

REPORT OF THE USAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON NAHLN

Co-Chairs: Chair Barbara E. Powers, CO; Harry Snelson, NC

Vice Chair: Terry F. McElwain, WA

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The Committee met on November 14, 2010 at the Minneapolis Hilton Hotel in Minneapolis, Minn., from 12:30pm until 3:00pm. There were 13 members and 13 guests present.

Presentations

2010 National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) Update

Dr. Barb Martin, National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL), USDA-APHIS

The following summarizes the discussion associated with her presentation:

1. Laboratory Membership
 - a. Cooperative agreements were established with 12 AAVLD accredited labs to convert them to Member status.
 - b. For the first time, funding was provided to support their quality management system and capability to electronically transmit the standardized test result data to the NAHLN IT system.
2. Revisions to VS Memo 580.4
 - a. 580.4 provides the procedures for investigating a suspected foreign animal disease or emerging disease event.
 - b. Flow charts have been developed to facilitate an understanding of how 580.4 should be followed. These charts have been distributed to NAHLN labs and State Animal Health Officials.
 - i. The flow charts are being incorporated into the FADD training but needs to be shared with additional stakeholders. It was also suggested that the NAHLN could use the monthly NASAHO conference calls to raise awareness among State Animal Health Officials as well.
 - ii. A question arose regarding the issue of vesicular stomatitis and whether or not its diagnosis is at odds with 580.4. Concern was expressed that the labs cannot conduct screening diagnostics without activating a FAD investigation and that this could lead to decreased submissions for VSv rule outs. NVSL indicated that the current assay is better suited for use in an outbreak situation than as a screening tool.
3. NAHLN newsletter: Distribution of the quarterly NAHLN newsletter has increased to over 1200 but wider distribution is desired. More awareness within the livestock industry and other stakeholders is still needed. It was suggested that AVICs should be encouraged to forward the newsletter to additional interested parties.
4. NAHLN Information Technology system:
 - a. 36 labs currently approved for CSF testing and 29 are receiving samples.
 - b. 13 submit test results electronically
 - c. A motion was approved to submit a resolution to USAHA & AAVLD to request USDA devote additional resources to complete the messaging and electronic data entry projects. (Resolution included)
 - d. Frustration was expressed that although many of the labs are capable of transmitting the data electronically, USDA lags in both the policy and infrastructure to incorporate electronic data capture from the network labs.
5. FMD Exercises
 - a. The NAHLN has participated in a series of FMD tabletop exercises to evaluate lab

- response capability during an FMD outbreak.
- b. Reports from some of the individual exercises will be going out “soon” and a draft final report will be issued should be out by mid-January.
 - c. They have decided to add an additional exercise involving NVSL to evaluate their interaction and collaboration with the NAHLN labs. This exercise is tentatively scheduled for February 2011 and will be followed up with a policy discussion to respond to gaps detected. It was noted that this discussion should involve a broad group of stakeholders.
 - d. Some findings of the exercises included:
 - i. The need for improved communications between the labs and NVSL
 - ii. The need to maintain routine testing while undertaking additional outbreak testing and response work.
 - iii. The ability to actually acquire enough test kits and reagents from the manufacturers during the response and recovery. It was recommended that the National Veterinary Stockpile should work on assuring adequate supplies.
6. NAHLN Coordinating Council report: Gary Anderson, Terry McElwain and Tom McKenna
- a. The coordinating council held its first meeting on June 15 – 16, 2010.
 - b. They focused on 3 issues:
 - i. Communication
 - ii. Lab reimbursement (i.e. BPA vs cooperative agreements, etc)
 - iii. The NAHLN charter including operational objectives and policies.
 - c. Concern was raised about duplicative reporting requirements. Dr. Martin indicated that they were working on addressing the issue of easing reporting requirements and better defining the timing of reports.
 - d. The committee proposed a resolution requesting the coordinating council seat a task force to consider the future operational structure of the NAHLN. (Resolution included)

Committee Business

Dr. Powers asked for a discussion on the role of the AAVLD/USAHA Special NAHLN Committee in light of the fact that the Coordinating Council was now functioning. It was the consensus of the attendees that the committee should remain intact and should be opened to additional membership from both AAVLD and USAHA. The committee was considered to be important for providing an interaction between industry, state animal health officials and AAVLD and the NAHLN process.

Dr. Harry Snelson, Committee Co-chair representing USAHA, recommends that USAHA leadership allow for the expansion of the committee membership to include any interested USAHA member. This would promote further involvement of integral stakeholder groups that do not have other access or representation in the NAHLN system.