

Computerized System will help manage animal disease outbreaks

The Emergency Management Reporting System (EMRS) developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (USDA, APHIS, VS) is a computerized system for managing animal disease outbreaks or animal emergencies.

In the past, VS managed animal disease outbreaks with paper records. But if an animal disease outbreak were to occur today in an area of high animal concentration, a paper system would be inefficient and difficult to use.

VS developed the EMRS using Lotus Notes document management and Oracle database management software. Both of these applications have been used for emergency management in non-animal emergencies. Many national, state and local emergency management agencies use Lotus Notes applications.

The EMRS system is capable of tracking all aspects of a disease outbreak or animal emergency due to a national disaster. It includes links to mapping applications and geographic information systems for spatial analysis capabilities. Besides simple analysis capabilities in the form of epidemiology curves, the Oracle component will allow higher level analysis for trends or examining efficiencies.

The EMRS includes four modules providing information management for: reference material; personnel, equipment and costs; general tasks; and the complex tasks of investigating premises. The investigation module also manages information regarding the tracing, surveillance and vaccination (if used) of associated premises.

The EMRS consists of a master database at a central location with a wide distribution of connections. In case communications go down, local replications will be available. Finally, for non-Lotus Notes users, there is a web browser interface. All databases will have an Access Control List and other security features to prevent unauthorized access to data.