Communication

Some considerations on veterinary drug use and supply in Nigeria

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Introduction

Poor health remains one of the most important factors limiting livestock production in Nigeria (4) despite the progress that has been made in the past to control major epizootic diseases and the development of more effective drugs. Disease control activities involve the expenditure of considerable resources in terms of finance, facilities and trained manpower. There is therefore an ever increasing demand for the provision of adequate veterinary care. Ideally, routine veterinary care and drug prescription should be administered by veterinarians. This is not the situation in Nigeria where the use of veterinary drugs without expert supervision is rampant. The result is the misuse of veterinary drugs seen quite frequently in recent times. Misuse is commonly in the form of underdosing and incomplete treatment regimes. Some examples of misused drugs include diminazene aceturate (Berenil®), several antibiotics used singly or as combinations, anthelmintic formulations and several orally administered drugs against poultry diseases.

Since veterinary drugs constitute important resources and materials in animal health and productivity, one consequence of this misuse is the development of drug resis-

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Recommendations

From the problems highlighted, it is not premature to call for a veterinary drug policy in Nigeria. The policy should be in keeping with a restructure and properly operated veterinary service. It is suggested that the problem of non-availability and/or shortage of veterinary drugs be tackled in the short run by an increased funding of veterinary service and purchase of drugs. A first step in restructuring should be the rehabilitation of veterinary services through increasing their main prerogative and redefining the roles and responsibilities of the livestock production services (2). Special attention must be paid to drug distribution. Transportation and storage should be improved to ensure that drugs are delivered promptly and in satisfactory condition to the different areas of use. Restructuring should also provide means for effective peddling in cases of dangerous and expired drugs.

Another update solution is partial privatization of veterinary service and the establishment of revolving funds which could be led from mass campaign returns or from clinical activities. The World Bank in a Staff Technical Paper (7) has recommended a combination of policy changes including increased cost recovery for services rendered and inputs provided. It has also recommended easing of monopoly restrictions on many government tasks while encouraging private sector involvement especially in curative treatments and drug distribution. This World Bank standpoint is shared by other donor agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and the GTZ.

An interim and long-term measure adaptable to suit Nigeria is the "no more free care" proposal of the GTZ which suggests that good quality services and veterinary drugs would guarantee profitability of investments and encourage the private sector to compete freely for importing, distributing, selling and administering veterinary products (3). The ODA proposes a similar fee recovery measure as well as a policy whereby the veterinary service is allowed to operate revolving funds to enable it continuously purchase and maintain an adequate supply of drugs which can then be sold and the returns ploughed back into its operating funds (3).

The FAO proposal (3) focuses on harnessing trained veterinary manpower into private veterinary associations which will both lessen and complement State veterinary service and improve the availability of veterinary expertise to livestock owners in rural areas.

Long-term solutions lie first in the need to conduct appropriate drug utilization studies. Such studies will serve as invaluable tools for all involved in health policy and related decision-making and can improve communication between health authorities, health personnel and scientists (1,2). These studies require adequate research input in the absence of which policy implementation is impeded. There is need to create, adjust and coordinate functional drug legislation and regulation. This will include criteria and rules for drug evaluation, selection, quality control, prescription, dispensing and logistics. Logistics will embrace questions on whether there is need to manufacture or buy drugs to meet local needs, stock storage and inventory, distribution and delivery. There is also a need for the establishment of descriptive and analytical drug utilization surveys primarily for the purpose of evaluating and re-evaluating various decisions and actions taken e.g. research and development.

Another long-term solution can be found in local drug manufacture. It is becoming increasingly essential for Nigeria and other developing tropical third world countries to develop an efficient pharmaceutical industry which will meet both human and animal health needs. However, the cost of all aspects of drug development has increased (5). Such cost includes the expense of maintaining permanent screening facilities for compounds of potential interest. Local drug development is also hampered by difficulties of securing adequate facilities and investigators. This partly accounts for the low rate of introduction of new products to control tropical animal and human diseases.

Conclusion

It is recommended that a national veterinary drug policy be formulated which will take account of the existing setbacks in veterinary services in Nigeria. This policy could be an integral part of a new animal health care structure. The policy will need to address short-term budgetary problems in veterinary service while it decreases costs to the State, and adopts steps to improve the quality of veterinary services. This can be achieved by a restructuring of the actual organization and by the introduction of revolving, self-servicing funds. The policy should incorporate and emphasize a strategic plan for local drug development and production with the aim of solving the rising demands for veterinary drugs and associated products. Research priorities in this area must take account of the real health needs of all classes of veterinary stock. There is need to ensure an effective and uniform distribution and delivery of drugs within the country through appropriate legislation which are expected to check the current misuse of drugs and also ensure adequate supply to field veterinary officers. Effort should be made to encourage the formation of private veterinary associations thereby increasing access to trained veterinary manpower, quality service and good veterinary drugs.

In developing this policy, it is important to have continuous drug surveys of statistical value. These data will be required for identifying the potential problem areas, controlling drug misuse, establishing drug needs, performing further research and improving the communication on drug utilization among those involved in the planning and implementation of the policy.

For convenience, the policy planning process should establish goals and targets for the animal health pro-
There must be elements of design and appraisal as well as implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation.

Finally, the implementation of a such policy requires the harmonization of political will and professional skill, factors which are essential and complementary.


There is widespread misuse of veterinary drugs in Nigeria resulting from controlled and unsupervised drug administration, underdosing and incomplete treatment. Development of resistance and toxicity are common consequences of this misuse. Drug shortage, uneven distribution, preponderance of fake and/or expired drugs and inadequate local drug production are some of the problems identified in veterinary drug supply. All these problems have an adverse effect on animal health and productivity and are related to an improperly coordinated veterinary service and the non-existence of national veterinary drug policy. Suggested solutions include rehabilitation and restructuring of the veterinary service, improved funding to support drug purchase, installation of self-servicing revolving funds, partial privatization, drug manufacture and appropriate legislations for veterinary drugs. These proposals are expected to overcome bottlenecks encountered in drug supply, distribution, delivery, prescription and use. Projections and plans must also be made toward the local development and manufacture of drugs for animal disease. Key words : Veterinary drugs - Supply - Use - Therapeutic - Nigeria.

References