

Library Frontiers: Disasters, Emergency Preparedness and Emerging Diseases IFLA conference side event 18 Aug 2007

Title

Disasters and diseases in Africa: Information support for animal and human health

Authors

Tertia Coetsee, Antoinette Lourens, Marguerite Nel and Erica van der Westhuizen

University of Pretoria Libraries (Academic Information Service)

Veterinary Science Library, University of Pretoria

Private Bag X04, 0110 Onderstepoort, South Africa

<http://www.ais.up.ac.za/vet/index.htm>

Abstract

This paper will describe the types of disasters, both natural and man-made, found in Africa, their impact on animal health and how this also influences human health.

These disasters include oil spills along the coastline, bush fires in game reserves, and floods.

It will highlight the importance of monitoring animal health, especially in the field of infectious diseases as these can have devastating effects on human health. Examples include the dreaded Ebola, Congo-Crimean Haemorrhagic Fever, Anthrax and Avian flu.

Biosecurity is an increasingly important issue these days and institutions and countries as a whole have to be prepared to protect their staff and populace.

Various disciplines are involved in ensuring the health of people, animals and the environment, and these include the following: epidemiology, (veterinary) public health, virology, parasitology, zoonoses and ecology.

The paper will show what information support is being offered in these fields. It will look at the curriculum of the Faculty of Veterinary Science of the University of Pretoria(UP), the only veterinary school in South Africa and compare it with other veterinary schools in the USA and UK to see how the veterinary practitioner of tomorrow is being equipped to deal with disasters and emerging diseases.

An overview of essential information sources in these disciplines will be given and the information sources collection of the Veterinary Science Library of UP will be evaluated to see if it is offering the information support necessary for the veterinary practitioner in Africa.

Cooperative steps that are being taken by the UP Veterinary Science Library and the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (Agriculture Research Council: Animal Diseases) Library to improve information support for all involved with animal health including state veterinarians, will be discussed. The expansion of these cooperative endeavours to other African countries will be explored.

The development of a website by the UP Veterinary Science Library to serve as a one-stop e-information source for the country's animal health workers who will have to deal with disasters and emerging diseases is a logical next step. The decisions that were taken before the final product could be made available included what type of information should be featured, who were the experts we would consult to add appropriate content to the site, how it may perhaps differ from similar sites elsewhere in the world, who would be the target audience, with whom should we collaborate, and what potentially dangerous information should be omitted from the site.

By making the information electronically available we are ensuring that the animal health worker, veterinary practitioner, epidemiologist, state veterinarian, or public health official will have the information he needs when he needs it, at any time and in any place where he has a computer and Internet connection.

Tertia.coetsee@up.ac.za,

Antoinette.lourens@up.ac.za,

Marguerite.nel@up.ac.za,

Erica.vanderwesthuizen@up.ac.za

<http://www.ais.up.ac.za/vet/vstaff.htm> Telephone: 27-012-5298007 Fax: 27-012-5298302