

## **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE**

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The Committee met on October 19, 2016 at the Sheraton Greensboro Hotel in Greensboro, North Carolina from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm. There were 42 members and 29 guests present. The meeting opened with a welcome and a review of the committee purpose and discussion of procedural rules. We discussed the prior year resolution number eight, related to potential increased international control of the anesthesia drug ketamine and the outcome that the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended no further controlled restrictions to the United Nations.

### **Presentations**

#### **Free-roaming Horses – The perspective of the Bureau of Land Management**

Dean Bolstad, Wild Horse and Burro Program, Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Bolstad presented details regarding the authority and activities of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) related to management of wild horses and burros on BLM controlled lands. He showed the eight parts of their management plan, and reviewed factors contributing to increasing horse numbers on public lands and held in off-range pasture or corral management facilities. He provided details related to how BLM resources are currently being apportioned for the management efforts. He also addressed questions in horse management issues raised by state animal health and wildlife personnel that pointed to inadequate resources to meet the needs of satisfactorily managing free-roaming horse populations for environmental resource management, public health and safety, and the overall charge to the BLM.

#### **The Effects of Horse Overpopulation in Indian Country Today - A Tribal Perspective**

Jason Smith, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

Mr. Smith presented the views of the Intertribal Agricultural Coalition and National Tribal Horse Coalition on the problems associated with horse overpopulation on tribal lands.

The complete text of this presentation is included at the end of the report.

### **Free-roaming Horses – The Perspective of a State Veterinarian**

Barry Pittman, Utah Department of Agriculture

Dr. Pittman offered comments regarding free-roaming wild horses and burros in Utah and the partnership between Utah and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). He gave specific examples of management efforts with herds of free-roaming horses. He specifically addressed his responsibility to protect the health and welfare of domestic horses in his state and the efforts related to providing surveillance testing and inspections of wild/feral horses for diseases such as Equine Infectious Anemia and Vesicular Stomatitis.

### **Committee Business:**

The first part of the discussion was related to the evaluation of the need and utility of the Committee on Animal Welfare for the USAHA. Membership was unanimous in their belief that the committee continues to be needed and useful. The chairs asked for specific input regarding scheduling recommendations. Co-scheduling opposite One Health Symposia has presented attendance conflicts for some members. The vice chair does not want this committee overlapping the Committee on Livestock Identification. We asked members to offer any scheduling concerns by e-mail to the chairs.

Another discussion addressed the fact that animal welfare expertise does not necessarily come from within this organization. The lack of availability to fund participation by invited speakers may limit the ability of this Committee to meet the mission statement fully and to provide value to the USAHA. It may be time to seek specific sponsorship of speakers for the Committee on Animal Welfare from allied stakeholder groups.

The last discussion addressed a list of potential topics related to animal welfare, both broadly addressing concerns across animal species, commodity groups and animal function, as well as topics specific to various species or groups. A list of topics was distributed to members with a request to provide feedback to the chairs regarding priorities, additional topics, speaker recommendations, or additional input after further discussion with stakeholder groups. Please see the following list for topics considered or recommended by the membership and guests:

Topics and concerns for potential future discussion of the Committee on Animal Welfare

All species:

- Genetic engineering for animal welfare, e.g. adding gene for polled cattle, and related issues
- Antibiotic free marketing schemes and their consequences on animal welfare
- Animal welfare issues related to animal testing requirements of animal product imports
- High density housing related to explosive animal disease transmission, especially related to highly contagious diseases not routinely prevented by vaccination, e.g. Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), foot and mouth disease (FMD), highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), Swine Enteric Coronavirus (SECoV)
- When do disease issues become welfare issues, and when, if ever, do management practices associated with disease reduction take priority over management practices for optimizing animal welfare? If so, what other strategies might be employed to enhance welfare?
- Animal welfare concerns related to a foot and mouth outbreak in the United States
- Impact of economic swings on animal welfare
- Requiring chickens to go outside but making cats stay in the house?
- Comparisons of animal welfare assurance programs across commodity groups
- Animal welfare food labeling comparison and implications
- Fly control
- State animal welfare and animal cruelty laws – enforceable statutes, responsible agencies, training requirements, using/having best management guidelines, appropriate/quality investigations
  - Legal guidance and examples – need for legal expertise input in the discussion
  - Panel of State officials willing to discuss examples in their states
- Psychology of animal welfare – learning more about how to communicate with the general public regarding fact based decision making and the continuum of practices and animal welfare.

#### Poultry:

- Update on poultry research related to animal welfare outcomes associated with different caging/housing systems
- Any design concerns/improvements/changes related to poultry welfare suggested in relation to HPAI transmission or control?
- Animal welfare concerns associated with confinement versus free range or pastured management systems

#### Beef cattle:

- Shelter requirements of cattle in different climates; shelter requirements for feedlots.
- Best management practices related to seasonal mud control
- Hide contamination – how much is too much from a welfare perspective?
- Minimum animal health best management practices necessary for feeder calf welfare

#### Dairy cattle:

- Concerns related to too many injections – are synchronization programs compromising cattle welfare?
- Lameness interventions for dairy cattle – how much lameness is too much
- Farm Program third party audit verification
- European movement to stop pregnant cattle slaughter
- Heat stress and heat stress management

#### Sheep:

- Excessively short tail docking in club lambs – still happening
- Growing sheep dairies – production medicine and best management practices for sheep welfare
- Tail docking, castrating best practices for pain control

#### Goats:

- Growing goat dairies – production medicine and best management practices for goat welfare
- Dehorning and castrating best practices for pain control

#### Swine:

- Gestation crates – animal welfare realities and options
- Animal welfare concerns associated with confinement versus free range or pastured management systems
- Best management practices related to castration, tail docking, needle teeth trimming, tusk trimming, tail biting, aggression in confinement systems, lameness, management of very large pigs

#### Horses:

- Soring
- Tripping
- Blood doping
- Tail docking
- Performance enhancement manipulation detection
- Animal welfare concerns related to racing. Science and research to minimize breakdowns with changes in training regimens, track designs, best management practices associated with injuries and recoveries
- Welfare concerns related to carriage horses in cities
- Best management practices and evaluation of appropriate work expectations for working equids

#### Dogs and cats:

- Importation of sick or injured dogs and cats

- Feral cat colonies – science to support decisions
- Trap spay/neuter, rabies vaccinate – is it really providing better welfare
- Legislation against declawing, tail docking, ear cropping – best management practices associated with elective surgeries.

