

animal agriculture

fall 2003

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

NIAA urges vigilance among DHS customs and border protection officers

The establishment of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) within the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) brought together employees from three departments of the federal government. Inside CBP, three different inspector occupations – the Customs inspector, the Immigration inspector and the Agriculture inspector – joined together at the nation's ports of entry.

To unify the duties and responsibilities of these occupations, DHS officials are creating a new position – the CBP Officer – a corps of officers who will present “one face at the border” to travelers and the importing community.

DHS officials say a single inspec-

tional workforce will enable CBP to effectively carry out its priority mission – preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the U.S., while facilitating the flow of legitimate trade and travel – as well as performing the traditional missions of the three legacy agencies.

Inspections are being divided into passenger and cargo functions and,

within the passenger function, inspectors may be stationed at sites of “primary” or “secondary” inspection.

So, what does this mean for agricultural inspections?

DHS officials say an extensive job analysis conducted by the agency showed that one officer could perform all of the primary and secondary functions that take place in the passenger

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Plans underway for 2004 NIAA Annual Meeting

“Farmland Security: Ensuring our Future” will be the theme of the 2004 Annual Meeting of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA).

Scheduled for April 4 - 8, 2004, at the Marriott City Center Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah, this gathering will include producers, veterinarians, business executives, scientists, academicians, state and federal regulatory officials and other stakeholders in the animal food and fiber industry.

The opening general session will feature a number of exceptional keynote addresses, including Homeland Security officials discussing new plans for customs and border protection, the future role of Plum Island Animal Disease Center and the proposed National Food Security Project; intelligence and terrorism experts discussing emerging threats to U.S. animal agriculture; and an agriculture official discussing applications of a national

animal identification system for rapid response to BSE, FMD and other threats.

NIAA committees will present 15 information-packed seminars addressing the breadth of issues affecting animal agriculture today. Other groups that will meet in conjunction with the NIAA Annual Meeting include the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials, National Johnes Working Group and the National Animal Health Emergency Management Steering Committee.

NIAA's mission is to provide forums for building consensus and advancing solutions for animal agriculture and to provide continuing education and communication linkages for animal agriculture professionals.

More information on the 2004 NIAA Annual Meeting can be obtained on the Internet at www.animalagriculture.org or by calling 270-782-9798.

Secretary Veneman lists protection of food supply, national animal ID system as top priorities

Remarks Made in October 12 Video Address to USAHA/AAVLD



While saying great strides have been made in the eradication and prevention of animal diseases, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman said that recent events suggest that "new threats continue to emerge."

In a video address delivered to animal health officials and industry leaders attending joint annual meetings of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) in San Diego, Calif., Veneman said, "The work you are doing to promote and protect animal health is vital to our livestock and poultry producers."

Livestock and poultry industries contribute significantly to the nation's economy, said Veneman, providing an estimated three million jobs. "This year, the value of livestock production in the United States is estimated at about \$101 billion, the second largest in history."

Veneman said pork, beef and

poultry are three of the top ten fastest growing U.S. exports, noting that animal agriculture is increasingly important to the nation's trade balance.

She said the fact that the President's budget has supported record levels of funding for USDA's food-safety programs, and significant increases for agricultural protections systems, demonstrates that protection of the food supply is a top priority of the Bush Administration.



"In the opening days of this Administration, we confronted the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Europe, and we took significant actions to prevent the disease in this country," said Veneman. "The events of September 11, 2001, led to a greater focus on intentional threats to animal production and our food system," she continued.

Veneman said stepped up

research into vaccine development and improved diagnostic measures, the establishment of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, and a new emergency operations center in Maryland are aiding the country's pest and disease infrastructure and rapid-response efforts. "Last year, our systems were put to the test with major disease outbreaks of avian influenza in Virginia and exotic Newcastle disease in California and the southwest." She said the discovery of a single case of BSE in Canada in May of this year provided another test.

"All of these animal health issues point to the importance of the development of a National Animal Identification System, which is a key priority for USDA, and I know it is for you, as well," Veneman told the audience of over 1,000 attendees. She said an effective animal identification system will help enhance the speed and accuracy of the U.S.' ability to respond to animal disease outbreaks.

"Together, we must develop a system that works."

Don Lein takes USAHA helm

Dr. Donald H. Lein, former director of the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell University, was elected president of the United States Animal Health Association at its 107th annual meeting in San Diego, Calif., in October.

More than 1,100 people – a record number for the second year in a row – attended the week-long meeting, held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association of Veterinary

Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD).

President-elect of the organization is Dr. Richard D. Willer, Arizona state veterinarian. Other officers are Dr. Bret Marsh, Indiana state veterinarian, first vice-president; Dr. Lee M. Myers, Georgia state veterinarian, second vice-president; James Leafstedt, South Dakota pork producer, third vice-president; and Dr. Jones Bryan, retired South Carolina state veterinarian, treasurer. Robert Frost, a California llama producer, is immediate past-president.

