RESOLUTION NUMBER: 1     APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:    Aquatic Animal Diagnostic Working Group

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The movement of aquatic animals is mired with varied and complex regulations. In the United States (US) the majority of states use the inspection and diagnostic guidance established in American Fisheries Society Fish Health Section’s “Suggested Procedures for the detection and identification of certain finfish and shellfish pathogens” (known as the Blue Book) to regulate domestic movement. For international movement, the majority of countries either follow the guidance provided by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) or develop their own import health requirements. This has resulted in American aquaculture producers and exporters having to meet multiple standards and requirements to move their animals as well as having to pay for duplicative and meaningless testing. Currently, both guidance documents, the Blue Book and the OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals, reference outdated or otherwise inadequate sampling and diagnostic procedures.

The US commercial aquaculture industry needs better diagnostic assays and the ability to reduce testing through options like farm-level testing and the ability to pool specimens. Further, laboratories conducting aquatic animal health testing need a core subject matter expert group, which may make recommendations, as well as coordinate positive control material and share information.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) form an aquatic animal health diagnostic working group with domestic subject matter experts in the field of fish, mollusks, and crustaceans. This working group will recommend standards and procedures for new assays to be developed and address issues with existing assays. Further, this group will identify gaps in knowledge and find ways to address these gaps, such as the impact of specimen pooling on assay sensitivity and specificity. This group should work closely with the American Fisheries Society Fish Health Section “Suggested Procedures for the detection and identification of certain finfish and shellfish pathogens” (known as the Blue Book) committees, USDA staff, and other federal and state partners to reduce duplicative, meaningless, and over-burden some testing regulations for aquatic animal movement both domestically and internationally.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 2    APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Commercial Aquaculture Health Program Standards

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Commercial Aquaculture Health Program Standards (CAHPS) were initiated by the National Aquaculture Association and developed with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2014. The standards set forth a model framework for the health of commercially farm raised aquatic animals. CAHPS recognized and built upon current activities and existing guidelines for health of aquatic animals by establishing uniform standards for United States farmed aquatic animal health and movement.

The United States Animal Health Association applauds the efforts of the USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for working with the National Aquaculture Association to develop the CAHPS. We believe that the program must further evolve to benefit all domestic commercial aquaculture, especially with regards to national and international trade. The effectiveness and success of the program requires the cooperation of not only industry but also state and federal entities.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) strongly encourages the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to engage with states to identify how the Commercial Aquaculture Health Program Standards (CAHPS) may be utilized in conjunction with existing health inspections for animal movement. USAHA recommends that USDA-APHIS-VS engage with states having well established aquatic animal health policies, which could become a national model for the acceptance and integration of CAHPS to meet state regulatory requirements for aquatic animal health.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 3    APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Import Health Requirements for Live Aquatic Animals

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

At present, there are only United States (US) federal import health requirements for the importation of live salmonid species and their gametes [United States Fish and Wildlife Service], as well as eight cyprinid species considered susceptible to Spring Viremia of Carp Virus [United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)]. All other live aquatic animals are entering the US with no US federal requirements with regard to animal health. In 2019, USDA responded to the first detection of Tilapia Lake Virus (TiLV), which was linked to infected fingerlings imported from Thailand. These fingerlings entered the US and the destination state legally with no mandatory health requirements, even though the country of origin was known to be positive for TiLV. Further, over the last several years, detections of World Organisation for Animal Health-listed pathogens and other emerging pathogens, such as Red Sea Bream Iridovirus, Infectious Hypodermal and Hematopoietic Necrosis Virus, and Ostreid Herpesvirus, have been linked to imports. The impact of these detections are felt by domestic industry because of animal loss, facility quarantines, export bans, and the need for enhanced surveillance. Import controls would not be intended to ban trade but to ensure that aquatic animals entering the US are healthy and do not pose risks to domestic aquaculture production or natural resources.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) immediately initiate a comprehensive pathways risk analysis for the introduction of World Organisation for Animal Health-listed pathogens from imported live fish, mollusks and crustaceans. Regarding prioritized pathogens, and with support of the domestic industry, USDA-APHIS-VS should implement appropriate import health requirements necessary to mitigate the risk of introduction.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 4, 9, 15, and 16 COMBINED


BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

African and Classical swine fever (ASF and CSF) viruses are infectious diseases of pigs and spread readily in pig populations. Neither ASF or CSF are zoonotic diseases and do not affect people. The different ASF and CSF virus genotypes vary in virulence from highly pathogenic strains that cause near 100% mortality, to low virulence strains believed to cause carrier states that can be difficult to diagnose. Clinical signs of ASF and CSF viruses in infected swine are often indistinguishable from any number of other systemic diseases endemic to United States (US) swine.

The recent emergence and ongoing spread of ASF among wild, non-commercial, and commercial pig populations in a growing number of countries presents a substantial risk to swine health and pork production globally. CSF continues to infect pigs in the Caribbean and Japan, as well as several other countries. In the event of an introduction of ASF or CSF into the US, early detection would be paramount to an effective response and recovery effort. Effective and real-time surveillance strategies that utilize state of the art diagnostic technologies are critical components of Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) preparedness.

In recognition of the above, on June 1, 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented an active ASF Surveillance Program at USDA, National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories that supplemented an already existing CSF surveillance program. This program tests case-compatible diagnostic lab submission for the presence/absence of ASF and CSF via a real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR). This is a tremendous step forward in enhancing ASF and CSF surveillance efforts in US swine. Long-term sustainability and efficiency of this ASF/CSF Surveillance Program and the continuous improvement of all FAD diagnostic capabilities and surveillance efforts at the USDA, NAHLN laboratories is of utmost importance to US pork industry stakeholders.

Pooling tissue samples for real-time PCR testing is a common practice used in group, premises, or herd level diagnostic investigations of swine. Pooling of tissues samples (spleen, lymph node, or tonsil) enhances the cost effectiveness and sustainability of surveillance programs and increases the number of case-compatible submissions that can be tested with the finite amount of funding available.

Some swine facilities do not have a Premises Identification Number (PIN) (e.g., non-commercial or infrequent submitters to veterinary diagnostic laboratories). While the goal
remains for all producers to have a PIN, removing the requirement for a PIN on laboratory accessions would expand the breadth and reach of this surveillance program to be more inclusive of case-compatible veterinary diagnostic laboratory submissions from all swine operations.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to validate and approve the items listed below. Collectively, these efforts aim to enhance the cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and breadth of coverage provided by the African Swine Fever (ASF)/Classical Swine Fever (CSF) Surveillance Program.

The USDA-APHIS ASF/CSF Surveillance Program at USDA, National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories shall:

- Validate methods and implement a provision for using pooled samples for ASF/CSF polymerase chain reaction testing from case-compatible diagnostic case submissions, and

- Revise the premises identification number requirement so as not to exclude cases from the ASF/CSF Surveillance Program, provided traceability of the sample is assured.

Foreign animal disease (FAD) diagnostic capabilities and capacities at USDA-APHIS NAHLN laboratories shall:

- Continue to expand the number of ante-mortem sample types (e.g., oral fluids, processing fluids, swabs, serum) approved for FAD diagnostic testing that are well suited for herd level detection and high-throughput test methods at veterinary diagnostic laboratories, and

- Expand the number of assays, testing methodologies (nucleic acid and antibody detection, and sequencing analysis) and reagent supplier options approved for FAD diagnostic testing conducted at USDA-APHIS NAHLN laboratories.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 5, 17, and 31 Combined  APPROVED AS AMENDED

SUBJECT MATTER: Adequate Funding for National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The 2018 Farm Bill under section 12101 Animal Disease Prevention and Management:

1. Established the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), which allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to enter into cooperative agreements with states, universities, industry, and other entities on projects and research to advance animal health.

