' program was operating². An inductive process of thematic analysis was used to identify themes relating to drivers of and barriers to inter-sectoral collaboration.

Results

All key informants reported examples of when they had collaborated with their counterparts in the opposite ministry. We identified four over-arching yet interlinking themes relating to the drivers and barriers for greater cross-sectoral integration within disease surveillance. These were 'common interests' which can stimulate integrated actions if the enabling 'operational structures' are in place. These structures require 'appropriate resource' which in turn require 'political will' to allocate.

".... these things [communication] need to be structured, I cannot walk in and say the DVS has sent me here to discuss disease...."

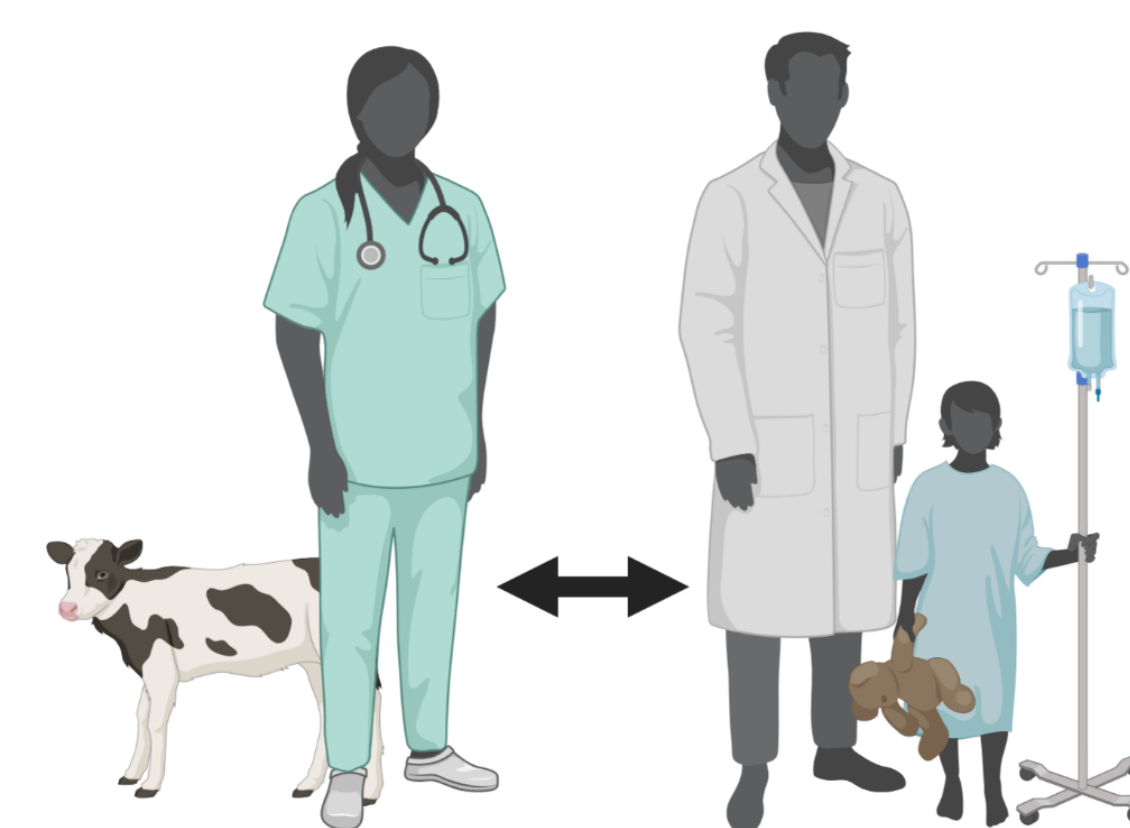
"If we have cases of dog biteswe will liaise with the veterinary officer"

Collaborative actions coalesce around **common interests**

Facilitated by **operational structures** including legislation, hierarchy, protocol and physical & virtual infrastructure

Which requires **appropriate resource**

Allocated on the basis of **political will**



The collection, analysis and dissemination of data from both sectors provides evidence for resource allocation

".....we are 2 ministries so bringing people together requires resources"

".....It [county government] sees surveillance as an item that is eating the money without giving back"

Conclusions

- Operationalization of integrated surveillance requires dedicated structures and resources
- Political will at the sub-national level is needed to facilitate these changes
- There must be alignment of national and international priorities with those at the sub-national level
- Appropriate analysis and dissemination of surveillance data provide stimulus for continued investment
- Common interests between sectors can be leveraged as entry points for strengthening collaboration

Acknowledgements



ILRI thanks all donors and organizations which globally support its work through their contributions to the CGIAR Trust Fund

References

¹Mbabu et al. (2014) <https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.2014.19.106.4588> ²Falzon et al. (2019) <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2019.00252>



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