United States Animal Health Association - 2004

RESOLUTION NUMBER: **30** **APPROVED**

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON BRUCELLOSIS

SUBJECT MATTER: REDUCTION AND ELIMINATION OF BRUCELLOSIS IN WILDLIFE IN THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE AREA

DATE: OCTOBER 27, 2004

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Greater Yellowstone Area in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho is one of the last reservoirs of *Brucella abortus* infection in the United States.

Government and the livestock industry have spent several billions of dollars on the eradication of brucellosis.

The latest infections of cattle in the state of Wyoming have great impact on the state's communities and livestock producers. The cost to the federal government will be several millions of dollars.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) request that all appropriate agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Department of Interior (USDI), working in close collaboration with the state fish and wildlife management agencies, the state veterinarians, the state departments of agriculture, and the state livestock agencies, immediately initiate an aggressive program to reduce and eventually eliminate brucellosis from wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. In this effort, all available, scientifically credible technologies and multidisciplinary management practices should be employed.

RESPONSE:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR (USDI)
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)

The National Park Service fully recognizes the highly successful national brucellosis eradication program among domestic livestock and captive wildlife, and the fact that GYA elk and bison are now recognized as one of the last reservoirs of *Brucella abortus* infection in the United States. The disease in wildlife and its regional and national importance continues to be recognized by the responsible agencies. These same agencies have implemented a variety of livestock, wildlife, and disease management strategies that have been extensively reviewed by the National Research Council, Government Accountability Office, USAHA, and the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee (GYIBC). Our commitment to interagency cooperation on brucellosis management continues through work to renew the GYIBC Memorandum of Understanding and collaborative efforts to develop, test, and ultimately implement all scientifically credible technologies and multidisciplinary management practices.

The Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Bison Management Plan for the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park and the draft Bison and Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park include wildlife vaccination as an alternative for brucellosis management. In 1998, the National Research Council reported that "Vaccination in bison and elk is one part of an overall strategy that could be used to control or eliminate *B. abortus* in the GYA, but much research is needed before current vaccines can be judged adequate for use in those species." In 2002, GYIBC reviewed the existing technical and

management capacity to address brucellosis elimination from the GYA and came to the same general conclusion. We too recognize that there are some very important gaps in the technical capacity to conduct highly effective elk and bison brucellosis vaccination and surveillance. Specifically, there are widely acknowledged and critical gaps regarding vaccine safety and efficacy, delivery system safety and efficacy, and surveillance diagnostics.

Therefore, it was with great anticipation that the Department of the Interior recently entered into a cooperative effort with the USAHA and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take additional steps to identify and address research requirements through the formulation of a Strategic Action Plan for an "Initiative to Enhance Brucellosis Vaccines, Vaccine Delivery, and Surveillance Diagnostics for Bison and Elk in the Greater Yellowstone Area." As you probably know, the intent of the Strategic Action Plan is to describe the overarching framework and level of agency support required to expedite the research required to achieve the mutual goal of eventual elimination of brucellosis from the GYA.

I fully appreciate the concern that the presence of brucellosis in the GYA generates but this issue is also complex and will require continued and dedicated efforts of all concerned to resolve. Please be assured that the National Park Service working with other agencies within the Department of the Interior will continue to fully coordinate with the USDA, USAHA, GYIBC, and states to advance this initiative and move forward with appropriate brucellosis management and elimination strategies that will protect the viability of the tri-state livestock industries while also preserving free-ranging wildlife.

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, VETERINARY SERVICES (APHIS-VS)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has worked with the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) to revise the GYIBC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU, in general, provides the direction and format for the Federal and State agencies of the committee to work toward the elimination of brucellosis in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA). The revised MOU is focused on the elimination of brucellosis from the GYA and calls for the development of draft initial management plans for each brucellosis affected herd unit, both wildlife and domestic, in the GYA by the end of 2006. USDA and DOI are also working with Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming to finalize the MOU.

As the lead USDA agency involved, it is the intent of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, working closely, cooperatively, and collaboratively with State and Federal agencies to assist and guide the process of developing aggressive plans to eliminate brucellosis from the GYA. All available, scientifically credible technologies and multidisciplinary management practices will be employed to hasten the elimination effort.

A USAHA-USDA-DOI sponsored scientific workshop is scheduled for August 2005. The workshop is charged with evaluating vaccines, vaccine delivery systems and diagnostics, determining what associated research should be done, and assigning priorities for that research.