2. Established the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB) to maintain sufficient quantities of vaccine and other countermeasures to help to address an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) or other high consequence foreign animal disease.

3. Reauthorized the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) with authorized appropriations of $30 million per year.

Funding for the first four years ($120 million) is provided up front as no-year money. NADPRP (1 above) must receive a minimum of $5 million for the first four years (of the $120 million) and $18 million (of the $30 million) annually, thereafter ($38 million of the total $150 million).

Of the remaining $112 million in 2018 Farm Bill funding not required to be spent on NADPRP, monies may be dedicated to the NAVVCB (2 above) to provide a robust vaccine and countermeasures bank with priority given to FMD response capabilities and to support diagnostic capabilities through the NAHLN.

Response to a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) often includes mass depopulation of animals, but the USDA FAD PReP plan for FMD is contingent on vaccination for all but the smallest, localized outbreak. The United States (US) currently does not have access to enough FMD vaccine to handle more than a very small, localized disease event. Worldwide vaccine production is limited, and there is no surge capacity to produce the millions of doses needed to address a large-scale outbreak in the US. The cumulative impact of an outbreak on the beef and pork sectors over a 10-year period would be more than $128 billion. The annual jobs impact of such reduction in industry revenue is 58,066 in direct employment and 153,876 in total employment. Corn and soybean farmers would lose $44 billion and nearly $25 billion, respectively, making the impact on...
these four industries alone almost $200 billion. A workable FMD vaccine bank can minimize the impact on the US economy and reduce government costs of a catastrophic FMD outbreak in the US.

RESOLUTION:
The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State Animal Health Authorities to support a total of $92 million for the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB), with a minimum of $20 million for each of the first four years and $12 million in the fifth year, of the funding established in the 2018 Farm Bill to provide adequate number of doses of foot-and-mouth disease vaccine and surge capacity. This $92 million for NAVVCB is to include a reasonable stockpile of foreign animal disease testing kits/reagents needed for outbreak response.

Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill prevention funding the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) should not be used to fund current USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) activities with the states nor should it inhibit full appropriation of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratory authorization within USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative and APHIS budgets.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 6    APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: American Veterinary Medical Association Veterinary Responder Certification Program

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Veterinary health care teams are uniquely positioned to be critical resources in animal disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Unfortunately, veterinarians traditionally receive little to no awareness or training in disaster issues during their formal years of schooling. Veterinarians need to receive information on how they, and their health care teams, can be better local, state, and regional resources for animals affected by disasters.

There are several schools/colleges of veterinary medicine that have begun incorporating veterinary disaster training in their curriculum in some manner. Establishing nationally recognized core competencies for this student training will facilitate a credentialing process for graduating veterinarians. This will enable state and local response organizations to strengthen veterinary participation in local disaster planning and response.

A similar process should be developed for training graduate veterinarians who did not receive the core curriculum during their veterinary schooling.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the American Veterinary Medical Association to develop a Veterinary Responder Certification Program in coordination with schools/colleges of veterinary medicine and other veterinary educational providers. The program should certify various levels of competency for veterinary medical emergency/disaster responders, and provide state and local response organizations a baseline for credentialing veterinary responders.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 7 and 36 Combined

APPROVED AS AMENDED

SUBJECT MATTER: Strengthening the United States Animal Disease Traceability and Disease Prevention Infrastructure

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

State Animal Health Officials (SAHO) and livestock industry members work collaboratively with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to protect the health of the nation’s livestock, and a comprehensive animal traceability system is critical to this collective mission. While many domestic components of the United States (US) traceability system are robust and successful, the current regulatory framework and practices applicable to livestock moving through US ports of entry allow animals from foreign countries to move throughout the US without traceability or the knowledge of state and federal animal health authorities. These traceability gaps may negatively impact trade and the health of domestic livestock by hampering state and federal animal health officials’ ability to effectively manage a domestic or foreign animal disease outbreak.

Language in Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations § 93.405, Health Certificate for Ruminants, only requires imported sheep and goats moving through US ports of entry to be accompanied by accurate certificates of veterinary inspection. Other livestock species are exempt from this requirement. Lack of minimum traceability standards for all imported species enables livestock to be diverted once in domestic markets without the knowledge of SAHOs. The lack of enforceable regulatory language has also impeded APHIS’ Investigative and Enforcement Services from being able to take action against persons who knowingly import livestock illegally when cases are referred by SAHOs.

Requiring accurate data on movement documents for imported livestock is critical, but appropriate information sharing between federal officials managing livestock movement through US border ports and SAHOs responsible for overseeing the domestic movement of imported livestock is also imperative to ensure comprehensive animal traceability. SAHOs are not always notified in a timely manner of international livestock movement into their states, and federal animal health officials do not consistently share movement paperwork with state offices. This hampers SAHOs’ ability to meet the expectation of federal partners to properly manage the domestic animal disease traceability program and to trace animals in instances of livestock diversion.

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The United States Animal Health Association appreciates the work that USDA APHIS VS does to protect domestic livestock health and promote a robust animal traceability system. We are optimistic that USDA APHIS VS’ willingness to pursue timely and reasonable regulatory and practice changes at US border ports will further protect domestic livestock from the risks of imported diseases while minimizing regulatory burdens on trade.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to 1) amend the language in Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations to require that every imported livestock animal travel with an official certificate of veterinary inspection containing comprehensive traceability information, including complete individual official animal identification and accurate consignor and consignee physical addresses; and 2) transmit a copy of the certificate of veterinary inspection to the state animal health official of the animal’s destination state within twenty-four hours of the import.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 8  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Inclusion of Biosafety Level 3 Necropsy Space in the Process for National Animal Health Laboratory Network Laboratory Participation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) supports United States animal agriculture by developing and increasing the capabilities and capacities of a national veterinary diagnostic laboratory network for early detection, rapid response, and appropriate recovery from high-consequence animal diseases.

Beginning in 2016, all laboratories in the NAHLN were transitioned to a new structure with the designations of Levels 1, 2, 3, Affiliate, or Specialty laboratories, as described in the “NAHLN Concept Paper” See (https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahln/downloads/NAHLN_structure_concept_paper.pdf)

The NAHLN Concept Paper describes critical needs and capacities for the various laboratory levels. For example, some Level 1 laboratory responsibilities are:

- Maintain capacity to provide surge testing for disease agents of interest;
- Be fully accredited by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians, International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025, or by another accrediting body with equivalent standards;
- Have staff members trained in testing procedures and proficiency tested in diseases of interest;
- Have the capability to electronically send diagnostic test results to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) databases;
- As requested by the USDA, help other laboratories develop and implement Information Technology (IT) capabilities to permit them to communicate testing results with NAHLN;
- Provide and maintain biosafety level 3 laboratory (BSL3) space adequate for work performed;
- Accept samples that originate from other States affected by disease outbreaks, especially those from Level 2 laboratories;
- Have an acceptable periodic review conducted under the oversight of USDA.

