

Report of the Committee on Animal Welfare

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The Committee met on October 28, 2015 at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, Rhode Island from 8:00AM – 12:00 noon. There were 65 members and 40 guests present. The meeting opened with a welcome and a review of the committee purpose and discussion of procedural rules. There were no prior year resolutions to discuss. However, a resolution of this committee from 2013, Resolution 33 in support of the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) ACT, HR 1518/S1406 did not result in passage of the legislation by congress. Essentially the same legislation is before the current congress, PAST Act [S.1121 and H.R.3268], and this committee would like to urge the USAHA to renew its support of this legislation.

Time-Specific Paper

Title: USDA APHIS National Veterinary Accreditation Program **Module 22: [Animal Welfare: An Introduction](#)**

Presenter: Dr. Gail Golab, Chief Advocacy and Public Policy Officer, American Veterinary Medical Association

Summary: The National Veterinary Accreditation Program Module 22 titled “Animal Welfare: An Introduction,” included the following topics: (1) why animal welfare is an important part of an accredited veterinarian's regulatory activities; (2) how to define animal welfare in a comprehensive way; (3) how to assess and evaluate an animal's welfare; and (4) examples of the opportunities and challenges that exist in protecting an animal's welfare.

Accredited veterinarians are required to consider the well-being and humane treatment of animals in the course of their regulatory work. The regulatory activities guiding the work of APHIS Veterinary Services and accredited veterinarians are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 9, Animals and Animal Products Chapter I--Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture Subchapters B, C, D and J available at: <http://www.ecfr.gov>. [Select Title 9--Animals and Animal Products; then Parts 1-199--Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture; then find the various Subchapters]. The authority supporting humane handling provisions required of accredited veterinarians is provided by the Animal Health Protection Act (AHPA), under the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter Act (9CFR§88), and the Statement of Policy under the Twenty-Eight Hour Law (9CFR§89). In addition, many thousands of accredited veterinarians are involved with the enforcement of humane animal care within the regulatory provisions of 9 CFR Subchapter A, granted by the Animal Welfare Act.

Arrangements were made to provide certification to attending accredited veterinarians. The module is publicly available at <http://aast.cfsph.iastate.edu/AWIC/index.htm>

Presentations & Reports

Title: The Importance of Timely Depopulation in Response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Presenter: Dr. Ben Wileman DVM PhD, Global Technical Services, AgForte

Summary: The spring of 2015 was a historic year for the turkey industry with the arrival of the H5N2 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus in the United States and specifically Minnesota. Previous epidemiology and research of HPAI from around the world has found that the two largest drivers of the size of an outbreak and the length of time of an outbreak are the delay from introduction to detection of the virus and then the delay from detection of virus to depopulation. During the first half of the outbreak of 2015 in the Minnesota the average days from sampling to completion of depopulation was approximately 5-10 days. This delay compounded over time lead to a large amount of viral production occurring on infected farms and allowed to release into the environment, via normal barn ventilation, of a poultry dense area leading to spread via windborne dust particles to neighboring farms. This lead to a large spike in cases which further diminished response times due to the saturation of response capabilities of both human and physical assets. The second half of the cases in the outbreak averaged 3-5 days from sampling to completion of depopulation which, in addition to fewer susceptible birds left in the geographic **area**, lead to a decrease in the number of additional cases in Minnesota. After meeting with industry stakeholders and state and federal officials there was agreement that depopulation should be completed within 24 hours of diagnosis regardless of size of the operation going forward.

(Paper summary included at end of report.)

Title: Use of Ventilation Shutdown for Mass Depopulation of Poultry in Emergency Situations

Presenter: Dr. Eric Gingerich, Technical Service Poultry Specialist

Summary: During the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks during the spring of 2015 in the upper Midwest, many problems occurred that did not allow timely depopulation of turkey and layer flocks. USDA has stated that, if possible, a flock infected with HPAI should be put down within 24 hours after confirmation. This stops the shed of virus and does not allow the increase in shed rate of HPAI virus seen in the outbreaks if flocks are allowed to remain alive. An option to quickly cause death of all birds in a house is to shut off the ventilation fans (VSD) that will allow the heat from the birds to increase rapidly and result in hyperthermic death. DEFRA set forth guidelines for VSD use in their document “Guidelines for Killing Poultry Using Ventilation Shutdown (VSD) in September 2009 (<http://www.slideshare.net/charmkey5/operating-guidance-ventilation-shutdown-procedure-defra>).

The VSD process as defined by DEFRA is to raise the temperature in the house to 104F within 30 minutes and to hold this temperature for at least 3 hours. Water is not turned off during the process. Sealing the house is required to help hold heat in the house. Supplemental heat may be required and guidelines are being developed using predictive modeling in different scenarios. More research is needed to make this procedure as humane as possible.