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PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

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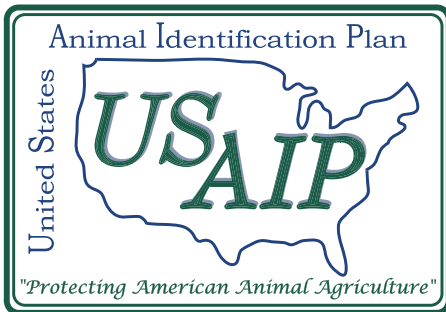
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USAHA accepts animal identification plan

At its 107th Annual Meeting in October, the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) endorsed a plan to implement a national system for animal identification as a work in progress.

The U.S. Animal Identification



Plan (USAIP), as it is called, defines the standards and framework for implementing a phased-in national food animal and livestock identification program. It was refined over the past year by 95 individuals representing 70 industry groups as well as state and federal animal health officials working collectively as the National Animal Identification Development Team.

"The goal with this national plan is to adopt national standards that will allow rapid traceback of foreign animal diseases in U.S. livestock and poultry," said Dr. Mark Engle, director of swine health programs for the National Pork Board and chair of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture's (NIAA) Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee. The plan calls for a 48-hour traceback capability in the event of a disease outbreak to assist in protection of the nation's food supply.

"We are pleased with the action of the USAHA," said Robert Fourdraine, co-chair of the National Animal ID Development Team Steering Committee. "With USAHA's acceptance, the next steps of finalizing the

Plan may be taken. Specifically, comments on the USAIP are needed from individuals or groups within the animal agriculture industry and government so the Development Team may address suggestions and concerns as implementation plans are being developed."

In addition to the comment period, Species Working Groups are being formed to advance the USAIP through development of more precise details of transition, implementation, and continuity within a timeframe consistent with the goals of the Plan.

"Recognizing the differences in how various species are raised and marketed, these working groups will be vital in developing the needed steps necessary to transition into a national identification system within the overall standards of the USAIP,"

said Fourdraine.

States, industry, USDA, the USHA committee on livestock identification and the National Institute for Animal Agriculture have been working in partnership on the plan for the past several years.

A comment period, ending Jan. 31, 2004, is now open for all interested individuals and groups to present their input and suggestions. A copy of the Plan is available at www.usaip.info. Comments may be emailed to Communication@USAIP.info, faxed to 719-538-8847, or mailed to USAIP Comments, 660 Southpointe Court, Suite 314, Colorado Springs, CO, 80906. These comments will be taken into account for the next iteration of the plan. Comments will continue to be accepted as the plan is developed.

Animal identification to be highlighted during national conference and trade show

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) has announced ID•INFO EXPO 2004, a conference and trade show devoted to the subject of animal identification and information systems.

ID•INFO EXPO 2004 is scheduled for May 18-20, 2004, in Chicago, Ill. This event follows a similar national gathering facilitated by NIAA in 2002 and will focus largely on the U.S. Animal Identification Plan that has been proposed by a team of industry representatives and government officials working on a national system for animal identification in the United States.

The preliminary schedule of events has a pre-conference seminar and technology seminar scheduled for May 18. General sessions, seminars, and breakout discussion groups are scheduled for May 19 and 20. The trade show, showcas-

ing a variety of animal identification manufacturers and information systems service providers, will open the evening of May 18 and run through the morning of May 20.

**ID•INFO
EXPO 2004**

Topics will include premises identification, group/lot ID, ID distribution, ID devices/methods, governance, security, confidentiality and many more.

Program and registration information will be published in February. Individuals wanting to be sure they are included on the mailing list are encouraged to go to www.animalagriculture.org, click on the ID•INFO EXPO logo and fill out an online information request form.

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Proposed rule to allow live animal imports from Canada issued by USDA

The United States Department of Agriculture has issued a proposed rule to amend its bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) regulations to establish a new category of regions that recognizes those that present a minimal risk of introducing BSE into the United States via the importation of certain low-risk live ruminants and ruminant products.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is seeking public comment on the proposal to allow the importation of certain live ruminants and ruminant products and byproducts from minimal risk regions under specified conditions. This proposed rule would place Canada on a list of countries considered a minimal risk for BSE, thus making Canada eligible to export certain live ruminants and ruminant products.

The proposed minimal risk region would include regions in which an animal has been diagnosed with BSE but in which specific preventive measures have been in place for an appropriate period of time that reduce the risk of BSE being introduced to the United States. Based on a comprehensive risk analysis and review, USDA believes that the surveillance, prevention and control measures implemented by Canada are sufficient to be included in the minimal risk category.

The proposed rule has a 60-day comment period. Once this period closes, USDA will consider the comments as it makes any final decisions on the importation of certain live ruminants and ruminant products from Canada and other minimal risk regions for BSE.