The ongoing approval for state laboratories to participate in the NAHLN is described in the NAHLN document “General Process for NAHLN Approval” (Document # WI-NAHLN-0034.01). Processes include:

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• Completion of a laboratory capability and capacity assessment (current capabilities, resources, commitment by State, and other relevant factors), in a standardized format, The “NAHLN Laboratory Matrix”, which is largely based upon the NAHLN needs described in the NAHLN Concept Paper.
• USDA, APHIS and USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture review and verify the information provided in the laboratory Self-Assessments, and other pertinent information.
  o The information from this assessment is used to establish NAHLN laboratory network level designation for the next fiscal year (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Affiliate, or Specialty).
  o Level 1, 2 and 3 laboratory categorizations are used to decide NAHLN funding levels for infrastructure support based on the laboratory level designation assigned.

In 2020, NAHLN proposes adding BSL3 necropsy capacity and capability to the NAHLN Laboratory Matrix as a new criterion for annual evaluation of NAHLN laboratory level designation. This new addition does not enhance the mission of the NAHLN for the following reasons:
1. The primary mission of the NAHLN for early detection, rapid response, and appropriate recovery are not enhanced by BSL3 necropsy space in NAHLN laboratories.
   a. Early detection of foreign animal disease (FAD) from field samples of diagnostic unknowns does not require BSL3 necropsy capacity and capability because diagnostic unknowns sent to the laboratory as a potential index case carcass do not yet have laboratory confirmed FAD, therefore, do not require BSL3 necropsy capacity and capability.
   b. Effective and efficient rapid response to FAD does not require BSL3 necropsy capacity and capability, but rather is better accomplished by submitting samples collected in the field then shipped to NAHLN laboratories as samples, not carcasses. This optimizes biosecurity/biosafety of FAD response activities (samples safer to ship or transport to lab than carcasses) and reduces costs of FAD response activities (samples cheaper to ship to lab than carcasses). The practice of shipping samples to NAHLN labs during FAD response has been the normal procedure of the NAHLN since NAHLN inception.
   c. Appropriate recovery from FAD does not require BSL3 necropsy capacity and capability for the reasons state in “b” above and, more practically, because proof of negative testing does not generate carcasses from FAD mortalities.
2. The addition of BSL3 necropsy laboratory capacity and capability to the NAHLN evaluation laboratory matrix may disadvantage Level 2 laboratories from reaching Level 1 status, and may reduce the number of Level 1 laboratories needed for effective implementation of the NAHLN mission.

RESOLUTION:

The American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians and United States Animal Health Association urge the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services and National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) to remove Biosafety Level 3 necropsy capacity and capability from the annual NAHLN laboratory evaluation matrix used in the annual process for NAHLN laboratory approval and laboratory level designation.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 10                  APPROVED AS AMENDED

SUBJECT MATTER:       Adequate Funding for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The 2018 Farm Bill under section 12101 Animal Disease Prevention and Management:

1. Established the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), which allows the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to enter into cooperative agreements with states, universities, industry, and other entities on projects and research to advance animal health.

2. Established the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB) to maintain sufficient quantities of vaccine and other countermeasures to help to address an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) or other high consequence foreign animal disease.

3. Reauthorized the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) with appropriations authorization of $30 million per year.

Funding for the first four years ($120 million) is provided up front as no-year money.

NADPRP (1 above) must receive a minimum of $5 million for the first four years (of the $120 million) and $18 million (of the $30 million) annually, thereafter, ($38 million of the total $150 million).

The $112 million in 2018 Farm Bill funding not required to be spent on NADPRP was intended to be used to provide additional support for the NAHLN (3 above) with the remainder dedicated to the NAVVCB (2 above) to provide a robust vaccine and countermeasures bank, with priority given to FMD response capabilities.

The NAHLN is the frontline for detection of a disease event and provides critical support for disease monitoring during the outbreak and certification of a return to disease absence after the outbreak. The NAHLN has never been fully funded ($30 million per year) at the federal level. In addition, availability of adequate test kits/reagents for foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak response testing has been identified as a critical concern in every FAD tabletop exercise conducted.

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RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide at least $5 million from the funding in the 2018 Farm Bill each of the 5 years dedicated as additional support of National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) infrastructure and improvements in testing capabilities and capacities.

Additionally, USAHA urges the USDA to assure that the 2018 Farm Bill prevention funding not be used to replace current funding for USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) activities with the states nor should it inhibit full appropriation of the NAHLN laboratory authorization within USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative and USDA-APHIS budgets.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 11   APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Abnormal Equine Health Events at International Import Quarantine Facilities

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The recent closure of the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Miami Animal Import Center, in conjunction with previous disease outbreaks associated with imported equidae, has raised concerns amongst animal health officials and the industry overall. Notably, between November 2018 and April 2019, the USDA identified over 200 sick horses imported from the European Union. Management of imported equidae displaying signs of ill health at an Animal Import Quarantine facility is critical for protecting the health of the United States equine population.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to take the following actions at all International Animal Import Quarantine Facilities:

1) Develop standard operating procedures for import quarantine facility staff and veterinarians to identify, investigate, document, report, and track cases of abnormal equine health events.
2) Develop a standardized electronic system to consistently and uniformly record details of each abnormal health event which should minimally include vital signs, physical exam findings, and date and time of examination.
3) Identify abnormal health events/parameters in equines and conduct further assessment to classify such as contagious, non-contagious, or other.
4) Adopt a system to accurately evaluate each equine displaying clinical signs of disease, to clinically evaluate each case of a potentially infectious disease, to identify the infectious agent, and to determine the possible risk of exposure to other imported equines. Protocols should include diagnostic testing at owner/agent’s expense, based on the syndromic clinical presentation.
5) Notify State Animal Health Officials in both the state of destination and the state in which the equine is currently located of any abnormal equine health events identified and classified as possibly infectious. The notification should include any potentially exposed cohorts with report prior to release from quarantine.
6) Modify VS 17-30 (Report of Animals, Poultry, or Eggs Offered for Importation) such that it documents the potential risk of exposure to infectious disease for any equines associated with the abnormal health event.

7) Develop and implement a compliance agreement between owners/agents and the USDA that includes recommended biosecurity measures for destination premises.

8) Track all abnormal health events for equines being imported into the United States and report such events to equine stakeholders if requested or applicable.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 12    APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Contagious Equine Metritis Import Quarantine Program
State Reviews

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), initiated a review of the United States’ Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) import program in 2007. The resulting report included comments describing program deficiencies regarding regulatory oversight and accountability.

The USDA’s current method of assessing the infrastructure and relevance of approved state CEM programs remains unclear. Thus, the review team’s report recommended that the USDA’s CEM Coordinator devise a more coherent system of review of states approved for the CEM Import Quarantine Program. To date, no reports of reviews conducted by the USDA regarding current state CEM programs have been received. Furthermore, state CEM coordinators agree that in order to accurately identify CEM carrier stallions, it is crucial that all stallion breedings be observed by regulatory personnel. Deficits in the CEM program could put domestic equine populations at an increased risk of disease and affect the trade status of the United States equine industry; it is imperative to implement credible and measurable means of periodically ensuring that all facilities within approved states conform to and remain compliant with the established standards.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to conduct on-site visits and reviews of states approved for Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) import quarantine. The review should include an assessment of the state’s regulatory procedures and processes, including but not limited to direct state or federal oversight of test-breeding of stallions and the standard operating procedures utilized by CEM import quarantine facilities. Furthermore, the USAHA requests that the USDA-APHIS-VS provide a report of state reviews at the annual USAHA Committee on Equine meeting and have this report available to all equine stakeholders.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 13  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  Equine Viral Arteritis International Import Requirements

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) has significantly impacted international trade in equidae and equine semen. The import control policies of most countries currently deny entry to carrier stallions and Equine Arteritis Virus (EAV) infective semen because of the associated disease risks. Currently, the United States (US) is the only major equine-breeding country without an import control policy for EVA.

