An integrated approach for education/training in Veterinary Public Health (VPH) by the Department of Veterinary Science, University of Turin: the experiences of the “VPH mobile clinic” and the “VPH practical weeks”.


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Introduction

All graduating veterinarians from European vet schools must demonstrate to have acquired the “Day One skills/knowledge”, as set by the EAEVE-EESVY in compliance with the EC Directive 2005/36/EC. From 2008/09 to 2011/12 and from 2013/14 to 2016/17 academic years, in order to provide 4th and 5th year undergraduate veterinary students with more efficient tools for training Veterinary Public Health (VPH) topics, two integrated practical teaching methods were respectively implemented at the course in Veterinary Medicine, University of Turin. The aims were to provide the “Day One”, with special reference to VPH (i.e. Preventive Veterinary Medicine/Population Medicine, and Food Hygiene/Animal Health/Nutrition). Taking into account the EAEVE recommendations on the competencies of graduating veterinarians (“Day 1 graduates”) to assure National Veterinary Services of quality (2).

Materials & Methods

During the period 2008-2012, lecturers/teachers of the VPH disciplines—after having taught their respective curricular courses—organized a series of scheduled field activities in collaboration with veterinary officials of the ASLTO3 (ASL = Azienda Sanitaria Locale) or Local Health Unify Services in Turin Province. Currently, 91 students participated in those practical VPH training activities, called “VPH mobile clinic” (Flow diagram: choosing one hands-on activities covering a multidisciplinary set of VPH actions (see Table 1)—mainly related to preventive veterinary medicine, surveillance/control of zoonotic animal diseases, etc.—regularly performed by the veterinary officials during their day-to-day work within the so-called “Area B” of the ASL. Ad hoc seminars on selected VPH topics (i.e. veterinary and pet identification systems) were also given (and still are), by the same vets during the curricular VPH courses/classes.

From 2013 to date, in order to implement the revised veterinary curriculum at national level, the VPH practical training activities were re-designed and re-organized. Training activities now include the same topics taught during the VPH Mobile Clinic, including a larger part on food hygiene/food inspection and meat inspection/slaughter activities (these are the activities relevant to “Area B” of the ASL system). Such training activity is now called “VPH practical weeks” (Table 1: topics relevant for “Area A” and “Area B” of the ASL). Students can rely on 15 ASLs throughout the Province Region to take their practical VPH training, supervised by veterinarians. Practical training on food hygiene/food inspection are performed at small-medium food processing plants (e.g. meat, milk/dairy products, fish, cash & carry activities, etc.), while practices on meat inspection/slaughtering activities are carried out at the small (cattle, sheep, poultry) abattoirs in the Region. Students have a common list of activities to be performed (http://www.chresevescienza.unito.it/_files/strutture/strutture_istituzionali.pdf; http://www.chresevescienza.unito.it/_files/strutture/strutture_istituzionali.pdf; http://www.chresevescienza.unito.it/_files/strutture/strutture_istituzionali.pdf; daily recorded on a log book and countersigned by the vet officials/lecturers).

At the end of each academic year, a satisfaction and evaluation questionnaire is administered to students and vet officials/lecturers, and the results are evaluated by the Practical Training Committee (PTC). DVS_UNITO. The most relevant aspects evaluated in the questionnaires are listed in Table 2.

Results

“VPH mobile clinic”: during the period under review (2008-2012), a total of 912 students participated in the practical field sessions in the selected sites (i.e. farmers’ farms, animal production units, horse sports centers, (improved) slaughter strategies). At the end of each academic year, students gave a 15 presentation to the students from the other groups, to the teachers and the vet officials/lecturers and got evaluated (mean grade: 27/30).

“VPH practical weeks”: in the period 2013-2016, a total of 485 students participated for their practical VPH training in the selected ASLs throughout Piemonte Region (subdivided according to the veterinary service relevant for “Area A” and for “Area B”, see Table 3). The satisfaction and evaluation questionnaires answered respectively by the students to evaluate the training received and by the lecturers to evaluate the students, yielded the following results: excellent 75% (students); 92% (tutors); good 25%; 75%: sufficient 25% 0%; poor 0% (data provided in the graphs hereunder refer to the 2015/16 academic year only).

