

Does a holistic approach to improving equine welfare produce better outcomes?

Nurturing a community-led tetanus toxoid vaccination program: the synthesis and learning



The Brooke India

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Introduction

Traditionally Brooke India delivered free veterinary services to working animals in India¹. Community-led tetanus toxoid vaccination is one of Brooke’s new approaches, which evolved as a result of a process of community empowerment, with the aim of developing a sustainable improvement in animal welfare.

Method

Retrospective veterinary treatment records of tetanus cases (Figure 1) and monitoring and evaluation data from the period between 2008 and 2012 were evaluated. Data were analysed descriptively.

Result

The tetanus vaccination program is categorised into three phases based on involvement of, and proportion of responsibility shared by, the community and Brooke India.

1. The **Brooke-led tetanus vaccination** process was the only means to vaccinate animals until 2007. Brooke organised and provided free vaccine and services at the treatment sites. The main challenge of this program was to ensure that animals received their follow-up dose as owners were often disengaged with the vaccination process and the reasons behind it.
2. To overcome the challenges of first phase, Brooke modified its approach and implemented participatory tools with owners². This enabled owners to organise vaccination events with the technical support of Brooke; leading to a phase of **community-led vaccination with Brooke support**.
3. In the **community-led vaccination** process *Ashwamitra* (“friends of equids”) and Equine Welfare Groups take the key initiative and the community shares the cost and responsibility of vaccination (Figure 4). This process has become prominent since 2009 and has aided the development of ownership among stakeholders. Thus a peer environment safeguards animals from fatal tetanus disease.

Discussion and conclusions

369 community-led vaccination events were organised during the financial year 2008/09; and total tetanus vaccinations reported in Brooke India were 4,912. Vaccinations increased to 63,609 with the support of 3,956 community-led events by financial year 2011/12 (Figure 2). The veterinary records show the average number of tetanus cases per operational unit has reduced from 4.4 to 3.7 during the same time period (Figure 3).

This retrospective study demonstrates the gradual transformation of Brooke India from direct service provision towards a community-led vaccination program.