In a serosurvey conducted as part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Animal Health Monitoring Systems Equine 1998 study there was a low seroprevalence of EAV infection in most United States equidae as they have never been exposed to the virus. Thus, the vast majority of the US equine population could be considered completely susceptible to natural infection. This was illustrated by the occurrence of a major outbreak of EVA in 2006, primarily in Quarter Horses. The virus spread widely based on shipment of infective semen and dispersal of mares and foals after completion of breeding of mares with infective semen.

The absence of any restrictions on the import of carrier stallions or EAV infective semen into the United States has greatly increased both the likelihood of the virus becoming more widely disseminated in the nation’s equine population and the risk of economically damaging outbreaks of EVA. Importations of EAV carrier stallions and infective semen not only augments the number of carrier stallions in the breeding population at large but also increases the potential for disease outbreaks through the introduction of more highly virulent strains of EAV, previously exotic to the country.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to develop, implement, and enforce Equine Viral Arteritis import testing requirements pertaining to equine semen and stallions in accordance with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Code Chapter for Equine Arteritis Virus infection.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 14   APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Vesicular Stomatitis Import Requirements

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In light of the recent vesicular stomatitis disease outbreak, the inconsistency of interstate import requirements has been the topic of great interest. In order to protect the equine industry from the introduction of disease, it is essential for State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs) to establish and adhere to adequate and proven import regulations for interstate movement. These requirements should be based on science that considers the risk of disease incursion and the associated economic repercussions. In 2015, when the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) delisted Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV), the United States Department of Agriculture utilized science to change VSV response policies. The revised 14-day quarantine reflects the scientific evidence that the virus is contained within the vesicle and does not persist beyond a few days post vesicle rupture. Import requirements including restrictions of equines within prescribed areas, such as a ten-mile radius and VSV testing requirements, have questionable foundations in the science of VSV epidemiology. Lastly, it is important to recognize that equine owners and venue managers can experience undue economic hardship from overly restrictive interstate import requirements that are not based on scientific risk. Furthermore, regulatory uniformity would benefit all concerned parties, including equine owners, accredited veterinarians, equine venue managers, and the United States as a whole.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges State Animal Health Officials to modify import requirements related to Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV) to include the use of a timed Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) as illustrated below. For equine originating from VSV affected states, the CVI should be issued within seven (7) days prior to arrival to the destination. Furthermore, for the purposes of standardization, states are urged to require the following statement on the certificate:

“I have examined all equines identified on this certificate and found them to be free of clinical signs of Vesicular Stomatitis (VS). These equids have not been exposed to a VS affected animal or VS quarantined premises within the last fourteen (14) days.”
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 18  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  Valid Sampling Methods and Protocols for Feed and Feed Inputs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The incursion of foot and mouth disease virus (FMDV), classical swine fever virus (CSFV), and African swine fever virus (ASFV) into the United States (US) would result in the immediate loss of export markets for live swine, pork, and pork products. A Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) study led by Dr. Dermot Hayes, economist at Iowa State University, estimated that in the first year of an ASF outbreak in the United States revenue loss by commodity would be $8 billion for pork, $4 billion for corn and $1.5 billion for soybeans.

Peer-reviewed research has demonstrated survival of ASFV and other swine diseases in animal feed ingredients\(^1\) and ASFV transmission in feed\(^2\). To better understand and address the risk of pathogen introduction through feed, the US pork industry has helped convene a feed risk task force that includes industry stakeholders, the United States Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. The task force has identified gaps in knowledge and subsequent research needs that include the development of diagnostic testing capability for feed and feed ingredients and the development of a response plan that will support feed ingredient monitoring for foreign animal disease contamination. Research to address these gaps has been funded by the Swine Health Information Center and the National Pork Board. It is expected that the research results will provide information that will help in the development of valid sampling methods and protocols for foreign feed and feed inputs.


RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the Food and Drug Administration, Center for Veterinary Medicine and United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to work with the United States (US) pork industry to develop valid sampling methods and protocols to detect pathogens in foreign feed and feed inputs that can be applied at the point of embarkation to the US or upon arrival at the port of entry.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 19       APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Efficient Diagnostic Sample Validation and Approval for Foreign Animal Diseases of Swine

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Swine oral fluids have been used extensively for disease surveillance in swine populations\(^1\) and pen-based oral fluid samples improves detection over single-animal testing\(^2\). Since 2011, the Pork Checkoff has funded 9 research studies related to assay development, diagnostic performance, and validation of swine oral fluids for foreign animal diseases. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, Veterinary Services has completed a series of swine oral fluid validation research projects and is currently working on a study looking at pen sensitivity. The Swine Health Information Center, through a USDA Foreign Agricultural Service grant, will fund research into field validation of swine oral fluids for African swine fever (ASF). Research into other aggregate samples types have been funded by the Pork Checkoff to validate meat juice for the detection of antigen and antibody for ASF. Swine processing fluids are gathering more interest as an aggregate sample collected during tail docking and castration to monitor for endemic diseases, and it is anticipated that research will be funded to evaluate this sample type for foreign animal disease (FAD) detection. It is important as the pork industry evolves and adopts aggregate sampling that these sample types are validated and approved by USDA for FAD surveillance prior to and after an FAD outbreak.


RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to work with United States pork industry to validate and approve swine oral fluids, swine processing fluids, and meat juice for detection of antigen and antibody for classical swine fever, African swine fever and foot and mouth disease.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 20  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  Foreign Animal Disease Prevention

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The incursion of foot and mouth disease virus (FMDV), classical swine fever virus (CSFV), and African swine fever virus (ASFV) into the United States (US) would result in the immediate loss of export markets for live swine, pork, and pork products. A Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) study led by Dr. Dermot Hayes, economist at Iowa State University, estimated that in the first year of an African swine fever (ASF) outbreak in the US revenue loss by commodity would be $8 billion for pork, $4 billion for corn and $1.5 billion for soybeans. According to Dr. Hayes, it would take over 10 years after an ASF outbreak for these impacted commodities to approach pre-outbreak commodity prices. Based on the same study, estimates for revenue losses were similar for FMDV and CSFV.

The increase in global prevalence of ASFV elevates the current risk for introduction of a foreign animal disease (FAD) of swine through ports of entry into the US by international travelers and visitors returning from ASFV, or other FAD, positive regions who have had exposure to farms, livestock, wet markets, laboratories, or harvest facilities. This risk also includes travelers entering the US that are carrying non-US origin meat and meat products on their person, carry-on, and checked luggage or parcels. Screening of travelers and interdiction and destruction of meat and meat products is critical to protecting US animal agriculture. While the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) works to address the risk, more could and should be done to understand risk, educate passengers, and screen travelers entering the US at all ports of entry.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to 1) on a quarterly basis, provide interdiction metrics to pork industry representatives, 2) work with the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) Cross-Species Team to develop education designed to increase awareness for passengers that are in transit from foreign ports into the United States (US) on the importance of protecting agriculture and being truthful on
the US Customs Declaration form, 3) work with the FMD Cross-Species Team to develop biosecurity education for travelers diverted for secondary screening after declaring they have been on a farm or in contact with animals in a foreign animal disease positive nation, and 4) modify the US Customs Declaration form to include language regarding a traveler’s proximity to packing and processing plants, live and/or wet markets, research facilities, laboratories, or any other location where there is a likelihood that cross-contamination could occur directly or indirectly between the traveler and animals, fresh animal products, or animal excretions.
RESOLUTION NUMBER:  21  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  Evaluating and Recognizing Compartments

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In April 2018 the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA), Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS) notified stakeholders that the agency is proposing criteria that will be used to evaluate and recognize livestock compartments in other countries. In this announcement APHIS proposes that the evaluation criteria for compartmentalization will be similar to what the agency already uses for regionalization requests with a few differences. The information gathered from the evaluation of the proposed criteria, combined with site visits from agency personnel, would allow “APHIS to determine whether the animals within the compartment are managed in a way that keeps them distinct and separate from other animal populations within the country”.

