

To Slaughter or to Vaccinate Animals: Acceptance Among Swiss Consumers

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Key words

Animal vaccination, highly contagious animal diseases, consumer behaviour, foot-and-mouth disease, avian influenza

Aim of the study

Consumers' attitudes are an important basis for decision-making concerning different strategies to fight highly contagious animal diseases. Therefore, the aim of the project was to gain information of the socio-ethical consequences of epidemic outbreaks and animal vaccinations.

Material and methods

Based on the "Mental Model Approach" (Morgan, Fischhoff, Bostrom, & Atman 2002), initially, qualitative interviews with experts (N = 21) and lay people (N = 12) were accomplished. In a next step, a large-scale population survey was sent out to the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland (N = 3000). Additionally, shortened versions of the population questionnaire were sent out to farmers (N = 890) and veterinarians (N = 752). Finally, experiments with different conditions were implemented on representative population samples.

Results and significance

Vaccination strategies are very accepted compared to culling strategies to fight highly contagious animal diseases (both from the population and from experts). Trust in federal departments (e.g. FVO) positively influences the acceptance of a vaccination strategy as well as a culling strategy. Only 26% of the population would accept meat from animals vaccinated against an animal epidemic and a zoonosis. Although vaccination strategies to fight animal diseases are very accepted, many people would refuse to consume meat from animals vaccinated against highly contagious diseases. Therefore, people do not link their considerations about the acceptance of vaccinating animals with the fact that the meat of those animals might end up in the food supply chain.

Publications, posters and presentations

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- Zingg, A.; Siegrist, M. Measuring people's knowledge about vaccination: Developing a one-dimensional scale. Accepted for Vaccine "Special Issue: Risk perception and communication regarding vaccination decisions in the age of web 2.0".
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