

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2009 RESOLUTION

OCTOBER 14, 2009, SAN DIEGO, CA

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 33 **APPROVED**

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON BRUCellosIS

SUBJECT MATTER: STANDARDIZATION OF BRUCELLA ABORTUS TESTING FOR
ELK

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

During the last 10 years, the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) states, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, have sustained *Brucella abortus* (*B. abortus*) infections in livestock with the most likely cause being a transmission from brucellosis infected elk. The GYA states have embarked on risk mitigation and surveillance programs in cattle to ensure that new cases are rare, and will be detected rapidly should they occur. The wildlife agencies in the three GYA states are likewise conducting aggressive wildlife surveillance to better understand the rate of infection and the distribution of brucellosis exposed wild ungulates.

The states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming use varying protocols for defining brucellosis exposed elk which creates difficulty in comparing surveillance results between states. As the National Brucellosis Eradication Program evolves from a state-by-state to a regional concept, uniformity in elk testing protocols and case definitions of a brucellosis exposed elk is increasingly important. Standardization of testing protocols for the purpose of classifying elk as brucellosis-exposed is important to monitor the rate of disease of wild ungulate populations across the three states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming and to facilitate risk-based decisions on livestock management and surveillance.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to work with the Department of Interior, and the wildlife agencies of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, to develop a standardized brucellosis testing protocol and serological case definition for a brucellosis exposed wild elk. Furthermore, USAHA urges the USDA-APHIS and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to commit laboratory capacity, and personnel to this effort.

RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS

We appreciate USAHA sharing its views on the issues in question with our Agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and assure you that we will take them under careful consideration. We look forward to further dialogue with your organization on these and other issues as we evaluate the health needs of animals in our country and move ahead with important animal health initiatives.

We value USAHA'S longstanding partnership with USDA, and look forward to continued collaboration advancing our mutual efforts to safeguard and promote U.S. animal health.

USDA, ARS

With regard to Brucella research, we acknowledge that this work is important and plan to continue to take advantage of our broad programmatic expertise and resources in these areas at the NADC in Ames, Iowa. Our current program focuses on diagnostic and vaccine development for *Brucella abortus* and *Brucella suis*, and we will expand our work to address emerging needs as opportunities arise.

INTERIM RESPONSE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS) is currently evaluating validation data from the fluorescent polarization assay (FPA) and buffered acidified plate antigen (BAPA) tests for use in serologic testing of elk. This evaluation is expected to be complete in 2010. If validated, VS, in collaboration with the National Park Service and the State wildlife agencies of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, will begin the development of standardized protocols for testing elk using these tests. These protocols, as well as test interpretation guidelines, will be provided to the United States Animal Health Association Brucellosis Scientific Subcommittee for review and input before further distribution.

Additionally, VS will continue to collaborate on brucellosis research activities through the VS, Agricultural Research Service, and the Research Priorities Brucellosis Working Group.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

We agree that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the appropriate agency to take the lead on developing a standardized brucellosis testing protocol and serological case definition for brucellosis-exposed wild elk. The DOI scientists in the UGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center have been working closely with researchers and managers at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Yellowstone National Park to understand the dynamics of brucellosis in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Past work includes a historical analysis of how the seroprevalence of brucellosis in elk around the feedgrounds of Wyoming is affected by population size, density, snowpack and the artificial feeding regime. Some current projects include: 1) interactions of stress, disease, and artificial feeding in elk; 2) GPS tracking of elk around the Wyoming feedgrounds; and 3) modeling elk brucellosis in the Northern Range of Yellowstone National Park. We believe interagency collaboration is important for better understanding of disease transmission. We will continue to encourage our scientists to look for opportunities to work with their colleagues at the USDA to further this work.