

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2009 RESOLUTION

OCTOBER 14, 2009, SAN DIEGO, CA

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 3 **APPROVED**

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

SUBJECT MATTER: FEDERAL FUNDING FOR A NATIONAL AQUATIC
ANIMAL PATHOGEN TESTING NETWORK

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In order to protect the health of wild and cultured fish and shellfish, provide quality inspections in support of interstate and international trade, and meet challenges associated with implementation of the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan (NAAHP), the National Aquatic Animal Pathogen Testing Network (NAAPT) is needed. The participating laboratories would all use standardized protocols for the detection of pathogens important in interstate and international trade and to the natural aquatic resources of the nation, or included in the NAAHP. These protocols would specify a standard approach to pathogen detection, calibration and operation of all relevant equipment, and the collection, handling, transport, storage, and preparation of samples for testing. Rather than attempt to establish a NAAPT in a single step, the program should begin with a trial period to demonstrate proof of concept. This effort would use viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) testing as the model for an aquatic disease diagnostic laboratory network. The goals of the trial period would be to:

- a) establish a collaborative structure to develop standardized protocols
- b) gain experience in the establishment of training programs
- c) develop methods to ensure laboratory compliance
- d) develop standardized reference materials for lab use
- e) develop proficiency testing samples for labs
- f) develop mechanisms for collecting lab results
- g) determine test accuracy and sensitivity among laboratories
- h) determine the need for formal centralized training of laboratory personnel
- i) establish a mechanism to validate future pathogen screening methodology

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) / American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) Committee on Aquaculture in consultation with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), United States Department of the Interior (USDI), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries has been working to develop a plan that outlines the structure and implementation of this laboratory network.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) in partnership with the United States Department of the Interior (USDI) Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries to provide funding, facilitate, and participate in a pilot National Aquatic Animal Pathogen Testing Network.

RESPONSE:

US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

As you know, the Service and the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) collaborate on many aquatic animal health issues and have a continuing Memorandum of Understanding on those issues.

The Service has an established history, infrastructure and ongoing testing for aquatic animal pathogens, especially in finfish, through our nine Fish Health Centers and our National Wild Fish Health Survey. It is my hope to expand our efforts into other aquatics, such as amphibians, in the future.

I am sure you appreciate the depth and breadth of our Agency's mission. We will continue to engage with APHIS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service, and other partners, and utilize existing staff, facilities, and funds to support the implementation of the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan and the NAAPTN. The United States Animal Health Association's resolution is an incentive and a welcome voice in support of our collective efforts.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is an active partner with USDA/APHIS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the development of the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan (NAAHP). One component of the plan is the implementation of a national laboratory network. NMFS supports the development of this network. We have dedicated resources for staff consultations with our Federal partners for the development of this network and will continue to do so.

The primary mission of our laboratories at the regional science centers is research for the protection and management of U.S. marine resources and ecosystems. Our laboratories do not have funding or other resources to conduct routine pathogen surveillance or provide diagnostic services. It is possible that, as the roles of Federal and State agencies become more defined with the evolution of the NAAHP, our laboratories will undertake a larger role in pathogen screening. NMFS is also an active participant in ICES and in the development of a strategy being put forward by the North Pacific Marine Science Organization to monitor pathogens in wild marine animals. As this strategy evolves, the roles NOAA laboratories might play in this surveillance will become clearer.

INTERIM RESPONSE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the United States Animal Health Association's (USAHA) concerns. VS considers the development of a National Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory Network as a keystone and priority activity within the overall implementation of the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan and will continue to seek the funding flexibility necessary for aquaculture activities through all appropriate channels within the USDA. In the meantime, VS, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have begun to review the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians/USAHA Aquaculture Committee's Draft Plan for the implementation of a national aquatic animal pathogen testing network that was submitted to VS on October 11, 2009, with the intention of implementing critical building blocks of a laboratory network this fiscal year.