

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Chair: Dr. Lee M. Myers, Atlanta, GA

Vice Chair: James W. Leafstedt, SD

Dr. J Lee Alley, AL; Dr. Wilbur B. Amand, PA; Dr. Jones W. Bryan, SC; Dr. Wayne E. Cunningham, CO; Dr. Nancy E. Halpern, NJ; Dr. William L. Hartmann, MN; Dr. Donald E. Hoenig, ME; Dr. Maxwell A. Lea, Jr., LA; Dr. Donald H. Lein, NY; Dr. Bret D. Marsh, IN; Dr. R. Tracy Rhodes, WY; Dr. Richard D. Willer, AZ.

Committee Chairs participants – Dr. Joan Arnoldi, WA; Dr. Francois Elvinger, VA; Dr. Chuck Massengill, MO; Robert Tully, KS.

American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) participants – Dr. Bruce Akey, NY; Dr. Alex Ardans, CA; Dr. Gary D. Osweiler, IA; Dr. Donal O'Toole, WY; Dr. Barbara E. Powers, CO; Dr. Willie M. Reed, MI; Dr. David Zeman, SD;

The Committee met jointly with AAVLD's Executive Committee and Governmental Relations Committee in Washington, D.C. on February 27 – March 2, 2005.

On Monday, February 28, 2005, the group met with Bill Hawks, Undersecretary United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Dr. Ron DeHaven, Administrator, USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, (APHIS), Dr. John Clifford Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS, Veterinary Services (VS) and other representatives of USDA-APHIS-VS. Dr. Clifford outlined the priorities of VS, including the completion of the safeguarding review recommendations, enhancing the National Animal Health Surveillance System (NAHSS), implementing a National Animal Identification System (NAIS), and promoting the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).

Dr. Clifford indicated that six out of seven safeguarding review groups had completed their tasks, including action plans to develop the FY07 budget request. Safeguarding plans and progress reports will be posted on the web www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/safeguarding/index.html. He announced that Dr. Valerie Ragan was serving as the NAHSS Coordinator and that the NAHSS Steering Committee had finalized the strategic plan in December of 2004. Dr. Ragan addressed the group and explained that the NAHSS is working first on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) surveillance data system and will include Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Avian Influenza (AI) and Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) data systems in later phases. The National Surveillance Unit (NSU) staff includes eight full time employees that are integrating monitoring programs and surveillance activities for efficiency; collecting, collating and analyzing animal health data; disseminating vital information; and reviewing the best approach to repair or replace the Generic Database. The Unit has developed monthly internal electronic communications.

Dr. Ragan reviewed the status of the BSE program. She reminded the group that three federal agencies had authority over BSE: APHIS for animal health issues, Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) for food safety and public health, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for animal feed, food and nonfood uses of animal products and public health. Discussion included the safeguards that guard against BSE and the status of enhanced surveillance in high risk cattle. Dr. Ragan indicated that over 242,000 samples had been tested for BSE as of February

21, 2005 with three inconclusive tests being confirmed negative. She said that the enhanced surveillance system would likely continue through August of 2005. Dr. Ragan remarked that seven National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories were using the BioRad test for screening and that the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) uses immunohistochemistry or western blot for final confirmation. She said that USDA published the final rule on January 4, 2005 to establish a minimal risk category, by which Canada was the first country to be considered. The rule establishes importation criteria based upon the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) recommendations. Dr. Ragan indicated that APHIS had dispatched technical teams to Canada to review the epidemiology and effectiveness of the feed ban. VS officials indicated they would re-evaluate the reporting of BSE inconclusives as well as the BSE testing by contract laboratories following the completion of the enhanced surveillance period.

