National Animal Identification Program Update

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Veterinary Services is in the final stages of animal disease eradication programs that have taken many years and millions of dollars to complete. It is accepted practice to identify animals during the course of administration of these disease programs. However, even as these programs wind down, the need for identification of animals remains high. The events of the last several years have further emphasized how critically important it is to have animals identified so they can be traced for disease purposes. The devastating outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom several years ago and the rapidity with which it spread emphasized how critical it is to be able to be able to rapidly trace animals in the case of a disease outbreak. There has always been significant effort put forth to protect American agriculture from the threat of the accidental introduction of foreign animal diseases. However, the events of September 11 added the new dimension of the possibility of intentional introduction of one of these diseases, thus further emphasizing the need to be able to rapidly trace potentially exposed animals. A key to safeguarding the Nation’s livestock herds from the drastic effects of diseases such as these, and (Continued on page 13)

Update on BSE

On May 20, 2003, Canada received confirmation that a single cow had tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). This cow came from a commercial beef herd in Northern Alberta, Canada. The herd of origin, the source herd and other herds at risk were placed under quarantine. All of the cattle in these herds have been depopulated. More (Continued on page 2)

MONKEY POX, GIANT RATS AND PRAIRIE DOGS

Bruce Morrison, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Dr. Larry Williams, Nebraska State Veterinarian

Until a few weeks ago, most Americans had never heard of monkey pox, much less the giant Gambian rat. Now these are common household terms, due to the ability of our national press to pick up a story and spread it far and wide. However, with a few exceptions, the journalists and reporters have missed the bigger story—the story of the burgeoning trade in exotic pets and the accompanying danger of introducing foreign disease pathogens into the livestock and wildlife of our country. Daily, thousands of wild animals are taken out of their natural habitat and shipped to the United States to feed our insatiable appetite for the new and different pet to amuse us in our leisure time.

There are several laws and regulations on the books, at both the national and state levels, to control the import of animals from areas where diseases are endemic. However, the responsibility for administering these rules and regulations is scattered (Continued on page 15)
The recent case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada has simply reaffirmed what we already have known, that animal identification has always been an important tool in the cattle business, especially with respect to maintaining and improving animal health. In recent years, many issues have pointed to the role of, and need for, improved animal identification systems. In particular, as we approach the national goal of brucellosis eradication (and as a result fewer breeding females are vaccinated and identified), it becomes more difficult to trace brucellosis reactors. If this goes too far, we might experience what Ireland did many years ago; they ignored brucellosis because they thought it had been eradicated, and it was back within about 5 years. We can’t let that happen here.

In addition, new animal identification technologies have emerged, especially electronic identification systems. Many years ago, the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) began providing leadership to help standardize these technologies. The Animal Identification Subcommittee of the Live Cattle Marketing Committee has established animal identification standards. These standards have been widely distributed and should help open up opportunities for producers to use these tools that should, over time, become less costly through increased competition and volume of sales. Thus, we see the foundation being built to support our national animal health goals, also assisting producers and the private sector use the emerging technologies of animal identification. The private sector will be able to use the same number used for the animal health system, but production-related information will be controlled and managed by producers and the private sector, not government.

The Cattle Health and Well-being committee of NCBA has focused on developing broad industry understanding of the need for animal identification as we pursue eradication of TB and brucellosis, as well as evaluate what systems would aid in dealing with BSE, foot-and-mouth disease as well as who should pay for such a system.

As a direct result of efforts by these committees, the NCBA has specific policies in force relating to animal identification standards, the private sector opportunities and role for animal identification to enhance genetic improvement and the public sector roles and partnerships related to animal health. These policies have been the guiding principles for our efforts on the animal identification front.

**Development of a National System**

Animal identification in the United States is a complex issue affecting all of animal agriculture. In an attempt to move ahead on a national animal identification system, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) funded an effort coordinated by the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) to develop a draft plan for the United States. More than 30 federal, state government, professional and trade associations participated in this project. This effort produced a report in November of 2002 titled “Safeguarding Animal Agriculture: National Identification Work Plan (NIWP).”

NIWP was presented to USAHA at their annual meeting held October 17-24, 2003, in St. Louis, MO. USAHA passed a resolution directing APHIS to use NIWP as a guide to further define a national animal identification system in the United States.

Recently, APHIS has established a National Animal Identification Work Plan Development Team. This team will be meeting over the next several months to further define a national animal identification plan. The team hopes to have
The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) annual meeting will be held October 9 to 16, 2003, at the Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, California. The hotel registration form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Registration:
Meeting registration forms are enclosed with this newsletter. Be sure to complete and return the annual meeting registration form to the USAHA Richmond office by September 12, 2003. Be sure to include your registration fee payment with your credit card information or your check made out to USAHA. Anyone sending a check from outside the United States, please make your check payable in U.S. dollars on an American Bank.

Refunds:
The refund policy for those who preregister but are unable to attend the meeting is to withhold $25 to cover processing and handling. Your request for a refund must be made in writing within seven (7) days after the end of the meeting.

Agenda:
A tentative meeting agenda is enclosed. The President’s reception and dinner will be Sunday evening, October 12, 2003. The USAHA/AAVLD Scientific Session will be Monday morning, October 13, 2003. Dr. Bernard Vallat, Director General of the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE) will be the keynote speaker. Other agenda topics will be chronic wasting disease (CWD), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and exotic Newcastle disease (END) and monkey pox. We will also have a presentation from the new Department of Homeland Security.

Please be sure to review the agenda because several changes have been made in committee meeting times since last year.

