



PRESS RELEASE

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Regional Animal Health Center (RAHC)

Facing Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) in West Africa Through Vaccination Campaigns

PPR in West Africa constitutes an animal health emergency because of its rapid spread. It kills up to 90% of the animals it infects and causes major economic losses. Adding to the efforts already undertaken at both national and regional level, the ECOWAS Regional Veterinary Committee continues to reflect, under the facilitation of the Regional Animal Health Center (RAHC), on the best approaches to accelerate the control and eradication of this scourge in the region by 2030.

The 4th meeting of the ECOWAS Veterinary Committee held in Lomé (Togo), from 18 to 19 April 2024, provided an opportunity for the veterinary services of ECOWAS Member States, including Mauritania and Chad, to discuss the progress made, difficulties encountered and formulate recommendations for combatting Peste des Petits Ruminants in their respective countries and in the region.

The main challenges identified include poor dissemination of ECOWAS veterinary texts, limited number of veterinary human resources in Member States, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cape Verde, poor funding for the sub-sector, fragility of the regulatory system in countries, certification of vaccines by the Pan-African Veterinary Vaccine Centre of the African Union (PAN-VAC), poor support to the States by RAHC in obtaining vaccines and challenges relating to the marking of vaccinated small ruminants for various reasons.

To tackle these challenges, the discussions and sharing of experience enabled the members of the Regional Veterinary Committee to call on both ECOWAS RAHC and Member States to action as part of their responsibilities. ECOWAS should, for example, provide Member States with additional technical and financial support in finalising national strategic plans for the eradication of PPR, support the dissemination of ECOWAS veterinary texts and commission a feasibility study on the creation of a regional vaccine and diluent bank. Countries should step up their efforts to have vaccines certified by AU-PANVAC, monitor vaccine quality from receipt to the animal's foot, carry out seromonitoring after vaccination campaigns, recruit more veterinary staff and lobby political decision-makers to mobilise the resources needed to carry out good vaccination practices.

Vaccination protects small ruminants against certain viral diseases, namely the Peste des Petits Ruminants, and other serious diseases. Vaccination is (i) a reasonable overall investment in herd health, (ii) proven effective protection against most diseases, (iii) herd immunity over time and (iv) a substitute for antibiotics. Controlling and eradicating PPR through regional approaches to



Regional Animal Health Center (RAHC) cross-border animal disease control also directly impact food and nutrition security, particularly for women and other vulnerable groups.

To recall, small ruminant production is an important component of the complex agricultural system on which the ECOWAS economy is highly dependent. Livestock production contributes 44% of the region's agricultural GDP, with an average of more than 60 million head of cattle, 400 million poultry and 160 million small ruminants. Compared with sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, it accounts for around 33% of sheep and 40% of goats. With a view to protecting and improving this production, mass vaccination campaigns have already been carried out in 8 countries in the region, namely Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, and Senegal, between 2018 and 2023, with technical support from ECOWAS and financial support from the Swiss Development Cooperation.

In addition, since 2016, the World Bank-funded Regional Support Project to Pastoralism in the Sahel (PRAPS) has been implemented in six Sahelian countries, including 4 ECOWAS countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal). In phase 2, PRAPS, through its component 1 "Improvement of animal health and control of veterinary medicines", which includes SC1.2 "Regional integration of policies, regulatory harmonisation and coordination of countries in animal health management" implemented by RAHC, is also focusing on mass vaccination against PPR.

The Regional Veterinary Committee (RVC) was set up by the ECOWAS Commission under Regulation C/Reg.23/11/10. It brings together Directors of Veterinary Services and Presidents of Veterinary Associations of ECOWAS Member States. The role of the RVC is to support the ECOWAS Commission in drafting Community legislation and harmonising legislation by formulating technical opinions and recommendations.

RAHC coordinates the activities of the Regional Veterinary Committee. With the support of partners, it supports national action on animal disease control and livestock development. Its main mission is to contribute to the fight against poverty and food and nutrition insecurity by continuously improving animal production at both national and regional level.

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