The organisation of federal Veterinary Services in Canada: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency

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Summary
The organisational design of a national Veterinary Service is critical to the overall quality and integrity of its animal health and veterinary public health infrastructure. It is well recognised that the diversity of political, economic and social situations which exist in and between countries dictates that no one model of organisational structure can be applied to all circumstances. In Canada, a reorganisation of the approach of the federal government to food inspection in 1997 resulted in the transfer of the veterinary administration to a newly created agency called the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

The authors provide a short background on the impetus for the creation of the CFIA and an overview of its organisational structure and responsibilities in animal and veterinary public health and food safety. Also included are the logic models that were developed for the federal Veterinary Services as part of their quality and performance management framework. Integrating all federally mandated food inspection systems under the CFIA has had concrete benefits in clarifying roles and responsibilities, reducing overlap and duplication of programme functions, improving service delivery and facilitating federal-provincial collaboration. Moreover, the strength of the organisation lies in the ability of the Canadian Veterinary Services to adhere to the fundamental principles of quality which are recommended by the OIE (World organisation for animal health) for the evaluation of Veterinary Services.

No single organisational structure can guarantee a highly effective or competent Veterinary Service. Common challenges exist that may or may not be addressed in whole or in part by the organisational structure. The challenges highlighted in this paper provide further thoughts on the management of shared jurisdiction, meeting public health objectives, balancing science and political accountability, and defining the role and jurisdiction of veterinarians.

Keywords
Agency – Canada – Organisation – Veterinary Service.

Introduction
One should not be misled by the name of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). It is much more than an organisation concerned only with food or inspection. Like other regulatory bodies, the legislative mandate of the CFIA confers multiple functions and considerable discretionary powers. As the name suggests, the activities of the CFIA focus on inspecting the food supply and administering and enforcing a number of statutory acts and related regulations and orders.

As the largest science-based regulatory body in Canada, the CFIA is committed to enhancing the safety of animals, animal products and food produced in Canada, as well as those exported from or imported into Canada. The activities of the CFIA include the following:

– domestic and import inspection
– export certification
– quality assurance
- registration of products and facilities
- audit activities.

In addition to inspecting food, other functions include:
- risk assessment
- programme design
- the establishment of standards and policies
- operational delivery of services for animal health, veterinary public health and plant health.

The CFIA is also responsible for managing the federal animal and plant quarantine system and the network of laboratories across the country. The research activity of the Agency extends beyond the development of diagnostic methods and survey design to respond to consumer needs and issues relating to food safety awareness.

The Agency conducts key policy-making and consultation functions with various groups in its policy community, including negotiating trade certification protocols and contributing to the development of relevant international trade standards for food, animal health and plant protection (8).

Background

A more effective delivery of federal food inspection services was the laudable goal which was examined in the 1994 Government of Canada Program Review and Report of the Auditor General of Canada (5). The 1995 federal budget highlighted the need to resolve this issue and, in May 1995, the Office of Food Inspection Systems was established to review organisational options with the federal departments, provinces, industry and other stakeholders in Canada.

A discussion paper was developed which outlined four possible organisational options (6). This paper was the focus of stakeholder consultations across the country. As a result of these consultations, in the federal budget of March 1996, the Government of Canada announced that all the food inspection and quarantine services which had previously been provided by four federal government departments (Health Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Industry Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada) would now be provided by a single agency, the CFIA.

Draft legislation was developed and introduced into the House of Commons on 18 September, 1996. The Bill was subjected to considerable debate both in the House of Commons and at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and received Royal Assent on 27 March 1997, with the CFIA becoming fully operational four days later, on 1 April 1997.

Being an agency, rather than a traditional government department, allows the CFIA considerable flexibility in terms of finances and human resources. The CFIA has the authority to set fees and to raise and retain revenue through diverse activities such as inspection and certification programmes, the accreditation of laboratories, the sale of patents and the provision of training. It can also choose its own service providers in areas such as legal services, procurement, asset disposal and property management. The Agency has also been granted a form of multi-year funding flexibility which means that, instead of being forfeited, any unspent budget can be carried forward into the next year. This flexible funding also allows the CFIA direct access to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Government of Canada for the payment of animal compensation for disease control activities associated with the Reportable Diseases legislation.