Hotel Registration:
Please complete and return the hotel registration form to the hotel as soon as possible. You can make reservations online at www.towncountry.com and your conference code is USAHA03. You may also make reservations by calling 1-800-772-8527. Reservations must be made by September 17, 2003 to guarantee a room at the meeting rate. If USAHA/AAVLD does not fill the entire hotel block, the organizations will be liable to pay for the meeting space, which is very costly.

Prayer Breakfast:
The second annual prayer breakfast will be Sunday, October 12, from 6:30 to 8:00 am. Please see the enclosed information and registration form for the prayer breakfast.

USAHA/AAVLD Keynote Speaker
Dr. Bernard Vallat, Director General of the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE) will be our keynote speaker this year in San Diego. He will focus his presentation on the importance of competent and credible veterinary services for national and international communities. He will also address the significance of the strong collaboration between federal and local governments as well as between public and private sector in the surveillance and control of animal diseases as well as the certification of animal and animal products for international trade.

We will also hear about the most recent OIE activities, from a description of the revisions of the international standards on foot-and-mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), as well as the new initiatives of the OIE and the veterinary community at large on animal production food safety and animal welfare.

TOURS...
For the last few years the tours have not been well attended; therefore we have not planned any commercially organized tours this year. For those who wish to visit the many interesting places in and around San Diego, we suggest using the Trolley, which is located directly behind the hotel. A few of the places that might be of interest are Old Towne, Downtown San Diego and even to Tijuana which are easily accessible on the Trolley. For those who like to shop, Fashion Valley Mall is directly behind the hotel and within walking distance.
USAHA’s highest priority is modernizing and upgrading this nation’s federal laboratories. The modernization of these laboratories in Ames, Iowa, is ongoing. The new partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with regards to the laboratory facilities at Plum Island is just beginning (June 1st). Establishing the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) is the third component of the big three. Ames, Plum and the NAHLN with modern facilities and sustained funding will go a long way in providing what this nation needs for defense against disease problems to our animal and human health and to protect this nation’s food supply.

Animal health headlines over the last few years include foot-and-mouth disease virus (FMDV) in the United Kingdom (UK), West Nile virus spreading across the United States, potential terrorist introductions of a foreign pathogen after 9-11, avian influenza in the east, bovine tuberculosis (TB) in wildlife and new TB outbreaks in domestic herds, chronic wasting disease (CWD) in wild deer and elk found in more states, exotic Newcastle disease (END) in the west and a separate END strain in Texas, and most recently a positive bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) cow in Alberta, Canada, monkey pox in the midwest, a disease of great concern.

This long list of mentioned animal disease events coupled with routine laboratory diagnostic responsibilities in recent years have stretched the capabilities of our outdated and severely inefficient laboratory facilities. Our surveillance and diagnostic capabilities are stretched, not yet broken, but one accidental or intentional introduction of a pathogen away from a laboratory disaster, and a crippling ripple effect throughout the nation’s economy. Veterinary diagnostic laboratories, both federal and state, must share the responsibilities of laboratory infrastructure, personnel and the cost of surveillance and diagnosis. Eventually Congress must properly fund and sustain these laboratory facilities, which are the first, middle and last line of defense insuring the safety of our nation’s food supply and the continued protection of public health from zoonotic disease.

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USAHA has taken the lead in the nation since the middle 90’s to rally industry support for the modernization of the federal reference laboratories in Ames. USAHA will provide a forum for these ideas at our annual meeting in San Diego.

As the funding process has evolved since 1999 for the modernization of the Ames facilities, so has USAHA’s concern and support for the Plum Island federal facilities in New York and the NAHLN, which is desperately needed to provide animal surveillance and veterinary laboratory diagnosis throughout the country. USAHA is currently working on a special edition newsletter to update our membership on Plum Island. This newsletter is scheduled for release this fall at the annual meeting.

In early April, USAHA responded to a request from Congress regarding support for supplemental funding for the modernization of the Ames facilities. The following statement was provided to Congress:

“The agriculture community has known for some time that the U.S. is under extreme risk from foreign animal disease and agricultural bio-terrorism. It was established in 1991, for example, that the former Soviet Union weaponized foot-and-mouth disease virus (FMDV), anthrax, African swine fever, and a wide variety of other ‘high economic impact’ agricultural pathogens at factories in Prokrov, Vladimir, Obelinsk, and about a dozen more bio-weapons sites in Russia. We have proof positive as

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Modernization of Federal Labs Critical

The need has never been more important than now...

supply of this nation from intentionally introduced pathogens.

“The need has never been more important than now to have a highly effective and rapid national prevention and response capability. Early in a disease outbreak it is impossible to know if the outbreak is due to bio-terrorism, a foreign animal disease incursion, or the resurgence of an eradicated domestic disease. It is also usually impossible to know if the disease is transmissible from animals to man. Answers to these questions can only come from investigation that depends on high-level technical expertise, safe and modern “bio-containment” facilities, and specialized equipment.

“The USDA-ARS/APHIS Ames Animal Health facilities are the largest high-containment animal disease research and diagnostic facilities in the U.S. They provide the essential tools and techniques for the diagnosis, prevention and control of animal diseases. The current facilities are at the very end of, or past, their useful life span and are considerably worse than those of other developed countries. These facilities in their current state cannot handle laboratory capacity that is needed daily for analysis of brucellosis, tuberculosis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), chronic wasting disease (CWD), West Nile virus, low-path avian influenza (AI) and exotic Newcastle disease (END). The laboratory response capability for diseases such as FMDV, anthrax, renderpest, classical or African swine fever, or any other introduced foreign disease would be measured in hours before the laboratory capacity of this entire nation would be overwhelmed.

“Because of this facility deterioration, Congress provided funding in FY02 for the planning and design of a new facility in Ames, and for the urgent construction of a high-containment large animal experiment building. In FY03, $33M was provided from the omnibus bill to add to these facilities, and $98M is now being considered in the Defense supplemental bill for the construction of laboratories.

