UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (USAHA) - 2007

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 8 APPROVED

SOURCE: USAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS

SUBJECT MATTER: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR SURVEILLANCE

DATES: RENO, NEVADA, OCTOBER 18 – 24, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Effective procedures and tools to detect disease agents in United States (US) livestock, poultry and aquatic populations are crucial for the protection, maintenance and restoration of animal and public health, assurance of food safety and security, and documentation of the US animal health status for national and international partners and stakeholders.

Animal health surveillance is a central function of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS). Guided by the National Animal Health Safeguarding Review and resolutions of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD), plus the ever greater challenges to the health of our animal populations, VS leads the initiative in building the National Animal Health Surveillance System (NAHSS). The NAHSS is to be 'a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated' system that will enhance efficacy and efficiency of surveillance for high impact foreign animal diseases, emerging diseases and endemic diseases.

Central to all disease surveillance activities are the collection, analysis and dissemination of information. All three of these activities are dependent on properly designed and executed information systems. Achieving proper design and execution requires the linkage of high quality technical information technology skills and knowledge with veterinary program expertise which ensures that the designed systems match the purpose and needs of surveillance programs. An effective union that adds value to the information collected is often difficult to achieve but becomes impossible without the deep integration of information technology and veterinary medical specialists. Mixed units of technical specialists ultimately yield more effective systems than separate groups who are conceptually isolated as could be the result of plans for reorganization of USDA information technology systems.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) commit the necessary resources and management support to maintain the integration of animal health specialists and information technology specialists in the development of information technology systems capable of linking to State regulatory and laboratory data bases and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. The USAHA also urges USDA to seek input from State regulatory, laboratory and industry stakeholders at all stages of the development of new or revision of existing information systems that support animal health surveillance programs.

RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, VETERINARY SERVICES
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association and appreciates the opportunity to respond. Surveillance data relating to animal heath are stored in several databases developed and maintained by USDA. VS recently hired a Chief Information Officer who is reviewing all information technology (IT) deliverables. A strategic plan addressing IT needs and priorities will be developed. In the process, we will solicit input from stakeholders to ensure the products address needs of field, State, and laboratory personnel.