In terms of managing staff, the Agency has its own status as a separate employer, which is fully responsible and accountable for its own staffing and for negotiating collective agreements with agents representing CFIA employees. Nevertheless, employees remain federal public servants so that they can retain their public service pensions and mobility within the federal public service (4).
The main forces which shaped the Agency were two-fold. First, there was the general belief that securing the food supply was a core role of the federal authority which ought to remain in the public domain. Secondly, there was great pressure from central agencies within the federal government, driven by the fiscal agenda of deficit reduction, to achieve savings by consolidating the inspection activities conducted by several departments (8).

A significant feature of the creation of the CFIA was that it was not undertaken in response to a crisis of public confidence in the regulatory system or in the Government of Canada. In retrospect, and against the backdrop of subsequent high-profile international animal health and veterinary public health events, it can be seen to have been a timely initiative. The CFIA was created to help simplify the organisation of a complex multi-jurisdictional area. Furthermore, the CFIA demonstrates the commitment of the Canadian government to continuous improvement in the federal role of protecting the food supply and animal and plant health.

Reporting accountability and organisational structure

The CFIA administers and enforces federal statutes which address all stages of food production, and reports to Parliament through the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The Agency not only inspects food, but also regulates and inspects the seeds, livestock feeds, fertilisers, plants and animals on which a safe food supply depends. In the case of food, inspection primarily involves verifying that importers, distributors and producers are complying with Canadian regulations and standards for safety, quality, quantity, ingredients, handling, processing, packaging and labelling. Where inspection and certification agreements are in place, the CFIA also ensures the compliance of Canadian exports with the requirements of foreign countries.

To meet these commitments, the Agency performs a range of regulatory responsibilities and is charged with the administration and enforcement of 38 sets of regulations, as well as the following 13 federal acts (including the Food and Drugs Act (as it relates to food): – the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Agricultural Products Act
– the Administrative Monetary Penalties Act
– the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act
– the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act
– the Feeds Act
– the Fertilizers Act
– the Fish Inspection Act
– the Health of Animals Act
– the Meat Inspection Act
– the Plant Breeders’ Rights Act
– the Plant Protection Act
– the Seeds Act
– the Food and Drugs Act (as it relates to food).

Much like Veterinary Services in other countries, the CFIA is required to:
– remain vigilant and responsive to emerging threats
– enhance surveillance, detection and traceability programmes to meet increasingly stringent international standards in a competitive global market
– address the changing expectations of consumers.

The successful design and delivery of these activities is fundamental to the broader public policy objectives of the Government of Canada in the areas of public security, economic opportunity, public health, and environmental sustainability. To this end, the CFIA relies on the best available science for evidence and values-based decision-making, for programme design and delivery, and as a tool to deal with emerging issues such as biotechnology and the increasing threat of the deliberate introduction of disease.

The top priority of the CFIA is food safety. The Agency shares this responsibility with producers, food processors, distributors, retail outlets and consumers, and with other government organisations and jurisdictions. As an agency responsible for enforcing federal legislation, the CFIA uses data on compliance rates and other quantitative and qualitative information to measure its success in achieving the objectives of the government (3). Furthermore, the CFIA protects Canadian livestock from foreign animal diseases and regulated animal diseases that may occur in Canada. Through its disease detection, control and eradication activities and import controls, the Agency plays a significant role in helping Canada to remain free of all the OIE (World organisation for animal health) List A diseases.

The principles of ministerial responsibility and bureaucratic accountability are directly built into the legislation of the CFIA, as is consistent with the parliamentary heritage of Canada, on the basis that, ‘inspecting the nation’s food supply and managing the quarantine system are important public policy issues over which there is a need to ensure the scrutiny and control of Parliament’ (2). These considerations influenced the type of public organisation chosen and the overall accountability framework developed for the CFIA. Consequently, the CFIA is more autonomous than a federal department, but not as independent of government control (at arm’s length) as a crown corporation (8).