Figure 1: A working horse infected with tetanus

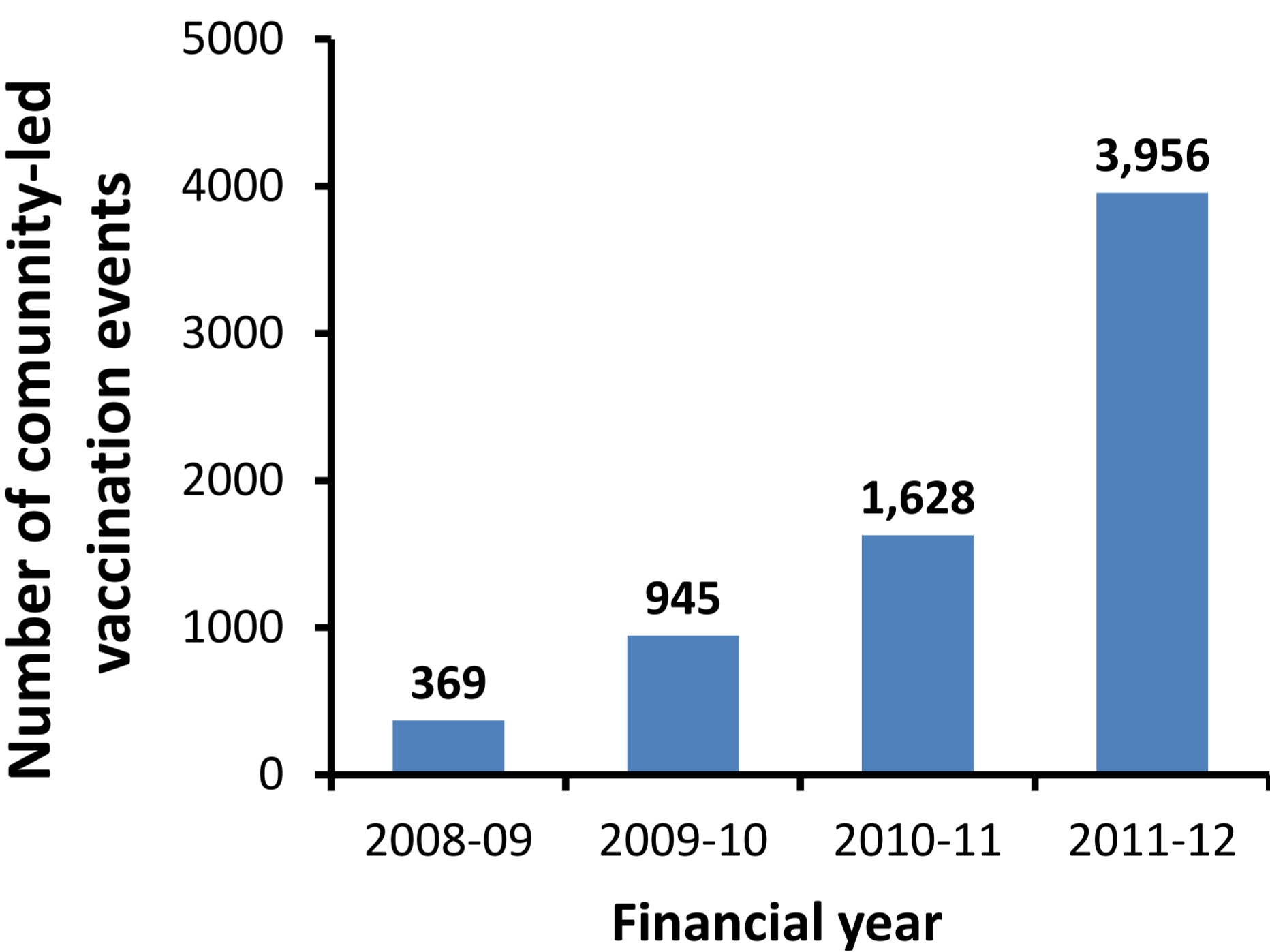


Figure 2: Community-led vaccination events in Brooke India from 2008 to 2012

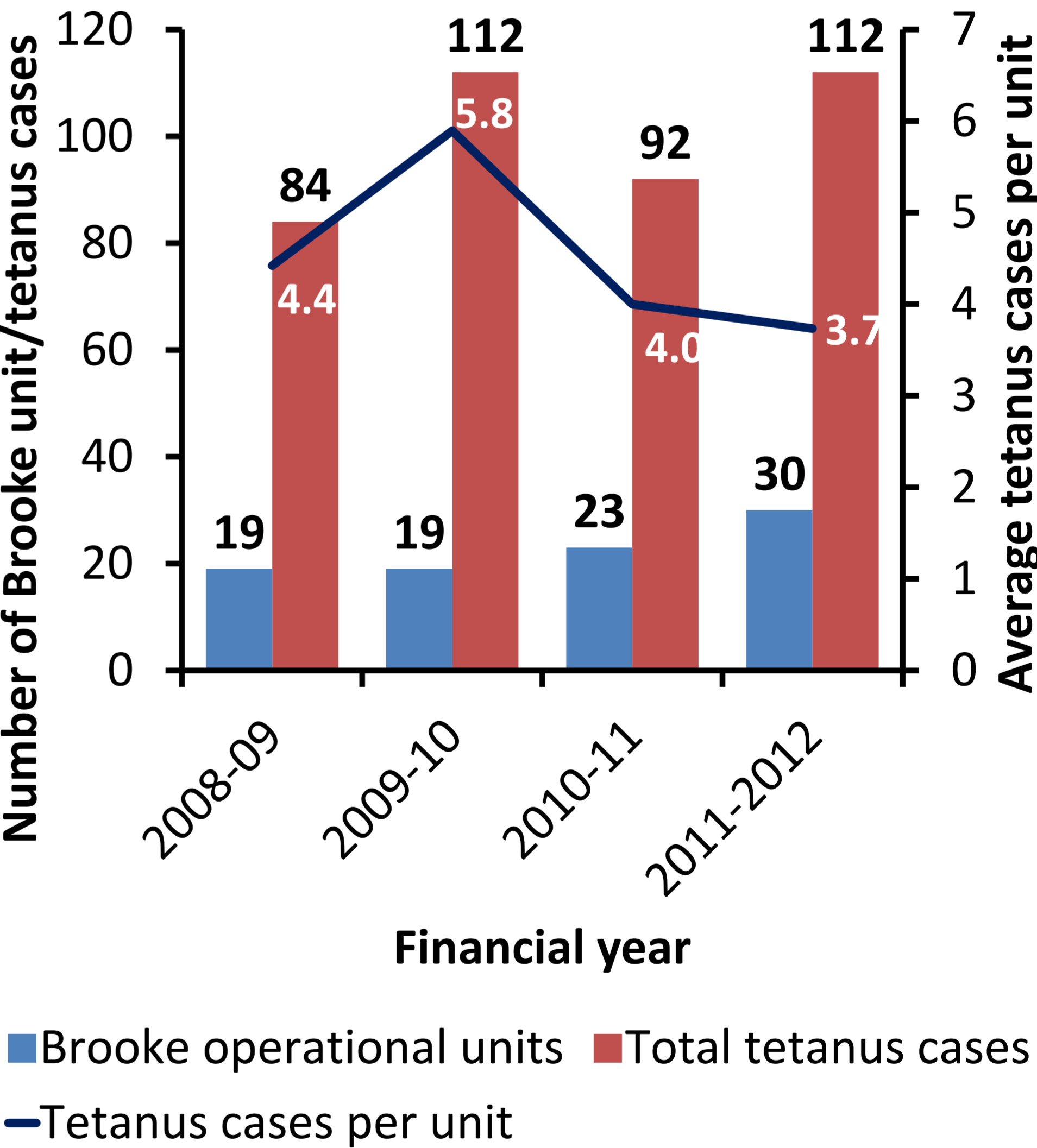


Figure 3: Tetanus cases in Brooke India from 2008 to 2012



Figure 4: (A) Animal owners talk on tetanus and its vaccination; (B) and (C) animal owners and stakeholders gathering in a community-led vaccination event

References: 1. Guha et al. (2010): *Proc 6th Int Colloq Working Eqs* p5–8. 2. Van Dijk et al. (2010): *Sharing the Load* p193 Practical Action Publishing, Rugby



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