Prior to China’s report of African swine fever (ASF) in August 2018, the United States (US) pork industry had been heavily engaged in the development of the Secure Pork Supply (SPS) Plan, a business continuity plan for pork producers. The plan incorporates principles specific to compartmentalization and could serve as a mechanism for implementing compartmentalization plans for the pork industry in the event of an outbreak of a foreign animal disease. Since August 2018, the US pork industry has stood up multiple groups that are addressing ASF prevention, response and business continuity. Better understanding of compartmentalization has been a common theme among these groups. An open frank dialogue between industry and federal animal health officials regarding compartmentalization, the proposed criteria, and how compartments are evaluated and recognized would be beneficial.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to host a meeting with the United States pork industry and State Animal Health Officials to discuss the proposed criteria that will be used to evaluate and recognize livestock/livestock products compartments domestically and internationally.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 22  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Stop Movement – Criteria for Implementing and Releasing

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In 2018 and 2019, at the request of the United States pork industry, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) National Training and Exercise Program (NTEP) hosted a series of four exercises to improve preparedness and response to African swine fever (ASF). The pork industry appreciates USDA, APHIS, VS prioritizing these exercises which were viewed by the industry as positive experiences that highlighted gaps to be addressed cooperatively by industry and state and federal animal health officials. One gap identified by these exercises is the need for specific criteria for implementing and releasing a national 72-hour stop movement ban. The United States pork industry is concerned that in the face of an ASF outbreak there is no agreed upon criteria for re-starting swine movements once a 72-hour movement ban is implemented. This lack of criteria will result in the extension of a national movement ban past 72 hours resulting in severe welfare and business ramifications over and above the impacts of the disease itself on production. For the swine industry that moves over a million pigs on any given day to harvest and for production purposes, it is important that industry, state and federal animal health officials undertake a cooperative approach to develop the criteria for releasing movement bans.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to work with the United States pork industry and state animal health officials to develop criteria for implementing and releasing national movement standstills due to the occurrence of a trade and commerce limiting foreign animal disease of swine.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are currently two official tests approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) for chronic wasting disease (CWD) diagnostics: immunohistochemistry (IHC) and enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).

Early detection of CWD is critical for wild, farmed, and captive cervid disease management. Tests that can detect prions earlier in the course of infection than those currently available would enhance intervention and could potentially lead to better outcomes. Additionally, tests that are more sensitive and could potentially be used with other tissues and biofluids, such as those from live or hunter-collected carcasses, would be extremely useful.

These tests, known as amplification assays, are used in human diagnostics at present. Several federal and university laboratories have been using real-time quaking induced conversion (RT-QuIC) and protein misfolding cyclic amplification (PMCA) for influential CWD research. These assays have advanced our knowledge of disease pathogenesis and prion shedding.

Despite their documented increased sensitivity, these assays have not been evaluated by the USDA, APHIS, VS, National Veterinary Services Laboratory or Agricultural Research Services for approval to be used by National Animal Health Laboratory Network and state veterinary diagnostic laboratories. A recent survey of diagnostic laboratories with current IHC or ELISA capabilities indicated an overwhelming willingness to use the RT-QuIC platform if it was approved by USDA.

RESOLUTION

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to evaluate the utility of real-time quaking induced conversion (RT-QuIC) as an official test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). If this CWD test demonstrates acceptable sensitivity

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and specificity, we urge USDA to approve the assay to be used by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory and National Animal Health Laboratory Network approved veterinary diagnostic labs. We encourage USDA-APHIS to work with the United States Department of the Interior United States Geological Survey to determine an appropriate source of recombinant prion protein for use in RT-QuIC assays that will be provided to approved NAHLN labs at a minimum cost.
RESOLUTION: 25 APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Support for Updating the United States Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center Laboratory Facilities

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Geological Survey (USGS), National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC), located in Madison, Wisconsin, is the only federal Biological Safety Level-3 (BSL-3) facility dedicated exclusively to scientific investigation and research on wildlife diseases that may threaten human, animal, and environmental health. The NWHC is an affiliate National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratory and is a World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Collaborating Centre for Wildlife Health and Biodiversity. It is designated by the United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI) as a USGS "mission essential" facility and is registered with and inspected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Federal Select Agent Program (FSAP). Built in approximately 1960, the NWHC is reaching the end of its usable life despite being well-maintained. The facility requires replacement and modernization to meet current standards for a modern high-level biocontainment facility working with high consequence pathogens and select agents (pathogens with potential to be weaponized against humans or livestock). If not replaced within the next 5-10 years, the laboratory and DOI may lose the ability to conduct nationally and internationally important work on detecting, characterizing, monitoring, preventing, and controlling wildlife diseases, many of which also involve livestock or humans.

The NWHC has conducted three master or concept plans and business case analyses to explore the most feasible, cost-effective and least disruptive option for modernization, including comparing renovation versus new construction, owned versus leased facilities, and options for relocation. All studies have indicated that new construction on the current site is the most cost-effective option that minimizes disruption to continuity of operations.

The NWHC supports the mission of the United States Animal Health Association and its members by conducting surveillance for high consequence pathogens in wildlife, many of which also infect domestic animals, or impact human or livestock health. The NWHC is a significant resource for wildlife agencies in the US and globally, supporting wildlife disease outbreak investigations and providing important tools and technology that assist with the management of diseases in wildlife populations. Recently, the NWHC has contributed to the understanding of diseases such as white nose syndrome, Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans (Bsal), and snake fungal disease. With ever increasing concerns over emerging, reemerging, and transboundary diseases, the demands on the NWHC facility and staff can be expected to increase.

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RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of the Interior to prioritize the identification of resources and methods to modernize the facilities at the United States Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center in order to protect wildlife, livestock, and public health.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 26  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  Need For Ongoing Scrapie Research

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

While the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) has been successful in decreasing the prevalence of scrapie in the United States, eradication of scrapie has not yet been achieved. With all disease eradication programs, as prevalence of the disease declines, the ability to identify the remaining cases becomes an ever greater challenge. With the 2019 publication of the NSEP standards, continued discovery of unique features of goat scrapie, improved live animal diagnostics and understanding of nonclassical scrapie are needed to achieve scrapie eradication.

We appreciate that scrapie program leaders have incorporated scientific discovery into pilot projects and the evolution of eradication program standards. Scrapie research continues to be valuable in efforts toward scrapie eradication. Research on the genetics of scrapie susceptibility/resistance in sheep and goats, differences in clinical signs and incubation periods in sheep and goats and live animal diagnostics are of continued importance. Research on the identification, diagnosis and epidemiology of nonclassical scrapie is also vital to achieving eradication of classical scrapie in the United States. Given the long incubation period of the disease, scrapie research requires multi-year commitment to carry out research on the epidemiology and pathogenesis of scrapie infection.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services and the USDA, Agricultural Research Service to work together to continue research into the pathogenesis, clinical signs, diagnosis and genetic resistance to disease of scrapie in sheep and goats, and validate and implement new approaches into the National Scrapie Eradication Program.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 27        APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Q-Fever (Coxiella burnetii) Vaccine

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Q-Fever is a zoonotic disease caused by the bacterium Coxiella burnetii. Coxiella infection is found in many species in many countries of the world, including the United States (US). The disease is a major cause of abortion in sheep and goats, which results in significant economic losses to producers, but also results in significant risk of transmission to human beings. Exposure to the products of abortion or raw milk products either directly or through environmental contamination poses a significant public health risk, as demonstrated by the large-scale 2005-2011 Q-fever epidemic (human and goat) in the Netherlands.