Testifying to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in 1997, co-author R.L. Doering stated that, if the primary activities of the Agency were to
conduct research and provide training, a crown corporation model could have been used. However, the CFIA has major regulatory powers of the most intrusive kind, since non-compliance can lead to large fines and imprisonment. The CFIA makes life-and-death decisions, applying science and risk analysis, often in circumstances characterised by urgency and crisis. The House of Commons once determined that no minister can escape accountability for the death by food poisoning of several children by referring parents to the President and Board of a remote corporation (1). The same holds true in the event of a major animal or zoonotic disease outbreak.

The creation of the CFIA also reinforced the differentiation of federal powers between the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Health. Through Health Canada, the Minister of Health is responsible for conducting risk assessments of, and establishing policies and standards on, the safety and nutritional quality of the food sold in Canada. Furthermore, the Minister of Health is responsible for undertaking a systematic and independent audit of the food safety components of the CFIA food inspection programme, and for verifying the compliance of that programme with Canadian health and safety standards (8).

Through the CFIA, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is responsible for risk management, risk communication, and conducting all federal food inspection, enforcement and compliance activities. Furthermore, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food retains responsibility for the following:
– the performance of animal and plant risk assessments
– the design of animal and plant health programmes
– the establishment of policies and standards related to animal and plant health
– the provision of the supporting inspection, enforcement and compliance activities.

The CFIA is headed by a President, who reports directly to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and by an Executive Vice-President, both of whom are appointed by Order-in-Council. An Executive Management Committee has been established, consisting of nine areas of responsibility, reporting directly to the President. Of the nine Committee members who report directly to the President (Fig. 1), two are veterinarians. The interests of Veterinary Services are represented and supported at the Executive Management Committee by the Vice-President of the Programs Branch (Fig. 2), in matters of programme design, standards and policies, and by the Vice-President of the Operations Branch in matters of programme delivery, enforcement and compliance.

As of October 2002, the CFIA had 5,584 employees, including 561 veterinary staff and a further 24 veterinarians in management positions. In the fiscal year 2001-2002, the CFIA had expenditures of CAN$489,049,000. Total expenditures against the food safety sector were CAN$296,300,000, including the salary costs for the equivalent of 3,244 full-time
positions, while the animal health sector showed CAN$162,200,000 in expenses, including the salary costs for the equivalent of 979 full-time positions.

**Animal Products Directorate**

The Animal Products Directorate is headed by an Executive Director (Fig. 3), who also serves as the Chief Veterinary Officer of Canada and official Delegate to the OIE. Reporting to the Executive Director are three Program Division Directors. These Directors are responsible for the Animal Health and Production Division, the Food of Animal Origin Division and the Fish, Seafood and Production Division. There are also four Program Network Directors, one located in each of the four geographical operations areas, namely, the Atlantic Area Network, the Quebec Area Network, the Ontario Area Network and the Western Area Network. The cadre of veterinarians employed by the CFIA play an integral part in the design and delivery of Agency programmes. The vital role played by veterinary-based activities in achieving crucial aspects of the public policy agenda of the government are best demonstrated in the following diagram (Fig. 4).

As Figure 4 shows, veterinary-based activities make a direct and substantial contribution to food security, public health and a number of socio-economic outcomes. In this context, the food security outcome represents both the availability of a consistent and predictable food supply (of sufficient quantity and at a cost affordable to consumers) and the delivery of food which is safe for human consumption.

The public health outcome extends beyond the limitation of risks associated with known and emerging zoonotic diseases to include the indirect benefits that result from a reduction in the prevalence of regulated diseases. Among these benefits is the consideration that, when the prevalence of animal diseases requiring treatment regimes is reduced, the development of antimicrobial resistance becomes less likely. In addition, if disease control measures take into consideration the prudent use of therapeutants, and deal carefully with the issues of carcass disposal and bio-containment parameters, such as farm quarantines, buffer zones and disease handling methods, the potential exposure of the human population to adverse health consequences from contaminants in water sources or the environment will be greatly reduced. The social and economic outcomes derived from reduced disease levels include the traditional benefits of lower production costs and potential opportunities for access to international markets, but these outcomes also address a number of issues that concern the general public, such as the humane transportation and slaughter of animals, the preservation of bio-diversity and the protection of wildlife from diseases from domestic animal sources.

