The Paravet Training Manual for the Pacific Islands Introductory Course

Secretariat of the Pacific Community
The loss of production caused by livestock diseases and the risk of humans being exposed to diseases carried by animals are major obstacles to the development of the livestock sector in Pacific Island countries. The development of the livestock sector has been complicated further by an acute shortage of qualified veterinarians and animal production specialists in the region. A recent review of veterinary services in the Pacific region has revealed that this shortage will continue as qualified veterinarians retire or migrate.

This shortage of qualified veterinarians and animal production specialists within the region was identified as long ago as 1951, when a South Pacific Commission (SPC) meeting recommended the development of a regional approach to training animal health care specialists. Subsequent meetings held in 1964 and 1992 also emphasised the need for “para-veterinary” training and recommended that SPC develop these types of training programmes. Unfortunately, initial attempts to establish a residential programme within a regional institution were unsuccessful. In 1997 a workshop on animal health information systems organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and SPC endorsed a recommendation that SPC change the approach and develop a regional para-veterinary training programme using distance education. This change of direction provided the impetus that was needed to initiate the PARAVET training project.

From July to October 1998, assessment teams visited 13 of the 22 countries and territories in the Pacific region and communicated with most of the other Pacific Island countries and territories. The assessment team found strong support for a distance education PARAVET training course at community, private sector and government levels. The findings of these visits were documented in the report “Animal health training for the Pacific Community”, written by David Macfarlane. The assessment team’s findings confirmed the wide variation in animal health and production skills in the region, and they set the stage for the development of the PARAVET training programme — a programme designed to develop skills in animal health and production at the sub-professional level.

To avoid duplication and maximise the use of limited resources, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in January 1999, between SPC, now the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Agricultural Development in the American Pacific (ADAP) and the University of the South Pacific (USP). In this memorandum, the three institutions agreed to collaborate on the development and dissemination of the PARAVET training programme. This led to the establishment of the PARAVET Project Steering Committee, which has provided guidance and coordination throughout the first phase of the project.
The purpose of the PARAVET training programme is to increase productivity by controlling or preventing animal illnesses and improving animal husbandry practices. This should lead to increased income-generating opportunities for small-scale livestock producers. The PARAVET training programme should also help reduce the risk of humans being exposed to diseases carried by animals and the risk of exotic diseases being introduced into the region. The PARAVET training programme will help protect the environment because it promotes environmentally acceptable livestock farming practices. A byproduct of the PARAVET training programme will be increased trade, because paravets will learn how to collect the animal health information required by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The PARAVET training programme will use new technology to make low-cost training materials available to as many suitable trainees as possible.

Phase 1 of the programme, this introductory course, has been developed by SPC in consultation with ADAP and USP. The completion of phase 1 of the programme, the provision of this introductory course, has shown that specialised and advanced training materials for animal health and production staff can be provided throughout the region.

The technical content of the coursebook is based largely on the FAO publication *A Manual for the Primary Animal Health Care Worker*, with new materials written where they were needed. The technical materials were reviewed by a technical advisory group of veterinarians working in the Pacific region. The materials then underwent a process of instructional design and editing at USP and at ADAP to make sure that the content was logically structured and presented in a form that would be easily understood.

This programme would not have been possible without the continued support of SPC, ADAP, USP, the commitment of the PARAVET development staff, and the donors who have helped fund the programme. Special mention must be made of the governments of the Fiji Islands and Tonga, who released staff to work on the project.

Peter Saville
SPC Animal Health Adviser
Suva, December 2004
There are a number of organisations that have contributed to the development of this paravet training course. Their assistance is acknowledged with thanks:

- The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), who kindly gave permission for the use of the FAO publication *A Manual for the Primary Animal Health Care Worker*, which forms the basis of much of this coursebook.

- The Government of Australia, who through the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB) provided the initial funding for the development of the training package.

- The Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), who provided funding for the development of the training package.

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- The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests (MAFF), Fiji Islands, who allowed me to be seconded to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to participate in the PARAVET training project.

In addition to these organisations, numerous individuals have assisted in the development of this training programme, and they are acknowledged with thanks:

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An important part of any new training curriculum is its pilot testing to allow it to be evaluated and changes to be made if necessary. The pilot testing of this introductory course was carried out in Samoa with trainees from both American Samoa and Samoa by my colleague Dr Siosifa Fifita, the SPC Animal Health Training Officer. In conducting the pilot course, Dr Fifita was ably assisted by Dr Sina Taulealo of Samoa and Ms Laura Laumaia of American Samoa who provided tutorial support for the trainees. The expertise of Dr Puru Rao of the USP School of Humanities and his kind yet critical review of the curriculum is acknowledged. The curriculum testing and review would not have been possible without the co-operation of the pioneer trainees from the two Samoas.

Since the pilot Dr Fifita delivered the course in the CNMI, Cook Islands, FSM, Marshall Islands, Palau, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu and the governments and administrations of these countries are thanked for their co-operation in the implementation of the training programme.

Finally, special thanks must go to Paravet Caryl Jade of the Marshall Islands who went through the course book in detail to provide me with a list of typographical errors and suggested improvements that have enhanced the value of the course book as a learning resource.

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