

CaribVET, a regional approach for surveillance and control of animal diseases in the Caribbean

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Abstract

The Caribbean Animal Health Network (CaribVET) is a collaboration among institutions (veterinary services, research or diagnostic laboratories, international organizations) to improve animal health throughout the Caribbean. It aims at promoting a regional approach for animal diseases control and emergency preparedness, strengthening national epidemiosurveillance networks, developing and harmonizing regional veterinary diagnostic capacities, and fostering communication and exchange of information in the region.

The network was initiated in 1995 with the Caribbean Amblyomma Programme (CAP), an eradication program for *Amblyomma variegatum*, a tick imported from Africa and associated with severe diseases of ruminants (heartwater and dermatophilosis), whose spread to the Lesser Antilles threatened the rest of the Caribbean and the American mainland. Reintroduction of classical swine fever in Hispaniola in 1996 further demonstrated the need to develop a regional network addressing the main animal health issues. Veterinary surveillance systems and diagnostic laboratories in the Caribbean were inventoried and listed in databases hosted on the CaribVET website www.caribvet.net. Projects funded by various agencies (EU, USDA, etc) were subsequently developed to help control classical swine fever in infected islands and to improve surveillance in neighboring countries. CaribVET also contributed to establishing collaborations for surveillance and diagnostic of West Nile virus, first detected in the Caribbean in 2001. Other activities encompass training, organization of regional meetings and dissemination of information through the CaribVET website. Future developments will include strengthening of epidemiosurveillance and emergency preparedness capacities, especially with regards to (re)emerging pathogens (HPAI, FMD), and improvement of the website in terms of information exhaustiveness and timeliness.