Currently there is no vaccine available in the US to prevent Coxiella burnetii infection or abortion in sheep and goats. Such a vaccine is available in Europe. The availability/approval of a safe and effective sheep and goat vaccine for Coxiella burnetii in the US would serve to safeguard human health and prevent production losses due to this potentially devastating disease. Humans not in direct contact with aborting animals also face some risk of indirect environmental exposure, so effective vaccination of sheep and goats could play a key role in minimizing human exposure. Additionally, the availability and approval of a safe and effective human vaccine would provide protection for those with occupational risk of exposure to Coxiella burnetii.

The United States Animal Health Association approved Resolutions on this matter in 2013 and 2014. Despite willingness of United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, Center for Veterinary Biologics to work with companies to approve vaccines in the US, no companies have come forward requesting approval and challenges remain for approval of import of effective vaccines, especially given the select agent listing of this agent, which requires Biological Safety Level (BSL)-3 facilities for research. Continued work toward import of vaccines as well as development of strategies for domestic production of Coxiella burnetii vaccines which would prevent the disease as well as the shedding of the organism are vital to reducing the impact of Coxiella infections in animals and man through a One Health approach. There is a need for development of animal models of placental accumulation and shedding of C. burnetii to facilitate rapid screening and testing of vaccine candidates. Specifically, we recognize the need for the construction of a mouse model of placental accumulation utilizing BSL-2-approved Nine Mile phase II clone 4 (RSA 439) C. burnetii to facilitate rapid screening of vaccine and treatment candidates in low cost environment. These will support the development of a full virulence (phase I) model of C. burnetii placental
accumulation and shedding to test vaccine and treatment candidates in preparation for efficacy testing in ruminant livestock.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) encourages the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, Center for Veterinary Biologics to continue to work to facilitate the licensure or importation of a safe and effective Q-Fever \((\text{Coxiella burnetii})\) vaccine for sheep and goats.

In addition, USAHA urges the USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to continue development of research models that could lead to the development of vaccines in the United States; the development of tests for accumulation and shedding of \(\text{Coxiella burnetii}\); and identification of genetic tools for improved control of Coxiella infections, including reduced shedding. USDA-ARS should pursue vaccine candidates that can be cost-effectively produced in a Biological Safety Level-2 facility.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 28  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Scrapie Eradication Program–Animal Identification

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) relies greatly on owner compliance to identify their animals as they leave the farm for exhibition or sales. No-cost official ear tags have greatly encouraged identification (ID) and thus encourage producer premises registration in the scrapie database and program compliance. There have been a multitude of problems noted with the use of official metal program tags such as infection, poor retention, difficulty in accurately recording the numbers, and safety hazards when shearing. With the publication of the interstate movement rule which requires the same ID requirements of goats as currently exist for sheep, the next few years are critical in encouraging goat and sheep producer compliance regarding ID and tagging. The industries feel strongly that, at a minimum, the provision of a limited number of no-cost official plastic tags will incentivize new goat and sheep producer compliance. In addition, the industries do not want to compromise the NSEP that has been built over the past 18 years at an expense of more than $260 million.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to continue to provide, at a minimum, a limited number of no-cost official plastic tags to producers enrolling in the National Scrapie Eradication Program for the first time. USDA-APHIS would provide the no-cost ear tags, but producers would be responsible for acquiring an applicator. Further, USAHA urges USDA-APHIS to continue to provide no-cost tags to markets and dealers.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 29  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  H5/H7 Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza Response

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) is the federal government’s poultry disease control program administered in cooperation with state animal health officials and poultry producers. The General Conference Committee (GCC) of the NPIP is the official federal advisory committee to the United States Secretary of Agriculture on matters pertaining to poultry health. Among other duties, the GCC is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) regarding adequate funding of NPIP. These funds are necessary for proper administration of NPIP provisions. The NPIP senior coordinator also advises USDA, APHIS with respect to administrative procedures and interpretations of the NPIP Provisions as contained in Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations, and to serve as a direct liaison between the NPIP and the United States Animal Health Association.

In 2002, H7N2 low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) was identified in North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, costing producers hundreds of millions of dollars. A surveillance program was not in place to detect the potential spread of avian influenza (AI). In response, the NPIP LPAI program was created to provide an incentive for regular AI surveillance and to protect poultry producers through indemnification and compensation should H5/H7 LPAI be found.

Avian influenza remains a concern for poultry producers in the United States with the H5N2 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak in 23 states in 2014–2015; H7N9 HPAI/LPAI in Indiana in 2016, H5N2 LPAI in Wisconsin in 2017, and H7N9 HPAI/LPAI in Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia in 2017, H7N9 LPAI in California in 2018, and H5N2 LPAI in Minnesota in 2018. The NPIP is the only federal program responsible for H5/H7 LPAI surveillance, response, and containment activities. HPAI flocks are fully indemnified and compensated by USDA, APHIS, VS; however, indemnity and compensation for H5/H7 LPAI flocks by VS is often not certain. Disruption of indemnity and compensation for H5/H7 LPAI can result in loss of confidence and trust, and could potentially create a harmful impact on future responses to H5/H7 LPAI. This loss of confidence and trust discourages poultry producers (commercial operations, independent growers, and small flocks) from fully complying with NPIP testing programs and cooperating with state and federal regulatory authorities, potentially risking the industry’s significant international trade. Without dedicated funding for LPAI indemnity...
and compensation, there is limited incentive for producers to participate in the highly successful voluntary NPIP programs.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the 116th United States Congress appropriate new, no-year, mandatory fiscal appropriations dedicated for low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) indemnity and compensation to ensure continued participation in National Poultry Improvement Plan H5/H7 LPAI programs. This new appropriation will support the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services’ effort to provide a stable indemnity and compensation program for H5/H7 LPAI flocks.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 30  
APPROVED  

SUBJECT MATTER: National Poultry Improvement Plan Staffing

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) is the federal government’s poultry disease control program administered in cooperation with state animal health officials and poultry producers. Currently, out of a national staff of five, there are three scientific positions in the NPIP and two of these are vacant. The NPIP Senior Coordinator position is filled, but the Compartmentalization Veterinary Medical Officer and the NPIP Authorized Laboratory Coordinator positions remain vacant.

Since its origins in 1935, the NPIP has grown tremendously due to its long history of success. The effectiveness of the program’s unique industry-driven structure has made it the home for controlling diseases far beyond what the program creators envisioned. As we saw following the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak in 2015-17, the multibillion-dollar United States poultry industry relies on the NPIP to monitor and respond to many of the most impactful diseases of poultry that negatively impact the poultry and product movement regionally and internationally. The role of these positions is vital.