**Animal Health and Production Division**

Under the mandate of the Health of Animals Act and Regulations and the Feeds Act and Regulations, the Animal Health and Production Division encompasses programme activities which range throughout the animal food production chain from the farm to the abattoir. The following tasks are included in the scope of the National Animal Health Program:

- the registration of animal feeds
- the licensing of veterinary biologics
- the management of domestic disease control programmes
- preparedness for any foreign animal disease emergency
- the humane transportation of animals
- consideration of the need for future regulation of animals derived from biotechnology
- import and export health certification
- a shared responsibility with the Food of Animal Origin Division for the avian Hatchery Program.

**Food of Animal Origin Division**

Under the mandate of the Meat Inspection Act and Regulations, the Canada Agricultural Products Act and Regulations, and the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations of Health Canada, as this
legislation relates to food, the Food of Animal Origin Division has responsibility for the red meat, poultry, egg, dairy and honey programmes. These responsibilities include overseeing compliance of the programmes legislated by the CFIA in the following establishments:
- more than 800 federally registered slaughterhouses, processing establishments and storage facilities for meat
- 279 federally registered establishments and 87 importing facilities for dairy products
- 351 registered grading facilities for eggs
- 118 health monitored avian hatcheries

Fish, Seafood and Production Division
Under the mandate of the Fish Inspection Act and Regulations, the Fish, Seafood and Production Division establishes the policies, standards and inspection requirements for the following:
- fish products
- federally registered fish and seafood processing establishments
- importers of fish and fish products
- fishing vessels
- fisher-packer facilities
- the equipment used for handling, transporting and storing fish.

The regulations require that the 922 establishments in Canada which process fish and seafood for export or interprovincial trade must be registered with the CFIA. As a condition of this registration, the CFIA requires that all establishments develop and implement a Quality Management Program (QMP). The QMP must include a formal hazard analysis of the product and of factory processes, and identify the controls in place to prevent such hazards from occurring. These activities are in accordance with the internationally recognised principles of hazard analysis and critical control points.

Quality management
The creation of the Agency has further enhanced the ability of the Veterinary Services of Canada to achieve the principles of quality of independence, impartiality, integrity and objectivity prescribed in Article 1.3.3.2 of the OIE International Animal Health Code (7). The CFIA has implemented a planning, reporting and accountability structure which forms the basis of its QMP. As part of this performance management framework, the Agency has developed logic models for each of its areas of responsibility. These models describe their activities, outputs and immediate and intermediate outcomes and express the effect they are expected to have upon society. The logic models for food safety and animal health are reflected in Figs 5 and 6.

In its most simple terms, the activities at the top of the model are broad areas that serve to answer the question ‘what does this department do?’ The next level is the outputs. Outputs define the results of these activities and answer the question ‘what does this department produce?’ The three levels of outcomes are external consequences attributed to the programme to aid in understanding ‘why does the department do this?’ The logic models can be used as the basis for measuring the performance of the department and establishing meaningful performance indicators against which the Agency can be audited.

Science and laboratory support
One of the key determinants of success for its food safety, animal and public health programmes is the quality of the science available to the Agency. The CFIA is extremely well served by 21 laboratories located across the country which provide:
- diagnostic capacity and competency
- research
- accreditation services
- training
- scientific advice.

The high degree of commitment to quality management practices has resulted in all CFIA laboratories achieving accreditation by the Standards Council of Canada to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025 standards. In the area of diagnostics, chemists, toxicologists, microbiologists, veterinarians and technicians perform tests and conduct analyses on samples which CFIA inspectors have collected for certification, surveillance and monitoring programmes. Laboratory scientists conduct research in the following areas:
- food hazards and food-borne diseases
- diseases of animals and plant pests
- the development of new test methods
- validation of existing test methods
- technology transfer.

