



IN THESE MONTHS

The main events of epidemiological interest in the last months in Italy and in the European Union

The Electronic prescription for veterinary drugs

Introduction

The “digital revolution”, constantly powered by the diffusion of mobile peripherals and the widespread digitization, is changing everything in many areas radically. This rampant innovation has brought with it new organizational and operational models, and has made necessary to change the relationship between individuals and public administrations through bureaucratic simplification and dematerialization.

The project

The Electronic prescription for veterinary drugs is a project of the MINSAL [Italian Ministry of Health (Direction General for animal health and veterinary drugs)] aimed at the full digitization of the management of veterinary drugs, from prescription to the treatment of the animals. The introduction of the Electronic veterinary prescription is therefore a tool and not the ultimate goal of the project, which includes digitization and traceability of sales, stockholding and use of veterinary drugs (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Data flow for the management of veterinary drug: from the left to the right

Purposes

The Electronic prescription for veterinary drugs is contextualized in the MINSAL policies for “public health, animal welfare and food safety”. The project therefore has health purposes, to make the use of the veterinary drug in Italy more “measurable” by digitizing and dematerializing the information now printed on paper. This project is also included in the implementation by the MINSAL of a traceability system throughout the veterinary drug supply chain. The main objectives pursued by the project are the following:

- Digitizing all the information currently handled in paperwork and collected for the traceability of the veterinary medicinal product;
- Simplifying the operation of citizens in meeting regulatory obligations by introducing new organizational and operational models through “intensive digital use” interaction.

The Electronic prescription for veterinary drugs does not introduce any new obligations or rules in relation to current legislation, but is intended to simplify and, wherever possible, reduce the obligations of citizens by recovering information already available in ministerial information systems.

The innovation

Although the project introduces full digitization (“we’ve gone from four paper copies to zero”¹), the full involvement and collaboration of all actors involved in drug management have been the true innovation in the testing phase of the system. The testing has enabled to “fine-tune” and validate the computerized management of the veterinary drug in livestock sector with the participation of the National Health Service Centre of the MINSAL (IZSAM G. Caporale) and of all the players in the chain:

- veterinary practitioners;
- holders and owners of animals;
- wholesalers and pharmacists;
- Veterinary services of Local Health Units and of the Regions.

The Electronic prescription for veterinary drugs: how it works

The veterinarian can issue an electronic prescription using any computer connected to the Internet, or by using a mobile device (tablet or smartphone) that can operate in off-line mode through an application that simplifies and where possible automates data entry (animals from the farm register, authorized species and time of suspension of the drug, etc.).

- The prescriptions are no longer separate according to the type of medicine (triple copy, repeatable or non-repeatable prescription, medicated feed), but only according to the purpose. The electronic prescription for veterinary drugs will be immediately available online and usable, for the sale of drugs, by pharmacies and wholesalers through its own number and PIN. It is possible to retrieve the
- prescription through the holding code or the farmer’s tax ID (Figure 2).

¹ Mario Facchi, veterinarian, involved from 2015 in testing in Lombardy and Advisor for the Italian livestock veterinary Society (SIVAR).

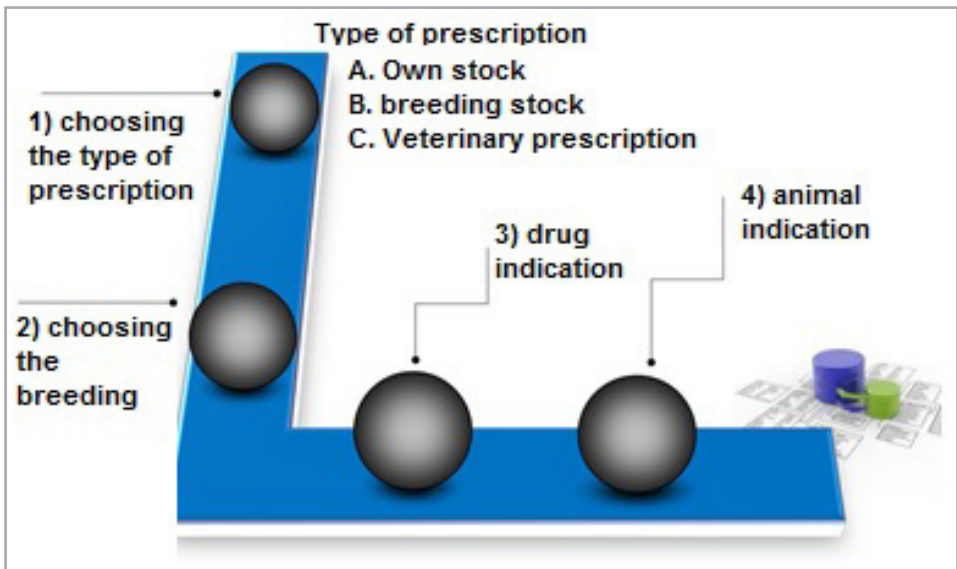


Figure 2. Electronic prescription release

In addition to the complete “dematerialization” of the prescription, the electronic management of the register of loading and unloading of stocks of veterinary drugs is foreseen and, as an alternative to paper handling, of the treatment register.

The complete “dematerialization” of the prescription eliminates the paperwork management of the loading-unloading register of veterinary drugs (of veterinarian and of the breeding). The register will also be automatically updated at the moment of the pharmacist’s delivery to the farmer of the drugs.

It is possible to manage the administration of veterinary drugs (treatment) through the following operating modes:

- Register of treatments handled in paper mode (mixed management);
- Register of treatments handled in computerized mode (full management).

