

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION – 2007

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 21 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES

SUBJECT MATTER: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AGAINST RABIES

DATES: RENO, NEVADA OCTOBER 18 – 24, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States (US) is enzootic for wildlife rabies. A single rabid animal may result in mass exposures to the public and the administration of hundreds of courses of human rabies postexposure prophylaxis. Production of Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) is, in particular, time and labor intensive and relies upon a pool of hyperimmune human donors. Supply shortages of rabies biologicals occur with disconcerting frequency. Strategic planning for episodic increases in demand for rabies biologicals, e.g. natural or man-made disaster, or mass exposures, is currently lacking.

Exposure to suspected rabies infected dogs is still the cause of over 90% of human exposures to rabies and of over 99% of human deaths worldwide. Yet requirements for importation of domestic animals to the US from canine-rabies enzootic countries are the same as from countries that pose a much lower risk of rabies translocation.

The use of a licensed oral rabies vaccine has been effective in controlling rabies in certain wildlife rabies reservoir species. However, there is only a single licensed vaccine available for this endeavor. Its efficacy is not uniform across the range of target species, and unit cost is rising.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) consider creation of strategic federal stockpiles of human rabies biologicals, improved research support for novel alternatives to current human rabies biologicals and encourage investment and innovation in the commercial sector thereby ensuring adequate production and distribution capacity for cost effective and efficacious products.

The USAHA requests HHS, CDC strengthen federal regulations to minimize the opportunity for the importation of rabies infected domestic animals from rabies endemic countries.

The USAHA also requests HHS and the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) offer financial incentives to small, innovative, biotech business ventures for production of new, cost effective, and efficacious oral wildlife rabies vaccines and delivery systems to better serve current and future program needs and support preparedness efforts.