Harvard Risk Assessment II released

USDA has released the findings of a second assessment conducted by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis (HCRA) that confirms the findings of

the initial study released in 2001. The study found that even if infected animals or ruminant feed material entered the U.S. animal agriculture system from Canada, the risk of it spreading extensively within the U.S. herd was low, that any possible spread would now have been reversed by controls put in place in the late 1990's, and that eventually, the disease would be eliminated from the United States.

"This study shows that the measures taken in the United States over the years greatly reduce the chance of BSE spreading and help ensure that the disease will not become a major animal or public health problem in America," said Dr. George Gray, executive director of HCRA.

USDA commissioned the risk reassessment shortly after the discovery of a single case of BSE in Canada

on May 20, 2003. The study evaluates the potential for BSE to spread if it were introduced from Canada prior to May 20, when USDA banned all ruminant and ruminant products from Canada because of the discovery of the single case of BSE. The reassessment specifically examined scenarios for the likely introduction of BSE from Canada into the U.S.

A complete copy of the second Harvard Report can be obtained on the Internet at www.usda.gov.

Ruminant feed ban compliance rate near 100 percent, reports FDA

Renderers, feed mills and other firms subject to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rule banning the use of most mammalian protein have

USDA implements electronic health certificate utilizing GlobalVetLink technology

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health, a part of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) program, is working with six states on a pilot project that would allow state and federal animal health officials to have instantaneous access to information regarding livestock movements in and out of their state.

Accredited veterinarians will be able to voluntarily use the Web-based Interstate Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI) via the Internet. An ICVI will be printed out to accompany the animal and the information will be transmitted electronically to the destination state.

By using an electronic Web-based application, accredited veterinarians, and state and federal

animal health officials will be able to electronically produce, transmit, and obtain reports of interstate animal movement information.

During the next several months, California, Colorado, Florida, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin animal health officials, in partnership with USDA, will implement the electronic ICVI in their states. The ICVI software will be accessible at no cost from the USDA to the practitioners, as well as state and federal veterinarians. State fees may apply, depending upon the state.

USDA purchased an eight-year license for an ICVI software application from GlobalVetLink, LC, a provider of Internet applications.

For additional information, contact Teresa Howes at 970-494-7410 or send an e-mail to teresa.k.howes@aphis.usda.gov.

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received an impressive report card from FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine during the most recent round of inspections.

Aimed at preventing the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) should it enter the United States, FDA's ruminant feed enforcement activities included inspections of 1,664 firms handling prohibited material.

Only six firms, less than one percent, were found to have "significant objectionable conditions or practices" warranting regulatory sanctions. In those cases, prompt re-inspection occurs to determine whether adequate corrective actions have been implemented.

Ten percent of firms inspected (171), most of which were protein blenders, were issued recommendations for voluntary action on conditions of little regulatory significance, such as minor recordkeeping lapses and conditions involving non-ruminant feeds.

HHS issues new rules to enhance security of the U.S. food supply

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson has announced the issuance of two Food and Drug Administration regulations that are intended to bolster the safety and security of America's food supply. The new regulations will enable better targeted efforts to monitor and inspect imported foods and will allow quick identification and notification of food processors and other establishments involved in any deliberate or accidental contamination of food.

The two new regulations will implement key provisions of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, which provided FDA new authority to protect the nation's food supply against actual or threatened terrorist acts and other food-related emergencies.

The first regulation requires food

importers to provide the FDA with advance notice of human and animal food shipments imported or offered for import on or after Dec. 12, 2003. This will allow FDA to know, in advance, when specific food shipments will be arriving at U.S. ports of entry and what those shipments will contain. This advance information will allow the FDA, working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), to more effectively target inspections and ensure the safety of imported foods. The FDA expects to receive about 25,000 notifications about incoming shipments each day.

The second regulation requires domestic and foreign food facilities that manufacture, process, pack or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States to register with the agency by Dec. 12, 2003. As a result, FDA will have for the first time a complete roster of foreign and domestic food facilities. The requirements will enable the FDA to quickly identify and locate affected food processors and other establishments in the event of deliberate or accidental contamination of food. The FDA expects about 420,000 facilities to register under this requirement.

The FDA worked closely with CBP to ensure the new regulations promote a coordinated strategy for border protection. The rules take effect Dec. 12, 2003, in accordance with the Bioterrorism Act.

Tests show declining levels of *Salmonella* in meat, poultry products

The United States Department of Agriculture recently announced that the rate of *Salmonella* in raw meat and poultry products dropped by 66 percent over the past six years and by 16 percent compared with 2002.

Of the random samples collected and analyzed between Jan. 1 and Oct. 31, 2003 by the Food Safety and Inspection Service, 3.6 percent tested positive for *Salmonella*, as compared with 4.29 percent in 2002; 5.03 per-

cent in 2001; 5.31 percent in 2000; 7.26 percent in 1999; and 10.65 percent in 1998.

