

RISKSUR Symposium: Roundtable discussions

Question 6

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Question: Which of the following statements is most in line with what you consider the role of economics to be in the decision process regarding strategic choices for animal health surveillance and control programmes?

- A. For me, the biggest value of economics lies in the judging the potential impact of a disease, which helps with prioritization.
- B. Surveillance must primarily be of high technical performance and economics is of most value to make sure that the costs are as low as possible.
- C. I usually do not ask for evidence of the surveillance benefits, as I already know that these are very large.
- D. I am interested in the economic value of surveillance, but there are many other factors in the decision process that play a bigger role.
- E. None of these statements fit my view (explain).

Feedback

General comments

- All groups agreed that the choice of the most appropriate statement depends on the nature of the disease, the disease situation in the country and the perspective of the person answering (decision makers, scientists and industry representatives may have different views).
- In each group at least one person preferred option E but following discussion they could usually agree with the ideas in one of the other options but not the exact wording.
- All groups thought statements A and D were more acceptable than statements B and C.

Comments on individual statements

A - For me, the biggest value of economics lies in the judging the potential impact of a disease, which helps with prioritization.

- Most groups agreed that economics is important in assessing the impact of disease, some groups thought that it was important but not the only driver of decisions while one participant commented that 'everything is about money'.
- This statement was most likely to be relevant for countries with a large agricultural industry and low disease levels and also for endemic disease and policy makers.
- The importance of considering who the disease impacts on (e.g. industry, government, consumer) was mentioned, public health impact should be considered.
- The issue of how to assess the cost of emerging diseases that had not yet happened was raised.

- Several groups commented that although economics is an important factor in making decisions it is not used as often as it should be. Historically, prioritisation has been carried out by veterinary advisors without considering economics. In some cases surveillance is required by legislation for trade purposes which is not based on a formal economic assessment although facilitating trade will have an economic benefit.
- Some people disagreed with the statement because of the emphasis on using economics for prioritisation, they felt that economics is equally important for making other decisions (e.g. optimal design of surveillance) as well as prioritisation.

B - Surveillance must primarily be of high technical performance and economics is of most value to make sure that the costs are as low as possible.

- Most groups disagreed with this statement, high technical performance is not always required and the statement underestimates the importance of economics although some agreed that high technical performance is important others felt that surveillance should be as simple as possible and in some cases passive surveillance is adequate e.g. BSE and FMD.
- The aim should not be to make costs as low as possible but to get the correct balance between cost and performance.
- Some participants felt that this statement may be relevant for some diseases with high impact e.g. swine fever.

C - I usually do not ask for evidence of the surveillance benefits, as I already know that these are very large.

- Most groups disagreed strongly with this statement, you cannot assume that benefits are very large, this idea makes us complacent about the costs of surveillance; surveillance may not always be relevant.
- Some groups felt that the statement may be relevant for some diseases with very large impact e.g. FMD.

D - I am interested in the economic value of surveillance, but there are many other factors in the decision process that play a bigger role.

- Most tables agreed with this statement to some extent but all groups objected to the word **BIGGER**; other factors play a part and the importance of non-economic factors was discussed. As discussed above the relative importance of different factors depends on the situation, this statement underestimates the importance of economics.
- This was thought to be particularly important for some diseases e.g. zoonotic and where prevalence of disease was low.

E - None of these statements fit my view (explain).

- At least one person in most groups choose this statement initially but during the discussions agreed with the main ideas in one or more of the other statements although not with the exact wording.