Title: Beef Quality Assurance – A Vital Program for the Cattle Industry

Presenter: Josh White, Executive Director – Producer Education, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association

Summary:

- Update on the Cattle Industry Long Range Plan, passed at 2015 Cattle Industry Summer Conference, and specific core strategies related to BQA:
<http://www.beefusa.org/beefindustrylongrangeplan.aspx>.

- Basic overview of the mission and structure of BQA. Reviewing resources available for producers and those that handle cattle – training, certification, and assessment tools (www.bqa.org).

- Consumer views on production practices - Focus on BQA Feedyard Assessment (www.feedyardassessment.org) and its role moving forward.

- Focus on cattle transportation:

- existing training – Master Cattle Transporter program,

- 2015 Cattle Transportation Symposium – executive summary overview (<http://beefresearch.org/beefissuesquarterly.aspx?id=5196>),

- next steps

[Powerpoint presentation has been included on flash drive and may be posted to the USAHA website]

Title: National Dairy FARM Program: Update

Presenter: Antone Mickelson, FARM Technical Writing Group and program administrator.

- Summary: **National FARM Background**

The dairy industry, through National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) with support from Dairy Management, Inc. (DMI), initiated a voluntary program named FARM: Farmers Assuring Responsible Management™ in 2009. The program is about to release version 3.0, which includes an updated database and a mobile app for data collection, and updated communications tools such as a new website, consumer video, and crisis drills.

He outlined some changes in program participation requirements that have been adopted, including mandatory Veterinary Client Patient Relationship, an accelerated timeline to the elimination of tail-docking, signed statements of cow handling responsibility. He also described the second and third party audit experience to date.

[Powerpoint presentation has been included on flash drive and may be posted to the USAHA website]

Committee Business:

The committee considered and approved the resolution on “Protecting veterinarians’ access to ketamine.” There was no other new business.

Addendums to the committee report should be in the following order:

Subcommittee Reports: None

Time-Specific Papers: publicly available at <http://aast.cfsph.iastate.edu/AWIC/index.htm>

Other Presentations/Papers

The Importance of Timely Depopulation in Response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Ben Wileman DVM, PhD, AgForte, Willmar, MN

The spring of 2015 was a historic year for the turkey industry with the arrival of the H5N2 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus in the United States and specifically Minnesota. Previous epidemiology and research of HPAI from around the world has found that the two largest drivers of the size of an outbreak and the length of time of an outbreak are the delay from introduction to detection of the virus and then the delay from detection of virus to depopulation. During the first half of the outbreak of 2015 in the Minnesota the average days from sampling to completion of depopulation was approximately 5-10 days (Figure 1). This delay compounded over time lead to a large amount of viral production occurring on infected farms and allowed to release into the environment, via normal barn ventilation, of a poultry

dense area leading to spread via windborne dust particles to neighboring farms. This led to a large spike in cases which further diminished response times due to the saturation of response capabilities of both human and physical assets (Figure 2). The second half of the cases in the outbreak averaged 3-5 days from sampling to completion of depopulation which, in addition to fewer susceptible birds left in the geographic area, led to a decrease in the number of additional cases in Minnesota (Figure 1). After meeting with industry stakeholders and state and federal officials there was agreement that depopulation should be completed within 24 hours of diagnosis regardless of size of the operation going forward. While prevention of even having a case is still the focus, if we are to see additional cases, this 24 hour goal should greatly limit the number of cases and the length of the outbreak.

Figure 1: Days elapsed from initial HPAI sampling to completion of depopulation activity of HPAI positive premises in Minnesota. One site shown was not confirmed by NVSL and is shown as 0 days. There were 108 total HPAI positive premises in Minnesota. The large spikes in the graph correlate with large chicken egg layer sites that had significantly longer depopulation times.

