

Zoonotic Risk Practices in Rural Households in the Penka-Michel Health District (West Cameroon)

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Abstract : Background: Zoonoses are nowadays a serious public health problem in both developing and developed countries. They contribute to increase the economic burden. In case of emergence, rural populations are the most affected, hence the need to investigate risk practices in rural households of Penka-Michel (West Cameroon). Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted from October to November 2021 among 200 heads of households living in the Penka-Michel health district (West Cameroon). It was done using a pre-tested and validated questionnaire, allowing to obtain socio-demographic, economic data, and data on zoonotic risk practices. Results: The participants [women (56%), men (44%)] worked mainly in the informal private sector (53%) and practiced agriculture secondarily (90%). Their highest level of education, for the most part, was a secondary school (50%); the average household size was 06 persons with a monthly income > 36270 FCFA (72%). 74% of household heads thought that animals can transmit diseases, and 17% had heard about zoonotic diseases through the media (65%). Rats caught in households (60%) were consumed there (74%), as was bush meat (61%) or dog meat (18%). For family food (90%), animals were slaughtered within the household (97%), rarely preceded by a veterinary inspection (6%). 87% of households practiced traditional rites with animal blood, 65% shared the same habitat as their animals, 41% did not systematically wash their hands after handling animals. More than 50% of households owned one or more dogs, usually strays (41%) and 48% of which were vaccinated (rabies). Many households had at least one: poultry (98%); pig (50%); dog (57%), cat (52%). 25% of households slaughtered sick animals for consumption, and 27% ate dead animals. Conclusion: This study identified numerous zoonotic risk practices in households in the Penka-Michel health district (West Cameroon). Concerted, multisectoral communication / awareness-raising actions are needed to break with these practices.

Keywords : zoonoses, risky practices, rural households, penka-michel, cameroon

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