

## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE

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Carolyn L Stull, CA

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The Committee met on October 14, 2009 at the Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, Calif., from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. There were 24 members and 43 guests present. Chair Amelita Facchiano was unable to attend this year's meeting and in her absence Co-Vice Chairs Ria de Grassi and Carolyn Stull fulfilled the duties of the chair. Ms. de Grassi reviewed the activities of the committee during and following the 2008 meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina. She acknowledged the committee's mission statement in her opening remarks and then referred the committee members to the USAHA website to review in detail the 2008 committee resolutions and the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) responses to those resolutions.

Cathy Liss, President, Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), gave her report entitled Reducing the Use of Antibiotics in Food Animal Production. Her opening remarks included that 70% of antibiotics used in the United States are prophylactically fed to cattle, pigs, and chickens according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, while the Animal Health Institute estimates agricultural use for growth promotion to be 13%. By either account, Ms. Liss stated that the U.S. leads the world in the use of antibiotics in food animal production. She proposed that fortunately through the use of responsible, humane management practices, farm animals can be raised under conditions that obviate the need for prophylactic feeding of antibiotics. By increasing reliance on vaccinations, diligently monitoring animal health, and, most importantly, by phasing out stressful confinement housing systems that compromise animals' immune systems and facilitate disease transmission, AWI's own Animal Welfare Approved program is but one example ([www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org](http://www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org)) of raising farm animals by which producers can manage animal diseases without resorting to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics.

Gail Golab, PhD, DVM, MACVSc (Animal Welfare), Head, Animal Welfare Division, American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), explained the Directions and Focus of AVMA's Animal Welfare Division for 2010. Dr. Golab reported on anticipated AVMA activities for 2010 in fulfillment of its ongoing strategic goal to be "an advocate for and an authoritative, science-based resource on animal welfare." Fulfillment of the goal was described as being collaborative (with the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee, Animal Welfare Division, and other AVMA leadership as principal players) and as focusing on four areas: policy development and implementation, veterinary education, international engagement, and some special

projects. The AVMA approach to policy development is becoming more comprehensive with increased attention being paid to what the scientific basis is for animal care practices and to making specific recommendations on avoiding or managing of any adverse consequences for animals. Common options for implementation include public policy activities and stakeholder education; the former is moving away from a paradigm of being reactive (responding to others' proposals) to being proactive (introducing proposals to address clearly identified concerns). Veterinary education in animal welfare is being addressed at three levels: students (lectures and opportunities for practical application), graduate veterinarians (CE AVMA meeting, state/allied group meetings), and specialization. In the international arena, AVMA's focus is on improved engagement and communication. Once again the emphasis is on actively seeking out opportunities to share information and provide input, including participation in meetings and symposia. Special projects of the AVMA during the next 12 months include continued work on updating the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia (70+ experts involved) and an educational symposium to be hosted jointly with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (November 9-11, 2009 at Michigan State University).

Chester Gipson, DVM, Deputy Administrator, Animal Care, USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), briefed the committee on USDA-APHIS: Animal Care Program and Future Developments. Public awareness and increased emphasis on animal welfare has given APHIS additional responsibilities. Those responsibilities have been delegated to the Animal Care (AC) unit, the unit within APHIS responsible for enforcing the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and regulations and the Horse Protection Act (HPA) and regulations. To respond to the additional responsibilities, the AC unit was authorized to establish an Emergency Programs Unit and a Center for Animal Welfare to provide the critical leadership necessary to effectively carry out the new responsibilities. The focus of the newly established units will support the current mission of AC while using the unique expertise within AC. Animal Care's Center for Animal Welfare will serve as the national resource for policy development and analysis, training, science, and technology in support of the AWA and the HPA; the Center will benefit both USDA and its stakeholders by providing essential technical information and educational programs. The Center's activities align with APHIS Mission Priority 4: "Enhance the well-being of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act (HPA)." The long-term strategy is for the Center for Animal Welfare to be recognized as an OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) Collaborating Center.

Jeremy Russell, Director of Communications and Government Relations, National Meat Association, addressed the challenges of the largest meat recall in US history by giving a presentation titled, Hallmark in Retrospect. He described the roots of this catastrophe going back to what people sometimes refer to as "the cow that stole Christmas"—the first cow in the US detected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) on December 23, 2003. The reaction to that news was extreme. The incident had several long-term consequences, one of which—nearly five years later on February 17, 2008, was when Hallmark announced that it was voluntarily recalling approximately 143 million pounds of raw and frozen beef products. This recall was designated as Class II "due to the establishment's noncompliance with regulatory requirements and the remote possibility that the beef being recalled could cause adverse health effects if consumed." The measure that the USDA put in place was a ban on all downer cattle entering the food supply. Mr. Russell acknowledged that there is a laundry list of things that went wrong at Hallmark. These things, such as using high pressure hoses and fork lifts to move downed animals, were illegal, reprehensible, and should have been caught by the company management and/or the government inspectors. Subsequent to the recall, both the industry and the inspection process were exonerated by a USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit that concluded "that the events that occurred at Hallmark were not a systemic failure of the inspection processes/system." The problem was Hallmark employees breaking the rules, not the rules themselves or how they are enforced. In the end, about 36 percent of the product was reported recovered by the establishment, which is a high recovery rate for any recall. Mr. Russell reported that the recall happened because Hallmark broke the rules and there was no way to prove that the animals involved did not have BSE. Since the Hallmark recall, several slaughter operations have installed video surveillance technology at their operations to monitor animal handling. Mr. Russell assured the committee that National Meat Association will continue to support the industry on the production and dairy side, through excellent quality assurance programs.

