



Improving communication – relevant tools and resources

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1. Summary

This document provides tools and resources on communication by inspectors. Research shows that enhanced interpersonal communication among inspectors can foster better outcomes and can better support inspection-driven animal welfare improvement. In addition, inspectors who have training in communication skills may have higher job satisfaction and less risk for job-related depression (Englar, Williams and Weingard 2016). The training methods described in this document can be incorporated into inspector trainings (see also EURCAW-pigs suggested training course structures, materials, and standards). Below, we suggest that the Calgary-Cambridge guide, Motivational Interviewing, and training on personality types and learning styles can be usefully adapted to inspector training in communication.

2. Calgary-Cambridge guide

The Calgary-Cambridge guide (CCG) for teaching communication skills was initially developed in human medicine and later adapted to veterinary education. It is considered the gold standard in veterinary communication skills training. Some of the core skills emphasized in CCG include reflective listening, empathy, nonverbals or body language and sounds, and open-ended questions (Englar, Williams, and Weingard 2016). The Calgary-Cambridge guide is used widely in veterinary education in the UK, Canada, and the US. In the course of training, veterinary students learn communication skills through conducting case scenarios with medical actors, class discussions, and practicing particular skills with classmates.

The Calgary-Cambridge guide breaks down a veterinary consultation into phases and lists the skills and techniques that veterinarians can use to communicate effectively with clients during each phase. Phases of a veterinary consultation, according to the CCG framework include: preparation, initiation, gathering information, physical examination, explanation and planning, and closure. For each phase, the Calgary-Cambridge guide describes important tools. For example, in the gathering information phase, trainees might practice active listening skills and asking open-ended questions. In the explanation and planning phase, trainees could practice involving the client in the decision-making process and breaking up information into smaller pieces followed by checking understanding (also known as “chunk and check”) to make sure that clients understand different aspects of the diagnosis and treatment plan.

CCG has been adapted to veterinary education, but to our knowledge it has not yet been adapted to inspector training. While some aspects would not be applicable to both situations due to the differences between a paid consultation for a pet and an EU animal welfare inspection, CCG could usefully be adapted as a communication training method for inspectors. In addition, CCG offers the benefit of possibly being familiar to inspectors who have been educated and trained as veterinarians.

As a training method, CCG includes discussions of core skills, rehearsal of these skills to integrate them into practice, observation, and descriptive feedback. These activities could be usefully integrated into ongoing inspector training in order to support improved outcomes as well as change on the part of farmers. One of the benefits of CCG is that there are a lot of online resources available, albeit ones that would need to be adapted to the particular needs and practices of inspectors.

Calgary-Cambridge guide resources

The following resources are intended only as a guide for training bodies who would like to organize courses on communication for inspectors. (Please note: EURCAW-pigs is not responsible for the content of these external resources).

- The Royal Veterinary College at University of London provides free online lesson plans, scenario descriptions and videos, workshops and more at: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530833>
- A learning and teaching guide for developing communication training programs for veterinary students is provided free online at: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530834>. This guide, developed through a collaboration between Murdoch University, The University of Queensland, and The University of Sydney includes scenarios, descriptions of the Calgary-Cambridge Method, and workshops/lesson plans for communication training.
- The following article (not open-access) describes the Calgary-Cambridge method as it is being used in veterinary education: Mossop L, Gray C., 2008. Teaching communication skills. In Practice 30:340-343. <https://edepot.wur.nl/530857>
- A worksheet for assessing skills using the Calgary-Cambridge guide: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530835>
- *Skills for Communicating in Veterinary Medicine* (2017) by Cindy L. Adams and Suzanne Kurtz is a handbook for developing communication training for veterinarians: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530836>
- This open-access article does not explicitly engage CCG but offers some general advice for doctors on communication skills and how to learn them, some of which could be adapted to training inspectors: “Key communication skills and how to acquire them” by P. Maguire in BMJ 2002 <https://edepot.wur.nl/530837>

3. Motivational Interviewing

As described in a EURCAW-pigs review on inspection-driven change (Overstreet and Anneberg 2019), Motivational Interviewing (MI) has been developed in a therapeutic context in order to help individuals change behaviors especially in relation to addiction, but has widely been accepted as a tool in the health sector for instance in relation to smoking and overweight. MI is based on the idea that people are most likely to change if they develop their own reasons for change in a supportive environment. Core skills in MI include empathic listening in order to understand the interviewee’s reasons for ambivalence, asking questions that support positive change talk, summarizing, and supporting positive reasons for change that the person in question raises. Therefore, MI training could help inspectors to support economic operators in finding their own reasons for change, which in turn, may increase the chances that economic operators will actually take steps toward that change.

