

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES

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The Committee met on October 22, 2007 from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Southern Pacific AGB at John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel, Reno, Nevada. A total of 37 people attended the meeting including 16 Committee members.

The first speaker was Dennis Slate, Wildlife Services (WS), Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Slate provided an update on wildlife related rabies activities. The use of immunohistochemistry testing has enhanced surveillance. Canine variant rabies has been eliminated in Texas. Gray fox variant continues to be a problem, both in foxes and coyotes. There is ongoing work to improve the efficacy and delivery systems of oral bait rabies vaccine. There is ongoing collaborative work with both Canada and Mexico to address disease along the borders.

The next speaker was Erin Kennedy, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Kennedy provided an overview of World Rabies Day 2007. It is estimated that there are over 55,000 human deaths annually caused by rabies world wide. World Rabies Day was a multi-partner effort to bring attention to rabies around the world. There was good media coverage and good education and outreach efforts. There were seventy seven events in the United States with participation by twenty five Colleges of Veterinary Medicine. Seventy three countries participated. The next World Rabies Day is October 28, 2008.

Christine Bunck, United States Department of the Interior, was the third speaker. She addressed surveillance for high pathogenic H5/H7 avian influenza in wild birds in the United States in 2006 and 2007. The focus of efforts in 2006 was in Alaska. In 2007, surveillance efforts expanded. Over 27,000 birds were tested. No high pathogenic avian influenza was found. Positive results for low pathogenic avian influenza were found in 2.7 percent of birds tested. Virus isolation is still ongoing. Three hundred ninety two different viruses of varying H and N types have been found to date. No H5N1 was found.

The fourth speaker was Tracey Lynn, Veterinary Services (VS), APHIS-USDA, reporting on the Subcommittee for Zoonotic Disease and Surveillance. The other lead for this Subcommittee is Tracee Treadwell of CDC. Recent initiatives over the last year were avian influenza, a food safety subgroup, and communications. There was discussion about next steps for this group. The group has been successful in meeting initial objectives. There is still a need for ongoing efforts. Wildlife agencies should be included in agriculture and public health initiatives.

Responses to the six Resolutions from 2006 were provided to Committee members.

The Committee approved two Resolutions. Voting was by a majority of the members present with each vote being unanimous. The two Resolutions were forwarded to the Committee on Nominations and Resolutions.

The Committee approved two recommendations. Voting was by a majority of the members present with the votes being unanimous. The recommendations are:

- 1) the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) provide comments on Federal Register 55729 CDC proposed rule on animal import regulation during the comment period published in the Federal Register which has been extended to December 1, 2007. In addition, we recommend that USAHA investigate the opportunity to issue joint comments with other organizations such as American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).
- 2) The Committee recommends that USAHA officially recognize World Rabies Day.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Committee on Public Health and Rabies is to enhance public health and environmental quality for all animals, including humans. It provides a liaison with United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) to livestock producers and handlers, private and public veterinarians and their organizations and agencies. It will encourage increased coordination among agriculture, wildlife and public health agencies in the detection, identification, prevention, control, and eradication of infectious and non-infectious diseases and conditions affecting animals and the common environment of animals and humans. With emphasis on facilitating communication and data sharing between the animal and human health communities to recognize emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases.

Objectives:

1. Establish a forum for all zoonotic diseases, both existing and emerging problem. Create Zoonotic Subcommittees as needed.
2. Objectives related to rabies are:
 - i. to maintain an awareness of the animal rabies situation, primarily in North America but other portions of the world as well
 - ii. to assess its impact on all animals including livestock, wildlife, pets, and humans
 - iii. to monitor regulatory programs of various public and animal health agencies in North America
 - iv. to develop program recommendations
 - v. to share information on new technologies
3. Assist in maintaining and developing healthy animal populations by improving the environmental quality through information for handling of hazardous wastes, recycling, disinfection in management and production.
4. Review and recommend programs as a Committee or in conjunction with other Committees in reducing and preventing disease agent transmission through foods or feeds of animal or poultry origin intended for consumption.
5. Promote education and training initiatives for livestock producers and handlers, and private and public practitioners in defining their role in maintaining and enhancing the public's health and environmental quality.