



THE COOPERATION OF PRIVATE VETERINARY DOCTORS - POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The veterinary medical service in our country has traditions and a history of more than a century. In the twenties of the last century, the geographical position of Bulgaria was assessed, as a potential corridor for the invasion of epizootics and toxic infections from Asia to Europe, from active outbreaks and epizootic diseases (in animals) and zoonoses (in animals and humans) in Asia and the Middle East to Central and Western Europe. This is the reason why the Bulgarian veterinary medical service is expected to organize active anti-epizootic measures, to create a "shield" that would protect both the country and Europe from animal and human infections.

The aim of the current paper is to study the possibility of cooperation of privately practicing veterinarians in the country and the benefits of this cooperation in the performance of their functions.

The methods that will be used to achieve this goal are analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, monographic, etc.

The expectations of this research are that the cooperation of veterinarians is a prerequisite for better performance of veterinary medical measures to protect the health of animals and people.

Key words: cooperative, animal husbandry, veterinary medicine, market

INTRODUCTION

Veterinary medicine is an activity of an international nature - related to protecting the health of animals from contagious parasitic diseases, protecting people from zoonoses (diseases common to animals and humans), and protecting the natural environment.

Zoonoses and epizootics are social, health, and economic problems that occur worldwide. Despite the significant successes achieved in the prevention and fight against them, new nosological entities continue to be discovered, and their geographical range is expanding.

METHODS

The following methods and approaches are used to achieve the purpose of the study and the task set: monographic, analysis and synthesis, systemic, synergistic and structural approach, induction and deduction, statistical methods, expert assessments, and historical and logical methods to analyze the results obtained.

RESULTS

The opening of Bulgaria to Europe and the world, the liberalization of trade in animals and products of animal origin, the ongoing structural changes in agriculture and the processing industry, and the geographical position of the country increase the risk factors for the emergence and mass spread of infectious animal diseases and zoonoses.

In the decade after 1990, animal breeding in our country was in a period of deconcentration of large farms. These processes have made it possible to solve veterinary problems by limiting the disease characteristics of intensive animal husbandry. However, in some diseases such as leukosis, etc. - there is no particular progress in the fight against them.

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The veterinary medical service in our country has traditions and a century-old history. Bulgaria's place in a region, a potential corridor

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for the invasion of epizootics and toxic infections from Asia to Europe, is assessed. Therefore, our veterinary medical service is expected to organize active anti-epizootic measures to protect both the country and the whole of Europe from animal infections and zoonoses.

Practicing the veterinary medical profession predominantly as a private practice (as far as the medical activity is concerned) gives reason to be one of the first on the list of freely practicing professions, on par with those of the lawyer, the humanitarian doctor, etc. In industrially and agriculturally developed countries, the ratio of public service veterinarians to private practitioners ranges from 1:3 to 1:9. A similar

trend has been observed in our country. **Table 1** presents the data on the number of privately practicing veterinarians and veterinary medical facilities by region in the country.

For our country, the fight against anthrax, brucellosis, trichenellosis, tuberculosis, cysticercosis (canine tapeworm) is particularly relevant. Fighting these diseases requires systematicity and comprehensiveness. It is not within the power of the individual veterinarian but is carried out by large-scale veterinary organizations at the national and international level with technologies and teams capable of carrying out a qualified and specialized rapid response to the problem.

Table 1. Privately practicing veterinarians and veterinary medical facilities by region in Bulgaria

