Disinformation and misinformation
A shared threat for Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement

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中华人民共和国农业农村部
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

From
the People of Japan

The hazards-false, deceptive, misleading, or manipulated information

Misinformation

- False information, spread without knowingly intending to cause harm.

- Common, all around us

Disinformation

- False information, spread with intent to deceive, mislead, or cause harm.

- Less common, greater risks, may be illegal

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Misinformation

Lumpy skin disease: Viral cattle disease sends rumours flying in India

21 October 2022
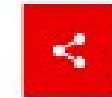
Misinformation about a viral disease that infects cattle is spreading on social media in India.

Lumpy skin disease has already infected over 2.4 million animals and has led to over 110,000 cattle deaths in India, according to latest data from the government.

India is the world's largest milk producer and has the world's largest cattle population, but the infection is threatening livelihoods of farmers in the country. Meanwhile, misinformation has made some people wary of consuming milk. We debunk three false claims about the disease.

Is milk produced by infected cattle safe for human consumption?

Many viral social media posts falsely claim that milk has become unsafe for human consumption due to the spread of lumpy skin disease, and that drinking milk from an infected animal will lead to the development of a skin disease in humans as well. The posts are often accompanied by images of visibly diseased human bodies covered in lesions, meant to create fear.

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Disinformation

AFP ● Fact Check

REGIONS

An Australian anti-vaccine campaigner has falsely claimed the state of New South Wales has "forced farmers to vaccinate their herd with mRNA jabs" that allegedly led to dozens of cattle deaths. Whilst mRNA vaccines for viral livestock diseases are in development, as of October 11, no such jabs were available or mandated for use for cattle in Australia. AFP has not found evidence the incident described in the posts actually occurred.

"A friend informed me today that her neighbor, a dairy farmer, is now forced to vaccinate her herd with an mRNA vaccine!" reads a portion of a screenshot posted on Instagram on October 2.

"She complied and of the 200 head of cattle, 35 died instantly!"

The post says the incident happened in New South Wales, Australia's most populous state.

https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.32KQ68B

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The threat

Untreated, misinformation and disinformation can:

- damage lives and livelihoods

- undermine trust

- spread confusion

- consume attention and resources

- cause economic and social damage

Countering animal health misinformation and disinformation often requires joint action by Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement agencies.

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Motivations to spread

- Belief in something or desire that it is true.
- Disagreement with something or wanting it to end or be changed.
- Undermine the credibility, trust and reputation of a person, organization or course of action.
- Advance a political, religious, economic, cultural or other goal.
- Make money or gain other financial advantage.
- Get attention, be heard or to gain greater online status.
- For fun ... mischief

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Enablers – our enclosed ecosystems

- Our digital 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles' mediate the information we see, watch, hear, and share. We are susceptible to misinformation that may infect and influence us.

- Organisations tend to interact in known and safe spaces, so they can easily miss critical debates or lack abilities to intervene beyond their comfort zones.

- Most of us, individuals and organisations, are not aware of these threats and we over-estimate our abilities to counter them.

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Image: https://theconversation.com/the-problem-of-living-inside-echo-chambers-110486

Enablers – technical innovation
Widely available digital and communication

- Tools can easily create, manipulate and 'virally' share or target messages and images.

- 'Clickbait', sensationalised headlines link to often misleading information

- 'Deepfakes', digitally altered audio, images and video that misrepresent people

- 'Trolls', people using social media to attack and undermine others and their ideas

- Bots,' computer programs automatically disseminate fake news on social media

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Image: https://theconversation.com/the-problem-of-living-inside-echo-chambers-110486

Countering the threats

Prepare

Tools, methods and strategies to prepare responses to threats in animal health emergencies.

Detect

...to detect, predict and listen out for threats in animal health emergencies.

Respond

...to counter threats in animal health emergencies.

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Countering disinformation and misinformation in animal health emergencies

- Guide developed with INTERPOL.

- A starting point for organisations to prepare for, detect and respond to disinformation and misinformation.

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Communication strategies

Contents

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Communication strategies

Either proactive or reactive

Proactive: Implemented before a disinformation risk becomes widespread.

- **Aim:** "Pre-bunk" misinformation, raise awareness, and shape the information environment to minimise risks.

Reactive: Applied in response to an observed disinformation risk.

- **Aim:** Debunk harmful messages, counter narratives, and restore the information environment.

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Details of Communication Strategies

Inoculation and pre-bunking

- Preventative strategy to counter false messages early.

- Provides facts and builds cognitive resilience.

- Emphasis on clear, balanced, and transparent messaging.

Awareness-raising and campaigns

- Shaping public debates with planned narratives and measurable outcomes.

- Focus on influencing target group behaviours beyond providing information.

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Details of Communication Strategies

Networks and alliances

- Collaboration between organisations (e.g., Veterinary Services, Law Enforcement).

- Enhance monitoring and response to misinformation threats.

Counter-branding

- Expose the motives and credibility of disinformation sources.

- Employ smart communication to weaken their influence.

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Details of Communication Strategies

Resilience-building

- **Empower communities** via targeted education and media training.
- Foster **critical thinking** and **responsibility** for shared information.

Debunking and fact-checking

- Core tactic to **correct false narratives**.
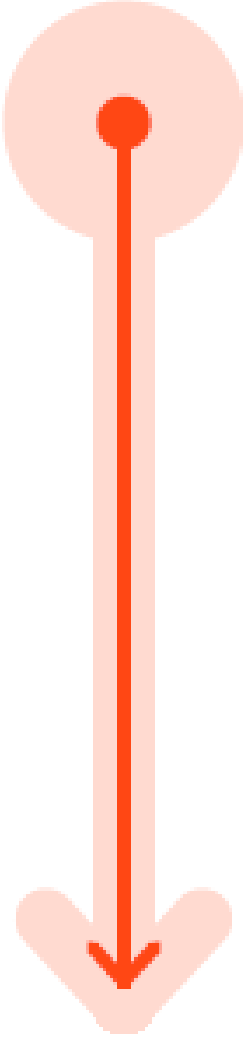- Example: **Truth sandwich** approach, frequently used in health and climate domains.

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The Truth Sandwich

FACT

Lead with the fact if it's clear, pithy and sticky – make it simple, concrete and pausible. It must 'fit' with the story.

WARN ABOUT THE MYTH

Warn beforehand that a myth is coming... mention it once only.

EXPLAIN FALLACY

Explain how the myth misleads.

FACT

Finish by reinforcing the fact – multiple times if possible. Make sure it provides an alternative causal explanation.

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Thank you

100
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