“The immediate threats if these facilities are not built include:

(1) Elevated potential for the escape of dangerous disease agents from existing facilities.
(2) Elevated risk of physical security breeches.
(3) Inadequate laboratory and clinical facilities to develop technologies essential to a bio-defense against some of the world’s most destructive diseases.

(4) A dangerous lapse in the capacity of the U.S. to protect the nation from an agricultural bio-weapons attack and the inability to act as the reference laboratory for the newly created Nation Animal Health Laboratory Network.

(5) Failure to meet international food quality standards for diagnosis and testing essential to American participation in the global marketplace.”

These efforts helped secure an additional $110 million for the Ames modernization project. This additional appropriation was included in the $79 billion FY2003 Wartime Supplemental Appropriation. The Wartime Supplemental Appropriation was initially loaded with non-military items. All but five of the non-military appropriations were rejected by the Congress. The $110M for Ames survived due to the laboratory’s importance with regards to food supply and agriculture biosecurity and a lot of hard work by USAHA members.

USAHA appreciates the Senate and House appropriations leaders commitment in helping to secure this additional $110 million. However, it is obvious that because of escalating costs, the original estimate of $430 million will not be enough to complete the entire Ames modernization project. During FY 2003, $33 million was secured in the Omnibus Bill plus the $110 million in the defense supplemental appropriations. This additional $143 million will allow USDA to continue construction.

We must secure full and final funding for the completion of this vital animal and public health project in the FY 2004 appropriations process.
The good news is that the incidence of disease has dropped dramatically and the exotic Newcastle disease (END) task force has started the process of releasing individual properties from quarantine and closing some of its satellite offices.

While we believe that END is on its way out, nothing is being taken for granted. The infectious nature and hardiness of this disease is in the forefront of our minds and we do not want to risk a reintroduction of the disease. Releasing a backyard property from quarantine requires that the premises test negative for the disease and show no presence of the disease within a one-kilometer radius. Approximately 15,000 backyard premises remain under quarantine.

Surveillance activities within the quarantine zone in Southern California are being pursued in each county to confirm that the disease is no longer present, with the goal of releasing each county from the state and federal quarantines. While it is not known exactly when the quarantines will be lifted, it is likely that some counties will be released over the next few months. In addition, avian health surveys are underway in 22 non-END infected counties in central and northern California, which also allows for voluntary testing.

The disease has not been found in commercial facilities since March 2003. A total of 22 commercial poultry operations are under quarantine, but they will soon be free to repopulate under compliance agreements. Commercial premises will be evaluated on an individual basis and will be required to agree to some monitoring requirements such as testing their flocks regularly for END.

Other essential components on the eradication program require close coordination with local law enforcement, landfill operations, daily communication with local government agencies in nine counties, the development of a broad public education program in at least two languages, paid advertisement, fielding an average of 70 news media calls per week, providing bi-weekly updates to approximately 65 media outlets in California, fielding approximately 450 calls per week from the public through a phone bank and coordinating community meetings and other outreach activities to increase awareness about the disease and biosecurity and the task force’s efforts to eradicate it.

At its peak, the task force employed nearly 2,000 staff, which were recruited from approximately ten state and federal agencies. Today, the task force is operated with just under 1,000 staff. The eradication program is co-led by a joint task force of the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture. Since the first discovery in a chicken flock in southern California last October, eight counties (and part of a ninth county) were quarantined, the exhibition and sale of poultry in California has been banned, 3.5 million birds were euthanized on 2,431 premises and 22 commercial poultry facilities were quarantined. Eradication efforts have cost taxpayers $160 million to date and resulted in international trade restrictions.

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Meeting Reports

Government Relations Committee Meets

Richard D. Willer, Chairman

The Government Relations Committee (GRC), a standing committee of USAHA, met with members of the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) Board of Directors in early February. The GRC meets annually in Washington, DC, usually in late winter, to discuss issues with federal agencies and industry representatives. In addition to all of the USAHA elected officers, others in attendance included Past President Mack Lea, Secretary J. Lee Alley, the presidents from each of the four regional districts, Wilbur Amand representing the District-at-Large, and the elected officers of the AAVLD.

Chair Rick Willer coordinated the two-day meeting with AAVLD President Terry McElwain. Discussions were held with Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Agriculture Research Service (ARS), Cooperative State Research, Extension and Education Service (CSREES), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and many of the Washington, DC representatives of national animal industry organizations. The issues discussed revolved around three main themes: emergency preparedness, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), including the ARS/APHIS Master Plan for the laboratories at Ames and Plum Island.

The 1999 estimated cost of the Master Plan, which provides for the consolidation and modernization of the APHIS facilities of National Veterinary Laboratory Network (NAHLN), including the ARS/APHIS Master Plan for the laboratories at Ames and Plum Island.

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The Western States Livestock Health Association and Western District of USAHA met March 5-6, 2003, in Sparks, Nevada.

As the current President of both organizations, Dr. Kathleen Connell, Washington State Assistant State Veterinarian, called the meeting to order. The following were represented—Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Texas, Wyoming, Nebraska, Washington, USDA APHIS VS, USAHA, California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System and the Rocky Mountain Llama Association.

Former Nevada State Veterinarian Dr. Jack Armstrong gave a presentation on the history of WSLHA. Mr. Bob Frost, USAHA President, will have the WSLHA history read into the record at the fall USAHA meeting.

Dr. David Thain, Nevada State Veterinarian, entertained the group, at the expense of Dr. Andrew Clark, the Oregon State Veterinarian, by showing a filmed news report on how not to dispose of a whale carcass on an Oregon beach. Several copies of this video were given as door prizes.

