

Assessing the use of an electronic telephone log to enhance early warning surveillance in England and Wales

Milnes, A.¹, Mearns, R.², Watson, E.³ and Hoinville, L.³, ¹Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), Langford Regional Centre, United Kingdom, ²AHVLA, Penrith Regional Centre, United Kingdom, ³AHVLA, Epidemiology and Risk, United Kingdom; eamon.watson@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk

Detection of new or re-emerging threats (NRT) relies on effective surveillance coverage of the target population. Telephone discussion of clinical cases between AHVLA Veterinary Investigation Officers (VIOs) and practitioners is recognised as an important method for the early detection of NRT. This extends the traditional pyramid of surveillance, which relies on the formal collation of laboratory data. A telephone log was introduced for *post mortem* submissions to AHVLA laboratories in January 2011. A review of the content of this log over a six month period was undertaken. The aim was to evaluate its use and how it may be developed to enhance early warning surveillance by collating data provided by all telephone communication with veterinary practitioners. During the period, 1076 telephone discussions were recorded, the findings of which will be discussed. This represented 24% of AHVLA carcass submissions within the time period. Telehealth systems are used successfully for surveillance in other European countries. The current system in AHVLA laboratories provides telephone support to practitioners using over 50 VIOs. Telephone consultations are varied including discussion of differential diagnoses in aid of a diagnosis. There is no formal method to capture data which does not result in a submission and yet 22% of NRTs are initiated through the phone discussions with practitioners. Systematic collation of information between the practitioner and VIOs is likely to reduce the time for detection of a threat and reduce the window of opportunity for silent spread. Managing this communication stream effectively is therefore likely to be beneficial to animal health and disease control.