

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION – 2008 Resolution

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 3 and 41 Combined APPROVED

SOURCE: USAHA /AAVLD COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE

SUBJECT MATTER: CONSISTENCY IN GUIDELINES AND APPLICATIONS OF
METHODOLOGY FOR LARGE-SCALE EUTHANASIA OR
DEPOPULATION OF ANIMALS TO ENSURE TIMELY AND
EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO AN ANIMAL HEALTH
EMERGENCY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since large-scale euthanasia or depopulation of animals may be necessary to control or eradicate emergency and program animal diseases or to remove animals from a compromised biosecurity situation (e.g., poultry flocks after tornado damage to houses), or to depopulate and dispose of animals with minimal handling to decrease the risk of a zoonotic disease to humans, it is important to have guidelines and approved large-scale euthanasia methodologies for each livestock species and poultry. This would ensure that animal health authorities responsible for activating and implementing animal emergency response plans are provided clear and un-reproachable direction to facilitate large-scale euthanasia or depopulation.

The American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) *Guidelines on Euthanasia* (2007) primarily addresses euthanasia methods for individual animals. Introductory statements in that document include "there should be an attempt to balance the ideal of minimal pain and distress with the reality of the many environments in which euthanasia is performed". The *Guidelines on Euthanasia* also state that "selection of the most appropriate method of euthanasia in any given situation depends on [several things, such as] the number of animals and other considerations."

A paragraph in the Special Considerations section of the *Guidelines on Euthanasia* states "euthanasia options may be limited in unusual conditions, such as disease eradication...and the most appropriate technique that minimizes human and animal health concerns must be used." Options listed for mass euthanasia are "CO₂, and physical methods such as gunshot, penetrating captive bolt, and cervical dislocation."

Currently, inconsistencies exist between available euthanasia guidelines used by AVMA, livestock species groups and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that describe approved methodologies for large-scale euthanasia or depopulation of animals. Additionally, state and local animal health authorities may not be aware of existing guidelines, approved methodologies and the resources necessary to accomplish large-scale euthanasia or

depopulation of animals. These factors contribute to misinterpretation, confusion, and delays in operations at the state and local levels.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests the following actions regarding the large-scale euthanasia or depopulation of animals:

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), National Center for Animal Health Emergency Management (NCAHEM) work with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and livestock species groups to revise euthanasia guidelines and methodologies specifically for large-scale euthanasia or depopulation of animals and identify those practices which pose the least risk to animals and humans. Further, this information shall then be incorporated into the National Animal Health Emergency Management System Operational Guidelines for Euthanasia as well as into the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia (formerly the Report of the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia).
- USDA-APHIS-VS-NCAHEM increase awareness of accepted guidelines, methodologies and resources within USDA-APHIS-VS to ensure consistency between program areas.
- USDA-APHIS-VS-NCAHEM increase awareness through outreach and education of state and local animal health authorities of accepted guidelines, methodologies and available resources to ensure consistency between states and enable a safe, timely and effective eradication or control process in case of an animal health emergency.

RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services recognizes the United States Animal Health Association's concerns. APHIS is taking steps to comply with the resolution. The Agency has nominated a representative to serve on the American Veterinary Medical Association Depopulation Committee. In addition, APHIS has formed a Mass Depopulation Working Group to develop mass depopulation strategies. The group will include stakeholders from industry, animal welfare, and government groups. APHIS will also submit a proposal to the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology to prepare a mass depopulation issue paper. Finally, as the mass depopulation protocols and strategies are developed by the working groups, APHIS will develop training modules, checklists, and manuals for internal and public use. The materials will be posted on the Agency's Web site and will be distributed to APHIS e-mail groups, similar to the disposal information that APHIS has already developed.