In both modes, the loading -unloading register of the drugs will be electronic. In case a computerized management of the register of treatment is used, the information will be used for the automatic compilation of the dedicated section of the dematerialized model 4.

The Electronic prescription in Numbers

The first results of the testing phase are shown in the figures 3 and 4 below (data updated to the half of July 2017).

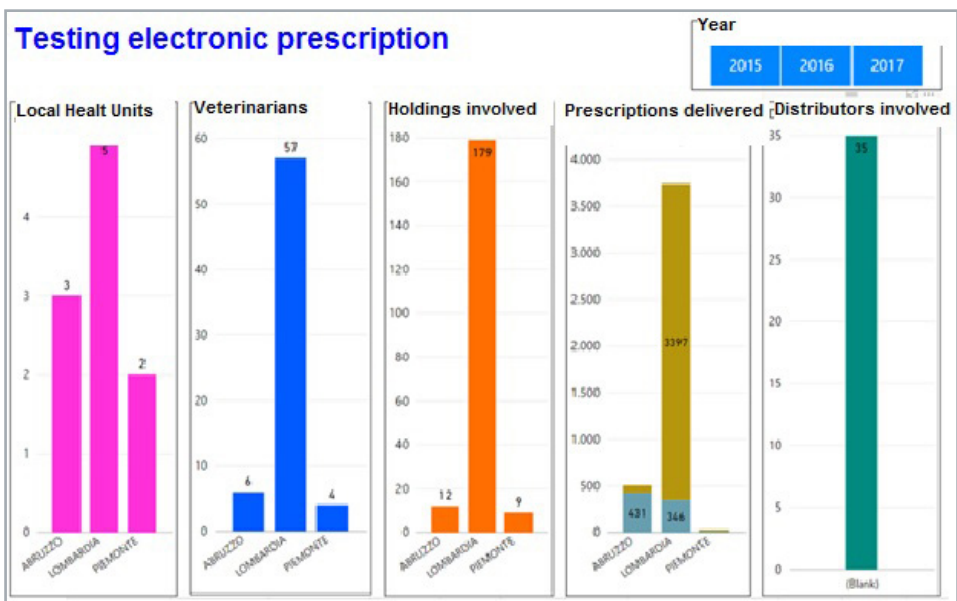
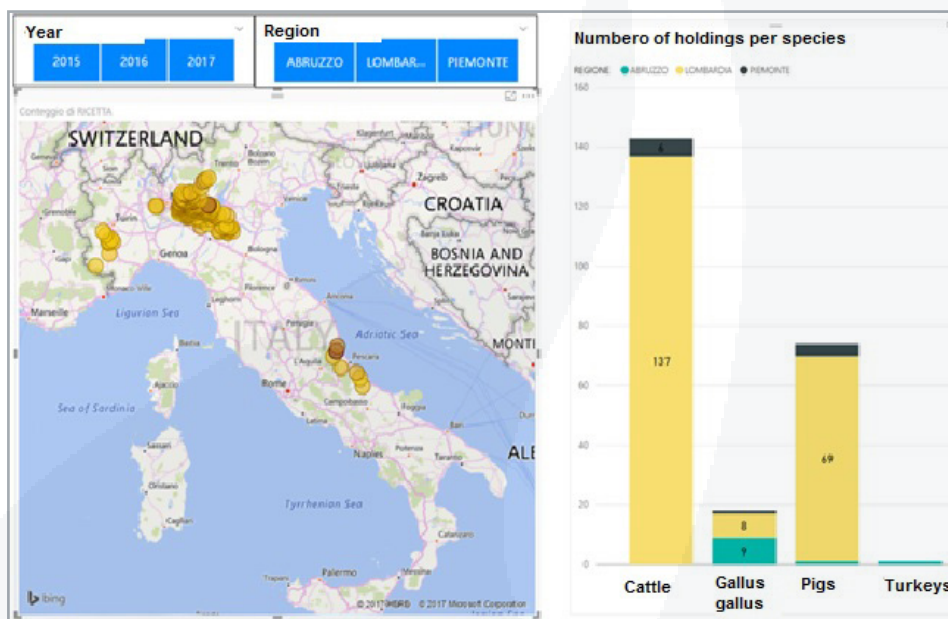


Figure 3. Preliminary data on testing phase

Figure 4. Holdings involved in the testing phase



Conclusions

Following public health safety objectives already covered by Directive 2001/82/EC, Italy is preparing for computerization of recording the production, marketing and distribution data of veterinary drugs and replacing the paper prescription with a computerized form. The computerization of the traceability of veterinary drugs is expressly foreseen in the 2015-2017 Agenda for Simplification, which contains a targeted action on veterinary health, to be implemented by December 2017; in addition to eliminating the requirement for cattle passport, the Agenda provides for digitization and traceability of veterinary drugs.

The testing of the electronic prescription has been the result of a joint work of the Ministry of Health and the IZS of Abruzzo and Molise with Lombardy and Abruzzo Regions (and from 2017 Piedmont), veterinary practitioners, associations, wholesalers and pharmacists, feed plants, food production chains, breeders and Local Health Units of the involved Regions. It has been a long journey that led the Electronic prescription from “testing” to the [2017 European Law](#), which introduced the Electronic prescription for veterinary drugs and medicated feeding stuffs from 1 September 2018.

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 Edited by:
 Marco Secone
 National Service Centre (CSN) of the Italian Ministry of Health
 Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell’Abruzzo e del Molise “G. Caporale”