



USAHA News Release

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For immediate release:

SENDING RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES “HOME”

Reno, Nev., Oct. 22, 2007 - Reports on reintroduction of rare and endangered species, animal care, chronic wasting disease (CWD) and research on fencing for deer and elk herds were featured at this year’s meeting of the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) Committee on Captive Wildlife and Alternative Livestock here this week.

Charley Seale of the Exotic Wildlife Association presented an overview of the partnership that the private exotic wildlife industry in Texas has with the Sahara Conservation Fund in reintroducing rare and endangered species from the United States back into their native countries. The first such reintroduction was conducted in 2005 in which 44 Dama gazelle, 40 Addax, 35 Markhor and 10 Scimitar horned oryx were transported to Dubai. These animals originated from private ranches in Texas.

Another reintroduction program is under negotiation for a reserve in Senegal. Seale said the success of the private game ranch industry in breeding rare and endangered species is an example of how private conservation can affect the worldwide preservation of such animals.

The committee also heard an update on animal care issues, including large exotic cat handling, tuberculosis in elephants, birds, avian influenza and pet evacuation/rescue. The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006 ensures that state and local emergency preparedness operational plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals following a major disaster or animal health emergency.

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy of domestic and wild cervids similar to scrapie in sheep and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or mad cow disease in cattle. No new CWD infection was found in farmed cervid herds in FY 2007, even though the number of animals tested (17,189) for the disease was up from the previous three-year average of about 15,000 animals. Four infected elk herds in Colorado and one infected white-tailed deer herd in Wisconsin remain under state quarantine.

West Virginia found additional cases of CWD in free-ranging cervids in Hampshire County and Wisconsin continues to battle the disease with more than 850 positive deer identified from some 130,000 animals submitted for testing since 2000. The infected area in that state appears to be slowly spreading.

The committee also heard a report on research to determine the minimum fence height that will essentially be 100-percent effective in keeping wild white-tailed deer out and captive white-tailed deer in. Preliminary results indicate that while 91 percent of deer can jump a six-foot fence, it is very rare for a deer to clear an eight-foot fence. More trials are underway at the eight-foot height.

Effectiveness of electric fencing in combination with woven-wire fencing to limit fenceline contact by elk and thereby reduce the probability of disease transmission is also being studied. Preliminary results suggest that coupling a single woven-wire fence with an electric fence virtually eliminates contact by elk through the fence.

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