

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2004

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 6 APPROVED
SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES
SUBJECT MATTER: A NATIONAL PLAN FOR RABIES CONTROL IN WILDLIFE
DATE: OCTOBER 27, 2004

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The epizootic of raccoon rabies continues to spread into uninfected areas of North America. The natural barriers that previously restricted the raccoon rabies variant to the Atlantic coast states have been compromised. Barriers have been breached in Ohio and Cape Cod, Massachusetts with a first time occurrence of raccoon rabies on Long Island, New York. Translocation of raccoons with incubating rabies infection may have contributed in these instances. This creates the potential for a large portion of the nation to be affected by raccoon rabies. The cost of living with raccoon rabies cannot accurately be determined, but is substantial according to numerous local, state, and federal studies. This epidemic has reached national proportions and control efforts require coordination at the national level.

Rabies vaccine, licensed for use in raccoons and coyotes by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) is available for delivery to wildlife through bait distribution. The use of oral rabies vaccination has been successful in the control of raccoon rabies in urban and rural environments, limiting the spread of raccoon rabies to uninfected areas, and dramatically controlling and eliminating rabies in coyotes in south Texas. Large-scale control efforts must continue to be developed and implemented over large areas of the epizootic front to prevent the spread of rabies in raccoons throughout the continent. The USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (WS), has provided substantial leadership, funding and program support to assist states with oral rabies vaccination programs which include raccoon, coyote, gray fox and skunk rabies. The USDA-APHIS-WS has also facilitated numerous meetings involving federal, state and provincial agencies to address the potential for coordinated, regional rabies control efforts, with the goal of developing a national rabies control program that would complement rabies control programs in Canada and Mexico. The National Working Group on Rabies Prevention, coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the American Veterinary Medical Association have developed recommendations for enhancing rabies control including wildlife vaccination.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) to continue to seek additional funding for terrestrial wildlife rabies control programs. The USAHA further encourages state and local governments and regional alliances to support this activity through appropriate funding channels. The USAHA also strongly encourages the USDA-APHIS-WS, the United States Public Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to allocate appropriated funding and resources to assist states and local agencies in the development, maintenance and expansion of coordinated regional wildlife rabies control and vaccination programs.

RESPONSE:

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)

CDC's rabies program continues to contribute significantly to assisting state and local governments in the control of rabies in wildlife. The program's accomplishments include the following:

- The provision of laboratory reference diagnostics.
- The development of diagnostics for rabies in formalin fixed tissues.
- The development of a new confirmatory diagnostic test for rabies.
- The development of a new serological method for determination of rabies virus antibody.
- The genetic sequencing of current and historical raccoon rabies virus to establish spatial temporal relationships to formulate a predictive model of disease variation and spread.
- The investigation of rabies virus host shifts from bats to skunks.
- The investigation of the ecology of virus transmission in bat colonies.
- The examination of rabies virus variants in livestock and non-reservoir species.
- The development of novel therapeutic approaches to rabies.
- The implementation of oral vaccination of animals against rabies.
- The establishment of real time wildlife rabies case mapping.
- The prediction of costs associated with a raccoon rabies epizootic.

In addition, on a daily basis, the Rabies team contributes to state-based rabies response through telephone consultations with veterinarians, laboratorians, physicians, and other public and animal health professionals to provide answers to complex problems. CDC works closely with its partner, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Wildlife Services, in direct logistical, laboratory, and research activities, in federal-sponsored programs of animal rabies prevention and control throughout the United States and its borders. We anticipate our future responsibilities in continuing this cooperation and look forward to additional opportunities to enhance our involvement in this important veterinary public health endeavor.

WILDLIFE SERVICES (WS)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), agrees with the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) regarding Resolution 6. As rabies in raccoons, coyotes and gray foxes continue to challenge oral rabies vaccination barriers and threatens to spread to uninfected areas, the need to seek additional funding for control programs is paramount. We accept the charge of cooperating with the U.S. Public Health Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local/regional governments. Without the continued cooperative efforts from all entities, successfully eliminating raccoon rabies will be unachievable. USDA/APHIS/WS' National Rabies Program is committed to supporting Resolution 6.