USDA recently announced data showing similar reductions in *E. coli* 0157:H7 in ground beef and *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat and poultry products.

"These results show that we are making progress in our efforts to enhance meat and poultry inspection systems," said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. "This is good news for consumers."

New educational tool on Johne's disease available through USAHA

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) has produced a new educational tool for use by animal health professionals involved with the control of Johne's disease and other on-farm biosecurity issues.

Titled "Johne's and Beyond", the CD-ROM contains 25 sets of PowerPoint slides and other essential information on this disease, which affects a large percentage of cattle worldwide and is also present in sheep, goat and deer herds.

The first edition of the CD-ROM will be provided when subscribers acquire membership to a password-protected website. New sets of slides and information will be posted on the website as they become available and eventually they will be included on an updated 2nd edition of the CD.

NJWG Educational Committee Chairman Dr. Don Hansen of Oregon State University said, "The value of a CD as well as a website is that the user can carry to lectures a ready-to-use presentation for large or small audiences without having to spend hours in preparation of a relevant talk on Johne's disease. This applies whether it is a group of veterinarians, students, dairy producers, sheep farmers, etc. There is something suitable for any relevant audience on this CD."

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Economists: U.S. on verge of becoming net agricultural importer

For more than 40 years the United States has exported more agricultural products than it has imported. That could change within a few years, said two Purdue University agricultural economists.

The gap between American export and import values is narrowing, said economists Phil Paarlberg and Phil Abbott. They predict imports could overtake exports by 2007, if current trends continue.

U.S. agricultural exports are projected to climb by \$500 million in 2004 to \$56.5 billion. Imports are estimated to jump as much as \$3.5 billion.

"What we've seen in the last several years is that agricultural exports have been relatively flat in real dollars while imports have been rising quite rapidly, even through our so-called recession," Paarlberg said. "A couple of years back imports were \$41 billion, and last year they were \$45 billion. We expect them in the coming year to climb to \$47 billion or \$48 billion.

"The last time we were a net ag importer was in the 1950s."

Fiscal year 1958-59, to be exact. At that time Europe had completed the rebuilding of its agricultural indus-

try following World War II, and demand for U.S. agricultural products stagnated.

The current sluggishness in the U.S. ag export trade dates back to 1996.

The rise in imports is closely tied to diet and lifestyle changes, Paarlberg said. Americans are consuming more foods either that aren't produced in the U.S. or produced in insufficient volumes to meet consumer needs, he said.

"Take a pizza," Paarlberg said. "If it's got black olives, where did they come from? They probably came from Morocco. If it's got sausage, that might be from a hog that came from Canada.

"If you go to a Mexican restaurant and order guacamole, chances are that came from outside the country because we don't produce that many avocados. We import even simple things like babyback ribs. We kill 100 million hogs a year, but we eat so many babyback ribs that there's a good chance those ribs came from Denmark."

Many restaurants stopped serving ribs two years ago when an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Europe

stemmed the flow of livestock imports into the U.S., Paarlberg said.

Abbott said it is a misconception that the rest of the world relies on American farm products for survival.

"The thing we need to remember is that in the rest of the world most countries are reasonably self-sufficient in agricultural commodities," he said. "Other nations produce most of their own needs, and trade meets a fairly small portion of those needs. Trade policy is important in determining how much countries let in at any given time."

Agricultural exports will continue to be a major segment of U.S. trade, even as import values grow, Abbott said.

"We need to understand that the products we're importing are different from the products that we're exporting," he said. "There's a danger in looking at agriculture as an aggregate sector and not understanding that there's a great deal of diversity in that sector. Some parts of agriculture will always be competitive with the rest of the world, and there are some things that we're better off getting from the rest of the world, and we should import them."

Tom McGinn testifies on national food security at Senate hearing

At a Senate Governmental Affairs Committee hearing in November, Dr. Thomas J. McGinn, III, director of emergency programs for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, said Congressional support is needed for a national food security project to assess vulnerabilities in the nation's food chain and agriculture infrastructure.

"We lack detailed information on the true vulnerabilities of our nation's food chain," said McGinn. "We have broad scope, very general data, but we do not understand the true nature of actual vulnerabilities at the granular level."

He said a terrorist will spend

months, even years, studying a potential target within an infrastructure before an attack. "We need to invest some level of effort to at least know what the terrorist might learn from his efforts."

McGinn called on Congressional support for a national food security program, such as one currently being proposed by the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO).

The proposed program will assist states and industry in an accurate assessment of the vulnerabilities of each component of the food chain, by commodity. Improved response and mitigation plans, vulnerability reduction programs, and advanced training and exercise pro-

grams would be developed based on the assessment, McGinn said.

He said the project would enable a "hardening" of the entire food chain.

"The effort to protect our national food chain and our agriculture infrastructure will be fraught with learning and challenges for everyone," McGinn told Senate committee members. "Just because the process will be difficult and potentially competitive with other important prevention and response needs, the effort must be made and we owe it to the people of the United States to do everything we can to protect them, their health and their economic well being in the face of terrorist and disease threats."

