

Animal Health Emergency Management Council Report

2011 NIAA Annual Conference

Tuesday, April 12, 2011



The Animal Health Emergency Management Council met on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 from 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm during the 2011 NIAA Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas with about 25 people present. Dr. Matt Cochran served as Chair, and Dr. Barrett Slenning, Vice Chair

The committee session focused on commodity disposition in the face of a non-zoonotic foreign animal disease. The following speakers presented relevant information:

Dr. Barrett Slenning, North Carolina State University, presented “Overview of Changes and Trends in Animal Agriculture.” Animal agriculture, as with all of US food and agriculture, has changed immensely over the past few decades. Modern animal agriculture is large scale, operates in commodity-specific regional production centers, and is highly dependent on transportation and energy. Lean production methods make us more efficient than ever, but that efficiency is bought at the cost of losing surge capacity and resilience to interruptions in markets. Concentration of ownership across the board brings advantages in consistency and communication but brings vulnerabilities in profile and disease control. Disease programs that focus on eradication without regard to protecting non-infected farms and markets can do more damage to U.S. agriculture than the diseases themselves.

Dr. Tammy Beckham, DVM, PhD, Director, National Center for Foreign Animal & Zoonotic Disease Defense, presented “Overview of FAZD Programs.” FAZD operates three main arenas: biological basic and applied research, information gathering and analysis, and education and outreach. FAZD workers have differentiable Rift Valley Fever vaccines and tests in trials now and are working with private partners to commercialize. In FMDV work, FAZD research is attempting to improve the one-step ‘strip’ tests sensitivity as current technology is insufficient to be reliable. They also aim to have approved bulk tank screening for milk within 2 years. FAZD informational analytic work is developing several products, most of which are based on their successful web-based ‘dashboard’ model of data collection, collation, analysis, and reporting (Biosituational Common Operating Picture). FAZD products are helpful, currently in teaching risk analysis, situational awareness, decision support, and resiliency but are not yet to the point where they can be deployed into policy. They have been demonstrated and tested in real events, including the recent Japanese FMD outbreak. Another module will aim to allow ERSS users to determine NAHLN laboratory capacity changes during an outbreak to optimize lab use and decrease delays. FAZD educational programs cover K-12, advanced training, and outreach to first responders and law enforcement.

Ms. Cindy Cunningham, Assistant Vice President of Communications, National Pork Board, presented “Overview of Cross-Species Communications Working Group.” The main goal of the Group is to establish cross commodity group unified messages and understanding before and during a major animal health event. Basic citizen surveys suggest few consumers know about FMDV. Those that do know about FMDV believe it is a human pathogen that can be contracted from drinking milk or eating meat. Therefore, over 4 in 10 survey respondents would stop drinking milk if the U.S. had an FMD outbreak. Consumers’ main concerns regard protecting the health of their families. Issues surrounding animal welfare and farm economics are distant issues to them. Consumers want to know that there are plans ready to go, that these plans have a history of success, that authorities know how to destroy FMDV, and to be assured FMDV cannot be contracted from food, and that it is not a public health concern. The

team is reaching out to different sectors within food and agriculture as well as to agricultural trade media — running training and education programs for these groups. They have a website that is being redone to reflect new knowledge and work: www.FootandMouthDiseaseInfo.org.

Dr. Pam Hullinger, DVM, MPVM, DACVPM, Department of Veterinary Medicine and Epidemiology, University of California, Davis, presented “FMD Vaccination as One Potential Control Measure During an FMD Outbreak Response.” The main focus is on whether a marketing/consumer backlash might occur if FMDV vaccine were used in the U.S. Globally, millions of people consume animal products from livestock that have been FMDV vaccinated and have been doing so for decades without issue. As an industry, we need to come to grips with difficult questions such as

- Under what circumstances will a vaccine be beneficial, and when might its use be detrimental?
- Which animals, and which production classes, will be vaccinated?
- How will vaccination fit in a broader control and response effort?
- Will vaccination be accepted domestically and internationally?
- With the size of U.S. agriculture, will 3rd parties agree with/accept OIE zoning and regionalization meant to keep uninfected markets moving?
- What will happen to vaccinates? Vaccinate to Kill? Vaccinate to Live? Other options?

Additionally we need to establish messages and training, now, before we vaccinate. Finally, these efforts need to engage all parts of our livestock supply chains.

Old Business: None

New Business: The Poultry Committee asked our Council to encourage development and adoption of business continuity plans in the face of catastrophic diseases from primary production through marketing. After reviewing the 2010 resolution “National Business Continuity Strategy,” the AHM Council members and the representation from the Poultry Committee determined that the AHM Council was already on record in support of such actions. No further action would be required.

Consensus Points for NIAA White Paper Development:

1. Animal agriculture has not been successful in reaching out to other nodes within our own supply chains – that the other participants evidently do not see our efforts as central to their own operations.
2. Animal agriculture must work to better educate retailers and consumers about our issues and what we do to address them.

General Discussion: None

Committee Session adjourned at 5:00 pm.