
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 27

Approved

SOURCE:

COMMITTEE ON SWINE

SUBJECT MATTER:

United States Department of Agriculture Plan for a Coordinated Response to the First Outbreak of Japanese Encephalitis Virus in Pigs in the United States

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since late 2021 and early 2022, Australia has been experiencing an outbreak of Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) infection in pigs and people. Estimates are that there has been an average production loss of approximately 6% of the national herd with some estimates being as high as 10%. Forty confirmed and suspected human cases with six fatalities have been associated with the outbreak.

JEV is a vector-borne disease, spread by *Culex* spp. and potentially other mosquitoes. The reservoir hosts are currently thought to be egrets and other like waterfowl although research to confirm is ongoing. Pigs are an amplifying host of the virus.

The current United States Department of Agriculture FAD PReP document is “Disease Response Strategy - Japanese Encephalitis” and, according to the document, “. . . is intended to provide animal health emergency responders with the information necessary to respond to JE, should it enter the United States. . . as well as control and eradication strategies.” Those control and eradication strategies include stamping out within 24 hours of a premises being identified as infected, trace back and trace forward for at least 42 days, and quarantine and movement controls, among others. All which may be appropriate for animal to animal and fomite spread pathogens but may not be for vector-borne pathogens like JEV. An urgent review of the guidelines presented in the document is needed for response preparation should JEV enter the United States.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to work with industry, state animal health officials, and other stakeholders to review “Disease Response Strategy – Japanese Encephalitis” and update and revise it where appropriate to reflect current science and contemporary global experience with a Japanese encephalitis virus outbreak. This should be completed by March 1, 2023, in preparation for the American Association of Swine Veterinarians 2023 annual meeting.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

APHIS understands that maintaining freedom from foreign animal diseases is a high priority of the U.S. swine industry. APHIS further recognizes the importance of responding to a JEV incursion with a One Health approach and coordinated plan that integrates the capabilities and perspectives of USDA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state partners, the swine industry, and other stakeholders.

APHIS has initiated early discussions, focused on identifying priorities and objectives of a response to JEV. As planning progresses, APHIS will expand conversations to include external industry representatives and state partners to incorporate coordination and One Health approaches, as well as unified communication strategies and effective surveillance plans. APHIS will continue to communicate with industry and State partners on agency priorities that will delay the completion of a JEV response plan, such as operational commitments in response to African swine fever and highly pathogenic avian influenza.

In the meantime, APHIS removed the outdated USDA Foreign Animal Disease Preparedness and Response (FAD PReP) document, "Disease Response Strategy - Japanese Encephalitis," from its web site. In the event of an emerging animal disease outbreak such as JEV, APHIS would use the current FAD outbreak response framework (https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/vs_emerging_diseases_framework.pdf).