

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2006

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 44 APPROVED AS AMENDED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES OF
POULTRY AND OTHER AVIAN SPECIES

SUBJECT MATTER: WATER-BASED FOAM FOR MASS DEPOPULATION OF
POULTRY

DATES: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Water-based foam provides an efficient, rapid, reliable, and safe means for mass depopulation of poultry. Research and field applications have shown that it has many advantages over existing technologies, including decreased bird stress, decreased human exposure to diseased animals which may carry zoonotic diseases, and decreased risk of disease spread.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Animal Welfare Committee recognized the difference between euthanasia and depopulation in its July 7, 2006 report. Specifically, "Euthanasia involves transitioning an animal to death wherein the experience is made as painless and stress-free as possible. In depopulation, large numbers of animals are killed efficiently and quickly. As much consideration is given to the welfare of the animals as practicable, but the circumstances and tasks facing those doing the depopulation are understood to be extenuating. Use of CO₂ has previously been considered by the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia to meet the definition of euthanasia when properly applied. *At this point in time, Committee members have not been able to reconcile the use of foam with the definition of euthanasia.*" The AVMA Animal Welfare Committee, however, did suggest that foam "be seriously considered as a rational approach to depopulation, specifically in cases of public health risk (disease or injury) and when conventional methods are not sufficient to adequately control disease."

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Service (VS), has given conditional approval to the use of water-based foam that meets USDA, APHIS performance standards as a means of mass depopulation of appropriate species of domestic poultry in cases of potentially zoonotic diseases, rapidly spreading diseases that cannot be contained by conventional means, or for animals housed in structurally unsound buildings that are hazardous for human entry.

The AVMA is widely regarded as an authority on animal welfare and humane depopulation. The lack of clear AVMA support of water-based foam as a method of mass depopulation of poultry may impede the efforts of federal and state authorities to prepare for disease outbreaks and disaster responses.

RESOLUTION:

Recognizing the importance of immediate action to manage an outbreak of a highly contagious or zoonotic disease, the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) to fully endorse water-based foam as an acceptable option for mass depopulation of poultry. Foam should be considered an appropriate method for mass depopulation of poultry when there is a need to limit human exposure or risk of human injury or a requirement to accomplish the task quickly due to epizootic considerations.

RESPONSE

AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (AVMA)

The AVMA Executive Board has approved a Policy on the Use of Water-Based Foam for Depopulation of Poultry