Ryan Armstrong, Owner/President, Armstrong Egg Farms, gave an egg farmer's perspective on the "lessons learned" from California's Proposition 2, which was a citizen's initiative to restrict the housing practices of laying hens, veal calves, and gestating sows. Mr. Armstrong recounted his role in the progression of Proposition 2, including participating in many interviews and editorials prior to the election. He acknowledged that the consumers do have concerns for animal welfare issues and that farmers must continue to produce food with increased restrictions that aren't always science based. He also described the difficulty for the farmers in the specific interpretation of the initiative's language in order to comply with the regulations, along with the economic impact of these potential changes on his family's egg business. Many questions and concerns were heard from committee members following his presentation.

Michigan State Veterinarian Steven Halstead, DVM, and Ohio State Veterinarian Tony Forshey, DVM, jointly addressed the topic, Regulating Livestock and Poultry Care at the State Level: Michigan and Ohio. Dr. Halstead described the recent interaction with The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and legislative activities in Michigan concerning the introduction of House bills 5127 and 5128 that focused on the development of food animal industry derived standards and the initiation of third-party audits on farms throughout Michigan. The pork and egg industries supported a substitute House bill for 5127, which the Governor signed on October 12, 2009. This bill eliminates within 10 years gestation stalls for sows, grants the provision of 1.0 sq. foot of space per laying hen, and eliminates veal crates within 3 years. Additionally, enforcement will be the responsibility of the Michigan Department of Agriculture through civil courts. In review of this series of events, Dr. Halstead asked the membership to consider the following questions: is an approach similar to that in the initial Bill package (and also being modeled by Ohio) viable? Considering The HSUS involvement, there is a sense that the livestock industry was forced to arrive at this outcome rather than lead the discussion and implementation of livestock welfare protective legislation. How does livestock agriculture regain the initiative and leadership?

Dr. Forshey described the proactive approach of the State of Ohio to support State Issue 2 to create the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board, a statewide board to set guidelines for food animal care. State Issue 2 was placed on the ballot through a joint resolution passed by a majority in the Ohio House and Senate; the Ohio voters will vote on November 3, 2009. The endorsements for Issue 2 include the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association, Ohio Grocers Association, and the Ohio Restaurant Association among others. The Board will be comprised of 13 Ohioans and assure Ohio families of a safe, locally grown food supply, excellent care of the state's flocks and herds, and reinforce consumer confidence in Ohio- raised food.

Kathy Finnerty, New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program (NYSCHAP) Coordinator, and Belinda Thompson, DVM, highlighted the requirements and achievements of the integration of dairy welfare certification into the NYSCHAP. The NYSCHAP includes many educational modules for cattle producers including topics such as calf pen management, vaccination programs, Johne's disease, culling, lameness, and cattle welfare. The requirements of the program include training of employees, facility and animal assessments, third party veterinary verification, and written standard operating procedures for areas such as non-ambulatory cattle, elective surgical procedures, euthanasia, cattle handling, hospital/sick cattle, newborn calves, and emergency management plans. The program consists of an annual herd health plan with the involvement of the herd veterinarian. The program is a voluntary and confidential program for the producer, with funding provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The third-party verification component is conducted by the state field veterinarian or university extension veterinarian. The program is applicable to all sizes and management styles of cattle facilities. The program also offers a one-time pre-certification visit to determine any deficiencies and offer solutions. More information can be found at [www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu](http://www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu).

#### **Committee Business:**

The business meeting followed the last presentation. Two resolutions were considered. The first resolution sought USAHA's support of the AVMA's August 2009 Response to the Final Report of the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production; the resolution passed. The second resolution requested USAHA's support for the continued development of the Center for Animal Welfare at USDA and for USDA-APHIS's leadership to serve as a national resource for policy development and analysis, to develop training, science, and technology on animal welfare topics, to be recognized as a collaborating center for OIE and other international entities, and to continue to enhance the well-being of animals covered by the AWA and

the HPA. The resolution passed; however, committee members Cathy Liss and Charles Vail, DVM, abstained. The resolutions were forwarded to the Committee on Nominations and Resolutions for review.

The Committee on Animal Welfare adjourned at 11:50 p.m.