Knowledge attitude and practice of meat inspection among stakeholders in Owerri, South-eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Meat safety and disease surveillance are highly dependent on effective ante- and post-mortem examination of meat at local abattoirs/slaughter slabs. In view of cases of emerging and re-emerging disease outbreaks of public health significance, it is important to use participatory epidemiology as a tool to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of animal presentation for ante-mortem and post-mortem evaluation using a local abattoir in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria as a case study. 90 Questionnaires were distributed and informal interviews held with stakeholders (animal owners, butchers, livestock department personnel and veterinary officers attached to the abattoir). Information gathered include; factors affecting the presentation of animals for inspection at the abattoir; attitude of animal owners and butchers to meat inspection, willingness and compliance of butchers during meat inspection, level of the butchers' knowledge of the importance of meat inspection and degree of access of the Veterinary officer-in-charge to all slaughtered animals. Result show that market demand, economic pressure and lack of understanding influence animal owners' and butchers' cooperation in meat inspection. Over 90 % of stakeholders understood the importance of meat inspection but more than 60% of animal owners and up to 40% of butchers feel they are uninformed about meat inspection. Incidentally almost 80 % of stakeholders do not blame the government for failures in the programme. Veterinary and other livestock department personnel are not as motivated and empowered to effectively execute their duties. There is need for increased education among stakeholders on the importance of meat inspection as well as prompt payment of compensations and more legal backing from government to promote the programme in the state and indeed in the country.

Keywords: Meat inspection, ante-mortem, post-mortem, food safety, programme assessment.

Introduction

Just like in other countries of the world, Meat Inspection in Nigeria is extremely important in the sustenance of animal food safety (Cousins, 2001; Okoli *et al.*, 2006; EFSA, 2013). Its importance to the presentation of wholesome meat for public consumption can not be over emphasised. Nevertheless, unwholesome meat sometimes finds its way into the local

markets, or directly onto the consumer's table. In Nigeria as in most developing nations, standardization of the practice of meat inspection in the country is very poor and the practice of meat inspection leaves so much to be desired (Kaneene *et al.*, 2006; Okoli *et al.*, 2006). In fact, there are hardly any true abattoirs in Imo State with mostly slaughter slabs being available for the processing of commercial meat in the

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state (Okoli *et al.*, 2006). Nevertheless, Veterinary and other livestock personnel are still stationed in these makeshift abattoirs to ensure that, for the purposes of public safety, meat inspection is still routinely practiced on meat presented for public consumption. However, unofficial and indiscriminate slaughtering of animals in and outside abattoirs is still the order of the day, and thus the public remains at risk (Okoli *et al.*, 2006). This study seeks to assess the Knowledge (awareness), Attitude and Practice among stakeholders in the presentation of animals for ante-mortem and post-mortem evaluation using a local abattoir in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria as a case study.

Materials and methods

Study area

The study was carried out in Owerri, the Imo state capital in South-eastern Nigeria, with the coordinates 5.485°N 7.035°E and 59 meters above sea level.

Data collection

Questionnaires were administered, and informal focus group interviews held with

stakeholders in the meat inspection programme (i.e. animal owners, butchers, livestock department personnel and Veterinarians attached to the abattoir) for this study.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using Descriptive statistics (i.e. frequency and percentages) and the results were presented as graphs.

Results and discussion

The results of the study showed the degree of awareness and attitude of the stakeholders' in the meat production industry towards the practice of meat inspection. Out of 90 questionnaires distributed, there were 84 respondents and six non-responders. The Respondents consisted of seven (7) Veterinary Doctors, 18 Livestock personnel, 12 Animal owners and 47 Butchers, comprising 8 %, 21 %, 15 % and 56 %, respectively.

It is encouraging to note that majority of the respondents actually showed a very high awareness of the importance of meat inspection to animal-food safety (Fig 1).

Fig 1: Occupational distribution of Responders and their opinion about meat inspection as a means of preventing transfer of diseases from animal to man

Fig 2: Occupational distribution of Responders and their opinion about the information they have on Meat Inspection

This shows that the likelihood of sustaining and even upgrading the programme for the purpose of standardisation has a positive outlook (Swai *et al.*, 2010). However, for the fact that over 30 % of the total respondents comprising 60% of animal owners and up to 40% of butchers (Fig 2) felt they were not well informed about the importance of meat inspection shows why

the attitude to meat inspection remains poor, while meat inspection as a routine practice in the animal food industry remains largely underdeveloped (Ngbede *et al.*, 2012). This attitude is reflected in Participants' readiness to forego meat inspection if they can find a reason to (Fig 3 and 4).

Fig 3: Occupational distribution of Responders and their opinion about forfeiting inspection of meat.

Fig 4: Distribution of participants that could possibly forego the practice of meat inspection

A study by Okoli *et al.* (2006) reported that an average of 56 % of animals supplied to the state is uninspected. Greed and

ignorance more than the lack of compensation from government is responsible for this (Fig 5).

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Fig 5: Distribution of Participants' reasons for not cooperating with Meat Inspection

Fig 6: Distribution of participants' blaming the government for stakeholders not cooperating with meat inspection

In fact almost 80 % of respondents do not blame the government for the failure of the programme (Fig 6). However, it was particularly encouraging that all stakeholders (including butchers and owners) showed willingness to cooperate with any efforts to standardize the practice of meat inspection.

Conclusion and recommendation

There is need to educate stakeholders in meat inspection programme on the importance of the practice through increased awareness campaigns, payment of compensations and more legal backing

with strong enforcement of extant laws by government to promote the programme and practice of meat inspection in the state and indeed in the country.

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