Dr. Steve Scott, APHIS-VS Western Region Associate Director, reported on the Ft. Collins Regional Office and the impact of exotic Newcastle disease (END). There is no report available yet of expenses for this eradication effort.

Dr. Jim Logan, Wyoming State Veterinarian, Dr. Bob Hillman, Idaho State Veterinarian, and Dr. Arnold Gertonson, Montana State Veterinarian, reported on ranch management strategies to avoid brucellosis on elk.

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The 2003 annual meeting of the Southern Animal Health Association (SAHA) was held May 5-7 in Asheville, North Carolina, and by all accounts was considered a complete success. Over 90 registrants traveled to the beautiful mountains of North Carolina for three days of informative presentations, discussion, and diverse social activities highlighting the region.

Special guests included USAHA Executive Committee officers, Mr. Bob Frost (President), Dr. Don Lein (President-Elect), Dr. Rick Willer (First Vice-President), Dr. Lee Myers (Third Vice President), Dr. J. Lee Alley (Secretary), Dr. Jones Bryan (Treasurer), and Dr. Mack Lea (2002 Past President). The members welcomed Dr. Bob Hillman (Texas) and Dr. Don Butts (Virginia) to their new positions and look forward to their future contributions to the organization’s activities. Dr. Ron DeHaven (Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-VS) and Dr. Randall Levings (Director, NVSL) represented a strong USDA-APHIS contingent present.

On Monday, May 5, the meeting was kicked off with a welcome and opening comments from North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Meg Scott Phipps. Dr. DeHaven gave a comprehensive overview of all USDA-APHIS-VS activities and initiatives. Dr. DeHaven’s presence was greatly appreciated as his schedule has been quite busy recently. The remainder of the morning was spent addressing emergency preparedness issues – from developing infrastructure and capability to assessing threats to the agricultural community, using FMD and END as models. Dr. Tom McGinn (NC Assistant State Veterinarian) and Col. John Hoffman (NCDA&CS Director of Threats and Mitigation) presented material that was both topical and thought provoking for future direction. Dr. Bill Hewatt (Director of Veterinary Services, Tyson Foods) briefed everyone on the challenges in dealing with the END outbreak in Mexico in Calendar Year 2000.

Monday evening presented the group with an opportunity to tour the historical Biltmore Estates, the largest private home in the country, built by George Vanderbilt in 1895. The visit included a tour of the farming operations on the 8,000-acre site, a visit to the winery complete with tasting, self-guided access to the 250 room mansion, and a wonderful meal at one of the facility’s four fine restaurants. A great time was had by all.

Tuesday’s agenda focused entirely on the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). Dr. Randall Levings moderated a very informative session, updating the group and answering questions on the mission, accomplishments to date, and future initiatives and goals. Directors or representatives from four of the five pilot NAHLN laboratories in the southern district provided updates on their individual laboratories’ progress in the project, to include Georgia (Dr. Doris Miller-Liebl), North Carolina (Dr. Gene Erickson), Florida (Dr. John Crews), and Louisiana (Dr. Alma Roy). It was generally perceived that the member states had a much greater understanding of the future of the project after the session, and their feedback and input

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The NEUSAHA completed a successful annual meeting hosted by New Hampshire State Veterinarian Dr. Clifford McGinnis in Concord, NH, April 28-30. Altogether there were nearly 100 registrants in attendance. Attendees enjoyed two evenings of entertainment including a dinner buffet and show at the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium and a picnic and live Blue Grass Band at the Beech Hill Farm Stand and Ice Cream Barn.

The first day’s agenda included split sessions between rabies, the Regional Dairy Quality Management Alliance and Johne’s disease. The rabies session focused on both the national and international control plans. A resolution was passed that called for USDA to continue and increase appropriated funding to support state-approved Wildlife Rabies Vaccination Programs and for completion of the National Rabies Control Program and that the National Rabies Control Plan include the advancement of an International Rabies Control Plan. It was also resolved as part of the same resolution that USDA seek procurement of new funding for continued research in program cost-effectiveness and rabies control techniques in other rabies vector species. A second resolution asked the Secretary of Agriculture to seek new funding to support the study of wildlife-disease interactions and dynamics through cooperative programs coordinated between USDA-Wildlife Services and Veterinary Services.

The Regional Dairy Quality Management Alliance continued its efforts to establish uniform standards for state cattle health and quality assurance programs focusing on issues of beef quality, animal welfare and core module development. The Johne’s session focused on use of fecal pooling strategies for herd screening and federal funding for states programs.

The second day’s agenda included topics on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies including scrapie, chronic wasting disease and BSE, and updates on West Nile virus, Animal Disease Emergency Management and National Livestock Identification. An update on low-path AI, which continues to be a vexing problem in the Northeast, resulted in an active discussion surrounding low-path AI policy and the need for a national program such as that being proposed by the USAHA Transmissible Diseases of Poultry Committee. As a result, two

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Services Laboratories (NVSL) and Center for Veterinary Biologics and the National Animal Disease Center (NADC) facility of ARS, was $379 million. While the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requested $306 M in their '03 budget, neither the '03 or the '04 President’s budget contained any funding for the Master Plan.

