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The Effects of Improved Training on the Business Performance of Livestock Vaccinators in Tanzania

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Abstract

East Coast Fever (ECF) is the most important infectious disease facing cattle keepers in Tanzania and the region. To address this challenge, Tanzanian authorities have since 2003 registered and promoted the Infection and Treatment Method (ITM) vaccine against ECF. To date, an estimated 1 million heads of cattle have been vaccinated with the 2 initially recognised distributors delivering 100,000 doses per year. However, all vaccinated cattle account for less than 5% of the total Tanzanian cattle population, leaving a huge gap that could be bridged by scaling up the delivery of ITM. This would reduce ECF-related losses, estimated to be USD 133.9 million annually, and benefit a sizeable proportion of the 1.7 million cattle keepers. Because of its cost, around USD 6 per vaccinated animal, public vaccination campaigns are unsustainable. Instead, a private dissemination system has been developed, based on accredited vaccine distributors supplying local vaccinators. The number of well-trained and certified vaccinators was identified as a bottle-neck to reach a greater number of livestock keepers with the ITM vaccine. Therefore, over 200 additional animal health professionals were trained with an improved curriculum and subsequently certified by the Veterinary Council of Tanzania. To document and measure the effects of this training, all trainees completed a survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices directly before the training, directly after the training and finally by phone about 18 months after the survey. The results show that most vaccinators already had a sound technical capacity before the training, which was further enhanced by the training. After the training, most vaccinators aspired to substantially increase their ITM vaccination activities and strengthen their provision of animal health services. However, this is in contrast with the results provided by the final survey round. Only few vaccinators were able to increase their vaccination numbers considerably after having received the ITM training. This may be because most trainees were government employees who may lack incentives to actively grow their animal health business. However, attracting trainees with a business background has been a challenge in a sector dominated by public institutions.

Keywords: Business performance, East-Coast-Fever, ITM vaccination, training