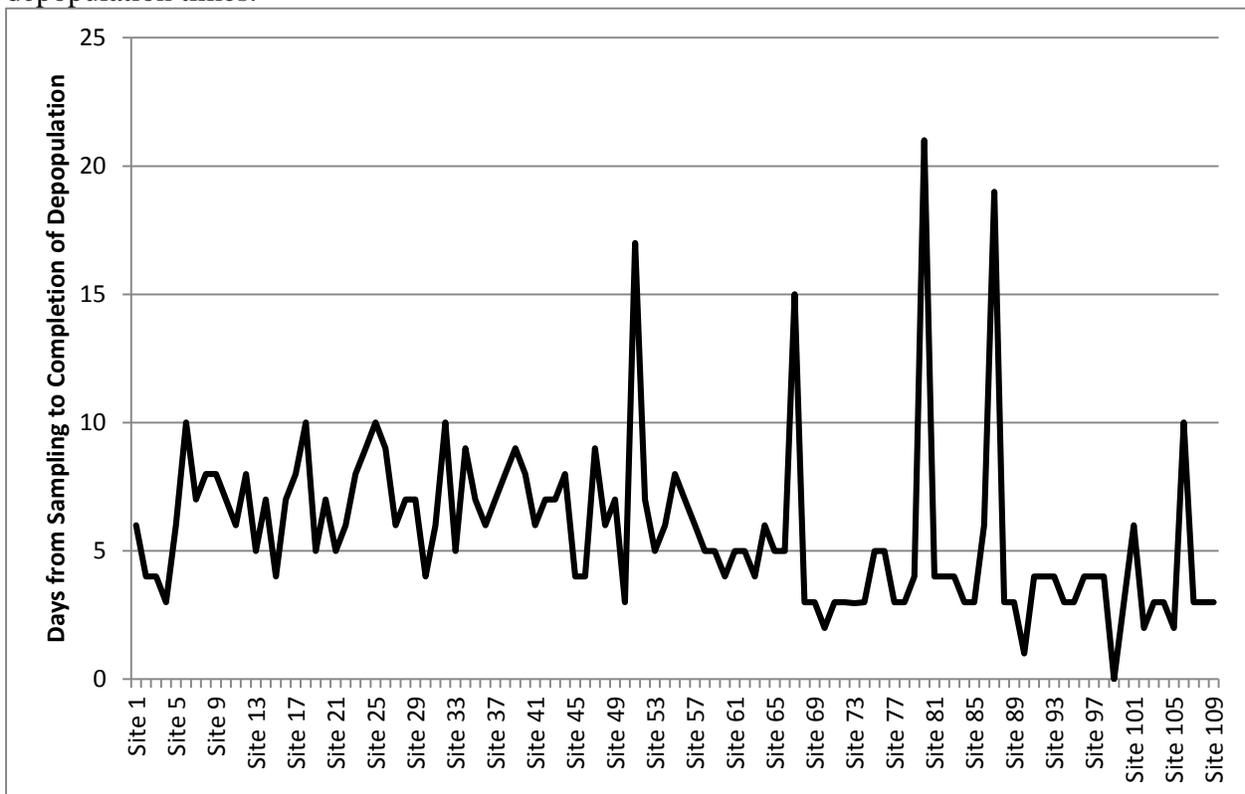
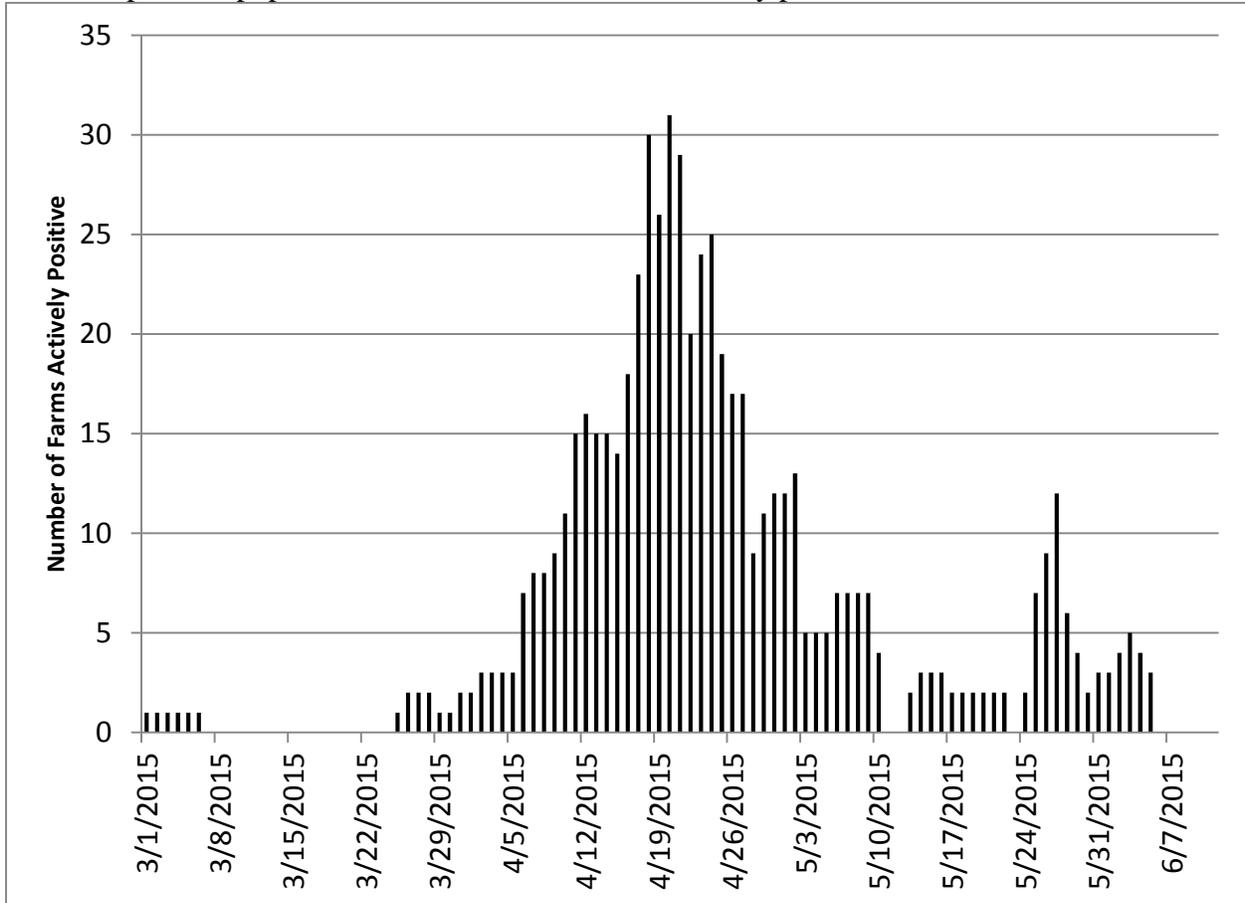