At the time of the GRC meeting, Congress had not passed the USDA '03 budget. ARS and APHIS administrators reported to the group that in spite of nothing being requested by the President in these two budgets, the funding to date was “ahead of schedule.” The '03 agency omnibus bill, when finally passed (after the GRC meeting), had an added $33 million for the Master Plan. The '03 Dept. of Defense supplemental appropriation added another $110 million, thanks in large part to President Frost’s short-notice efforts. As it stands today, funding is still short and the final cost increases with each day’s delay. Available funding has provided for the design and planning, and will allow for the relocation of the “strip mall” labs by November 1, 2003, and the start of the construction of the BL3 building. The transfer of the ARS and APHIS facilities on Plum Island to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) general

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feeding ground areas of Wyoming. The intent of the “Tri-State Efforts to Prevent Brucellosis in Cattle from Bison and Elk” is to ensure cattle from the three states are not infected with brucellosis. The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, USDA-APHIS and the Greater Yellowstone Brucellosis Committee are all involved.

Officials are considering opening up bison migration routes, which would give the bison access to Colorado and Utah. Population management is also being looked at, although this is not a popular response to the problem. An April 2003 meeting in Jackson, Wyoming, will serve to develop a plan to eliminate brucellosis in the Greater Yellowstone area.

Dr. Armstrong shared a story about his dad, his dad’s friend, Charlie, and a buffalo hunt. Mr. Armstrong had a contract to feed 30 bison on a bison ranch. After “a few drinks” one day, the two men went to the ranch and asked permission to hunt a bull bison. Permission was given and off they went on their horses with bows and arrows, the arrows held in their teeth. When Charlie pulled the arrow from his mouth to fire at the bull, his false teeth came with it and went flying. Subsequently, Jack’s dad and now toothless Charlie had to hunt through several feet of snow to find the missing teeth. That was their last attempt at buffalo hunting.

Dr. Connell, Dr. Willer, Mr. Frost, Dr. Don Lein, Professor Emeritus at Cornell University, and Dr. Alex Ardans, Director of the California

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SAHA 2003 Meeting
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would be used to chart future actions.

Tuesday evening’s entertainment consisted of a beautiful bus ride through the Blue Ridge Mountains to a steak dinner hosted by the Haywood County Cattlemen’s Association, complete with local bluegrass music, fare that included smoked trout and trout caviar, and “air guitar” entertainment by Dr. Willer. We’re thankful that Rick is so competent in his day job, as he would have a hard time making it in the music business.

Wednesday’s session included addresses from Mr. Bob Frost and Dr. Rick Willer on USAHA directives and initiatives, including a report on the Governmental Relations Committee’s trip to Washington, DC, in February. Dr. Don Lein provided a USAHA annual meeting agenda update, and APHIS-VS Eastern Regional Director Dr. Bill Buisch provided his perspective on issues of importance. The attendees also heard from Mr. Tim O’Neill (USDA, APHIS-VS Program Analyst) and Ms. Amelita Facchiano (GlobalVetLink) as to progress made and future strategies toward the implementation of the Interstate Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI), a joint project between USDA-APHIS-VS and GlobalVetLink.

After an update on the elk reintroduction project in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park by Wildlife Biologist Kim Delozier, Dr. Ron Wilson (TN) moderated a discussion on development of an encompassing southern regional Equine Passport document. Ron presented summary information from a survey of all SAHA member states, solicited input, and will proceed with the development of a draft document to be forwarded to members for review prior to the SAHA breakfast in San Diego.

Dr. Lee Myers (GA) led a discussion on Tropical Soda Apple (TSA), and presented the most recent draft of the “Southern Region MOU to Control TSA.” The membership approved a Resolution, modeled after a similar one from the Southern Plant Board, to be forwarded to the USDA and NASDA, as well as the USAHA for referral to the appropriate committee at the national meeting.

After presentation of the financial report by Dr. Marshall, the Nominations Committee, chaired by Dr. Jones Bryan, presented the following slate of officers for consideration:

2004 President:
Dr. Ron Wilson, Tennessee
2004 Vice President:
Dr. Maxwell Lea, Louisiana
Secretary/Treasurer:
Dr. David Marshall, North Carolina
Industry Representatives to the USAHA Board of Directors:
Dr. Bob Good (Arkansas) and Mr. Wayne Godwin (Florida)

All candidates were seconded and unanimously approved.

New president Ron Wilson thanked the group and invited them to the 2004 annual SAHA meeting, tentatively scheduled to be held in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The 2003 SAHA meeting reaffirmed the strength of the organization and the benefits of regional collaboration between state, federal, university, and industry partnerships.

Update on END
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END was also found in backyard flocks in Texas, Nevada and Arizona. Nevada had a total of 138 infected premises, Arizona had 4 infected premises and Texas had 40. END has been eradicated in Nevada and Arizona and their quarantines have been lifted. Texas is expected to be released from its quarantine soon.

WSLHA Meeting
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Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System, gave a report on the USAHA Government Relations Committee meeting held in Washington, DC, in February.

During the February meeting, AA VLD and USAHA officers and representatives met with FDA, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA-APHIS and national livestock industry representatives. Discussions focused on Plum Island, END, emergency management and homeland security. Concern was expressed about the shift of agencies into the Department of Homeland Security, with the potential for more emphasis on bioterrorism and less on foreign and emerging animal diseases.

Dr. Richard Breitmeyer, California State Veterinarian, Dr. Paul Ugstad, California/Nevada AVIC, Dr. Thain and Dr. Willer gave END updates. Mr. Mike Dondero, Incident Commander 2nd team, Las Vegas, Nevada, gave a presentation on the incident command system and how to avoid problems when dealing with local government entities. The first day’s session concluded with Dr. Randall Levings, Director, NVSL, who spoke on rapid diagnosis of END via molecular diagnostics.

The second day’s session started with an overview of TB in California, New Mexico, Michigan and Texas. Dr. Bob Meyer, APHIS-VS Western Region TB Epidemiologist, discussed TB cases found at slaughter and possible changes in the TB status of California and New Mexico. Dr. Meyer also gave a brief update on infected dairy herds in California, New Mexico and Michigan. Michigan
Two parasites, Theileria equi and B. caballi, cause piroplasmosis, but, at present, only horses infected with B. caballi can be successfully treated. B. caballi is sometimes impossible to clear from a horse, and the treatment, which is fairly toxic, can be damaging to the horse, Dr. Isaac said.

