
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 1, 10, and 18 COMBINED

APPROVED

**SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT;
COMMITTEE ON SWINE;
COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL WELFARE**

**SUBJECT MATTER: National Veterinary Stockpile Resources for Mass Depopulation
of Animals**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Management of mass animal depopulation is a significant challenge for animal agriculture. Recent events, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks and the processing disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted gaps in resources available to deal with such events. Many different organizations, agencies, producers, veterinarians, and related animal industries have participated in exercises that highlight the challenges of mass depopulation of animals. Whether depopulation is for an animal health crisis, a natural disaster, or even a non-animal health related threat, as in the instance of COVID-19, methods and resources for acceptable and timely depopulation are scarce.

During the months since the identification of SARS-CoV-2 in the United States, a large-scale effort has been undertaken by state animal health officials, state pork associations, veterinarians, and producer organizations to identify areas of greatest need and to perform needed research in those areas. The outcomes of such research will provide further guidance regarding depopulation yet in 2020. Additional research focus in the area of depopulation and disposal is provided by funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) for 2020; results and outcomes for projects initiated this year, however, will not be available until 2021 or later.

The United States Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Stockpile is designed to provide federal resources in the event of a national animal health crisis. Much of the resources available are relevant for management of poultry depopulation but do not adequately cover other farmed animal outbreak events. Resources that are available for use include personal protective equipment, limited animal handling equipment (gating, chutes etc.), and captive bolt guns. The amount and type of equipment needed to conduct depopulation of swine and other farmed animal species, however, is very limited in comparison to the greater need in the event of an outbreak or other disaster.

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 utilize the results of current and future research to critically review, increase, and update the available resources within the USDA National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) to support rapid response to mass depopulation crises involving swine and other farmed animal species. In addition, information gained from such studies should be incorporated into the USDA Foreign Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Plan (FAD PReP)/National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS) guidance and Standard Operating Procedures.

INTERIM RESPONSE

USDA, APHIS, VS recognizes the concerns of USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. APHIS continues to assess and enhance the logistical resources needed for our NVS to adequately support mass depopulation of swine and other large animals during disease outbreaks or other crises. APHIS continues to collaborate with States, Universities, and industry to evaluate equipment and methods currently being researched and leverage results from the 2020 NADPRP depopulation projects.

Recently, APHIS provided funding to purchase additional depopulation and disposal equipment and support State project proposals to build depopulation equipment that will be added to the NVS inventory.

FINAL RESPONSE

USDA, APHIS, VS recognizes the concerns of USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. APHIS is committed to ensuring that the NVS is equipped maximally in relation to available funding and at a level adequate to provide necessary resources to support mass depopulation of swine and other large animals during disease outbreaks or other emergencies. In August 2021, the NVS hired a 3D (Depopulation, Disposal, and Decontamination) Program Coordinator (PC) to focus specifically on depopulation and disposal. The 3D PC will collaborate with the principal investigators of NADPRP projects and with academic and industry groups developing depopulation methods. APHIS has a vested interest in such projects, will closely monitor their outcomes, and will communicate directly with states on their efforts to develop and improve depopulation strategies. To further enhance the NVS' ability to depopulate swine, APHIS will solicit proposals from vendors to develop depopulation equipment using CO₂ or other depopulation methods. Additionally, APHIS is exploring potential sources for funding to purchase additional supplies and equipment for the NVS. Finally, the NVS purchased a horizontal grinder for mass carcass disposal and has successfully completed the first article test. As funding becomes available, the agency will add additional grinders to the inventory and include them in the updated NVS catalog.