

Analysis of the use of monitoring systems for animal health by farmers and their advisors: differences to work on?



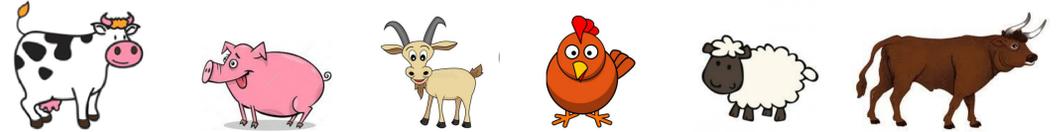
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Context and objectives

Health context of livestock farms is changing to integrate social, technical and economic pressures towards reduction of antibiotics use and greater attention paid to animal welfare. These pressures therefore call for a preventive herd health approach rather than a curative individual one. We are currently working on a four-year research program on animal health, co-funded by the region Pays de la Loire and Europe. **Our aim is to help livestock farmers to improve, in collaboration with their advisors, the health management of their livestock production.** This work focuses on three main livestock sectors of the Pays de la Loire (western France): ruminant farming (i.e. beef, dairy, goat and sheep farming), poultry farming and pig farming. We sought to understand:

- i) The diversity of the farmers' **social representations** about animal health
- ii) **With whom** farmers work to discuss and manage health issues
- iii) Which **tools and methods they mobilize** to manage their animals' health.



Method: a two-step approach

1 – Inventory of tools and methods used for health management by health advisors:

Health advisors: vets, animal feed advisors, livestock housing advisors, dairy advisors, animal husbandry technicians, etc.

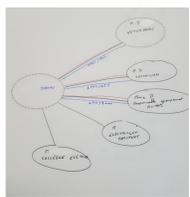
Method: actions implemented to pilot health more or less directly

Tools: supports which make it possible to set up and follow these actions

- National survey addressed to animal health advisors: 178 respondents
- Statistical processing of the responses to obtain a typology of the tools (AFCM, CAH)

2 – Focus groups with livestock farmers

- 8 focus groups organized, distributed in the Pays de la Loire
- Objective of 10 farmers for each focus group, led by a sociologist, with the help of an animal scientist
- Each focus group lasted 4 hours, and was recorded
- Morning program:



Graph of a farmer's relationships on animal health

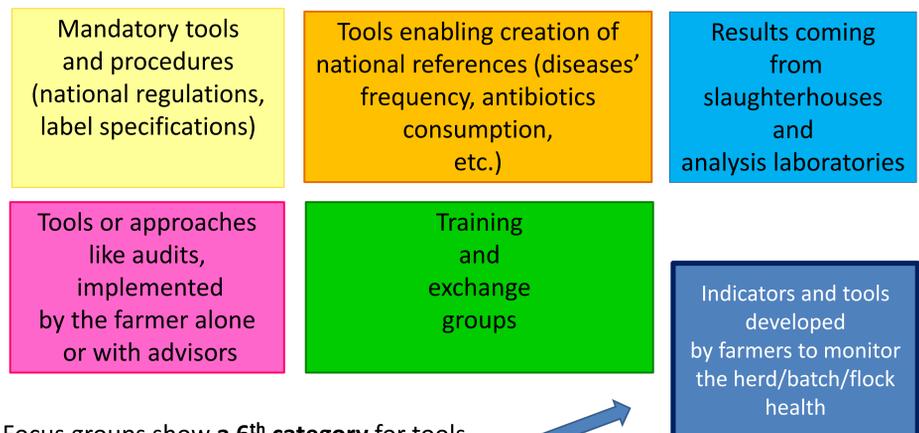


Graph enriched with the tools used by the farmer

- Crossed presentation of livestock farmers
- Presentation of the research program, and focus groups objectives
- Discussion on their representations of animal health
- Drawing by each farmer of a graph of their relationships with **people they talk to about their animals' health**, estimation of frequency and importance of their relationships
- List of tools or methods used to manage health, then classification according to the proposed typology
- Discussion about each tool type
- Discussion about an annual compulsory French tool for the livestock farmers: the animal health report (Bilan Sanitaire d'Elevage - BSE)
- Filling in a short form about individual and farm characteristics
- Then lunch offered on the premises

Results

- ✓ A large diversity of tools and methods to manage animal health
- ✓ A five-group typology:



- ✓ Focus groups show a **6th category** for tools and methods, not mentioned by advisors:

- ✓ **Small overlap of tools** quoted by both farmers and advisors

- Farmers use sensitive indicators on a daily basis: sight, smell, hearing
- They observe animal(s) to diagnose their condition and behavior, as well as they check the livestock building ambience
- Fine analysis of the animal (ruminants) or of the herd/batch/flock (monogastrics) behavior
- Farmers are little interested in tools proposed by advisors, whose ergonomics fail to correspond to their ways of thinking and working
- Livestock advisors and vets base their work on periodic monitoring, using more often diagnostic protocols, measuring instruments, or analyzing husbandry data recorded by farmers during their visits
- A strong expectation of interoperability of tools, whatever the animal sector

⇒ **There is a distribution of roles and tools between farmers and advisors opposing a daily health management operated by farmers to a medium-term surveillance of livestock health provided by advisors.**

- ✓ **The links between advisors and farmers differ according to sectors:**

Criteria	Dairy	Beef cattle	Small ruminants	Poultry	Pig
Degree of proximity with advisors about health whatever their field	+	+ or -	+	+++	++
Strength of the link with the veterinarian	+++	+++	-	+++	++
Decision-making autonomy of farmers in technical choices	+++	++	+++	+	+++
Support system: specialized advisors, quality and accessibility of resources	+++	+	+	+++	+++

⇒ **Each sector is distinguished by the partnership scheme the farmer builds around the farm health surveillance, and by the nature of the contract which binds him/her to economic operators.**

Conclusion

1 Discrepancy between the tools used by farmers and those used by their advisors

Need to work on joint categories of tools to improve the appropriation of alternative health management techniques

2 According to the animal sectors :
 ○ Inequal distribution of roles between farmers and advisors
 ○ Different power of decision regarding herd health management

Need to target communication on appropriate decision-making stakeholders