Monitoring of endemic goat’s diseases using farms’ health assessments done by private veterinarians

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As part of a dairy goat’s disease surveillance network developing in Poitou-Charentes, France, veterinarians are participating to the monitoring of priority diseases at the regional scale. Since 2007, every farmer has to implement every year a health assessment of his herd with a veterinarian in order to be allowed to treat his animals on his own against specific diseases, respecting a precise protocol. In 2011, the health assessments done by seven practitioners in 144 dairy goat farms were used to identify and describe the priority diseases of each farm. The data standardization was made possible thanks to the conception of a specific form including a user-guide and 61 diseases case-definitions. Priority diseases identified in three age groups (pre-weaning, replacement herd and adults) were described by the main symptom observed, the main etiology suspected or confirmed, the estimates of the disease morbidity and mortality rates, the age class concerned and some free comments of the veterinarians. Annual mortality and culling rates were also recorded, as well as farms’ characteristics (feeding, annual milk production…). The first results obtained have proven the functionality of this surveillance system. Actually, the results from 3 veterinarians, who provided more than 20 forms, show similar frequencies of priority diseases. Practitioners specialized in goats medicine consider that these first results are consistent with their own beliefs. Besides, most veterinarians recognize the simplicity and rapidity of the form filling. Despite the subjectivity of veterinarians in their choice of the farms priority diseases and the lack of precision of some results, this tool turns out to be adapted for the identification of priority diseases using veterinarians’ expertise. Adaptations of this system are still required to encompass a larger number of veterinarians and maintain their participation on the long run.