The United States is considered free of the disease because there is no evidence of tick transmission of the disease, and there have been no clinical cases of the disease in the country. The USDA, however, can’t rely on this.

“In some areas, like southern Texas and southern Florida, local populations of native ticks have the potential, experimentally in the laboratory, to transmit the disease agent,” Dr. Isaac said. “But there is no evidence that these ticks are infected and transmit the disease.”

**Vets Told to be Vigilant**

With the United States on heightened alert for terrorist attacks, veterinarians have been asked to increase surveillance for foreign animal disease. Veterinarians need to be particularly aware of any indication that could signal the existence of a highly contagious disease or any other unusual or unexplained adverse animal health event.

Veterinarians can turn to several sources for helpful information. The Department of Agriculture’s Veterinary Services has issued a communications plan for animal-specific threats, which can be read at [www.avma.org/press/biosecurity/usda.vs.commubcations](http://www.avma.org/press/biosecurity/usda.vs.commubcations). The USDA has also prepared information outlining steps that can be taken to prevent or respond to a food supply threat, at [www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity/homeland.html](http://www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity/homeland.html).

The Emergency Operations Center of the Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has a lending library of foreign animal disease reference materials; call (800) 601-9327.

In May, the Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service started requiring horses imported into the United States from other countries to undergo a new test for piroplasmosis—the CELISA. The USDA is requiring the new test because it has a greater likelihood of detecting the disease agent than the old test.

“The new test is more sensitive and more specific,” said Dr. Freeda Isaac, a USDA-APHIS-VS staff veterinarian who spoke about the CELISA at the recent Animal Transportation Association conference in Washington, D.C. She went on to explain that the CELISA should reduce the risk of not detecting false-positive horses and provide greater confidence in detecting the true disease status of horses being imported into the country. Before the CELISA test, veterinarians performed a complement fixation test to determine a horse’s piroplasmosis status. According to the Office International des Epizooties, equine piroplasmosis is endemic in South and Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern and Southern Europe. The United States is currently deemed free of clinical disease, but remains at risk of introduction from international animal trading and equestrian sports, where infected and noninfected animals mingle. While the disease doesn’t usually cause severe health problems in animals that are routinely exposed to it, some infected American horses can become very ill or die. Signs can include fever, anemia, jaundiced mucous membranes, swollen abdomens, constipations, colic, and labored breathing.

**USDA Requires New Test for Tickborne Horse Disease**

The United States is currently deemed free of clinical disease, but remains at risk of introduction from international animal trading and equestrian sports, where infected and noninfected animals mingle. While the disease doesn’t usually cause severe health problems in animals that are routinely exposed to it, some infected American horses can become very ill or die. Signs can include fever, anemia, jaundiced mucous membranes, swollen abdomens, constipations, colic, and labored breathing.

**WSLHA Meeting**

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other potential emerging diseases, is to have a national plan in place to identify livestock. Recognition of this need is being demonstrated through the united effort of several segments of the livestock industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state animal health officials.

In 2002, the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) coordinated the actions of the National Food Animal Identification Task Force, a united effort of industry and government, which subsequently developed a National Identification Work Plan (NIWP).

The NIWP was accepted by USAHA at the 2002 annual meeting with a resolution calling for USDA to establish an Identification Development Team that would use this plan as a guide to develop a national animal identification program and system that will enhance animal disease monitoring, surveillance, control and eradication in the United States.

APHIS established a National Identification Development Team composed of a steering committee and five subcommittees totaling nearly 100 members and representing over 70 industry stakeholder organizations. The subcommittees are subject oriented covering the issues of communication, transition, standards, information technology, and governance. The goal is to honor the USAHA resolution and develop a plan for a national system using the NIWP as a guide, and to present that plan at the 2003 USAHA meeting, after review by industry and other groups.

Development of the plan is now on a steady course, and the entire National Identification Development Team is meeting July 1-2 to further accelerate the process. Timelines and action items are being reviewed in light of the increased awareness and sense of urgency to see if the process can be accelerated without sacrificing quality. The objective is to ensure the United States develops an efficient and cost effective animal identification system that ultimately allows for traceability for disease purposes within a 48 hour time frame and supports the financial viability of animal agriculture.

It is the intent of the Animal Identification Development Team to make this process as transparent as possible. A website is under development where all the activities of the steering committee and subcommittees will be able to be viewed. Visitors to the website will have the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions, so that even though individuals may not be on one of the subcommittees, they may provide valuable input.

Successful implementation of a national animal identification system will require a mutual understanding and reconciliation of public and private goals and objectives. Maintaining the health of the U.S. herd is the most urgent issue for both industry and animal health officials. Working together to develop a viable animal identification system that has components that will both benefit the producer as well as allow for traceability of animals in case of a disease outbreak will go a long way towards ensuring that the health of the U.S. herd is maintained.

### Animal Identification: Where are we heading?

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their basic framework effort complete by July of 2003 and out for review with the intention of finalizing the plan for presentation to USAHA by October of 2003.

**Key Concepts**

There is broad agreement from beef producers, and solid scientific evidence that there needs to be some level and frequency of mandatory animal identification to protect and improve the health of the U.S. cattle herd, and as a result, ensure our global competitiveness. In some instances, this may require only animals entering interstate commerce that will become part of the breeding herd may need to be identified. In other cases, states may institute a mandatory animal identification system to aid in specific disease eradication efforts intrastate.