NIAA urges vigilance among DHS customs and border protection officers

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environment and most of the work that takes place in the cargo environment.

However, the analysis also showed that the complexities of cargo examination of certain kinds of agricultural products requires such a specialized background that a second position, the CBP Agriculture Specialist, is also being established to work with the CBP Officer in the cargo environment.

The CBP Agriculture Specialist position will complement the work of the CBP officers, officials say.

DHS will assign agriculture specialists to ports with large volumes of cargo importation, particularly in those hubs where the agriculture industry imports much of the flowers, fruit, vegetables, meat and other products of an agricultural interest.

Their assignment will be to apply their specialized backgrounds to support the CBP Officer in complex cargo examinations, pre-arrival risk analysis, and will be responsible for seizing, safeguarding, destroying, or re-exporting cargo. Agriculture Specialists will also coordinate with USDA which will continue to manage commodity pre-clearance operations, issue export certifications, identify pests, and oversee Plant Inspection Stations as well as fumigations and cold treatments.

Federal officials say the establishment of the CBP Officer is a "force multiplier" for agriculture inspection, providing a greatly expanded workforce of over 18,000 officers, trained to carry out important agriculture responsibilities in the processing of passengers and their baggage. Further, the CBP Agriculture Specialists who support the CBP Officer, will provide in-depth expertise in the analysis and examination of cargo.

Newly hired CBP Officers will receive agriculture training as part of their basic training. This will be followed by significant agriculture preparation, both classroom and on-the-job, in the port environment. Extensive cross-training will be provided to current inspectors as part of the conversion process. This cross-training will include a substantial amount of agriculture training needed to carry out the functions of the CBP Officer.

Despite these assurances, a number of agricultural organizations, including the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA), have voiced concerns that agriculture specialists are being reserved for the "secondary" function of inspections.

"Their face-to-face efforts will be key in maintaining the security of our borders and keeping our nation free of foreign animal disease."

In a recent letter to DHS Under Secretary Asa Hutchinson, who oversees border and transportation security, NIAA Chairman of the Board Kenneth E. Olson underscored the importance of maintaining a strong agricultural inspection presence and stressed the need for extensive training under the new inspection consolidation plan.

"Given the recent animal disease outbreaks in other countries, our front-line agricultural inspectors have done an exemplary job of screening passengers, inspecting luggage, and finding potentially-harmful contra-



Dr. Kenneth E. Olson
NIAA Chairman of the Board

band that could jeopardize our country's high standards of animal health," he said.

"We appreciate the efficiencies, coordination, and focus that can be achieved by combining the customs, immigration, and agricultural inspection personnel into 'one face'." Olson expressed concern, however, that these agricultural specialists will be focusing primarily on cargo-only inspections.

"While we agree this is a likely avenue for the potential introduction of a foreign animal disease – whether intentionally or unintentionally – we cannot stress the importance of maintaining vigilance by the CBP officers at the front line," said Olson. "Their face-to-face efforts will be key in maintaining the security of our borders and keeping our nation free of foreign animal disease."

Olson said NIAA strongly supports activities to assure that all Customs and Border Protection officers receive significant training on potential vectors for introduction of unwanted agricultural pests or disease. "We believe that this is critical for the protection of animal agriculture, a vital part of the United States economy."

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Production of the CD-ROM was sponsored by Biocor Animal Health, IDEXX Laboratories, Inc., Akey Feeds, American Veterinary Medical Association and the United States Department of Agriculture, with additional support from Agway, Allied Monitor, Dairy Farmers of America, Novartis, Holstein Association USA and the Federation of Animal Science Societies.

Said Biocor's Adam Yankowsky, "The more knowledge we can collect together and use effectively, the greater our chances of controlling this disease which has slowly been eating into profits from dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep and goats."

Subscriptions for the website and CD-ROM can be ordered via the Internet at www.JD-ROM.com or by calling the USAHA office in Richmond, Va., at 804-285-3210.

New animal health policy book released

Global Livestock Health Policy:

Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Positive Action, by Robert F. Kahrs, was released this fall by Iowa State Press.

This book untangles the politics, policies and pressures that shape animal disease control, food safety, and trade in livestock and poultry products in a bioterrorism-threatened, unpredictable, and highly competitive global economy.

This reference is ideal for anyone involved in the production, processing, distribution and consumption of livestock products and their impact on global stability.

It can be ordered at www.iowastatepress.com; by calling 1-800-862-6657; at Amazon.com, or at your local bookstore.

Veneman announces bovine genome sequencing project

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman has announced the launch of the \$53 million Bovine Genome

Sequencing Project to be led by the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Contributors to the collaboration include: NHGRI, \$25 million; USDA, \$11 million; the state of Texas, \$10 million; Genome Canada, \$5 million; The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization of Australia, \$1 million and Agritech Investments Ltd., Dairy Insight Inc. and AgResearch Ltd., all of New Zealand, \$1 million.