The Agency provides technical expertise, proficiency testing, audit services and other assistance to aid non-CFIA laboratories to meet CFIA and international quality management standards and become accredited. The Biohazards Containment and Safety Unit of the Laboratories Directorate manages CFIA laboratory safety programmes, enforces containment standards for Canadian laboratories that import animal pathogens, and issues permits for the importation and movement of animal pathogens. Laboratory scientists are full partners with programme policy officers in providing scientific advice for redesigning programmes and evidence-based decision-making, and for contributing to the development of international standards and the delivery of specialised training such as foreign animal disease diagnosis. Within the CFIA laboratory system, there are 14 OIE reference laboratories and one international collaborating centre. These laboratories provide
many opportunities for recruiting and retaining expert scientific staff, who then collaborate in research and provide high-level training to veterinary field staff.

The Animal Health Disease Surveillance Unit supporting the Animal Products Directorate has two important functions. Disease surveillance is the primary concern of the Unit. Through the formation of a nationwide network known as the Canadian Animal Health Network (CAHNet), this Unit has united the disease detection capabilities of practicing veterinarians, provincial and university diagnostic laboratories, and the federal government. The CAHNet educates producers and practitioners to make them more aware of the importance of disease detection and reporting. The activities of the CAHNet partners are published in the Canadian Veterinary Journal, the CAHNet Bulletin and on the Internet at http://www.CAHNet.org. Part of the work of the Unit is to ensure that Canada keeps up to date with international developments in animal disease outbreaks, surveillance methods and livestock identification approaches. To achieve this, the Unit provides continuous scanning and analysis of international disease intelligence. The Unit also has a supporting role in the implementation of the mandatory animal identification programme for cattle and bison in Canada and the extension of this programme to other species.

Further crucial scientific support is provided to the Animal Products Directorate by the Animal Health Risk Assessment Unit. The key activities of this Unit include the following:
- planning, developing and conducting animal health risk analyses
- planning, developing and conducting disease status and veterinary infrastructure evaluations of foreign countries, regions and zones
- developing concepts, novel approaches, practices and techniques in risk analysis to provide the most current, sound and accurate information, advice, and analysis for programme design
- providing a structured approach to policy development

Fig. 5
Logic model outlining the work of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in the area of food safety (October 2002). The Agency has developed similar logic models for each of the different areas of responsibility. These models, which describe activities and expected outcomes, form part of the performance management framework of the federal Veterinary Services in Canada.
– contributing to the development of national and international standards in the areas of risk analysis, epidemiology, evaluation of Veterinary Services, regionalisation and zoning, disease control and economic consequence analysis.

The Center for Policy and Epidemiology evaluates new and emerging sciences, technologies and tools which may be applied to disease control. Specific projects include the following:

– the application of Geographic Information Systems for real-time mapping of disease outbreaks
– studies on contacts between animal populations, such as in community pastures
– studies on the demographic movement patterns of livestock
– the evaluation of disposal sites for environmental sustainability.

Benefits of the creation of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Consolidating the establishment of human health and safety standards with Health Canada and integrating all federally mandated food inspection and quarantine services under the CFIA have enhanced food safety and accountability.

Clarified roles and responsibilities

Although the CFIA shares the responsibility for food safety with Health Canada at the federal level, and with consumers, the food-processing industry and provincial governments at the provincial level, the Agency is able to take a more
comprehensive approach across all areas of food production, ‘from gate to plate’. In addition, combining the two areas of animal health and food inspection under a single agency enables an improved ability to respond to food safety emergencies. The CFIA has both federal powers to recall food products and the authority under the Health of Animals Act to investigate suspect premises and order the destruction of infected or suspect animals. Separating the Agency from traditional federal government departments has achieved another important public policy objective. Both the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada were perceived to have an inherent conflict as their mandates traditionally included both industry and market promotion as well as inspection and regulatory functions. Separating the regulatory function from the industry promotion function has ended this conflict.

Reduced overlap and duplication

The creation of the Agency has significantly streamlined working practices so that there is now much less overlap and duplication in areas such as enforcement, informatics, laboratories, communications, and overheads. Other efficiency gains have also been achieved through the establishment of a simplified regional structure, which has resulted in the consolidation of inspection facilities and a move towards a service-orientated approach to serve clients more effectively.