Recently, the NPIP has expanded to include: shifting from oversight of hatchery and breeder monitoring to oversight of the entire commercial poultry industry for avian influenza; compartmentalization; expansion of laboratory workshops; and the newly mandated biosecurity audits. These programs along with the 2020 NPIP Biennial Conference magnify the impact of these vacancies. For the continued success of the program there is an urgent need to bring the NPIP office to full capacity.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services expedite the process to hire the best qualified Compartmentalization Veterinary Medical Officer and the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) Authorized Laboratory Coordinator for the positions located at the NPIP office.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 32  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  Removal of Select Agent Status for *Brucella* species

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In order to protect the nation from terrorist attacks, select agent regulations restrict possession, transfer, and use of select agents and toxins. The restrictions have been highly effective in limiting access to dangerous agents and toxins by unauthorized individuals. Unfortunately, these same restrictions have limited opportunities for important research on *Brucella* spp., including *B. abortus*, *B. melitensis*, and *B. suis*. *B. abortus* is a disease endemic in Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) wildlife, while *B. suis* is endemic in feral swine populations throughout the United States (US), and *B. melitensis* is a foreign animal disease that has successfully been kept out of domestic livestock and wildlife populations in the United States.

A recent paper published by Olsen et. al documents that *Brucella* spp. can be removed from the biological select agent and toxins list based on clinical, biological, and epidemiological properties of the bacteria. In particular, the paper highlights that *Brucella* spp. are readily available in endemic areas, thus easily attained by individuals or groups with nefarious intentions. Previous reports estimating human morbidity and mortality in the event of a *Brucella* bioweapons attack did not adequately consider the fact that brucellosis is the most common zoonotic infection reported in humans annually. Humans are considered dead end hosts for *Brucella* and are typically infected from exposure to animal reservoirs or animal products. Additionally, previous reports have listed the infectious dose for *Brucella* to be 10 to 100 bacteria, but research in closed environments indicate that aerosol exposure to a much higher concentration of bacteria is required to result in infection; thus, use of *Brucella* under natural conditions as a bioweapon would likely result in a limited to negligible rate of infection in humans or animals.

Costs associated with the effective eradication of swine and bovine brucellosis in the US between 1934 and 1998 are conservatively estimated to be over 3 billion dollars. The persistence of brucellosis in wildlife reservoirs with an expanding terrain both within the GYA and the greater US has resulted in potential incursions of the disease into the national domestic cattle and swine herds. A limitation on research due to the select agent status of *Brucella* spp. has reduced the capacity of research institutions to study *Brucella* under field conditions, a necessary step to develop effective vaccines and diagnostic tools. The continued expansion of wildlife reservoirs of *Brucella* spp. without efficient vaccines and sensitive, specific diagnostic tools will...
result in additional costs to producers, and state and federal governments for disease control programs.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to support the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the removal of *Brucella abortus*, *Brucella suis*, and *Brucella melitensis* from the biological select agent and toxins list, thereby enabling needed *Brucella* spp. research and diagnostics.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 33  
APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Backup Identification of Livestock in Commerce

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On March 11, 2013, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Disease Traceability rule became effective. Unless specifically exempted, livestock moving interstate must be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection or other documentation, such as owner-shipper statements or brand certificates. Stocker/feeder cattle less than 18 months of age are exempted from the rule. States are allowed to issue official National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tags to producers to identify livestock.

We strongly support the implementation of the radio frequency identification (RFID) tag as the primary method of official identification. For cattle exporters, low frequency RFID tags have long been the international standard for cattle identification. We believe the transition to RFID tags as the primary official identification tag to be long overdue and an important step in protecting the health of our animals and the strength of our industry. The low frequency (LF) RFID tag allows us to better identify one specific animal at a time—an important ability when working in close systems, such as head locks/stanchions and necessary due to the particular nature of our work. We have been using LF RFID tags for years, specifically the 840 combo tag. We are right there, side by side, wand in hand, with our efficient USDA inspectors during export inspections and have been from the start.

We are, however, very concerned with the current plan to eliminate the old metal (NUES/Steel/Brite) tag for official usage, even as a backup identification (ID). Having only one form of official ID leaves us vulnerable to identification error, which can have far reaching disease and economic consequences. Despite the high retention of RFID tags, when dealing with thousands of animals, ID tags are frequently lost. Identifying the exact animal with a lost RFID in a small, closed herd, may not be a problem, however, when dealing with large combined groups assembled from multiple herds, we must rely on the implementation of an additional official ID for correct identification. Cattle exporters commonly use combo RFID tags—when that RFID is lost, so is the animal's visual ID. If a metal tag is in place as a backup source of official ID, these cattle can still be identified or rectified.

Cattle exports undergo health testing at an approved laboratory associated with the official ID. If an animal loses their RFID while undergoing final export inspection, and if the animal has lost the single RFID official ID, it is then impossible to demonstrate that the animal has undergone the necessary health testing. Because of this one tag loss, the whole shipment would be stopped, as there is now one animal with a different health
status than the group. If that animal was tagged with both a RFID and a metal tag, and both are forms of official ID, the second is checked and the problem is solved, and the shipment continues. A solid unique backup is vital in the fight to protect our animal’s health and industry’s bottom-line. Because uniqueness is a vital requirement of an official ID, RFID tags cannot be manufactured with duplicate numbers. Double-tagging an animal with dual RFIDs is also problematic. Double RFIDs of the same frequency causes ID confusion. Double RFID tagging of a different frequency requires either multiple wands, a significant expense in hardware and software, or manual entry of bulky 15-digit RFID numbers, an obvious user/entry error issue and a significant time delay. In the face of all of these concerns and the presence of already implemented and tested system, we urge USDA/APHIS to keep the metal tag as a backup official ID.

We understand that this scenario was not envisioned with the transition to RFID as the official ID, and while we fully support RFID as official ID, it is also necessary to retain the NUES tags for backup, secondary official ID, to be purchased by the producer, and to only be used when RFID tags are already in place.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture and State Animal Health Officials to work with livestock exporters to ensure a system is in place to allow for a backup identification system for animals being exported to account for loss of official identification.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 34  APPROVED AS AMENDED

SUBJECT MATTER: Continuation of Proposed Electronic Identification Transition Timeline

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In April 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) announced a timeline to transition to the mandatory use of electronic identification (ID) tags for cattle covered under the 2013 Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Rule. While not accompanying the announcement, this timeline was the product of over two years of due process during which time nine regional meetings were held nationally from April 2017 through July 2017, state and local meetings were held with feedback provided, and 462 written comments were received. A sixteen member state-federal working group was formed; the working group held fifteen meetings over seven months, and contributed more than 500 hours of work, resulting in a comprehensive document which summarized the issues, needs, and options of the current ADT program and detailed 14 points as recommendations. Further discussion and feedback was generated through three public traceability summits, and Undersecretary Ibach produced a list of agency-specific objectives to enhance traceability. Finally, an additional state-federal working group was formed to specifically address one of the objectives: a plan to transition to electronic ID. This working group again received input from all sectors of industry before generating the proposed timeline which was adopted by the USDA.

While not unanimous, the transition timeline was met with significant positive responses and as outreach efforts continued, industry support grew as State Animal Health Officials, livestock market operators, industry organizations, and practicing veterinarians committed to engage in a successful transition.

The groups previously mentioned have invested considerable resources to ensure a smooth transition as defined by the timeline. Significant time and energy has been devoted to explaining the timeline to stakeholders and activities have already begun to accomplish the first step of the transition - ending free National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tag distribution by 12/31/19.

In late October 2019 it was announced that the timeline was being suspended until USDA could evaluate the method in which the timeline was proposed and determine what steps were necessary to ensure a transparent process was utilized to arrive at the timeline and to satisfy any legal challenges.

