Reviewer’s report

Title: Acceptability of local-made baits for oral vaccination of dogs against rabies in the Philippines

Authors:

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Reviewer: Dr Malcomb Fearneyhough

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after revision, which I do not need to see

I strongly support the intent of the paper to define the most cost effective delivery system for OVD. Currently, the single most important factor limiting the successful implementation of oral rabies vaccination programs for domestic or wildlife species is available financial resources. Therefore, the author's intent to define a cost effective delivery system has merit. I would ask that the following issues be addressed for the final revision of the paper:

1. (Minor) The central topic of the paper is the development of a cost effective mechanism of vaccine delivery to domestic species. However, the authors chose to omit consideration of the labor cost involved in production of the bait. It would seem important to include a cost estimate for labor, storage and distribution of the final product, even if those estimates are determined to be small.

2. (Minor) In an effort to limit the confounding effect of geographical movement by the target species, most Oral Rabies Vaccination Programs have attempted to vaccinate large segments the target population in a short period of time. In an urban OVD program geographical movement by the target species would seem to be limited but a successful program in an urban area would certainly involve the distribution of thousands of doses of vaccine in a short period of time. The logistics of such a program would require access to refrigeration for the vaccine and finished bait/vaccine product. Therefore, the cost for refrigeration should be mentioned as a program consideration.

3. (Major) The handling and use of raw and cooked intestine of domestic species could possibly present health concerns relating to zoonotic disease. It would seem important that measures be defined to prevent the distribution of bacterial or parasitic pathogens that might represent a danger to workers participating in the program and the human or the domestic animal populations at large. Are cooking temperatures and cooking times adequate to kill potential pathogens in the bait material?

4. (Major) The authors have chosen not to use a biomarker to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed delivery system and have used empty plastic vaccine containers rather than a placebo vaccine "sachet." There should be definition of the size, shape and thickness of the plastic film used in the empty vaccine container and the mechanism used to secure the vaccine container in the bait material.
5. (Major) There should be more detailed definition of the subjective measures used to determine the fate of the vaccine containers and if vaccination might have resulted during consumption of the bait by dogs. Were the vaccine containers recovered to verify the P, NP, SW, and SW/P classification or was the evaluation process only visual from a distance?

Overall, the paper offers some interesting alternatives in the selection of bait material for oral rabies vaccination. If proven cost effective and logistically practical, such bait material could potentially reduce the cost for oral rabies vaccination and thereby, potentially present a means to reach larger segments of the target population.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.