Dr. Barbara Martin, the USDA, APHIS, VS, National Veterinary Service Laboratory (NVSL), NAHLN Coordinator, addressed the expansion of qualified laboratories and methods to accomplish it. She indicated that there were 47 labs in 39 states, including fee for testing laboratories and those conducting END, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), Scrapie and BSE testing. She indicated that a train-the-trainer program was being initiated for one representative from the initial 12 pilot laboratories in April of 2005. It was emphasized that the NAHLN was one small piece in the overall preparedness plan and that laboratory data must be coordinated into a national database. Dr. Larry Granger spoke of implementing activities for emergency preparedness, including the diagnostic laboratories. He mentioned the newly formed Interagency Consortium of Laboratory Networks that is meant to coordinate the activities of the National Plant Disease Network, the NAHLN, the Food Emergency Response Network, the Laboratory Response Network, and the laboratories of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It was emphasized that the U.S. has a shortage of BSL3 capability and that funding \$3-5 million per NALN laboratory would provide significant advances in diagnostic capability. A report was given on the NVSL modernization plan. Both the mycobacteria building and Building 21 were completed in 2004 and that the high containment large animal facility is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2007.

Undersecretary Hawks addressed the group. He said that he had set several goals when he came to USDA four years ago. There were to 1) build broader bridges and reach out to develop relationships, 2) move more products, 3) invest in infrastructure (Ames, NVSL), 4) grow people, and 5) sell agriculture as a profession. He believes that significant progress has been made toward achieving these goals. His overarching theme for the future will be to make US agriculture more competitive by focusing on four areas. These are 1) enhancing market access, 2) improving the health and quality of agriculture, 3) harmonizing agricultural standards, and 4) improving the competitiveness of our infrastructure. Homeland security issues have "moved from a cottage industry to a mansion on the hill". If we had one foreign animal disease outbreak it would do more economic damage than the 9/11 attacks. Secretary Hawks encouraged the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) to create a standing Committee for the National Animal Health Emergency Management System. He said that in the near term, the agency will focus on regaining market access to Japan. In response to a question regarding the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) brucellosis eradication efforts, Secretary Hawks related that he remains committed to the success of that initiative. The group encouraged Secretary Hawks to continue building the NAHLN infrastructure and identify the necessary funding. Secretary Hawks agreed with the group that APHIS should develop a strategic plan surrounding homeland security. He concluded his remarks by invoking his now-famous slogan "working together works!"

Drs. Ron DeHaven and Peter Fernandez, Associate USDA-APHIS Administrator, addressed the group. They mentioned that APHIS was fortunate to receive four new Senior Executive Service positions. Dr. DeHaven reviewed the APHIS budget and remarked of the large increases in spending over the last several years. For example, four years ago the APHIS budget was \$425 million compared to the FY06 proposed amount of \$866 million. Also, the agency spent \$75 million in Commodity Credit Corporation emergency funds during the 8 year period of 1993 through 2001 compared to the \$1.1 billion spent in the last four years. He was pleased that there had been a \$58 million increase in the FY05 budget compared to FY04 despite tough budget times. The FY05 budget includes \$33 million for NAIS, \$1.2 million for aquaculture diseases and \$19 million for Johnes. He commented that the agency requested \$3 million for Johnes and the private sector lobbied successfully for a \$16 million increase, and that USDA will once again request \$3 million for the Johnes program in FY06 because of competing priorities, considering return on investment, and the positive impact of the program. Dr. DeHaven indicated that the brucellosis focus will be in the GYA and the three remaining brucellosis positive states. A discussion ensued about the possibility of the NVSL becoming AAVLD accredited. It was mentioned that the AAVLD had undertaken significant transformations to become compatible with the OIE laboratory accrediting guidelines for demonstrating competence. It was mentioned that USDA recognition of the AAVLD accrediting process would go a long way in establishing a true national laboratory system with meaningful standards. A member of the group emphasized that AAVLD accreditation should not be considered a "stepping stone" to ISO17025 compliance, but considered valuable on its own merit. AAVLD accreditation provides a comprehensive lab-wide audit, versus a specific test by test audit as ISO. It was mentioned that ISO standards originated from the manufacturing industry and are mechanically oriented versus a systems evaluation approach like the AAVLD process. Dr. DeHaven remarked that the NVSL needed to gain international acceptance and questioned whether accreditation by AAVLD or the ISO process was best.