Improved service delivery

The key motivation for any changes to organisational design is being able to respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of the public, regulatory partners and regulated agri-food industries. The consolidation of federal inspection activities within the Agency provides the public, consumers, international counterparts and regulated industry sectors with a single point of contact, while its financial and human resource flexibilities permit the Agency to be more responsive to the changing needs of the organisations which it serves and regulates. The structure of the Agency encourages a flexible work environment and a participatory decision-making process within its legal framework. Agency staff are empowered and made accountable for conducting business based on their knowledge and experience.

In an effort to improve service delivery to importers, the CFIA, in collaboration with Customs and Revenue Canada, launched a new initiative designed to enhance compliance and improve service for all importers of agriculture, food and fish commodities. Improvements included extending the hours of service (24 hours a day, seven days a week) and introducing electronic commerce. Services were further enhanced by the introduction of new technologies, including the use of electronic forms, new approval processes and communication through the Internet.

Government programmes which protect animal and human health and safeguard the food supply promote consumer and international confidence in food products, open up markets and help to create economic prosperity. While the food-processing industry is responsible for the production and marketing of sale, quality products, the CFIA contributes to economic opportunities by negotiating science-based certification requirements for two-way trade and ensuring the integrity of inspection and certification procedures. The Agency also negotiates mutual recognition arrangements or equivalency agreements to encourage recognition of the Canadian plant and animal health and food inspection system. Such agreements can reduce inspection and certification costs for importing and exporting countries, while providing the assurances expected by consumers. These agreements help to broaden the acceptance of Canadian systems by other countries and reduce the likelihood of additional certification requirements.

In addressing future needs, the CFIA, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and their respective counterparts in the United States of America (USA) have been exploring options for the co-location of Canadian and American employees in one common facility at ports-of-entry and border crossings.

Improved federal/provincial harmonisation and co-operation

A single federal body, combined with new legal powers to facilitate federal-provincial collaboration, has contributed to a more integrated approach to standards and inspection throughout Canada. Addressing gaps in federal, provincial, and municipal regulation through the development of ‘national codes’ enhances food safety and promotes international trade. In addition, bilateral approaches enable the Agency to enter into comprehensive agreements with provinces to develop more integrated approaches to food safety and inspection, while maintaining its political and administrative accountabilities for protecting public health and confidence. Partnership principles are agreed on through consensus decision-making and based on sound science and risk assessment processes. This results in flexibility and adaptability in achieving standards, the equitable application of standards, and the avoidance of non-negotiated transferrals of costs, liabilities or accountabilities.

Enhanced Veterinary Services

As a result of its reporting and accountability relationships, the CFIA can clearly be seen to have avoided the perceived conflict of interests associated with other organisations, where the regulator is also responsible for supporting and promoting the interests of the agricultural production sector. This separation ensures that the CFIA can achieve the highest possible degree...
of integrity in meeting its disease reporting obligations, as it cannot be influenced by concerns about lost economic opportunities. Similarly, the ethics and credibility of certification are preserved because of the independence of Agency staff from any pressures which might otherwise affect their judgement or decisions. Furthermore, the creation of the Agency has served to highlight the integral role of Veterinary Services in achieving crucial public health objectives. These objectives go beyond food safety and zoonotic disease prevention to include other concerns, such as the emergence of antimicrobial resistance.

Challenges to Veterinary Services beyond organisational design

There is no single organisational structure which guarantees a highly effective or competent Veterinary Service. Constitutional, political and financial realities will influence the approaches adopted in any country. However, common challenges exist for all Veterinary Services that may or may not be addressed in whole or in part by the organisational structure in which they operate. Four such examples are presented as the basis for further reflection.

Coping with shared jurisdiction

Canada, as a federal state, shares jurisdiction in animal health, public health and food inspection activities with its provincial authorities. Canada, the USA, and Australia are three of the oldest federal systems in the world and yet each has taken a different path to manage shared jurisdiction. It is clear that each country must find its own way but in the process learn from the experience and practices of others. Evolving governance arrangements like that of the European Union pose particularly interesting dynamics and challenges when it comes to ensuring accountability and an overall competent authority. Such examples can only enrich the collective understanding and approaches of other Veterinary Services.

