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**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 1      APPROVED**

**SUBJECT MATTER:      Aquatic Animal Diagnostic Working Group**

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**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Currently, both guidance documents, the Blue Book and the OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals, reference outdated or otherwise inadequate sampling and diagnostic procedures.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:**

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-burdensome testing regulations for aquatic animal movement both domestically and internationally.

**INTERIM RESPONSE:**

USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. VS has invited key domestic subject matters experts (SME) to participate in the newly formed *Aquatic Animal Health Diagnostic Working Group*. In February 2020, members of the working group will meet to identify priority activities and develop a strategic plan to establish goals, objectives and desired outcomes for this workgroup.

VS is also proposing a specific ad hoc working group to begin looking at harmonization of shellfish pathogen testing for specific pathogen surveillance and database development.

**FINAL RESPONSE:**

USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. VS has formed an Aquatic Animal Health Diagnostic Working Group. Members of the group initially met in February 2020 during Aquaculture America. The working group planned to meet again in August 2020 in Ames, Iowa, but was unable to do so because of COVID-19. The group has begun regular meetings to discuss fit for purpose testing as well as the need to develop a reference manual of updated protocols using both the OIE Aquatic Manual and the American Fisheries Society Fish Health Section Blue Book as models.

VS has also proposed a specific ad hoc working group to study harmonization of shellfish pathogen testing for specific pathogen surveillance and database development.