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TITLE

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DUTCH AND BELGIAN PIG FARMERS WITH RESPECT TO THEIR BIOSECURITY LEVEL AND ANTIMICROBIAL USAGE WITHIN THE I-4-1-HEALTH PROJECT

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CONTENT

Objectives

To face the challenge of antimicrobial resistance in food-producing animals, the i-4-1-Health project aims to reduce antimicrobial usage (AMU) through increased infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship in Belgium and the Netherlands in pig production.

Material & methods

In this study 30 sow farms were included (15 per country) with higher than average AMU in the nursery pigs. From each farm the following information was collected: farm characteristics, technical performances, vaccination strategies, diagnostics, management and level of biosecurity, measured by means of the Biocheck.UGent™ (www.biocheck.ugent.be). The better biosecurity is established, the higher the score.

Results

The average number of sows in the included farms was 500 (range 95-1600). In the Netherlands, a continuous production system was the standard (n=10), whereas in Belgium a 4-week batch production system was the dominant system (n=7). The biosecurity score for the Netherlands (72%) was higher than that of Belgium (53%) on average (non-significant). Especially internal biosecurity was scored substantially higher in Dutch farms, with the highest score achieved in control of vermin and wild birds (93%). Measures concerning purchase of animals scored the highest in Belgium (81%). The antimicrobials used in the year preceding the farm visits differed greatly between both countries. Weaners received antimicrobials during 51% of their time in the nursery in the Belgian farms in comparison to the Netherlands where AMU was substantially lower with 11% on average during the same period.

Conclusion

These data indicate that there is room for improvement. Variation between both countries in AMU can be explained by cultural and historical differences. The Netherlands introduced reduction goals for AMU three years earlier than Belgium and additionally guidelines for antimicrobial treatment per indication differ occasionally between countries. With farm-specific interventions we aspire to a reduction in AMU on these farms during the further course of the project.