In Canada, federal-provincial harmonisation has been much improved by the new consolidated arrangement of the CFIA at the federal level. In fact, the federal re-organisation has been a major impetus to encourage provinces to undertake reforms in their areas of jurisdiction. The CFIA has clear Memoranda of Understanding with all provinces and territories and, in some cases, has established comprehensive sharing arrangements for the task of inspection, something which would have been impossible previously. Some challenges remain. Harmonisation does not mean federal control, as provinces continue to have their unique priorities and needs.

In many countries the role of third-party or private-sector contributions to animal and veterinary public health services continues to evolve. In other countries, sub-national authorities exist which may be either complementary or independent of the national supervising body. Inevitably, there will always be healthy debate and tension between the benefits of centralisation in comparison to the desire for local control. However, as changing circumstances will always require continuous improvements in organisational structures, this work will never be finished. In any organisational model, managing relationships is extremely important in ensuring an effective Veterinary Service. Emerging pathogens and rising consumer concerns in the area of food-borne illnesses and veterinary public health will create new challenges in the coming years, presenting a real test of the ability of Canada and other countries to manage inter-dependence in an area of jurisdictional complexity.

Managing risks from conception to consumption

Canada has experienced many benefits from its consolidated approach. Consider, for example, the management of zoonotic diseases. When Canada experienced an outbreak of bovine tuberculosis (2001–2002), the animal health veterinary specialist responsible for the control of the disease was on the same floor of the building as the specialist responsible for food safety risk management for the dairy sector and the Food Recall Co-ordinator. All three were supported by the integrated laboratory system and all three reported to the same Agency Head. In many, if not most countries, there would have been two or possibly three government ministries involved. Feeds is another example. As the feed programme in Canada is combined with animal health and food inspection, Canada has been able to make comprehensive and integrated responses to such issues as the dioxin crisis in Belgium, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Collaboration between different government departments and ministries can work, but consolidation offers a greater chance for coherence and consistency because there is a single path of accountability. Tensions and disparate views are internalised and can be better managed without compromising a rapid response to emergencies. In those countries where animal health is supervised by a different ministry from food safety, it can be a real challenge for the Veterinary Services to find collaborative ways to work across differing bureaucracies, cultures, value systems and disciplines. Unless clear roles, responsibilities and paths of accountability are established in advance, territorial and jurisdictional conflicts may arise in times of crisis, which can be problematic and counter-productive.
Balancing veterinary science with political accountability

Veterinary Services around the world are increasingly confronted with pressures to compromise their scientific views. Throughout its history, the OIE has made major science-based animal and veterinary public health decisions without the interference of political factors or commercial interests. These decisions were seen as technical and complex, and the official Delegates to the OIE worked in relative anonymity in their own country and at the international level. However, it is now recognised that these decisions have profound economic and political implications. They can cost billions of dollars, cause government ministers to lose their jobs and governments to fall. As OIE standards are recognised by the World Trade Organization, these standards are viewed by some as creating opportunities for protectionism. In many countries, politicians and other interest groups will find it increasingly difficult not to urge the official Delegate to the OIE to delay the reporting of a disease or to find the scientific approach or pathway which best supports the economic interest of the country. Maintaining professional integrity in this new environment will be increasingly difficult.

In many countries, there is an accepted principle that government ministers leave most science-based decisions to scientists. If not, such officials assume significant political risk by interfering. However, when the science is incomplete or uncertain, Veterinary Services everywhere will face the continuing and complex challenge of balancing science and professional integrity against considerations of political accountability.

Defining the role of the veterinarian

A fourth major challenge which confronts Veterinary Services is defining the role and jurisdiction of veterinarians along the animal-based food and public health continuum. In most countries, including Canada, the veterinarian has a primary role in the effective design and delivery of animal health objectives. However, beyond production on the farm and slaughter in the abattoir, the role of the veterinarian becomes less well developed or accepted.