Dr. Martin Mendoza explained the functionality of the new Wildlife Services Mobile Command Post that is used primarily to coordinate oral rabies vaccine activities. The 53ft. trailer towed by a freight liner supports seven work stations with internet and phone connections, a two-way satellite system and GIS capable computers. When not in use the Command Post is stationed in Columbus, Ohio and can be available for other APHIS functions. Wildlife Services plans to purchase an additional trailer to station one in each region of the U.S.

Dr. DeHaven updated the group on the possible implementation of the Veterinary Medical Services Act, if funded by Congress. He mentioned that the program would require the coordination of APHIS and Food Safety Inspection Services (FSIS) with Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES) as the lead agency and would go through the rule making process. He remarked that VS is already authorized to 1) reimburse students for loans provided they work in under represented areas, 2) pay additional amounts on student loans if the student agrees to also be a first responder to a foreign animal disease and 3) reimburse student loans for recruitment for employment. However, there are no available funds to implement these provisions.

Dr. Peter Fernandez gave an update of OIE activities. He mentioned that OIE now has a single list of diseases (no longer a List A and B). He reviewed the proposed new diseases and chapters, and the changes in the BSE Chapter. OIE activities can be monitored by visiting www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie/oie/index.html

Dr. Larry Granger, Associate Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-VS Emergency Management, announced that Drs. Randall Crom and Joseph Anelli were directing incident management and

coordination. He indicated that USDA had successfully placed one position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and one in Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and that additional positions in DHS directorates and Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) were desired. Dr. Granger indicated that the draft response guidelines were being finalized under contract and would be available on the internet for comments and edits. He encouraged USAHA to adopt National Animal Health Emergency Management Systems (NAHEMS) as a working committee and mentioned that this process would not require the involvement of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. An Emergency Management Leadership Team, lead by Dr. Crom, has been formed with representatives from every unit within the APHIS VS system (i.e. Center Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH), National Surveillance Unit (NSU), Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL), Regions, Area Veterinarians In Charge (AVIC's), Area Emergency Coordinators (AEC). Dr. Granger announced that the National Response Plan had been approved in January 2005 as part of the National Incident Management System and that Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (HSPD9) recognizes agriculture and food as part of nation's critical infrastructure. USDA is the lead agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 11 with the U.S. DHS coordinating federal agency resources. VS is spearheading standard operating procedures for avian influenza based upon the exotic Newcastle disease experiences in California. It was mentioned that USDA should coordinate news alerts with U.S. DHS and the Homeland Security Information Network.

After lunch, the group was pleased to visit with Secretary Michael Johanns. The new Secretary opened his remarks by saying, "I applaud your efforts". He also said, "To be successful, we need to base our decisions on science" and that "if our approach is based upon the best science, then we are on the right track. Otherwise, we will be whipsawed by the political climate." The new Secretary appeared extremely supportive of the USAHA and AAVLD efforts and was presented with a USAHA pamphlet. He said that, "Open opportunities to our economy open our economy to challenges" and indicated that he looked forward to working with our group.

Dr. Ulysses Lane made a thorough presentation on the progress of the Cooperative Agreement Process Improvement Team (CAPIT). He indicated that USDA would not require any measures beyond those required by the Office of Management and Budget. The CAPIT report has been forwarded to the VS Management Team and will be publicly distributed following approval.

Neil Hammerschmidt reported to the Committee on the progress of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Announced in December 2003 by the former Secretary Ann Veneman and funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) in April 2004, the NAIS has made significant progress. To date, 38 states and 4 tribes are operational in the standardized premises allocation system offered by USDA. Approximately 41,000 premises have been registered in the standardized system based in Fort Collins, CO. The system is being evaluated to determine the challenges states are having with the system, including the exception process. Ten states and 2 tribes are using compliant systems to capture premises data in their respective jurisdictions. USDA's goal is to have all states operational by July 2005.

The Animal Identification Number (AIN) Management System, which will initiate the 840 numbering system, is anticipated by midyear of 2005. USDA is evaluating tag distribution options using input from the species working groups. AIN tag managers will be required to validate the premises ID for the site and report the distribution of AIN tags. Minimum tag requirements are that the tag is designed for one-time use, it cannot be readily altered and the number is printed on the tag. The November 2004 Interim Rule recognizes additional forms of

official ID, makes it unlawful to remove ID, and recognizes numbers that already exist in the marketplace.