Register of veterinary medical institutions with the veterinarians registered in them as of 31.03. 2023				
District	Total veterinary medical facilities	Total veterinarians	Relative share of veterinary medical facilities	Relative share of veterinarians
Blagoevgrad	143	143	6%	3%
Burgas	127	187	5%	4%
Varna	167	387	7%	9%
Veliko Tarnovo	116	225	5%	5%
Vidin	32	37	1%	1%
Vratsa	33	44	1%	1%
Gabrovo	31	55	1%	1%
Dobrich	60	75	2%	2%
Kurdzhali	56	60	2%	1%
Kyustendil	51	53	2%	1%
Lovech	54	82	2%	2%
Montana	29	35	1%	1%
Pazardzhik	71	75	3%	2%
Pernik	36	45	1%	1%
Pleven	108	135	4%	3%
Plovdiv	204	447	8%	10%
Razgrad	40	62	2%	1%
Ruse	58	101	2%	2%
Silistra	31	29	1%	1%
Sliven	51	51	2%	1%
Smolyan	28	35	1%	1%
Sofia city-clinics	60	574	2%	13%
Sofia city-ambulatory clinics	297	675	12%	15%
Sofia Region	75	96	3%	2%
Stara Zagora	130	286	5%	6%
Targovishte	54	76	2%	2%
Haskovo	106	132	4%	3%
Shumen	71	90	3%	2%
Yambol	114	149	5%	3%
Total	2433	4441	100%	100%

Source: BFSa and own calculations

These veterinary functions are of major public interest as they affect the health of the entire society, as well as the economic interests of all animal owners. Under current conditions, the ownership of large animals is a large capital investment, covering buildings, machines, and facilities, which creates a large economic interest for farmers in a timely veterinary response.

The second function, economic, creates material value (production) and has a direct economic effect through livestock production. Private veterinarians must have a good foundation for performing these basic functions. The opening of veterinary clinics, practices, laboratories, and consulting offices requires significant capital. Its' provision for the purchase of land, implementation of construction, reconstruction, and renting of special premises for the purchase of special equipment and medicines is made difficult by the low solvency of those wishing to develop this activity and the viability of bank loans due to high interest rates.

This can be overcome by pooling capital. Legislation in our country provides a good opportunity for the association of privately practicing veterinarians. For veterinary medical services, a cooperative is a suitable form because of the unpretentious requirements for its formation. A voluntary association of at least seven able-bodied individuals with non-fixed capital, which is raised from the introductory, share, and additional contributions of the members, as well as from income from the activity, has a place in veterinary medicine. In Israel, many veterinarians are united in cooperative associations and serve private farmers and farms under contracts concluded between them and veterinary cooperatives for different periods of time. Veterinarians in Germany showed similar associations.

Historically, a veterinary and livestock cooperative was founded in Bulgaria in the forties of the last century, which at the end of 1945 had 452 members. The cooperative's own funds are over BGN 10 million. In the same year, it sold goods for nearly BGN 18 million and tools for BGN 1.5 million. The cooperative also produces cheese yeast, verulin, and crystallin.

There are several reasons for the cooperation

among veterinary specialists:

- quick response to calls from farmers and businesses;
- some in-house specializations in performing veterinary services;
- mutual assistance in carrying out mass state veterinary events;
- cost reduction in the joint procurement of drugs, equipment, biological preparations, and other activities;
- more efficient use of the outpatient clinic, office, and inventory.

The cooperation and division of labor and the specialization of activities offer a better performance of veterinary medical services, which in a normal market economy and free competition leads to more efficient production and a better realization of economic interests (individual and general). The market economy places at its center the individual entrepreneur, who takes the risk, performs work functions, and possesses intelligence and skills. In the current economic and legal system in place in Bulgaria, entrepreneurial initiatives are also required by veterinarians. They may be supported by interested institutions such as cooperatives, under the guise of providing capital to the veterinary associations in the form of credit, which will link profit not with economic interest, but with the provision of social value - "veterinary service".

CONCLUSION

The motives for performing veterinary medical services in freelance practice are material remuneration and professional satisfaction. The self-employed veterinarian offers their work on the labor market and receives remuneration for the work performed according to the direct agreement with the user of the results – the owner of the animals and in accordance with the accepted norms for the country (price list). The link between the work, the result, the evaluation, and the incentive reward in the case of independent practitioners is clear and immediate, as is the connection between the veterinary medical result, the economic effect, and the earned reputation.

Veterinary medical activity is subject not only to legal rules and norms but also to moral-ethical and medico-biological regularities and requirements. Owing to its specificity - the production and realization of services - a suitable form of association is the cooperative.

However, no organizational form can automatically solve all problems. Those who can demonstrate entrepreneurship through professional skills and quick orientation in the opportunities provided by the market will survive and prosper.

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