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Deliberations of an Advisory Committee regarding priorities, sources, and methods for collecting animal antimicrobial use data in the United States

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Abstract

This paper describes the methodological options for food animal antimicrobial use data collection in the United States, including data priorities, methods, and limitations that were identified by a diverse group of expert stakeholders. Four major categories of antimicrobial use data were identified based on the source of information and its proximity to actual use: end-user data, prescription data, manufacturing data, and distribution data. Criteria were developed to aid in evaluating the overall utility of each methodological option, and an attempt was made to develop a qualitative, composite ''overall usefulness'' score for each option. Concensus was not reached on option scores, therefore, the experts individually rated six methodological options relative to the evaluation criteria, and provided comments and rationale for each response. The responses serve as a microcosm of the issues and stakeholder perspective: most relevant to animal antimicrobial use data collection in the United States.

Keywords: Antimicrobial use; Monitoring; Antibiotics

1. Introduction

The Advisory Committee on Animal Antimicrobial Use Data Collection in the United States was established by the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics in

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order to foster discussion among a diverse group of expert stakeholders and develop consensus regarding the most effective means for gathering data on antimicrobial use in food animals in the United States. Specific objectives and the rationale for the project are described elsewhere in this Supplement (DeVincent and Viola, 2006). This report describes the methodological options for animal antimicrobial use data collection, priorities, and limitations identified by the members of the Advisory Committee.

2. Methods

In the spring of 2002, Advisory Committee members were recruited from the following stakeholder groups: academia/research, government officials, animal health industry representatives, public interest scientists and advocates, food animal producers, and veterinary professionals (see DeVincent and Viola, 2006, for complete list of names). Committee members engaged in a three-step process to develop a strategy for gathering antimicrobial use data in animals in the United States. The first step was to identify and prioritize ''data needs,'' or the specific types of information that would be ideal to characterize the quantity of antimicrobial use in animals. Next, the committee considered ''potential data sources and methods for gathering data,'' again focusing on identifying all possible options. Finally, the Committee considered limitations and practical considerations constraining the feasibility or utility of each data collection method. Criteria were also developed to aid in evaluating the overall utility of each methodological option.

At each stage of this process, initial knowledge and opinion were solicited from Committee members via email questionnaire. Responses were then compiled by staff members at APUA and re-submitted to the group for comment and revision. Additionally, Committee meetings were held in November 2002 and May 2003. All Committee members had an opportunity to review the meeting minutes and project documents. Additional correspondence, initiated by APUA or by individual Committee members, occurred by phone and email throughout the duration of the project.

3. Results

3.1. Assumption of utility

Initial concerns were raised by several Committee members regarding the difficulty of discussing methodology without first reaching consensus on the utility and specific purpose(s) of animal antimicrobial use data collection. While acknowledging the validity of this concern, the Committee co-chairs decided that the highest priority should be to generate a flexible set of options adequate to meet a broad range of potential policy goals. Committee members were therefore asked to assume utility and set aside their concerns about specific goals. All agreed to do so.