The President's budget includes \$33 million for the NAIS. It is anticipated that \$18 million of the total would be used for cooperative agreements with states that did not receive funding previously and a percentage would be used for field trials. Applications for field trials will be available in May 2005.

USDA provided language to Congress that would address concerns about confidentiality of data in the NAIS. Currently, there isn't a sponsor for the legislation. Further, the National Animal Records Repository will contain 4 key data elements: animal number, premises number, date of sighting and event code. USDA is evaluating private systems currently in the marketplace. Even though there may exist private data systems, USDA will maintain its own database.

Late in the afternoon, Drs. John Clifford and Lee Ann Thomas addressed the issues associated with select agents. Federal oversight of the specific select agents is shared. Some of the agents are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Human Services, others are the responsibility of USDA and others are the responsibility of both agencies. For those agents that overlap into both agencies, a registration is only required through only one agency. The United States Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) is not involved in the select agent registration process. Coordination between the agencies is accomplished through a Steering Committee that has joint representation from Center for Disease Control (CDC) and USDA, and the Steering Committee has subcommittees to fulfill the task.

Specific requests for use of a select agent will be followed with security risk assessments of the individuals handling the agent and site-specific risk assessments. Some product exclusions exist for attenuated agents including RB51 and Strain 19. There have been 113 applications processed to date. The process can take four to five months, particularly on those agents that require concurrence from USDA and CDC. The final rule on select agents is under review at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Currently, there is no requirement to notify the State Veterinarian or the Public Health Veterinarian in a state if a site is registered. USDA will evaluate the possibility of a courtesy notification to state officials of a registered location.

On Tuesday morning, the group met Drs. Barbara Masters and Pat McCaskey, USDA-FSIS to discuss the mission of the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN). The purpose of FERN is to integrate the nation's food testing laboratories by establishing five regional centers in Athens, GA; Jaimaica, NY; Denver, CO; Alameda, CA; and the pending final location. FSIS will be staffing the regional offices to provide FERN coordination. FERN has members from 94 laboratories in 43 states; 27 of which are federal laboratories, and 67 are state or local laboratories (37 public health, 22 agriculture, 4 veterinary diagnostic, 67 chemical, microbiological or radiological). Analytical methods, training and proficiency testing are key challenges. The electronic lab exchange network (eLEXNET) will capture the data and provide electronic communications. Dr. McCaskey indicated that FERN will integrate with other networks, such as the Laboratory Response Network, the NAHLN, the National Plant Disease Network, and a proposed environmental network. The White House Homeland Security Council initiated an Integrated Consortium of Lab Networks (ICLN) to provide timely, high quality and interpretable results for early detection and effective consequence management of acts of terror and other events requiring an integrated lab response. The ICLN will establish the leadership structure and define the relationships among the affected federal agencies (i.e. USDHS (Chair); USDA (FSIS, APHIS, CSREES), HHS (CDC, FDA), EPA, DOD, FBI, Department of State, DOE, NRC, OSHA, etc.). Dr. McCaskey said that the next steps are to develop memoranda of agreements to develop a matrix of responsible federal agency roles; identify network gaps;

decide how information is to be managed; develop proficiency testing requirements, training and sampling guidance; develop testing methods including promoting standardization where appropriate. It was imperative that the ICLN work together as a team to accomplish its mission. The FY05 budget includes \$3.5 million for FERN which will be dispersed to participants through cooperative agreements.