In reality, veterinary science requires a synergistic and inclusive approach to incorporate and reflect the strength of a multitude of scientific disciplines. Veterinary science, with its strong foundation in comparative medicine and epidemiology, has much to offer in the achievement of desired public health and food safety objectives. The evolution of the CFIA and its relationship with other jurisdictions has some way to go before the contribution of veterinary science is fully recognised, nevertheless, the present organisational structure provides an opportunity for these tensions between organisations to be expressed, evaluated and resolved.

Conclusion

The creation of the CFIA in 1997 has provided an opportunity to align and integrate the federal Veterinary Services of Canada with several key public policy objectives. In so doing, the profile of Veterinary Services has been enhanced and the importance of its contribution to public security, food safety, economic opportunity, public health and sustainable agricultural practices has increased. The impetus for change and the organisational model adopted by the CFIA were based on the desire to improve efficiency and effectiveness, not as the result of a crisis in public confidence. The flexibilities and strengths associated with the Agency model have subsequently been studied by a number of other countries who have moved to adopt similar models, modified to meet their individual circumstances. Although there have been a number of significant benefits derived over the initial six-year period of operation, further adjustments will undoubtedly be undertaken as part of a commitment to continuous improvement and to remain responsive to the changing needs and values of society within Canada and internationally.

L’organisation des Services vétérinaires fédéraux au Canada : l’Agence canadienne d’inspection des aliments

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Résumé
Le cadre organisationnel des Services vétérinaires nationaux est un élément clé de la qualité globale et de l’intégrité des infrastructures zoosanitaires et de santé publique vétérinaire. Du fait de la diversité des contextes politiques, économiques et sociaux d’un pays à l’autre mais aussi à l’intérieur de chaque pays, un même modèle de structure organisationnelle ne saurait s’appliquer à
La organización de los Servicios Veterinarios federales en Canadá: la Agencia Canadiense de Inspección de Alimentos

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Resumen
La forma en que se planifica la organización de un Servicio Veterinario nacional es fundamental para la calidad e integridad general de su infraestructura zoosanitaria y de salud pública veterinaria. Es indiscutible que la diversidad de situaciones políticas, económicas y sociales en un mismo país y entre distintos países impide que un modelo único de estructura organizativa sea aplicable a todas las circunstancias. En Canadá, una reorganización del sistema utilizado por el gobierno federal para la inspección de los alimentos en 1997 redundó en el traslado de la administración veterinaria a un nuevo organismo creado a tales efectos, la Agencia Canadiense de Inspección de Alimentos (ACIA).

Los autores de este artículo exponen brevemente los motivos que impulsaron la creación de la ACIA y describen su estructura organizativa y sus responsabilidades en materia de sanidad animal, salud pública veterinaria y...
seguir seguridad sanitaria de los alimentos. Describen asimismo los modelos pertinentes que fueron elaborados para ser incorporados al marco de gestión de la calidad y eficacia de los Servicios Veterinarios federales. La integración de todos los sistemas federales de inspección de los alimentos en la ACIA ha dado buen resultado, ya que ha permitido concretamente definir de manera clara las funciones y las responsabilidades, reducir la trasposición y la duplicación de las funciones de los programas, mejorar la prestación de servicios y facilitar la colaboración entre servicios federales y provinciales. Además, la solidez de la organización se basa en la capacidad de los Servicios Veterinarios canadienses de centrarse a los principios fundamentales de calidad que recomienda observar la OIE (Organización mundial de sanidad animal) para la evaluación de los Servicios Veterinarios.

Ninguna estructura organizativa puede garantizar por sí sola un alto nivel de eficacia o de competencia de un Servicio Veterinario. Existen retos comunes a los que la estructura organizativa puede o no hacer frente, de manera total o parcial. Los retos analizados en este artículo permiten a sus autores ofrecer una reflexión más profunda sobre la gestión de jurisdicciones compartidas, la consecución de objetivos de salud pública, el equilibrio entre ciencia e interés político y la definición del papel y de la jurisdicción de los veterinarios.

Palabras clave

References


