

AHC -10

Knowledge Attitude and Practice of Meat Inspection among Stakeholders in Owerri, South-Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Meat safety and disease surveillance is highly reliant on ante- and post-mortem examination of meat at local abattoirs/slaughter slabs. Sometimes unwholesome meat finds its way into the local markets, or directly onto the consumer's table. In view of cases of emerging and re-emerging disease outbreaks of public health significance, it is important to use participatory Epidemiology to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of animal presentation for ante-mortem and post-mortem evaluation using a local abattoir in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria as a case study. Questionnaires and informal focus group interviews with stakeholders (animal owners, butchers, livestock department personnel and Veterinary officers attached to the abattoir) were key tools used in this study. 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 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 factors such as market demand, economic pressure and lack of understanding influence animal owners' and butchers' cooperation in meat inspection. Veterinary and other livestock department personnel are not as motivated and empowered to effectively execute their duties. Thus unofficial and indiscriminate slaughtering of animals in and outside abattoirs which may include sick and pregnant ones are common.

Key words: Meat inspection, ante-mortem, post-mortem, food safety, programme assessment

Introduction

As 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). However, as in most developing nations, standardization of the practice in the state is very poor and the practice of meat inspection leaves so much to be desired (Kareane *et al.*, 2006; Okoli *et al.*, 2006). In fact, there are hardly any true abattoirs in the state with mostly slaughter slabs being available for the processing of commercial meat in the state (Okoli *et al.*, 2006). Nevertheless, Veterinary and other livestock personnel are still stationed in these makeshift abattoirs to ensure that, for public safety, meat inspection is still routinely practiced of 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

The study was carried out in Owerri, the Imo state capital in South-eastern Nigeria, with the co ordinates 5.485°N 7.035°E and 59 meters above sea level. Questionnaires (90) and informal focus group interviews with animal owners, butchers, livestock department personnel and veterinarians attached to the abattoir were used in this study. 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 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.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study show 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 I). This shows that the likelihood of sustaining and even upgrading the programme for the purpose of standardisation has a positive outlook (Swari *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 II) do not feel they are 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 III and IV).

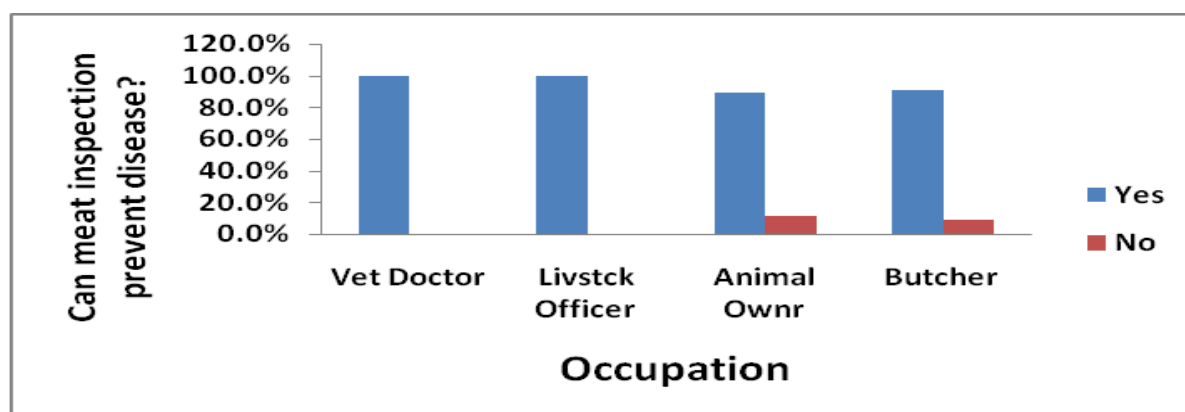


Fig I: Occupational distribution of respondents and their opinion about meat inspection as a means of preventing transfer of diseases from animal to man.