Jeremy Stump, the Director of Homeland Security for USDA, discussed the activities of his staff. He reports directly to the Secretary and is USDA's main liaison to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (USDHS). He started his presentation by thanking Dr. Bret Marsh, Indiana State Veterinarian, for working on his staff over the last year. He mentioned that he traveled to Afghanistan to get a first hand look at some of the challenges to the security of our nation. He said that strengthening relationships within the federal government such as EPA and FDA is as important as developing new ones with the FBI and CIA. His office now has a liaison with the intelligence community and they are expanding USDA's role to include security. The important message is that U.S. agriculture is a national resource and its value is \$1.24 trillion dollars. He discussed the President's recommendations for the 2006 budget which provide for significant increases for the food and agriculture defense initiative. The components of this initiative are awareness and warning; vulnerability assessments; mitigation strategies; response planning and recovery; outreach and professional development; and research and development. Finally, he discussed two councils, the Government and Private Sector Coordination Councils, which were formed and are led jointly by USDA, DHS, and HHS/FDA and serve as a forum for sharing input on national policies and programs. These two councils meet both independently and jointly to share information and pursue common goals. Dr. Maxwell Lea, Louisiana State Veterinarian, and Dr. Mike Marshall, Utah State Veterinarian, represent the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials on the Government Coordination Council.

Dr. Stephen Sundlof, Director, FDA Center of Veterinary Medicine (CVM), updated the group on current activities at the Center. Dr. Sundlof reported on CVM's efforts in strengthening the feed ban rule and the ANPR that was published during July, 2004. This rule proposed banning specified risk materials (SRMs) from all animal feeds. The FDA received over 1500 comments on this proposed rule and it's currently working through the clearing process at FDA.

The proposed rule would result in infrastructure challenges of current disposal of slaughter byproducts and dead stock. A complete Specific Risk Materials (SRM) ban would result in an additional \$2.1 billion pounds of byproducts requiring special disposal. Dr. Sundlof indicated that a new proposed feed ban rule will be published that will address cost/benefits, potential environmental impacts, BSE testing of dead stock, and a limited definition of SRMs.

Dr. Sundlof reported that FDA was no longer considering blood products in the new feed ban rule. He reported that FDA will continue to aggressively inspect rendering facilities and feed mills to assure compliance although recent inspections confirm an excellent level of compliance.

FDA is working to link its laboratories through the Interagency Consortium Laboratory Network. The FY06 President's Budget increases funding for food protection by \$20 million for FREN to address analytical surge capacity, microbiological laboratories and increased capacity.

Dr. Beth Lautner briefed the group on the DHS programs related to activities at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) and to animal disease detection and response generally. DHS comprises five Directorates: Border and Transportation Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, Science and Technology and Management. The PIADC falls within the Science and Technology Directorate. DHS has

established a Center for Excellence in Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Diseases, a consortium based at Texas A&M, but remains interested in creating a working group to further identify research gaps related to bioterrorism agent detection and response. Together with the PIADC and other national laboratories, these facilities constitute the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center (NBACC), headquartered at Ft. Detrick, Maryland.

The PIADC still maintains the traditional Agricultural Research Service (ARS) research and USDA Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory components. In addition, the DHS, now responsible for overall operations, is focused on development of bioforensics testing capabilities, accelerated development of vaccines and other biologics countermeasures (novel delivery systems and adjuvants), development of multiplex rapid assays for foreign animal and zoonotic diseases and disease threat assessment and epidemiology techniques. DHS funded research has already revealed that FMD vaccines produce protective immunity in as little as seven days, instead of the previously accepted 21 days, a finding with significant potential impact on disease response activities. DHS is looking to expand collaboration with outside groups through a DHS Scholars and Fellows program aimed at bringing MS, PhD and post doctoral researchers into their programs. Other initiatives include expanding surveillance through state and regional labs, planning for a multistate FMD exercise and development of an epidemiologic and economic model of an FMD outbreak.

Much of the PIADC infrastructure was built in the 1950s and although \$12.9 million was allocated for maintenance and upgrades in FY05, there is a need for a comprehensive review of future use of these facilities. The NBACC has received \$3 million for a planning and feasibility study of a "next generation animal disease center". An issue that needs review within this context is the establishment of critical BSL4 research and containment facilities. The previous Secretary of the USDHS stated that no BSL4 facilities would be located at the PIADC and so far this issue has not been raised again for discussion.

