



USAHA News Release

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For immediate release:

NATIONAL SURVEILLANCE STRESSED AT ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE MEETING

Reno, Nev., Oct. 23, 2007 - Development of surveillance systems at the national level was the main focus of the meeting of the joint U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) and American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) Committee on Animal Health Information Systems here this week.

Having a comprehensive, integrated National Animal Health Surveillance System (NAHSS) will provide information to answer a number of questions, including:

- Can the U.S. Department of Agriculture rapidly find disease throughout the nation, wherever it may arise?
- Can the United States make statements about its national disease status that will convince trading partners that its products are safe and convince consumers to buy them?
- Can national policy decisions be based on actual data so that tax dollars can be spent wisely?

A national surveillance system needs to focus on vesicular diseases, including foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), and on emerging diseases and issues. The information system infrastructure that is being built must support a comprehensive and integrated surveillance system with multiple tests from one farm, animal or laboratory submission whenever possible.

In the “old way” of surveillance, there was one sample and one test for one disease. In a new and comprehensive surveillance system, one sample would serve multiple purposes. It would be tested for several diseases, both species specific and cross species. Test results would be electronically transmitted through the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) backbone. Such information would not only be fed upward to a centralized data base, but also would be available for use at the state and local level.

In a report on the status of the National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS), it was noted that 46 states are currently participating in NAHRS, an increase of two since last year’s meeting. NAHRS continues to be an important source of information used to complete U.S. animal disease reports for the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). NAHRS also provides a credible source of information to support trade negotiation. In 2008, the direction of

NAHRS will move from recruitment to national awareness of NAHRS with emphasis on continued improvement and validation of NAHRS reporting.

The committee also called for the development of a “national reportable animal disease list.” It was pointed out that while all states have some type of reportable disease list or reporting requirements, there is a significant lack of standardization between states. Currently, there are international animal disease reporting requirements with no corresponding U.S. national reporting requirement. Diseases that now require reporting at the national level are listed in multiple regulations and memorandums and are thus difficult to find. Finally, state reportable lists lack standardization and are not updated as often as they need to be to provide accurate and timely information.

The committee emphasized that the lack of a national list of reportable animal diseases can be a significant trade issue, as one of the first requests from trade partners often is to see the other country’s “National Reportable Disease List.”

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