Workshop on the Surveillance, Diagnosis, Control and Prevention of Brucellosis in Arab Countries

From 11 to 14, November 2024 in Riyad

Recommendations:

A working group session was organised to enable countries to discuss the importance of a regional approach to strengthening regional capacity to prevent, control and eliminate brucellosis in Arab countries, and to determine the regional network and governance body to be set up to achieve this objective.

Feedback of the working groups was the following recommendations:

- **A Regional Brucellosis Control and Eradication Network**: should be established to coordinate and facilitate regional efforts
- **Strengthened Surveillance:** Invest at the national level in robust surveillance systems to monitor the prevalence and distribution of brucellosis.
- **Enhanced Laboratory Capacity:** Improve laboratory capacity for accurate and timely diagnosis with the support of the WOAH reference laboratories.
- **Effective Vaccination Programs:** Implement well-designed vaccination programs targeting susceptible animal populations.
- **Biosecurity Measures:** Promote strict biosecurity measures on farms and in slaughterhouses.
- **Public Health Awareness:** Raise public awareness about brucellosis and its prevention.
- **One Health Approach:** Adopt a One Health approach to address the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Strengthen regional collaboration to share information, resources, and expertise.
- **Continuous Training and Capacity Building:** Organize regular training programs to update the knowledge and skills of veterinary professionals.

The creation of a Collaboration Platform under the supervision of the Collaborating Center for Camel diseases (UAE) with the support of WOAH French collaborating center (ANSES Maison Alfort) should facilitate and frame joint efforts, while highlighting and promoting the work and the added value of the reference laboratories.

However, several shortcomings were identified during the workshop as hampering the successful implementation of the recommendations.

I/ Animals identification and traceability

- **Technological and Infrastructure Barriers:** Implementing effective identification systems, such as RFID tags, requires significant investment in technology and infrastructure. Many countries lack the necessary resources to establish and maintain these systems.
- **Data Management and Integration:** Managing the vast amounts of data generated by identification systems is complex. Ensuring data accuracy, security, and integration across different platforms remains a significant challenge.
- **Compliance and Standardisation:** Different countries have varying standards and regulations for animal identification and traceability. Achieving compliance and standardization across borders can be difficult and time-consuming.
- **Farmer and Stakeholder Engagement:** Farmers and livestock owners may be resistant to adopting new identification technologies due to perceived costs, complexity, or lack of understanding of the benefits. Building trust and demonstrating the value of these systems is essential.

II/ Wildlife Sector

- **Disease Surveillance and Monitoring:** Monitoring brucellosis in wildlife populations is challenging due to the difficulty in capturing and testing wild animals. This makes it hard to accurately assess the prevalence and spread of the disease.
- **Human-Wildlife Interface:** Wildlife often interacts with livestock and humans, creating a complex interface where brucellosis can spread. Managing this interface to prevent disease transmission is challenging, especially in areas where wildlife and livestock share habitats.
- **Ethical and Practical Considerations:** Controlling brucellosis in wildlife often involves culling or vaccination programs, which can be ethically and practically challenging. There are concerns about the impact on wildlife populations and the feasibility of large-scale vaccination efforts.
- **Funding and Resources:** Wildlife conservation and disease management programs often suffer from a lack of funding and resources. Sustaining long-term brucellosis control efforts in wildlife requires continuous financial support, which can be difficult to secure.

III/ Limited Surveillance at Borders:

During the workshop, all the countries agreed that effective cross-border surveillance is often lacking. And that in the absence of robust surveillance and notification systems at border points, it becomes difficult to monitor and control the movement of potentially infected animals.

- **Informal Animal Movements:** In many Arab countries, informal or unregulated animal movements are common. These movements bypass official controls and can facilitate the spread of brucellosis, undermining formal control efforts.
- **Resource Constraints:** Border control and surveillance require significant resources, including trained personnel, diagnostic tools, and infrastructure. Limited resources can hinder the implementation of effective control measures at borders.
- **Coordination Challenges:** Effective control of brucellosis requires coordination between countries. Differences in administrative processes, priorities, and capacities can impede collaborative efforts to manage and control the disease.

These points will need to be integrated and considered in future work and meetings.