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The withdrawal of the transition timeline creates confusion, doubt, and lack of trust amongst stakeholders and continues to leave unaddressed a major gap in the nation’s resilience to an incursion of a high consequence animal disease.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, State Animal Health Officials, and livestock industries to move as quickly as possible to continue the momentum toward electronic identification and to work together to institute a modified transition timeline with the same end date of January 1, 2023 and the extension of National Uniform Eartagging System tag distribution being no more than 12 months or no later than December 31, 2020.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 35
APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Funding for Infrastructure and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Tags

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In April 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) announced a timeline to transition to the mandatory use of electronic identification (ID) tags for cattle covered under the 2013 Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Rule. While not accompanying the announcement, this timeline was the product of over two years of due process, during which time nine regional meetings were held nationally from April 2017 through July 2017, state and local meetings were held with feedback provided, and 462 written comments were received. A sixteen member state-federal working group was formed; the working group held fifteen meetings over seven months, and contributed more than 500 hours of work, resulting in a comprehensive document which summarized the issues, needs, and options of the current ADT program and detailed 14 points as recommendations. Further discussion and feedback was generated through three public traceability summits, and Undersecretary Ibach produced a list of agency-specific objectives to enhance traceability. Finally, an additional state-federal working group was formed to specifically address one of the objectives: a plan to transition to electronic ID. This working group again received input from all sectors of industry before generating the proposed timeline which was adopted by the USDA.

While not unanimous, the transition timeline was met with significant positive responses and as outreach efforts continued, industry support grew as State Animal Health Officials, livestock market operators, industry organizations, and practicing veterinarians committed to engage in a successful transition.

The groups previously mentioned have invested considerable resources to ensure a smooth transition as defined by the timeline. Significant time and energy has been devoted to explaining the timeline to stakeholders and activities have already begun to accomplish the first step of the transition - ending free National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tag distribution by 12/31/19.

In late October 2019, it was announced that the timeline was being suspended until USDA could evaluate the method in which the timeline was proposed and determine what steps were necessary to ensure a transparent process was utilized to arrive at the timeline and to satisfy any legal challenges.

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The withdrawal of the transition timeline creates confusion, doubt, and lack of trust amongst stakeholders and continues to leave unaddressed a major gap in the nation’s resilience to an incursion of a high consequence animal disease.

As a further point of confusion, plans to potentially provide “free” official calfhood vaccination (OCV) radio frequency identification (RFID) tags and making a “cost-share” available for non-OCV RFID tags were announced as options in addition to continuing provision of “free” NUES tags. State Animal Health Officials and many industry stakeholders have repeatedly indicated that the industry wishes for infrastructure improvements rather than a short-term, complicated method of cost-share for RFIDs.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) strongly urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to discontinue the distribution of National Uniform Eartagging System tags within twelve months or no later than December 31, 2020 and utilize available funding for infrastructure development and provide access for producers to obtain radio frequency identification tags. USAHA further urges USDA-APHIS-VS to avoid “voucher” programs which would create additional administrative challenges.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 37  APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: Increased Fiscal Year 2021 Funding for the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services National Rabies Management Program

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) has demonstrated that strategic implementation of cooperative oral rabies vaccination (ORV) programs targeting wildlife are cost-effective, while continuing to reduce rabies exposure and transmission among wildlife, livestock, pets and people. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) determined that the most effective strategy to control terrestrial rabies targets the sources of infection (i.e., wildlife vector populations) with large-scale control efforts. ORV programs are designed to immunize target wildlife species by increasing the percentage of rabies-immune animals within vaccination zones, resulting in the reduction of rabies cases, prevention of viral spread (Phase 1 of the NRMP), and eventual raccoon rabies variant elimination (Phase 2 of the NRMP).

In early 2016, WS assembled federal, state, academic, and international experts to develop a comprehensive strategy to implement Phase 2 of the NRMP, elimination of the raccoon rabies variant in the eastern United States (US). In 2019, the NRMP and cooperators distributed >9 million ORV baits, >8.2 million in the eastern US to combat raccoon rabies in 17 states and >1 million in Texas to prevent the reemergence of racies in coyotes and grey foxes along the border with Mexico. The total area baited in 2019 was >63,740 square miles, an area slightly smaller than Wisconsin. In 2019, 20 miles of the ORV zone, equating to 2,324 square miles, was removed along the border with Canada in northern New York, Vermont and New Hampshire, and 2,541 square miles of ORV zone was created eastward from the ORV zones in Pennsylvania and West Virginia into the raccoon rabies enzootic area and classified as “new area under management”. To date, there was no new NRMP initiated contingency actions reported.

Successful ORV programs in Texas continue with rabies elimination in gray foxes and maintenance of an immune barrier along the Mexican border to keep the US free of coyote (canine) and gray fox rabies. The requested funding will allow USDA to:
- Continue the enhanced rabies surveillance program.
- Implement contingency actions in response to rabid animals in sensitive areas.
- Continue Phase 1 of the NRMP, to maintain existing ORV programs to control rabies and prevent spread in wildlife populations.
- Continue the evaluation of novel and US-licensed vaccines and baits.

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- Continue studies related to rabies control in skunks, mongoose, and vampire bats.
- Initiate and enhance the operations of Phase 2 of the NRMP, to eliminate the raccoon rabies variant in the U.S.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests the 116th Congress to appropriate a minimum of $33 million for the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Inspection Service, Wildlife Services, National Rabies Management Program.
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 38  
APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER:  
Equine Infectious Anemia and Equine Piroplasmosis Control Strategies

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Over the past ten years, multiple states have investigated either Equine Piroplasmosis (EP) and/or Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) in Quarter Horses involved in non-sanctioned race activities. All indications are that transmission and disease introduction is related to management practices, including the use of blood and/or plasma products of non-domestic origin within the equine population, rather than natural transmission by vectors. Additionally, in recent years, an increasing number of illegally imported horses have been identified as positive for EP and/or EIA. The nature of non-sanctioned race events makes tracking infected and exposed horses difficult and serves as a significant barrier to effective epidemiological investigations.

During investigations and while horses are maintained under quarantine or hold order, state animal health officials have determined that in many cases, horses have continued to participate in race events and move interstate despite the quarantine or hold order. Additionally, horse substitutions and horse disappearances are complicating efforts to control these diseases. Failure to permanently identify all cohorts, multiple names for the same horse, alteration of tattoos, communication barriers, and inability to reliably determine ownership complicate the ability of animal health officials to conduct thorough epidemiological investigations.

Identification of horses involved in these disease investigations would be enhanced through the placement of International Organization for Standardization (ISO)-compliant microchips that are recorded in the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Identification Management System (AIMS) and Emergency Management Response System (EMRS) databases. This permanent identification would serve both immediate and potentially future diseases investigations.

Given the increasing frequency at which disease investigations are being conducted for EP and/or EIA involving quarter horses in non-sanctioned racing, it is only a matter of time until these diseases impact larger equine populations involved in activities such as barrel racing, polo, and other pleasure events.

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RESOLUTION:

United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to develop strategies for the control of Equine Piroplasmosis (EP) and Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA). USDA, APHIS, VS should coordinate these strategies with State Animal Health Officials. USAHA further requests that the American Horse Council and other equine stakeholders seek funding to fully support these programs. Further we request USDA-APHIS-VS Animal Disease Traceability funds to maintain an inventory of International Organization for Standardization (ISO)-compliant microchips at the USDA Kansas warehouse to provide to state and federal animal health officials for use in EIA and EP disease investigations.