MI has shown promise in various contexts including inspection. In Denmark, MI has been introduced as a communication training method in the Aarhus University MA program in assessing animal welfare. Inspectors are introduced to the most common concepts connected to MI, for instance active listening and ambivalence. They also work with role playing on how to use the concepts in conversations with farmers (economic operators). The teacher at the Master degree program is a Danish psychologist who is educated in using and teaching MI.

Compared to the Calgary-Cambridge guide, MI is less structured and less focused on a specific format of interaction (eg a veterinary consultation). Instead MI might be described as an approach that is specifically targeted toward supporting change in another person. It is founded in therapeutic skills such as empathic listening. MI can be useful for inspectors because there is evidence that economic operators may be ambivalent about making changes and MI may be a way to support economic operators in ‘talking themselves’ into making animal welfare improvements. Because it is less structured than CCG, MI may potentially be learned more quickly than CCG.

We strongly suggest that Competent Authorities (CAs) in Member States (MS) look locally for experts trained in MI who can participate in training courses for inspectors. It is also possible to find videos and resources online, but a skilled trainer is necessary for successful development of MI skills. In addition, adequate time must be given for active learning exercises such as discussion, role playing, and/or written activities.

Motivational Interviewing Resources

The following resources are intended only as a guide for training bodies who would like to organize courses on communication for inspectors. (Please note: EURCAW-pigs is not responsible for the content of these external resources.)

- An open-source overview on MI by Ken Resnicow and Fiona McMaster: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530846>
- Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) - This webpage includes information on MI trainers as well as a library of open-access resources on MI: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530847>
- This webpage includes an adapted summary of MI assumptions and principles: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530848>
- This online article in Positive Psychology provides a description and some materials that could be useful for training in MI: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530849>

4. Personality types and learning styles

There is some research on how farmers with different personality types and learning styles receive and act on information. This research shows that successful communication on issues such as mastitis require different forms of delivery with farmers of varying mindsets (Lam et al 2011). For example, while some farmers might benefit from in-person discussion and group learning with peers, others are more likely to act on information from online or written resources that they research themselves. According to Lam et al (2011), veterinarians can encourage better mastitis management among ‘hard-to-reach’ farmers through assessing farmers’ differences in their level of trust and openness to information from different sources. Lam et al (2011) argue that the best ways to support change through communication based on personality types and learning styles is through “a pro-active approach, personalization of message, providing a realistic frame of reference for the farmer, and use of the farmers’ social environment” (pg 8). Like the previous two communication methods (CCG and MI), training for inspectors on personality types and learning styles would need to be adapted to fit the specific needs and practices of inspectors.

There are numerous personality typologies used in psychology and social psychology, many of which could be useful for inspectors. Some typologies are simple while others are highly complex and require questionnaires and more. Due to the limitations of interaction in an inspection, a simplified approach would be most useful. It may be more difficult to adapt personality typology training to the specific needs of inspectors than CCG or MI. On the other hand, it may be less time-consuming than other trainings as there may be fewer skills required to use this approach in practice. Skills might include asking questions that help the inspector to assess some basic aspects of an economic operator's approach to information sources and willingness to change and some basic training in how to respond to different personality types.

Resources on personality types and learning styles

The following resources are intended only as a guide for training bodies who would like to organize courses on communication for inspectors. (Please note: EURCAW-pigs is not responsible for the content of these external resources.)

- An article by Lam et al (2011) on veterinarians using personality types to more effectively support better mastitis management among farmers is available here: <https://edepot.wur.nl/181105>
- A second academic article may also be useful: "Debunking the myth of the hard-to-reach farmer: Effective communication on udder health" by Jansen et al (2010): <https://edepot.wur.nl/134770>
- A lesson plan for an introduction to Myers-Briggs from Patrick Breslin at Santa Fe College, Gainesville Florida: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530852>
- A handbook that draws on personality typologies to enhance veterinary communication is called Exam Room Communication for Veterinarians: The Science and Art of Conversing with Clients: <https://edepot.wur.nl/530855>

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