"This project is an excellent example of what can happen through public/private partnerships," said Veneman. "Sequencing the bovine genome is a vital first step that will lay the groundwork for breakthroughs that will benefit both human health and agriculture. Eliminating hunger, improving nutrition and reducing agriculture's impact on the environment are all potential outcomes of this research."

The bovine genome is similar in size to the genomes of humans and other mammals, with an estimated size of 3 billion base pairs. Besides its potential for improving dairy and

FDA issues preliminary assessment of safety of animal cloning

As part of an ongoing review of the scientific evidence regarding the safety of food products derived from animal clones, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has released a draft Executive Summary that evaluates the risks to animals involved in the cloning process.

The draft risk assessment builds on the findings of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and indicates that food products derived from animal clones and their offspring are likely to be as safe to eat as food from their non-clone counterparts, based on all the evidence available. The findings also showed that healthy adult clones are virtually indistinguishable from their conventional counterparts. Most of the data available address cattle, pig, and goat clones.

FDA's position with respect to releasing animal clones or their progeny into the food supply has not changed: these products should not be released into the food supply. Until such time as FDA makes any final decisions on cloned animals, the agency will continue to request that producers withhold these products from the market, with the full expectation that firms will comply with this request as they have willingly done in the past.

This draft assessment was developed by scientists at FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM), after the NAS published its report on animal biotechnology. The Academy concluded that, although food from animal clones posed a "low level of food safety concern," it would be prudent to have more data

with which to minimize any further safety concerns. In FDA's analysis of the available data on animal clones, no differences were detected in overall behavior and health of juvenile and adult animal clones and conventional animals, even at the level of blood chemistry.

The draft assessment also looked at the risks to animal health from cloning, and concluded that, although there were risks to animals involved in the cloning process, cloning technology does not present any type of risk that is not present with other forms of reproduction. However, the adverse outcomes may occur at a higher frequency with cloning than with other assisted reproductive technologies now in common use, such as in vitro fertilization or embryo transfer.

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meat products and enhancing food safety, adding the genomic sequence of the cow (*Bos taurus*) to the growing list of sequenced animal genomes will help researchers learn more about the human genome.

"The recent occurrence of "Mad Cow Disease," involving a single cow in Canada, demonstrated quite clearly how deeply an economy can be affected by a problem in the cattle industry and how crucial it is to avoid another situation like this one," said Dr. Martin Godbout, president & CEO of Genome Canada. "It is important for the international community to invest in fundamental science that will help us all overcome the challenges of this industry. Research in this field is imperative and Genome Canada is extremely proud to be a partner in this important project and is very enthusiastic it has now been launched."

ASI to host scrapie program information session

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), in conjunction with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, will be conducting the first in a series of national meetings at regional locations on Wed., Jan. 21, in Sacramento, Calif. to discuss the Accelerated National Scrapie Eradication Program.

Presentations will provide information on the current status of the eradication program, the results of a national slaughter surveillance study and the vision for the program's future. Ample time will be allotted for producers to ask questions and provide feedback on the successes and failures of the program as they relate to the farm and ranch.

The information session will be held in conjunction with the ASI annual convention and will be open to all producers at no charge. More information is available on the Internet at www.sheepusa.org.

President signs bill to assist veterinary graduates

President George W. Bush signed into law the National Veterinary Medical Services Act on Dec. 6. The legislation, drafted and sponsored by Mississippi Congressman Chip Pickering, will provide student loan repayment to veterinary school graduates who agree to work in underserved areas of the country. Senator Thad Cochran, also of Mississippi, sponsored the Senate companion legislation.

This act will place veterinarians in underserved areas of the country in need of veterinary health care by offering veterinary students grants to assist in repaying educational debts. Eligible students will enter into agreements with the Secretary of Agriculture for a period of time and amount of repayment of educational loans determined by the Secretary in exchange for the veterinarian's service in a shortage area including rural regions and inner-city areas.

"This act is good for the country, good for livestock and companion animal owners, good for our profession, and a step in the right direction to assist new graduates with their huge debt load," said Dr. Michael Chaddock, director of the AVMA Governmental Relations Division in Washington, D.C.

In addition, this act will establish a 'national guard' of veterinarians. In exchange for additional debt repayment, eligible students can enter into further agreements with the Secretary to assist USDA in addressing disease outbreaks, agro-terrorist threats or similar emergency situations determined by the Secretary. The Secretary would be able to mobilize these volunteers to investigate suspicious and/or treat suspicious outbreaks, or as other-

wise necessary.

"Veterinarians are highly qualified medical individuals that first notice and diagnose developing health patterns in animals," said Dr. John Thomson, Dean of Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "These first responders in the field are our front line defense against foreign or domestic disease epidemics and agro-terrorism threats. Long before the laboratory technician or the college research facility begins their work, veterinarians have already encountered the challenges."