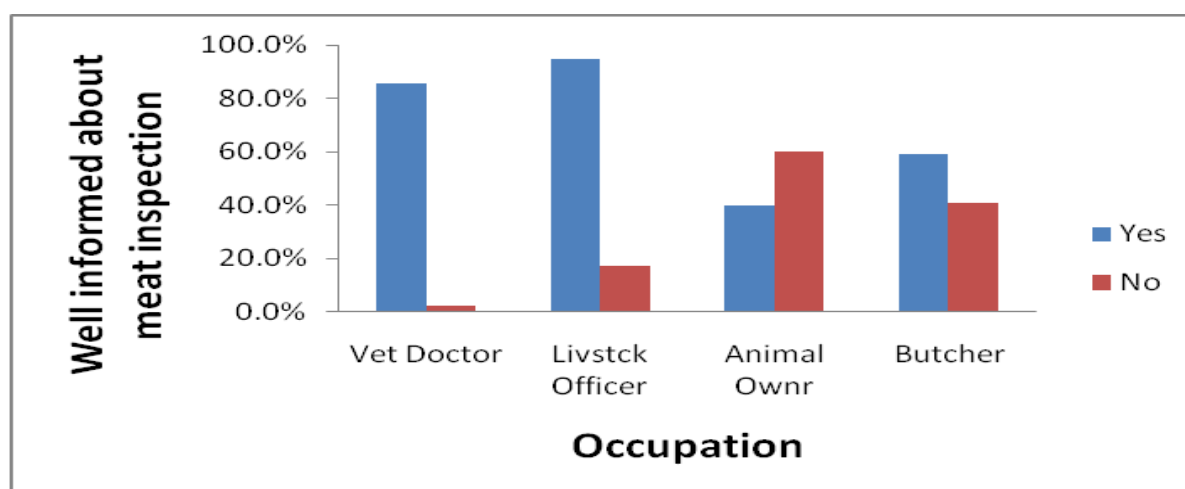


Fig II: Occupational distribution of respondents and their opinion about the information they have on Meat Inspection

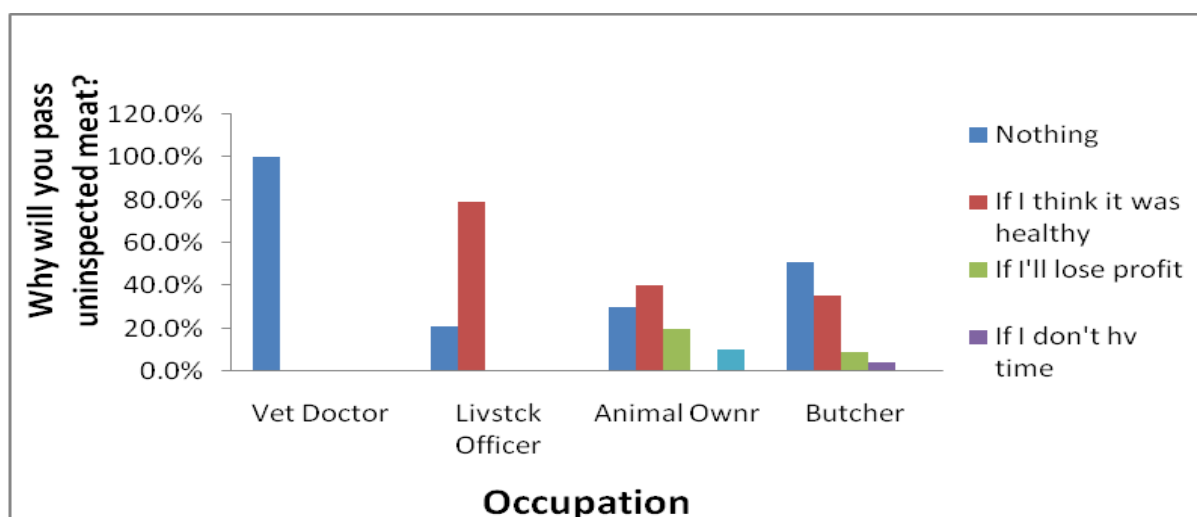


Fig III: Occupational distribution of Responders and their opinion about forfeiting inspection of meat

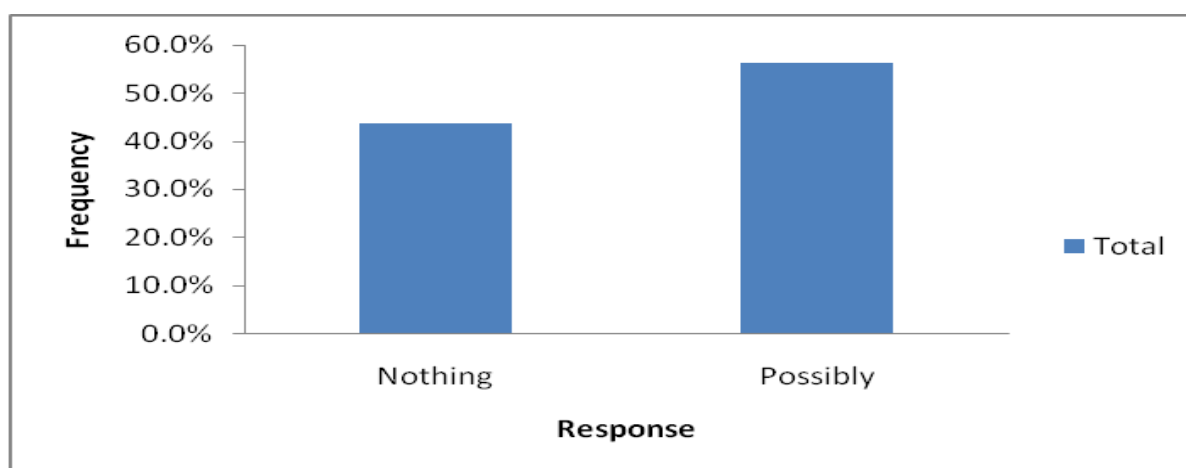


Fig IV: Distribution of participants that could possibly forego the practice of meat inspection

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 V). In fact almost 80 % of respondents do not blame the govt for the failure of the programme (Fig VI). 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.