Late in the afternoon, the group was addressed by Dr. Caird Rexroad, Associate Administrator, USDA-ARS. Dr. Rexroad requested assistance in recruiting for Keith Murray's replacement as Director of the Animal Health Disease Center. The position is an Senior Executive Service (SES) position requiring leadership to oversee and direct the approximate \$30 million in collaborative research. The announcement will be available on the USDA/ARS website.

The new biocontainment lab is projected to be completed in 2006. Dr. Rexroad explained the evolution of the FY05 budget with a brief historical review of prior budgets. The U.S. Agriculture and Food Defense Initiative first received supplemental funding following 9/11, but the next opportunity for funding did not occur until FY05. The budget will focus on three areas: animal health, plant health and food safety. The base program remains well funded with \$1 billion allotted for animal health plus additional funds for BSE. There is a two percent increase in the budget which is \$1.1 billion. Over the past three to four years the total appropriation for the new laboratory facility has been \$463 million with an additional \$58.8 million proposed in FY06 to complete the facility.

Program initiatives within ARS include emerging and exotic diseases in the agriculture and food defense initiative while continuing to invest in basic animal health research. Funding will continue to be directed toward immunology (vaccinology, immunomodulators), investments in bovine genome, sequencing and disease resistance. A brief description of FMD vaccine research was presented which will be provided to the USDHS for product development. ARS is requesting \$6.9 million for BSE research in the FY06 proposal and an increase in funding for researching invasive species (i.e. ticks, fire ants) and genomes.

In response to questions about the current and future status of other laboratory facilities, 20 facilities are in some stage of planning or development. Feasibility studies for laboratory renovation or reconstruction has been requested by Congress for some facilities, but the main priority is the completion of the Master Plan. The final phase of the Master Plan remains a commitment, but the extent of the renovation verses new construction remains under consideration. Other laboratories which require renovation include the Southeastern Poultry Research Laboratory (SEPRL) which will require over \$100 million to replace; the Michigan Poultry Oncology Laboratory which may be merged with the SEPRL in a new facility and location; the Kerrville, Texas insect laboratory and the Pullman, Washington laboratory, both of which remain highly relevant but have not received additional funding.

Late in the day, the group met with the Animal Agriculture Coalition (AAC). John Adams with the National Milk Producers Federation, Dr. Ray Stock with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and Tom Cook and Dr. David Meeker with the National Renderers Association were in attendance. The AAC is made up of 26 member groups and organizations and their main priority is to assure adequate funding to complete the Ames, IA Master Plan, which is \$85 – 90 million considering inflation. Other priorities include adequate funding of the National Antibiotic Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS), the NAHLN, and the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database (FARAD), which is a biodefense food safety initiative for ARS. Further, the AAC continues to be heavily involved with NAHEMS. Mr. Adams emphasized that it was a very challenging year to regain funding for programs that had received cuts, particularly the Johnes program. He feared that budget rescissions that have been requested would result in program elimination. He suggested that the AAC, USAHA and AAVLD work collaboratively on a strategic plan for animal health initiatives. The AAC remains concerned about the BSE feed rule proposed by FDA. The AAC believes that the data does not support the perception of risk and the cost/benefit analysis does not warrant the proposals. The group expressed concerns about who had authority over carcass disposal and the true presentation of relative risk. There were continued discussions about homeland security and Mr. Adams voiced a basic question, “Are we ready?” He suggested that funding requests be approached by critical areas or major initiatives rather than the traditional list of diseases.

On Wednesday morning, the group met with representatives of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC). Bob Ehart, the Animal and Plant Health Safeguarding Coordinator for NASDA, updated the group on the NASDA – FSIS Cooperative Agreement, which is a farm to fork initiative. The agreement calls for the collection of state plans, best practices, training, and exercises. Seventeen Midwestern states are cooperating in the venture. Mr. Ehart then reviewed the components of HSPD 9 and 7, and the National Response Plan. He emphasized that the key to their implementation would be reliant upon the ability of the agriculture to demonstrate the need and successfully compete for funding. He also reviewed the NASDA (Communication Officials of State Departments of Agriculture) - APHIS - FSIS Cooperative Agreement for Communication for risk and crisis communication strategies. The agreement is addressing how best to share critical information in timely manner in order to better manage the dissemination of information to the public. Mr. Ehart briefly mentioned that agriculture and food must be part of a state’s strategic plan in order to qualify for homeland security funding in FY07 and encouraged state officials to include agriculture and food interests in the state office of homeland security. He encouraged the group to attend the full day session on how to qualify for ODP funding at the National Institute for Animal Agriculture meeting on April 3, 2005, sponsored by the National Animal Health Emergency Management System. Mr. Ehart mentioned that the NASDA policy amendment on

