Developing evidence-based recommendations for food safety and animal health: an evaluation of the GRADE approach

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In food safety and animal health it is critically important that evidence-based recommendations for interventions are made in a manner that is transparent, i.e. the rationale for the recommendation is clear. In human clinical medicine, the GRADE system has been developed over the past 10 years as an approach to facilitating transparent recommendation making. According to the GRADE working group website ‘The Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE for short) Working Group provides a framework for grading quality of evidence and strength of health care recommendations that is explicit, comprehensive, transparent, and pragmatic.’ The GRADE system is increasingly being adopted by organizations and professional societies worldwide including WHO and CDC. Although judgment is still required to interpret the data, GRADE aims to transparently document, what factors are included in the decision making. The GRADE approach suggests that panels making recommendations explicitly consider the following factors: (1) the quality of evidence; (2) the balance of benefits and harms; (3) certainty about values and preferences and 4) resource implications. This presentation will illustrate the basic principles of GRADE using examples from animal health (autogenous Moraxella bovis vaccines for Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis) and food safety (Vaccination and antibiotics for Salmonella in pork) where the GRADE approach was used. Further, the presentation will include a discussion of the potential for the GRADE process to be used in food safety and animal health settings.