The two VPH training methods are not fully comparable, both have their pros and cons. However, the PTC has positively evaluated both approaches as being interesting and very useful to complement and reinforce the curricular contents previously provided in the classroom courses.

The PTC consider important to introduce 10-week and/or ongoing evaluations of the training activities, and to further reinforce the liaison with students and vet officials to timely discuss and solve possible difficulties encountered.

By the end of the current academic year, a re-evaluation of both experiences will be carried out and possible adjustments and improvements of the current method will be discussed.

Discussion and Conclusion

Selected examples of training activities (relevant for “Area A” and “Area B”) carried out during the “VPH mobile clinic” and the “VPH practical weeks”.

Acknowledgments: The management of DVS_UNITO would like to sincerely thank all vet officials/lecturers of the 15 ASLs in Piemonte Region for their invaluable contribution during the “VPH practical weeks”, without their valuable collaboration and dedicated work the VPH practical training activities would not have been possible. The contribution by Dr. Alberto Tarducci, former director Veterinary Services ASLTO3 Pinerolo, who enthusiastically supported the “VPH mobile clinic” since its inception, is also acknowledged here.
An integrated approach for education/training in Veterinary Public Health (VPH) by the Department of Veterinary Science, University of Turin (DVS_UNITO): the experiences of the “VPH mobile clinic” and the “VPH practical weeks”

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Introduction: All graduating veterinarians from European vet schools must demonstrate to have acquired the EAEVE-ESEVT “Day-One-skills” (1) and the OIE “Day1competencies” [2]. In order to provide 4-5th year undergraduate veterinary students with more efficient tools for VPH learning, from 2008/2009 to 2011/2012 academic years, and from 2013/14 to-date, two integrated practical teaching methods were respectively implemented.

Methods: During the period 2008-2012, lecturers/teachers of the VPH disciplines - after having taught their respective curricular courses - did organize a series of scheduled field activities in collaboration with veterinary officials of the ASLTO3 (ASL=Local Health Units-Vet Services) in Turin Province. Groups of 5-6 students participated in those practical VPH training activities, called “VPH Mobile Clinic” (half-a-day duration), carrying out hands on activities covering a multifaceted set of VPH action, routinely performed by vet officials. Ad hoc seminars on VPH topics have also been given by the same vets during VPH classes.

From 2013 to-date, in order to implement the revised veterinary curriculum at national level, the VPH practical training activities (6 ECTCS) –now called “VPH training weeks”- are provided to single students under the supervision of the ASL vet officials only. Students can rely on 15 ASLs throughout the Piemonte Region to take their practical VPH training. Training activities on food hygiene are performed at small-medium food processing plants, while meat inspection activities are carried out at the small didactic abattoir at the vet campus, and at large slaughterhouses in the Region. Students have a common list of activities to be performed, daily recorded on a log-book and countersigned by the vet officials/tutors. A satisfaction and evaluation questionnaire is administered to students and to tutors at the end of each academic year, and the results are evaluated by the DVS_UNITO Practical Training Committee (PTC).

Results: A total of 612 students participated in 91 practical sessions of the “Mobile VPH Clinic”. At the end of each academic year, students gave a 15’ presentation to the students from the other groups, to teachers and vet officials/tutors, and got evaluated (mean grade: 27/30). As regards the “VPH training weeks”, a total of 495 students
were so far sent out for their practical VPH training to the selected ASLs. The satisfaction questionnaires answered, respectively by the students to evaluate the training received, and by the vets/tutors to evaluate the students, yielded the following results: excellent 75% (students), 92% (tutors); good 23%, 7.5%; sufficient 2.5%, 0%; poor 0.5%, 0%.

Discussion and Conclusion: The two VPH training methods are not fully comparable, both have their pros and cons. However, students, lectures and tutors considered both approaches interesting and useful especially to complement and reinforce the curricular contents previously provided in classroom. The PTC considers important to reinforce the supervision/liaison on the students and vet officials and timely discuss difficulties encountered. By the end of the current academic year, a re-evaluation of both experiences will be carried out and the current method could be likely adjusted/improved.

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