

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2005

RESOLUTION: 31 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES

SUBJECT MATTER: A NATIONAL PLAN FOR RABIES CONTROL IN WILDLIFE

DATES: Hershey, Pennsylvania – November 3-9, 2005

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The epizootic of raccoon rabies continues to spread into uninfected areas of North America. The natural barriers that previously restricted the raccoon rabies variant to the Atlantic coast states have been compromised. Barriers have been breached in Ohio and Cape Cod, Massachusetts, with a first-time occurrence of raccoon rabies on Long Island, New York. Translocation of raccoons with incubating rabies infection may have contributed in these instances. This creates the potential for a large portion of the nation to be affected by raccoon rabies. The cost of living with raccoon rabies cannot accurately be determined, but is substantial according to numerous local, state, and federal studies. This epidemic has reached national proportions and control efforts require coordination at the national level.

Rabies vaccine, licensed for use in raccoons and coyotes by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), is available for delivery to wildlife through bait distribution. The use of oral rabies vaccination has been successful in the control of raccoon rabies in urban and rural environments, limiting the spread of raccoon rabies to uninfected areas, and dramatically controlling and eliminating rabies in coyotes in south Texas. Large-scale control efforts must continue to be developed and implemented over large areas of the epizootic front to prevent the spread of rabies in raccoons throughout the continent. The USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) has provided substantial leadership, funding and program support to assist states with oral rabies vaccination programs which include raccoon, coyote, gray fox and skunk rabies. The USDA-APHIS-WS has also facilitated numerous meetings involving federal, state and provincial agencies to address the potential for coordinated, regional rabies control efforts, with the goal of developing a national rabies control program that would complement rabies control programs in Canada and Mexico. The National Working Group on Rabies Prevention, coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AAVMA), has developed recommendations for enhancing rabies control, including wildlife vaccination.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) to continue to seek additional funding for terrestrial wildlife rabies control programs. USAHA further encourages state and local governments and regional alliances to support this activity through appropriate funding channels. USAHA also strongly encourages the USDA-APHIS-WS, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to allocate appropriated funding and resources to assist states and local agencies in the development, maintenance and expansion of coordinated regional wildlife rabies control and vaccination programs with the ultimate goal of eliminating terrestrial strains of rabies regionally and then nationally.

RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) agrees and is committed to support USAHA Resolution Number 31. Rabies in raccoons, coyotes and gray foxes continues to challenge oral rabies vaccination zones and threatens to spread to uninfected areas, underscoring the need for additional funding for strategically coordinated rabies control. We accept the charge of cooperating with the United States Public Health Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local, county and state governments, as well as regionally to include border States and provinces in Canada and Mexico to reach rabies management goals nationally. Without the continued cooperative efforts from all entities, the goal of successfully eliminating rabies in terrestrial carnivores such as the raccoon would not be attainable.

In response to our Federal leadership in managing rabies in wildlife, Wildlife Services received \$23,580,000 in FY 2006 Congressionally appropriated funding. Appropriated funding and resources have been used to expand the oral rabies vaccination program and to assist State and local agencies in the development, maintenance, and expansion of coordinated regional wildlife rabies control efforts. The NWRC initiated key research projects to address bait, bait density, vaccine, and rabies reservoir population issues in support of an effective ORVP. WS has requested additional resources for the expansion of wildlife rabies control efforts in fiscal year 2007.