BSE paralleled that of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association position with the exception of a clause that Canada include brucellosis, tuberculosis, anaplasmosis and bluetongue into the trade agreement. He also reported that changes to emergency funding through the Commodity Credit Corporation would be a key area of opportunity in the 2007 Farm Bill.

The group was then addressed by Dr. Mike Chaddock, AVMA Governmental Relations Division (GRD) Director, and Senator John Melchor, AVMA legislative consultant. Dr. Chaddock indicated that the AVMA, USAHA and the AAVLD work for many common interests on parallel paths. He explained that the AVMA Executive Board set legislative policy and categorized items by active pursuit of passage, active pursuit of defeat, support or non-support. The AVMA legislative agenda and one page issue briefs are available on AVMA website. He invited the group to visit the new AVMA GRD office and offered his assistance when group members were on Capitol Hill. Senator Melchor said that he had practiced for 20 years in MT and graduated from veterinary school in 1950 after WWII. He gave an inspiring talk on how to be an effective lobbyist and expressed great respect for the manner in which the GRD was conducting their affairs. He indicated that during these tough budget times, Congress was expected to "hold the line" with no program expansion.

Dr. Larry Heider, Executive Director of the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), addressed the group. Dr. Heider listed reasons and dollar amounts on why the new budget looked bleak for colleges and laboratories. The reduced federal funding comes at a time when veterinary schools are also being restricted on state funds. Dr. Heider discussed legislative initiatives supported by the AAVMC. He expressed the concern with the growing shortfall in public practice and the support for funding the Veterinary Medical Services Act and the Veterinary Medical Research Act, which allows debt reduction for biomedical researchers or newly graduated post-doctorates. He mentioned the AAVMC Human Resources Task Force Report, chaired by Dr. Lonnie King, which highlights the need to develop centers of excellence. Dr. Heider reiterated the AAVMC support of the NAHLN.

Drs. Tom McGinn and John Hoffman were introduced as two leaders within DHS that drive national strategy for agriculture and food defense, particularly animal health. Dr. McGinn, with DHS FEMA, reviewed the Homeland Security Presidential Directives' (HSPD) relevance to the protection of agriculture against threats. HSPD5 directs the formulation of the National Response Plan (NRP), a basic plan for which Department of Human Health Services (DHHS), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and USDA are to write a Food Safety and Agriculture Annex (not yet written). HSPD7 adds the critical infrastructure language, and specifically created awareness for agriculture as a part of the critical infrastructure. HSPD9 'establishes a national policy to defend agriculture and food production and distribution against terrorist attacks, major disasters and other emergencies,' determines responsibilities across federal agencies and clearly defines deliverables. Federal assistance in disasters is coordinated through Emergency Support Functions (ESF) 8, addressing health (human and veterinary medicine assistance teams) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services being the lead agency, and ESF 11, addressing agriculture and natural resources with the USDA and U.S. Department of Interior being the lead agencies.

Dr. McGinn pointed out that the U.S. has learned and will continue to learn from disasters at home and abroad when formulating policies and planning and implementing prevention, response, and recovery. Thus, review of the National Audit Office's (NAO) report on the recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom, highlighted the need to include and be able to locate existing resources for homeland defense on the local and state level in order to mount effective protection and response. Recognizing, defining and describing the impact on

commerce of a halt-down of parts of an industry, and how long it takes to restore all activities in order to calculate economic, public health and security impact need to be components of response plans.

