

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report April 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Exclusion

- Task force set up in Washington State to prevent spread of avian influenza – An Incident Command Post has been established in Washington State to carry out exclusion, surveillance, and outreach activities designed to prevent or rapidly detect the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza from Canada. Task force personnel are assisting DHS' Customs and Border Patrol personnel in identifying agricultural products that should be excluded entry into the US and in identifying vehicles which need to be cleaned and disinfected prior to entry. A surveillance zone has been established and task force personnel are contacting backyard flock owners and requesting to swab birds. Surveillance being carried out by commercial poultry operations is being monitored by the task force. Leaflets and other materials are being distributed to feed stores and veterinarians in the area. The exclusion steps enacted to prevent HPAI spread are consistent with numerous Safeguarding Review exclusion recommendations.

Surveillance

- Funding obtained for national animal identification system– In April, \$18.8 million was transferred to APHIS from the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation to fund the development and implementation of an animal identification system. The top priority for 2004 is to establish a national premises allocator and repository. To achieve that goal, several activities will be undertaken including: an independent assessment of existing premises allocation systems, IT development work to enhance the most promising system, funding of cooperative agreements with States and Tribal nations to assist them in preparing for the national animal identification system, and an outreach and education campaign. Safeguarding Review recommendation #128 calls for the development of a comprehensive animal identification system.

Response

- Carcass disposal– Progress was achieved on several carcass disposal initiatives. The International Working group on Alternatives to Disposal of Animals met in Vancouver April 15-17th prior to the annual Quadrilateral Meetings. Recommended actions from the working group were presented to the Chief Veterinary Officers at the Quadrilateral Meeting. The Executive Board of the American Veterinary Medical Association has appointed a task force to review carcass disposal issues. The AVMA task force will review literature related to

disposal issues and provide a report with recommendations for addressing problems associated with carcass disposal. Kansas State University recently issued a draft report from work funded by APHIS about disposal options. The KSU research will be used to amend current disposal guidelines. Safeguarding Review recommendation #152 calls for the continued development of guidelines for carcass disposal.

- International cooperation during animal health emergencies – A Memorandum of Understanding outlining how Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States would share personnel in the event of an animal health emergency has been drafted. The draft has entered the final review process and a final MOU is expected to be ready for signature in early 2005. Safeguarding Review recommendation #114 calls for establishing pools of emergency responders.
- Updated North American vaccine bank protocol– Chief Veterinary Officers for Canada, Mexico, and the United States have accepted modifications to the North American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Vaccine Bank. Modifications were made in the program’s communication plan and in guidance surrounding regionalization and vaccine distribution decisions. Establishing vaccination strategies for foreign animal disease is recommended in Safeguarding Review recommendation #112.
- OIE meeting on vaccination - VS personnel organized, attended, and presented at the *International Conference on the Control of Infectious Animal Diseases by Vaccination* in April. The conference included scientific sessions on vaccination for a number of diseases. Establishing vaccination strategies for foreign animal disease is recommended in Safeguarding Review recommendation #112.
- Updated FAD/EAD investigation procedures – VS has completed an update to VS memorandum 580.4 entitled “Procedure for Investigating a Suspected Foreign Animal/Emerging Disease Incident”. VS Memo 580.4 outlines specific instructions for conducting and reporting FAD/EAD investigations. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations call for updating response guidance (#s 107 and 110).
- Information distributed for first responders – A compact disc entitled, *Food Security: The Threat to American Livestock* is being distributed. The compact disc was developed by APHIS in conjunction with Auburn University and is geared to first responders. The disc offers comprehensive information on infectious disease threats to livestock, animal disease awareness briefings, standard veterinary medical information for diagnosing such diseases, and emergency information gathering and reporting mechanisms. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations address the need to establish pools of responders and to extend training to these responders (#s 113 and 114).

Laboratory Systems

- Novel diagnostic technologies - VS personnel attended a Novel Diagnostic Technologies meeting in Ames the week of April 12th. The meeting was sponsored by the Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics. The purpose of the meeting was for USDA scientists to gain an understanding of some of the latest diagnostic technologies and to determine which of those technologies could be applied to current efforts to develop rapid diagnostic tests for high consequence livestock pathogens. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations call for enhancing applied research to support response activities (#s 137 and 138).
- Poultry FAD awareness course held – A poultry foreign animal disease awareness course was held at NVSL for federal, state, and industry veterinarians. In addition to providing technical information, the course promotes collaboration between industry, state, and federal government personnel and identifies a network of poultry veterinarians who could be called upon in case of a disease emergency. Safeguarding Review recommendation #113 calls for expanding foreign animal disease training opportunities to state, university, industry, and private practitioners.

Information Technology

- Spatial analysis of low pathogenic avian influenza outbreak – Several spatial analyses have been completed on data from the low pathogenic avian influenza outbreak in Virginia. These analyses examined the impact of flock depopulation and truck movement on the spread of LPAI. Applying spatial analysis techniques to develop an improved understanding of disease spread is consistent with Safeguarding Review recommendation #130.
- NAHLN information technology committee meets - The National Animal Health Laboratory Network Information Technology Committee met in Fort Collins the week of April 19th to discuss current progress of the pilot NAHLN system. The Committee also continued planning for the release of the system to additional laboratories. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations address the need to establish a laboratory network (#s 74, 118, and 119).

Organizational Dynamics

- New communication tool – APHIS information technology staff launched *Lotus Sametime* as a tool for instant messaging and web-conferencing. Training sessions were held at APHIS offices throughout the country. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations call for improving internal communications (#s 85 and 140).

Veterinary Accreditation

- Steering committee established – A steering committee has been established for the Veterinary Accreditation Program Database. The committee has representatives from various user groups in VS as well as representatives from other APHIS units. The steering committee will hold its first meeting in May. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations call for improving the veterinary accreditation program (#s 145, 146, and 147).

II. Implementation activities:

At its March meeting in Miami, the Information Technology Issue Group viewed recent technology advances implemented at the port of Miami and met with a private practitioner to discuss his reliance on electronic information processing.

The National Surveillance System Issue Group will be meeting the week of May 10th to continue working on action plans. Three action plans have been submitted thus far.

The Coordinated Response Issue Group will be meeting the week of May 17th to continue working on action plans.

Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.

