

Disinformation and Misinformation

A shared threat for Veterinary Services and Law Enforcement

Pandemic preparedness:
WOAH workshop on risk-based management of spillover events in wildlife
18-19 February 2025, Hanoi, Vietnam

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

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

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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.

Case of Misinformation



Case of 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>

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.***

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

Our enclosed ecosystems are powerful

Dealing with “echo chambers” and “filter bubble”

- Our online bubbles shape what we see, hear, and share, making us more likely to believe and spread misinformation.
- Organisations often operate in familiar spaces, which can cause them to miss important debates or struggle to act outside their comfort zones.
- Most of us, individuals and organisations, are not aware of these threats and we over-estimate our abilities to counter them

Technical innovation

Widely available digital and communication

Tools can easily create, manipulate and ‘virally’ share or target messages and images.

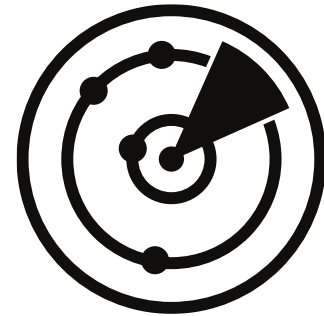
- “**Clickbait**”, sensationalised headlines link to often misleading information
- “**Deepfakes**”, digitally altered audio, images and video that misrepresent people
- “**Trolls**”, people using social media to attack and undermine others and their ideas
- “**Bots**”, computer programs automatically disseminate fake news on social media



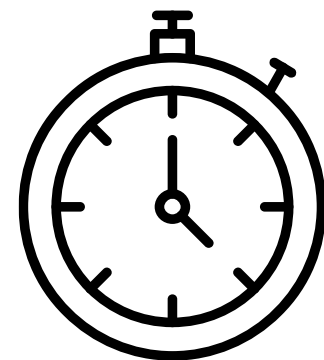
Countering the threats



Prepare



Detect



Respond

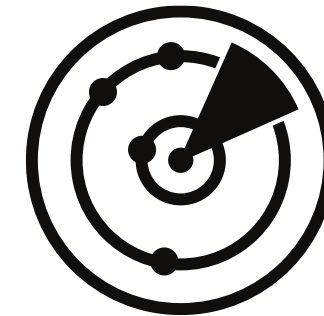
Countering disinformation and misinformation in animal health emergencies





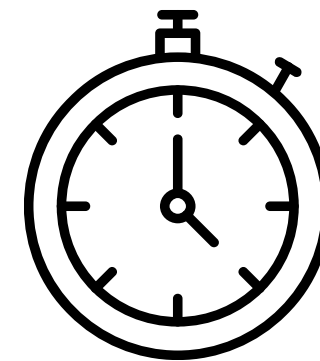
Prepare

- **Raise awareness and recognise threats**, educate ourselves to take timely action, putting in place robust and agile plans, procedures and capacities.
- **Training, gaming, and other exercises** help people understand threats and get prepared.
- **Coordinate actions across agencies and borders, bringing in specialised skills** and networks when needed.
- **Build feedback loops** and learning to be better prepared for the next emergency.



Detect

- **Build trust and connections** and extend organisational reach, for intelligence-gathering and readiness to act.
- **Monitor and assess misinformation/disinformation risks and threats** and changes over time.
- **Social listening** draws insights from **social media and other online forums** to hear what people are concerned about, to pinpoint emerging issues, threats, and risks



Response

- **Pre-bunking** facts counteracts false messages before they are widely spread.
- **De-bunking and fact-checking.** Challenge and correct the false information.
- **Build alliances** where partners share the load and amplify the impact of counter- messaging.
- An important ally is **media** for fact-checking.
- Work with social or community “**influencers**” and “**community leaders**” and convince ‘distant’ audiences

Communication strategies

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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.

Detailed of Communication Strategies

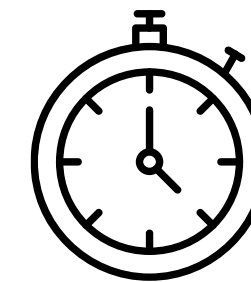
Prevention and pre-bunking

- 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.

The true sandwich



Respond



FACT

Lead with the fact if it's clear, pithy and sticky – make it simple, concrete and pausable. 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.



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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World Health
Organization



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Thank you

Cảm ơn

Guillaume Maltaverne

**Regional Communication Officer for the Sub-Regional
Representation for South-East Asia**

g.maltaverne@woah.org