The National Veterinary Medical Services Act has been a work in progress since its original inception in October 2000, and was supported by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges.

Also in November, another of the AVMA's legislative priorities, the Animal Drug User Fee Act, became law. The measure allows the Food and Drug Administration to collect annual user fees totaling \$43 million over five years, beginning with \$5 million in 2004. This allows for the hiring and training of additional scientific reviewers and implementation of enhanced processes to accelerate and improve the review of new animal drugs.

There is a critical shortage of veterinarians with special training in strategic disciplines within the profession, including food safety veterinarians. Although programs already exist for recent graduates of human health professions (doctors and nurses), as well as educators, with loan forgiveness in return for work in underserved areas, no such program existed for veterinary school graduates until this act.

NIAA members in the news

DHS names Beth Lautner as Plum Island chief



The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced the selection of Dr. Beth Lautner as director of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center. Lautner is currently

vice president of science and technology at the National Pork Board.

Lautner will take the reins at Plum Island Jan. 1 from acting director Marc Hollander, who has been in charge since DHS took over responsibility of Plum Island from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in June.

Dr. Paul Sundberg was named vice president of science and technology at the National Pork Board, replacing Lautner. Sundberg previously served on Lautner's staff as assistant vice president of veterinary issues. Pork Board CEO Steven Murphy said he has mixed emotions about Lautner's opportunity.

"We are fortunate to have someone with Paul Sundberg's knowledge, passion and skills in place to continue to oversee the vital scientific work being conducted for pork producers with their Checkoff investment. And it's a great compliment to our industry and to our staff that Dr. Beth Lautner has been selected to head the Plum Island facility, whose research and diagnostic work is critical to this country's food safety. But her energy and devotion to serving the needs of pork producers will be sorely missed," said Murphy.

Lautner's appointment, which makes her the first female director in the 50-year history of PIADC, garnered statements from others, as well.

"She's absolutely the best person for the job. She has a terrific background," said Maureen McCarthy, Homeland Security director of the Office of Research and Development, which oversees the agency's labs.

"I hope that she will have the

mandate and ability to carry out the many security objectives that I have discussed with Secretary (Tom) Ridge," Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton told *Newsday*. "The mission of this facility is vitally important to our national security." Clinton (D-N.Y.) represents the state where Plum Island is located.

Lautner is chair of NIAA's Animal Health and International Trade Committee.

Neil Hammerschmidt accepts role with USDA to coordinate animal ID



Neil Hammerschmidt, a longtime advocate of a national system for animal identification in the United States, has accepted a role at the National Center for Animal

Health Programs (NCAHP) in Riverdale, Md. Hammerschmidt has been assigned to NCAHP's Eradication and Surveillance Staff, a component of USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services, as animal identification staff coordinator.

Most recently, Hammerschmidt served as chief operating officer of the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium, providing overall direction to the development and implementation of a "farm to plate" animal identification and information system to support marketing programs and regulated animal health and food safety programs.

Prior to that, Hammerschmidt was the executive director for Marketing and Dairy Herd Services at Holstein Association, USA. There, among other accomplishments, he developed and implemented the plan for the National Farm Animal Identification and Records (FAIR) program as a model for a national animal identification system.

"With over 29 years of production

agriculture and management experience, Neil will be a valuable resource to the agency," said Dr. Michael J. Gilsdorf, Chief of NCAHP's Eradication and Surveillance Staff. "His interaction with national industry groups is extensive."

Prior to beginning his duties at APHIS on Nov. 3, Hammerschmidt was serving as chair of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture's (NIAA) Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee.

Rich Breitmeyer honored by California poultry industry



Dr. Richard Breitmeyer, California State Veterinarian and Director of Animal Health and Food Safety at the California Department of Food and Agriculture, was

named the recipient of the California Poultry Federation's highest honor at the federation's annual conference held recently in San Francisco.

Dr. Breitmeyer was presented with the prestigious award at the poultry federation's annual banquet held at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel. In presenting the award, federation chairman Richard Zacky acknowledged Breitmeyer's efforts in marshaling the resources of the CDFA, USDA and the state's poultry industry in battling an outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) in Southern California during the past year.

"His efforts were exemplary in halting this disease in the south and preventing its movement to Northern California," said Zacky. "Dr. Breitmeyer listened intently to industry's concerns regarding this disease and continues to work closely with all of us as we seek to keep END and other disease from affecting our industry."

Breitmeyer is a member of the NIAA Board of Directors serving on its Executive Committee.

NIAA welcomes the following as new members!!