Dr. McGinn referred to the USAHA model state homeland security plan which calls for \$165 million in funding. Funds are needed in the amount of \$4.8 million per state to provide personnel (\$375,000 for three veterinarians per state for homeland security, emergency management, and food and agriculture functions); \$1 million per state for laboratory support; \$1.9 million per state for additional infrastructure; and \$1.5 million per state for annual operating funds. He emphasized the need to build effective partnerships between industry, state and federal agencies, and improve effective communication between all stakeholders. Recognition of the needs of agriculture and its relevance for food supply and public health has led to growth in agrosecurity budgets from \$160 million to \$600 million in only a few years.

According to Dr. John Hoffman, in the DHS Information Assessment and Infrastructure Protection Directorate, homeland security extends beyond terrorism to any incident of national significance. The USDHS in February 2005 released the Interim National Infrastructure Protection Plan (I-NIPP) which is to 'provide a consistent, unifying structure for integrating critical infrastructure protection (CIP) efforts into a national program.' (<http://www.deq.state.mi.us/documents/deq-wb-www-interim-nipp.pdf>). The NIPP is national in scope calling for partnerships among all stakeholders, including federal, state, and the private sector, to ensure effective and efficient protection of all critical infrastructures and key resources. Protective activities have to be integrated with appropriate response. The NIPP is based on a CIP risk management framework and vulnerability assessment, which entails identification of critical infrastructure, identification and assessment of vulnerabilities, followed by analysis and prioritization of assets for protection, implementation of protective programs, and feedback with measurement of effectiveness of those activities. One assessment tool currently used by DHS, USDA, FDA and industries is CARVER, assessing criticality, accessibility for attack, recognizability by anyone intent on doing harm, vulnerability, order of effect (1st, 2nd, 3rd), and recoverability. Dr. Hoffman emphasized that the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) provides funding to states for vulnerability assessments, with over \$5 million being available in 2005.

Sector specific plans for detection, protection, response, mitigation and recovery are drafted, based on vulnerability and risk assessments, to be reviewed and shared through the structure of Sector and Government Coordinating Councils (SCC, GCC). Information is to be shared with key stakeholders through the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN). Infrastructure monitoring has to be continuous, and communications have to be greatly coordinated. Industry needs to reorganize itself, recognize the hazards and threats, and agree to share information with those in charge to reduce vulnerabilities. Ability for bio-situational awareness has to be shared across industries and states, and the National Biosurveillance Integration System (NBIS), which combines health data from CDC, agricultural data from the USDA, food data from a combination of USDA and DHHS, and environmental monitoring from BioWatch to improve detection and response, and to tie all agencies and sources of information. Confidentiality of information shared for the purpose of enhanced security is maintained through the Protected Critical Infrastructure Information (PCII) Program (resulting from the Critical Infrastructure Information Act of 2002 (CII Act), which is designed to encourage private industry and others with knowledge about our critical infrastructure to share sensitive and proprietary business information about this critical infrastructure with the Government with the assurance that the information, if it satisfies the requirements of the CII Act, will be protected from public disclosure.

According to Dr. Hoffman, shields to protect critical infrastructure have to be in place up-front, and, the better you are prepared, the less you will be a target for attack. The goal of the NIPP is to reduce susceptibility to disaster, and/or to reduce the effect of a disaster event on the pre-event state of national infrastructures. The NRP is to facilitate the most efficient return to normalcy, should a disaster event occur. Some areas may not be prepared well enough, and feedback from the NRP either in case of a disaster event, or during planning phases, has to be used to improve the NIPP.

Discussion following presentations of Drs. McGinn and Hoffman addressed the role of the National Animal Health Emergency Management System Steering Committee (NAHEMS SC). The SCC and GCC recognize the NAHEMS SC as a working committee, although its status and functionality may change with its realignment as a committee within the USAHA. Further discussion focused on confidentiality issues, and in particular on how PCII could be extended towards data associated with the National Animal Identification System. Dr. Hoffman explained the distinction between voluntary and mandatory information that is shared with the federal government. Data shared by industry and states on a voluntary basis is protected from FOIA requests. The data held at state levels could also be protected. The issue of data housing has to be resolved by and for the industry. It is essential, though, that assurances are in place to make that data available at a moment's notice when needed for homeland security and defense.