The development of a standardized system with federal and state support for the infrastructure and producer cooperation is important to our efforts to control and eradicate animal diseases.

APHIS has the legislative authority to require animal identification for specific disease control and eradication purposes for animals entering interstate commerce. APHIS does not have the authority to regulate the intrastate movement or identification of animals. However, such authority resides with the states and their animal health infrastructure. In some states, brands are a required “premises” identification system that aids in animal disease and ownership issues.

Disease control and eradication in the United States has and will remain a process focused on a partnership between the federal, state and local governments and producers. In this regard, NCBA has worked closely with APHIS and USAHA to move forward on a national animal identification system plan.

NCBA will continue to monitor the development of this national plan and keep beef producers, and animal health professionals aware of the progress the group is making. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our positions, please contact Gary Weber by calling (202) 347-0228 or by sending an e-mail to gweber@beef.org.
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Peter Fernandez, Ron DeHaven

erated considerable discussion. At the time of the GRC meeting, the facility was slated to be transferred to the Department of Homeland Security Division of Science and Technology on June 1. The original “plan” for Plum Island was that ARS and APHIS would be “tenants” on DHS property. While the outcome is still up in the air, it was revealed during the meeting that one-half of the ARS program money for Plum Island would be moved to DHS, in part to force dialogue between USDA and DHS. At the time of the GRC meeting, an interagency agreement was being developed to outline how USDA and DHS would cooperate in the oversight of activities on Plum Island.

In multiple venues, the group discussed the state of this nation’s emergency preparedness. This was an important component of the Safeguarding Review of APHIS accounting for 48 out of 152 of the final recommendations. APHIS discussed their transition to using the incident command system for an animal health emergency response, first used in modified format in the low-path avian influenza (AI) outbreak in Virginia in 2001. They are also using other agencies within USDA, including the U.S. Forest Service, to assist with the exotic Newcastle disease (END) response in California. The Associate Deputy Administrator, Emergency Programs, had been recently named and was due to start work soon. In addition, the Emergency Management Operations Center (EMOC) was scheduled for opening on March 1, 2003. Finally, while it looked like there would not be another sizeable amount of money available to states to improve their surveillance and emergency response capability, some money may become available directly through USDA funding for Emergency Programs.

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network is a critical issue for USAHA and AAVLD. Initial funding in ’02 for the network was $15 million from the Department of Defense supplemental bill. It was used for the “start-up” of 12 pilot laboratories. Money was to be used for renovation including upgrading lab facilities “toward” BL 3 capability, training in foreign animal diseases diagnostics, purchase of equipment for rapid testing, development of communications systems including databases, and for personnel.

APHIS and ARS discussed a steering committee established for the laboratory network. The Committee is charged with developing polices and procedures for the network, concentrating on eight OIE list A diseases. Until a full-time coordinator for the steering committee could be named, Dave Kinker would serve as the interim coordinator. The steering committee is composed of representatives from APHIS, CSREES, AAVLD, pilot labs, other non-pilot labs, state veterinarians, Center for Disease Control (CDC), and state public health laboratory directors. In addition, an information technology subcommittee was formed to address integration of communications to and from the Network labs. The network will integrate with the Laboratory Reporting Network of CDC and possibly with eLexNet, the Food Safety Network of FDA and Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS).

APHIS stated during the GRC

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OIE Meeting
Donald H. Lein
President-Elect

The 71st meeting of the General Session of the OIE had over 500 participants representing 140 of the 164 countries or territories that are members, 4 non-member observer countries and 25 regional and international organizations. Organizations included the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Equestrian Federation (FEI), the World Veterinary Congress (WVC), and several others. In many ways the membership reminds me of the USAHA.

Excellent leadership and diplomacy was demonstrated by the Director General, Dr. B. Vallat; the President, Dr. R. Maribelli (Italy); Dr. Alex Thiermann (USA), President of the International Animal Health Code Commission; and the OIE staff in running the session. Consensus was reached on several important issues and a course for several future issues to meet the world animal health and trading issues. New issues include animal welfare, antimicrobial concerns, zoonotic diseases, and food safety as well as animal diseases and regionalization. A particularly important announcement was delivered to the General Session by Dr. Brian Evan, Chief Veterinary Officer of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, about the first Canadian cow with confirmed BSE.

The U.S. Delegation attending the meeting consisted of Dr. Peter Fernandez, Associate Administrator of USDA/APHIS and the official delegate of the OIE; Dr. Ron DeHaven, Deputy Administrator, APHIS Veterinary Services; Dr. Alex Thiermann, Coordinator of International Organization Activities, APHIS International Services; and Dr. Michael David, Director, Sanitary International Standards Team, V.S. Dr. Terry McElwain, President, American

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meeting that it intends for network labs not only to provide “surge capacity” in the event of a foreign animal disease outbreak, but also to improve the national surveillance ability. Transfer of rapid test technology from ARS to network labs hinges on validation. To expedite this process, Barb Martin has been detailed to focus on field validation involving labs in the network. A Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for classical swine fever (CSF) should be released to network labs by the end of 2003 and for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) by mid 2004. Although there is no current funding for expansion of the network, the plan is to expand to other AAVLD animal diagnostic labs and other selected non-accredited labs when funding is available.

The working relationship between APHIS and ARS continues to solidify. The two agencies met in late ’02 to set research priorities to meet APHIS’ needs. Regular meetings are planned and likely will coincide with the USDA budget cycle. Currently, APHIS is working on a direct connection between ARS researcher to APHIS staff program person in order to expedite the interaction.

ARS is focusing on Taq Man PCR technology for research on rapid testing for FAD’s. They received a $18.3 million special appropriation for real-time PCR development for both plant and animal testing. Of that amount, $6 million is earmarked for animal testing research focusing on AI, CSF, FMD, and END. APHIS/ARS are trying to lead the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE) in developing validation standards.

