



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Roles of effective risk communication in ensuring
advocacy and coordinated stakeholders' responses

**Animal disease risk assessment, management &
simulation exercises training workshop Abu Dhabi, United
Arab Emirates, 17-19 October 2023**

Foer and Mouth Disease, Peste des Petits
Ruminants, Lumpy Skin Disease, Rift Valley
Fever, Sheep and Goat Pox



Learning Objectives

- Targeting communication messages to the right people
- What language to use
- What message to give
- Who needs to know

Poor risk communication



REMINDER: A 50% INCREASE IN A TINY RISK IS *STILL TINY*.

UK Oct 2014 – pets and Ebola **theguardian**

Excalibur, Spanish Ebola patient's dog, is euthanised despite global outcry



Mirror
WEBSITE OF THE YEAR

RIP Excalibur: Husband of Ebola nurse writes moving letter to dead dog mourned by 350,000

MailOnline

Nearly 100,000 people sign petition calling for Spain's health minister to quit over the order to kill Excalibur, the beloved pet dog of recovered Ebola nurse




 News ▶ Latest News

Migrating bats 'to bring rabies to UK' in deadly disease outbreak

A DEADLY pandemic of rabies will be spread by monster vampire bats and migrants "smuggling puppies into the UK from Eastern Europe" in a matter of years, experts have warned.

Effective risk communication

- What is the issue?
 - The nature of the risk
 - Are there any benefits? 
 - Uncertainties in the risk assessment
 - Risk management options
 - Government and private veterinarians;
 - Industry & stakeholders;
 - Policy makers and ministers;
 - General public
-

Principles of risk communication



- Know the audience
- Involve the scientific experts
- Establish experts in communication
- Be a credible source of information
- Share responsibility
- Differentiate between science and value judgement
- Assure transparency
- Put the risk in perspective

[The application of risk communication to food standards and safety matters \(fao.org\)](http://fao.org)

Barriers to risk communication



- Differences in perceptions
 - Some people may choose a high risk activity, but be more worried about a low risk one imposed on them
 - Differences in receptivity
 - Some people may be more risk averse than others
 - Lack of understanding of the scientific process
 - Don't use clever language, but also don't over-simplify
 - Source credibility
 - Having a joined-up message
 - Building trust
 - The media
 - Work with journalists from all areas of the media
 - Societal characteristics
 - Language, religion, poverty, illiteracy
-

Risk Communication Decisions

		Management Options	Public risk communication options
Risk Level	Low	Do some tracings, raise awareness about the clinical signs	Nothing unusual or proactive
	Medium	Seize recent imports, quarantine or treat	Reactive mode – if questioned, explain what is happening
	High	Surveillance, disease control plan, zones in high risk areas	Proactive comms to farmers, to the public,

What novel ways are there to get a message out to the right people?

- Veterinary professionals
- Industry stakeholders
- Farmer groups
- Social media
- Posters or feed packaging
- Apps
- Radio or television
- Religious leaders, faith leaders, educators, medical centres

Risk comparators



- Risk criteria are unacceptable; tolerable or acceptable
 - Comparators should include hazards with similar outcomes or similar probabilities in the same host population
 - For example, causes of death in cattle each year may include other infections – anthrax, pneumonia or clostridia, nutritional problems and deficiencies, physical injuries.
-

Working with industry



- Setting up a core group of stakeholders in peace time
 - Develop common understanding of the strategy
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Working with one another's comms teams to develop common messages
 - If there is a public health risk, you must involve the public health authorities – chief vets cannot talk for chief medics and vice versa
 - Who else do you need to bring to the table?
-

Briefing the Minister

- Time is of the essence therefore keep it short
 - As the expert you may want to know all the detail but the Minister may not
 - Keep the language plain and get the message across
 - What decisions should the Minister make – offer some alternatives and costs / effectiveness
 - Who are the main stakeholders and what are the opinions of other government departments, legal challenge, public concerns
-

Briefing the public

- In general, the public will have two differing views – the risk to them and the risk to the World they live in.
- Trust, transparency and reassurance, but most of all, what is government doing about it?
- If there are uncertainties, then explain what they are and what government is doing about it.



Questions or comments?