**The Effects of Horse Overpopulation in Indian Country  
Today- A Tribal Perspective**  
Jason Smith  
National Tribal Horse Coalition

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS) and the National Tribal Horse Coalition (NTHC) a subcommittee of the Intertribal Agriculture Council, have always held the horse in high esteem. Historically, this animal has provided an important contribution to our people. Early in reservation life, the horse provided a means to travel and trade along the Columbia River. Over the centuries our people have continued to respect this animal because of the cultural significance it provides: livestock economy, farming, gathering of livestock, hunting, recreation, and ceremonial purposes. Perhaps most significantly for Warm Springs, the horse has, and continues to be utilized and treated as livestock.

The CTWS and NTHC understand that every tribe has their specific cultural belief toward the horse, and we respect each tribal tradition and cultural belief. Warm Springs recognizes the importance of pursuing all avenues of reviving the current dismal horse market, which historically and until recently, has been a vital part of the Warm Springs economy. We, along with many tribal nations, witness daily, the numerous detrimental effects to the physical condition of horses on our reservation and to our tribal economy since the closure of processing facilities in the United States. Without a viable market, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of horses on our tribal lands. This has had an adverse effect on the condition of our rangelands, watersheds, fisheries and wildlife habitat, cultural plants, and foods.

The CTWS Tribal Council, in Resolution 11082, states that “affected Tribal Nations recognize the necessity and benefit of our ability to direct the transport and processing of horses” and “requests that Congress oppose federal legislation that interferes with tribal abilities to direct or conduct the transport, processing, or management of horses for the protection of sustainable natural resources and reserved treaty rights”, and supports “efforts to protect the rights of Tribal Nations through the subcommittee of the National Tribal Horse Coalition (NTHC).”

The CTWS also takes the stand that the horse continues to be held in high regard as a culturally significant animal that has directly contributed to the overall prosperity of the Warm Springs People. Committed to exploring and implementing a number of options to reduce the number of horses on the reservation, the CTWS has, with limited success, offered for the last nine years, a public auction of horses, and has an ongoing castration program. These alone didn't seem to accomplish our reduction numbers so we have now established a horse removal program that has been very successful.

As we move forward to protect our tribal traditions and treaty rights, the CTWS and NTHC understands the need to pursue a horse processing alternative as a viable and humane option to improve conditions for horses, our natural resources, and our tribal economy. While this perspective may be unique to Warm Springs, each member of the NTHC brings its own compelling and valuable reasons for managing and controlling their horse population. In this way, we stand together to promote or enhance the horse market in its totality and protect the horse from the cruel reality of starvation, neglect, and abandonment.

In June 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the research arm of Congress, stated:

Clearly, the cessation of domestic slaughter has had unintended consequences, most importantly, perhaps, the decline in horse welfare in the United States. Horse abandonment and neglect cases are reportedly up, and appear to be straining state, local, tribal, and animal rescue resources. They further commented: Congress may wish to consider allowing USDA to again use appropriated funds to inspect horses at domestic slaughtering facilities, as authorized by the Federal Meat Inspection Act.

These “unintended consequences” of starvation, neglect, and abandonment are something that Congress has known about since 2011. Yet in every budget they have passed from 2012 on, they have prevented the use of federal funds to be used for USDA horsemeat inspectors. They are either: 1.) Ignoring these horrendous consequences, or 2.) These consequences are actually what they do intend. Either one provides a dismal characterization and record of U.S. policy makers with respect to the welfare of horses and alarming environmental and economic Tribal concerns.

Because this policy of banning the use of USDA horsemeat inspectors has had definite Tribal implications, I want to refer to Executive Order 13175, which states:

In order to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications, to strengthen the United States government-

to-government relationships with Indian tribes, and to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes.

It further states: "Policies that have tribal implications" refers to regulations, legislative comments or proposed legislation, and other policy statements or actions that have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian tribes.

This "consultation" or "collaboration" process has also been ignored.

We know the effect this policy is having on the natural resources of Tribal lands. We know the effect this policy is having on the welfare of horses. But there is another consequence this policy is having that doesn't get mentioned enough. More and more we find a "Generational Disconnect" to our Horse Culture. There is something that is sometimes referred to as a "Cowboy Culture" on Tribal Reservations throughout the country. This is rooted in love of horses, and a love of the land. It entails hard work and individualism. There is pride in managing horses for riding, rodeos, racing, and hunting and all the economic advantages that goes with these activities. It is a central element to our Tribal culture and affects every Tribal family that has owned or raised horses for a living. So, when there is no longer a market for horses, due to the overpopulation of horses created by federal policy that doesn't take into account the effect that policy has on Tribes, that important Tribal culture element begins to die. Every Tribe I know has seen this first hand.

As we move to understand this crisis from differing perspectives, and look to realistic solutions to improve the welfare of horses everywhere, I welcome your input, and hope that the Committee on Animal Welfare will convey a Tribal perspective to your colleagues and U.S. policy makers.