

# Evaluation of the effectiveness of training courses to increase disease awareness of livestock owners for Bluetongue Disease

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## Key words

livestock owners, training course, disease awareness, Bluetongue Disease, surveillance program

## Problem definition and objectives

After the 2007 epidemic of Bluetongue Disease (BT), the Swiss surveillance program needed adaption to the new situation. In addition to active BT-surveillance (cattle, insects) a passive surveillance system was developed for sheep. For the first time in Switzerland, specifically trained sheep owners were included in a national disease surveillance program by the Federal Veterinary Office. The project aimed at the evaluation of the effectiveness of the training courses.

## Material and methods

Sheep owners living in regions at risk for BT were invited to attend a three hours training course about epidemiological and clinical aspects of the disease. A questionnaire on BT as well as on herd management was completed by 26 sheep owners (32 participants) three months after they had attended a training course. As a control group, 264 randomly selected sheep and cattle owners who had not visited a training course, filled in the same questionnaire (return rate: 67%).

## Results and conclusions

Results showed that disease awareness for BT after attending the training course is considerably increased. This was especially evident in the better knowledge of the participants about the great number of possible symptoms. Training courses with the objective of increased disease awareness of livestock owners are an efficient, cost-effective instrument in control programs for exotic diseases. The evaluation of the awareness campaign in general showed that journals were the most frequently used source of information about BT.

## Publications, Posters and Presentations

- B. Stuber, H. Ochs, A. Tschuor, P. Zanolari, J. Danuser, L. Perler (2009): Tierhalter mit gezielt erhöhter „Disease Awareness“ für die Blauzungenkrankheit: ein neuer Ansatz in der Seuchenüberwachung. Schweizer Archiv für Tierheilkunde (accepted).
- B. Stuber: Tierhalter mit gezielt erhöhter „Disease Awareness“ für die Blauzungenkrankheit: ein neuer Ansatz in der Seuchenüberwachung. Presentation at Annual Conference FVO, 2008.

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