As you know, HR 5005 provided for the formation of the Department of Homeland Security within 60 days of the bill’s passage. It consolidated 22 agencies with 170,000 employees. The agency is divided into four functional divisions: Borders and Transportation Security (including Plant Protection Quarantine (PPQ)), Emergency Preparation and Response (including Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA)), Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, and Science and Technology, the division that includes Plum Island.

Bill Lyerly from the Office of Homeland Security met with the GRC to discuss the new Department. He stated that DHS was very interested in agriculture-related research and in fact has formed a Bio-defense Research Coordinating Committee. DHS would reimburse USDA for these types of projects. According to Lyerly, there were no major changes planned for the operation of Plum Island during the first year. It became evident that relocation of the “mission” of Plum Island to the mainland may have to be considered.

The GRC met during a snowstorm with the CSREES in spite of having a skeleton staff that day. CSREES works through land grant universities to enable

BSE Update

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surveillance program tested 19,990 cattle during fiscal year 2002 with negative results. The United States has established science-based firewall to protect the United States from this disease. These protective measures include restricting the importation of ruminants such as cattle, sheep and goats, and ruminant products from countries that have or are considered to be a risk for BSE, prohibit the feeding of rendered mammal products to cattle and other ruminants, and has an active surveillance program.

On Tuesday, June 3, 2003, Canada reported to USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection service (APHIS) that five bulls from one of the potential source herds were sold to a Montana producer. Montana’s investigation reveals that these bulls were slaughtered. USDA believes it is unlikely that any of the bulls were a BSE risk. The bulls were slaughtered after the feed ban, ensuring that these animals

Monkey Pox

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throughout the federal bureaucracy. USDA-APHIS controls livestock imports, the Fish and Wildlife Service checks for threatened and endangered species while the CDC is concerned about possible human diseases. However, no entity is currently responsible for checking all imports of animals for diseases as they come into the United States. Additionally, several diseases that are local in other parts of the world are not of concern to most port inspectors and agencies checking the import of exotic pets, due to already overburdened staff. Consequently, from time to time, we have a foreign disease such a monkey pox show up in North America and citizens get sick and may even be in danger of a life-threatening disease.

The USAHA, in concert with sister organizations like the Wildlife Disease Association and the Wildlife Society, should take the lead in reviewing import restrictions and recommending actions that will address loopholes in the law, the unnecessary exposure of native animals to exotic diseases and the enforcement of laws already on the books. We also need to work towards adequate staff at all points of entry into the United States to ensure that proper inspections and quarantines are carried out.

How many people have to get sick or die before action is taken? ■
Names in the News

Welcome new State Veterinarians

Dr. Bob Gerlach - Alaska
Dr. Paul Norris - Arkansas
Dr. Clarence Siroky - Idaho
Dr. Phyllis Cassano - Maryland
Dr. Bradly LeaMaster - Oregon
Dr. Bob Hillman - Texas
Dr. Joe Starcher - West Virginia
Dr. Don Butts, Virginia

...as we say goodbye to old friends who have passed away.

Dr. Donald R. Bridgewater – Northglenn, CO – Retired USDA, APHIS, VS – July 29, 2002
Dr. John F. Quinn – Portland, MI – October 12, 2002 – Former State Veterinarian and President of USAHA in 1968
Dr. Michael T. Staton, Sr. – Cheyenne, WY – USDA, APHIS, VS – November 19, 2002
Dr. Gaylord E. McKissick – Bridgewater, NJ – Consultant – December 15, 2002
Dr. Arnold C. Taft – Bowie, MD – USDA, APHIS, VS – December 30, 2002
Dr. Morris S. Cover – Chestertown, MD – January 28, 2003 – Life Member and Former Chair of the Committee on Feed Safety
Mr. John B. Armstrong – San Antonio, TX – February 20, 2003 – Life Member and Former Chair of the Committee on Brucellosis

Government Relations Committee Report

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research and education. They oversaw the $15 million Department of Defense funds for establishing the NAHLN. Of the $16 million authorized for the CSREES “Homeland Security Program,” only $8 million was earmarked for maintaining existing network labs (both plant and animal) and $3.5 million for animal-related research. This compares to $117 million for bio-terrorism research related to food safety. CSREES confirmed the desire to expand beyond the 12 pilot animal diagnostic labs and the possibility that the network labs might provide back-up for human health and food security emergencies.

The GRC had a working lunch with a number of Washington representatives of animal industry organizations. The “Animal Agriculture Coalition” represents 16 major commodity groups plus a number of other industry-related organizations. They, too, were concerned about the state of this nation’s emergency preparedness, emphasized the need for a national identification program, and were very supportive of the progress that had been made with the NAHLN.

In summary, the GRC and AAVLD participants actively engaged our federal stakeholders this past February in discussions that are of great concern to each of us as USAHA members. While resolution of the issues remains elusive, at a minimum the meeting reinforced the commitment that USAHA, a dues-based voluntary organization, has in addressing the tough issues head on for the benefit of this nation’s animal industries. My sincere thanks go to AAVLD President Dr. Terry McElwain for his assistance in ensuring a successful meeting and to the AAVLD board for their active participation.

OIE Meeting

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Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD); Dr. Lyle Vogel, Director of Scientific Activities, American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA); and myself, Don Lein, President-elect, USAHA, were invited guests and part of the U.S. Delegation to act as observers and represent the U.S. livestock industry.

Mr. William Hawks, Under Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, USDA, was a special invited guest and delivered a speech at the opening ceremonies of the General Session stressing the importance of “working together” to accomplish the world animal health controls and enhance world trade of livestock and their products.

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