Improving institutional memory on challenges and methods for estimation of pig herd antimicrobial exposure based on data from the Danish Veterinary Medicines Statistics Program (VetStat)

With the increasing occurrence of antimicrobial resistance, more attention has been directed towards surveillance of both human and veterinary antimicrobial use. Since the early 2000s, several research papers on Danish pig antimicrobial usage have been published, based on data from the Danish Veterinary Medicines Statistics Program (VetStat). VetStat was established in 2000, as a national database containing detailed information on purchases of veterinary medicine. This paper presents a critical set of challenges originating from static system features, which researchers must address when estimating antimicrobial exposure in Danish pig herds. Most challenges presented are followed by at least one robust solution. A set of challenges requiring awareness from the researcher, but for which no immediate solution was available, were also presented. The selection of challenges and solutions was based on a consensus by a cross-institutional group of researchers working in projects using VetStat data. No quantitative data quality evaluations were performed, as the frequency of errors and inconsistencies in a dataset will vary, depending on the period covered in the data. Instead, this paper focuses on clarifying how VetStat data may be translated to an estimation of the antimicrobial exposure at herd level, by suggesting uniform methods of extracting and editing data, in order to obtain reliable and comparable estimates on pig antimicrobial consumption for research purposes.

General information
Publication status: Published
Organisations: National Veterinary Institute, Epidemiology, National Food Institute, Research group for Genomic Epidemiology, University of Copenhagen
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Number of pages: 25
Publication date: 2017
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Journal: ArXiv
Original language: English
Electronic versions:
P_Vetstat_paper_Versao_Leo_Repository_Preparation_for_ArXiv_01_ARXIV_240517.pdf
Source: FindIt
Source ID: 2370650759
Research output: Contribution to journal › Journal article – Annual report year: 2017 › Research › peer-review