REPORT OF THE USSAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Chair: Bret D. Marsh, Indianapolis, IN
Vice Chair: Norman G. Willis, Ontario, CAN

Dr. Joan M. Arnoldi, WI; Dr. Michael J. David, MD; Dr. Peter J. Fernandez, AE; Dr. John R. Fischer, GA; Mr. Bob Frost, CA; Dr. Lonnie J. King, GA; Dr. Elizabeth A. Lautner, NY; Dr. Bret D. Marsh, IN; Dr. Alex B. Thiermann, Dr. Alfonso Torres, NY; Dr. Gary M. Weber, DC.

The Committee met on Sunday, November 6, 2006, from 12:30pm to 4:30pm in Tower Room 3. The meeting, chaired by Bret D. Marsh and supported by Vice Chair Norman G. Willis, was attended by 5 committee members and 22 observers, 10 of whom indicated that they wished to become members.

Following his opening remarks, the Chair reviewed the Committee White Paper, which, in 2003, defined the objectives and the rationale for the establishment of this committee.

A presentation was given by John Fischer updating the Committee on the activities of the Organization for World Animal Health (OIE) Wildlife Diseases Working Group (WG). This WG was established in 1994 and consists of members from Sweden, Portugal, France, South Africa, the United States, Canada and Australia. The members function as wildlife experts and do not represent their countries. Other experts may be invited to contribute to the WG as required. Their terms of reference can be found on the OIE web page.

The WG conducts an annual survey of wildlife disease occurrences in the 167 Member Countries. Other activities of the WG include preparing recommendations and producing publications on wildlife diseases. Disease issues are reviewed, and measures and research to prevent, control and manage such issues are developed. Their accomplishments included a disease-risk protocol for translocation of wild animals, guidelines for compartmentalization, and guidelines for preparedness for trans-boundary animal disease incursions. The WG’s agenda for the future is expected to be dominated by avian influenza.

William B. Karesh described the activities of the Field Veterinary Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The program involves working in remote areas of developing countries focusing on activities such as capacity building, assessment, and monitoring. They have a worldwide staff of about 3,000 located in 50 countries. About 95 percent of their staff is hired locally. The WCS work with other international organizations using disease issues to foster partnerships with such organizations. An example of using “disease connections” is the isolation of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza from geese in Mongolia for use in human vaccine to protect against the potential next human influenza pandemic.

Capacity building in surveillance and outbreak investigations is done by training foreign nationals. Using the example of ebola virus, Karesh stressed the importance and success of educational campaigns in rural areas before outbreaks occur. Karesh described how animals in Asia are traded, how they are used in the local economies, and the distances they are transported to reach live markets in the major metropolitan areas. There is little or no sanitary control when such animals are moved.

The demand for animal protein will triple in developing countries, and while the global trade in meat is highly concentrated and not a likely means for spreading disease, the global trade in wildlife animals is poorly regulated and characterized.

Although there are inter-sectoral gaps, these are being bridged, as shown by the cooperative efforts with avian influenza. There needs to be a system that transcends politics such as stronger public-private partnerships.

Norman G. Willis described an Animal Health Foresight Project conducted in 2005 by Canada and the United States. The Project was a continuation of the International Working Group on Animal Disposal Alternatives (IWADA) process, which sought alternatives to mass animal destruction for disease control. Using the technology of foresight, scenarios of multiple plausible futures were created by the 43
participants from industry, academia, the public, and various levels of state, provincial and federal governments.

Based on the opinions and observations expressed by the participants, 10 conclusions were derived leading to the development of a new paradigm for animal health – all based on animal-health optimization rather than destruction. The paradigm for strategic thinking was added to the existing elements for hierarchical decision-making that were previously enunciated in the IWADA process, namely, anticipation, prevention, new paradigm, utility maximization, and disposal. It was suggested that the results of this project could be extended to broader acceptance and development leading to global guidelines.

Lorenzo Terzi described the structure and processes of the European Union (EU) as it related to sanitary issues and decisions. The 25 Member States plus Norway all operate under the European Commission for the administration of veterinary issues. This applies to intra-community trade, agreements with third countries and bilateral agreements between a member country and a third country. Animal health policies are guided by regulations, directives and decisions. The principles and tools guiding animal health policy in the European Union are transparency, consistency (harmonization) and preparedness.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is an independent agency located in Parma, Italy. This authority addresses risk-assessment and risk-communication issues; however, risk-management issues are addressed by the European Commission and by the Member States.

Considerable emphasis was placed on regionalization and zoning. The legal framework was identified in the SPS Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Regionalization must be embedded into an overall strategy for disease control and management. Although it is the best approach for trade, it is but one approach. Examples were given as to how regionalization had been applied in several non-EU countries with particular references to the exchanges between the EU and the United States.

Michael David described the United States’ activities with the OIE during FY 2005. These included activities with the four Specialist Commissions (Terrestrial, Aquatic, Laboratory and Scientific), participation in the various ad hoc groups established to address a specific issue, and the active involvement with the review of various OIE Code Chapters, particularly with the chapters and appendices on animal welfare, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, avian influenza, and compartmentalization.

Meetings in which the United States has participated included the OIE’s General Session, the Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas, the Board meetings of the Americas Region, the Quadrilateral Animal Health annual meeting and the North American Committee on Animal Health meeting. The Region for the Americas has established various committees (poultry health, aquaculture, TSE, and CAMAVET) to address issues of common interest at the regional level.

Finally, the United States arranged for certain industry groups to visit the OIE headquarters and the European Commission with a view to help such groups understand the processes and functioning of these organizations.

To conclude the meeting, the Chair discussed two possible resolutions and the Committee decided that no action needed to be taken on the proposed resolutions at this time. The Chair also requested suggestions for a replacement of retiring Committee Chair Joan Arnoldi.