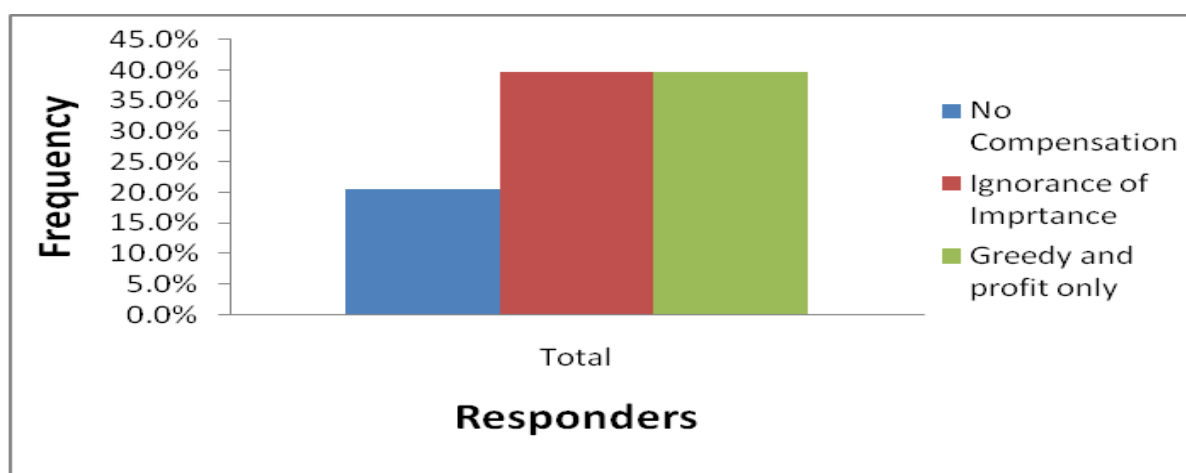


Fig V: Distribution of participants' reasons for not cooperating with meat inspection

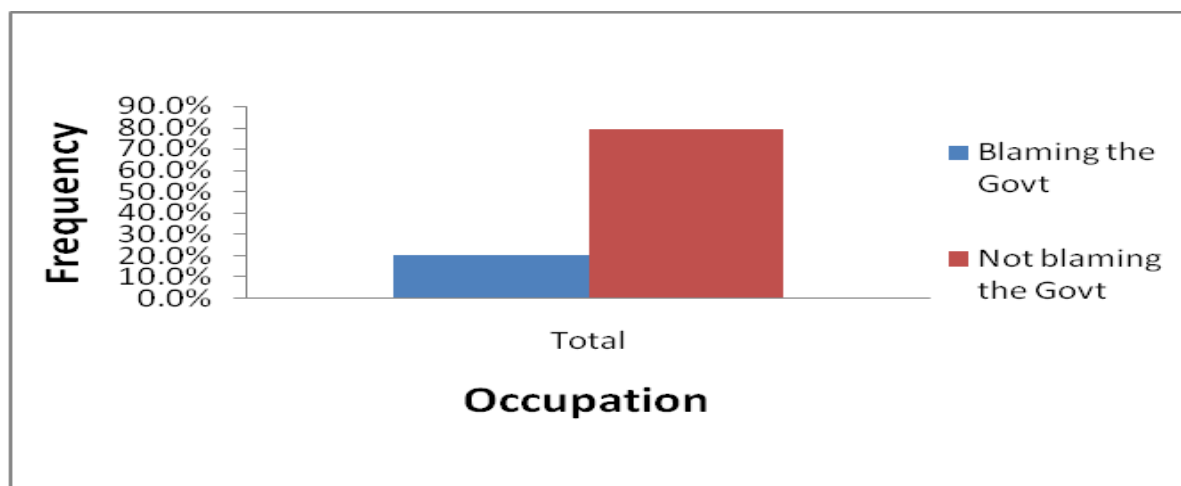


Fig VI: Distribution of Participants' blaming the Govt for stakeholders not cooperating with Meat Inspection

Conclusion and Recommendation

Respondents actually advocated for increased awareness campaigns, payment of compensations and increased legal backing with strong enforcement of extant laws by the government to promote the programme and practice of meat inspection in the state and indeed in the country.

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