National Associations & Commercial Organizations:

Premier Sheep Supplies, Ltd
 Contact: Mr. Stan Potratz
 2031 300th Street
 Washington, IA 52352

Temple Tag, Ltd.
 Contact: Mr. Bill McCoy
 P.O. Box 369
 Temple, TX 76503

For a complete NIAA membership listing, visit our website at www.animalagriculture.org

State-level Associations & Publicly Supported Institutions/Agencies:

Kentucky Veterinary Medical Assn.
 Contact: Ms. Louise Cook
 P.O. Box 4067
 Frankfort, KY 40604-4067

USDA, APHIS, Wildlife Services
 Contact: Mr. William H. Clay
 14th Independence Ave. SW
 Room 1624
 Washington, DC 20250

Dr. Thomas DeLiberto and
 Dr. Robert G. McLean
 4101 LaPorte Avenue
 Fort Collins, CO 80521-2154

Affiliate Membership (Non-voting):

American Dairy Goat Association
 Contact: Ms. Shirley McKenzie
 209 West Main Street
 P.O. Box 865
 Springdale, NC 28160

Zee Tags Limited
 Contact: Mr. S. Tree
 P.O. Box 302 477, North Harbour
 Auckland 1311
 New Zealand

For information about membership in NIAA, contact Michele Vise-Brown at (270) 782-9798, Ext. 105 or mvisebrown@animalagriculture.org.

Renewing members!!

(during the past quarter)

National Associations & Commercial Organizations:

ALLFLEX USA, Inc
 American Association of Equine Practitioners
 American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners
 Centers for Epidemiology & Animal Health
 Critereon Company, LLC.
 GlobalVetLink, L.C.
 Ketchum Manufacturing, Inc
 Murphy-Brown, LLC
 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
 National Band & Tag Company
 National Livestock Producers Association

State-level Associations & Publicly Supported Institutions/Agencies:

Alabama Farmers Federation
 Arkansas Farm Bureau
 Florida Farm Bureau Federation
 Idaho Department of Agriculture
 Illinois Milk Producers Association
 Iowa Pork Producers Association
 Kansas Farm Bureau
 Kansas State University, College of Veterinary Medicine
 Kentucky Beef Network
 Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, Commodity Relations
 Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
 Massachusetts Bureau of Animal Health
 Michigan Farm Bureau Federation
 Michigan State University, Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health
 Minnesota Pork Producers Association
 Mississippi State University, College of Veterinary Medicine
 Missouri Department of Agriculture
 Murray State University, Breathitt Veterinary Center
 Nevada Department of Agriculture
 Purdue University, Department of Animal Sciences

South Carolina Pork Board
 The Ohio State University, College of Veterinary Medicine
 University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine
 Washington State Department of Agriculture, Food Safety/Animal Health
 Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection

Individual Members (Self-employed):

Dr. Angela Baysinger
 Mr. Jeff Galle
 Mr. Robert Jameson
 Mr. Ken VanGilst, V.G. Farms
 Mr. Max Waldo

Affiliate Membership (Non-voting):

Dr. Gino Caputo, Rome, Italy
 Mr. Tom Haas
 Mr. Jim Handley
 Dr. K. Jim
 National Meat Association
 Dr. William G. Queen

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NIAA hires new director of member relations



Michele Vise-Brown has been hired as Director of Member Relations for the National Institute for Animal Agriculture. She began her duties on Dec. 1.

Vise-Brown is a 1996 graduate of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture with a B.S. in Animal Science. Upon graduation, she began her career at PIC USA, where most recently, she served as Customer Service Manager at PIC's headquarters in Franklin, Ky. She has also spent time in PIC's East Region office in Raleigh, N.C., and has helped to service accounts with herd sizes ranging from 10 to 600,000 sows.

While a student at U.K., Vise-Brown worked as an assistant at the

University of Kentucky Livestock Disease Diagnostic Center, and in stints at Kentucky Dairy Records, Inc. and Long Valley Equestrian Center. She was an active member of the U.K. Block and Bridle Club, Agriculture Student Council and was president of the U.K. Agribusiness Club. She also served on the U.K. horse judging, dairy judging and equestrian teams.

Vise-Brown is a lifetime member of the American Quarter Horse Association and American Simmental Association, a current member of the American Angus Association and American Kennel Club, and serves as a 4-H volunteer. She resides near Bowling Green, Ky., in the Woodburn community in southern Warren County with her husband, David.

"We are pleased to have Michele join the NIAA staff," said NIAA President and Chief Executive Officer Glenn N. Slack. "Member relations is

a vital aspect of our operations and I know Michele will represent the interests of our members extremely well."

Vise-Brown fills the position vacated by Michelle Thomas, who is now the proud mother of Jesse Lee Thomas, born October 10. Thomas will continue to work with NIAA on a contract basis in the areas of committee operations, website operations and meeting and event planning.

NIAA Upcoming Events

2004 NIAA Annual Meeting

April 4-8

Salt Lake City, Utah

ID•INFO EXPO 2004

May 18-20

Chicago, Illinois

Place these dates on your calendar!

See www.animalagriculture.org for more details.

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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE
fall 2003

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