Figure 2: Cumulative number of farms that would be actively shedding virus by calendar date. Actively shedding means the farm is somewhere between a sample (later to be found positive) was taken and the completion of depopulation. So a farm that took 6 days (far left of graph) from sample to depopulation would be counted over a 6 day period.



Use of Ventilation Shutdown for Mass Depopulation of Poultry in Emergency Situations

Eric Gingerich DVM

Diamond V

2015 USAHA Annual Meeting – Animal Welfare Committee

October 26, 2015

During the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks during the spring of 2015 in the upper Midwest, many problems occurred that did not allow timely depopulation of turkey and layer flocks. USDA has stated that, if possible, a flock infected with HPAI should be put down within 24 hours after confirmation. This stops the shed of virus and does not allow the increase in shed rate of HPAI virus seen in the outbreaks if flocks are allowed to remain alive. Ventilation shutdown (VSD) is being considered as a possible solution should this problem arise again.

During the HPAI outbreaks of 2015, too many outbreaks occurred at one time and overwhelmed the ability to depopulate flocks on a timely basis using the approved methods of CO2 carts for layers or fire fighting foam for turkeys. It is felt that many flocks could have been spared being infected with HPAI had flocks been put down in a timely manner and suppressed the high levels of virus shed from them.

An option to quickly cause death of all birds in a house is to shut off the ventilation fans (VSD) that will allow the heat from the birds to increase rapidly and result in hyperthermic death. A precedent has been set by the United Kingdom's Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for use of this method in emergencies. DEFRA set forth guidelines for VSD use in their document "Guidelines for Killing Poultry Using Ventilation Shutdown (VSD) in September 2009 (<http://www.slideshare.net/charmkey5/operating-guidance-ventilation-shutdown-procedure-defra>).

Besides the reduction in shedding of virus, other reasons for deciding to use VSD are 1) that it greatly reduces the time of exposure of the workers depopulating flocks using standard methods to possible zoonotic agents, and 2) reduces the amount of birds suffering from the disease during slower depopulation methods.

It is agreed that VSD is not the ideal method for mass depopulation as it results in longer periods of time for suffering compared to other methods. The decision to use VSD is only to be made after all other more humane methods have been considered and it has been determined that the time taken for other methods will allow the amount of virus to become excessively high and results in undue spread of the disease.

The United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) developed and announced its position on the use of VSD on September 18, 2015. This document contains a decision tree for determining if a particular depopulation situation should use VSD or not. This document is available at the USDA-APHIS website -

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/emergency_management/downloads/hpai/ventilationshutdownpolicy.pdf

The VSD process as defined by DEFRA is to raise the temperature in the house to 104F within 30 minutes and to hold this temperature for at least 3 hours. Water is not turned off during the process. Sealing the house is required to help hold heat in the house. Supplemental heat may be required and guidelines are being developed using predictive modeling in different scenarios. More research is needed to make this procedure as humane as possible.

The American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP), at their annual meeting in the summer of 2015, approved a position statement drafted by their animal welfare and management committee to approve the use of VSD, with appropriate veterinary consultation, in cases of emergency when deemed necessary in order to control the spread of a foreign animal disease (FAD). The AAAP position statement, FAQs, and background information are available to AAAP members on the website www.aaap.info under Committees/Animal Welfare/Emergency Mass Depopulation Guide and Avian Influenza Resources.

The American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) Panel on Depopulation will be developing their guidelines for mass depopulation over the next two or more years. More information can be seen at the AVMA website - <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/AnimalWelfare/Pages/Depopulation.aspx>