

# Equine HEALTH REPORT

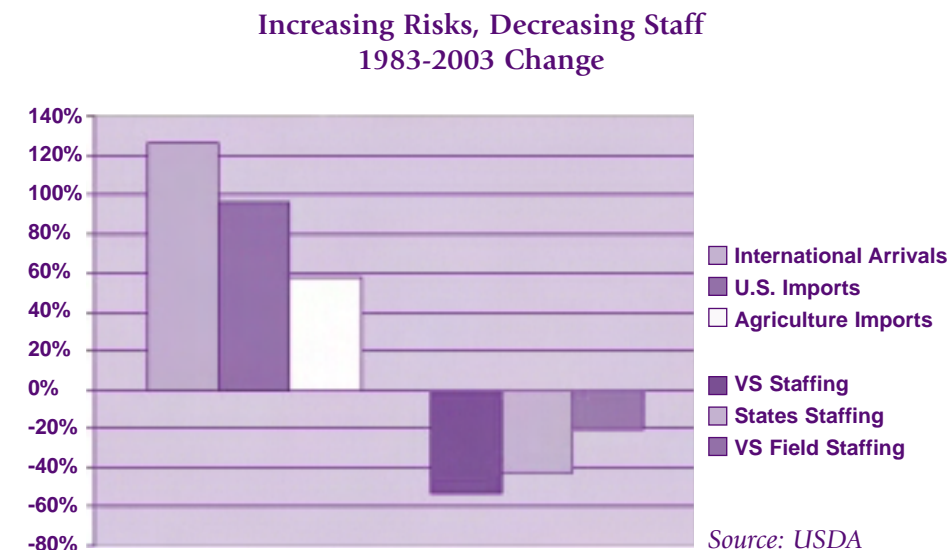
A National Institute for Animal Agriculture Publication

Fall 2003

## APHIS Challenged with Increasing Risks, Decreasing Staff

How safe is American agriculture? With recent changes in trade protocols, the increased volume of international trade and travel, and the threat of bioterrorism, it's easy to be overwhelmed with concerns. Toss in wildlife diseases and emerging diseases, and the pressures on USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to keep us all safe seem insurmountable.

"The current APHIS cadre of veterinarians and animal health professionals has been stretched to the limit handling the increased workload associated with trade obligations and emergencies," says Dr. Ron DeHaven, deputy adminis-



trator for USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services (VS). "This huge demand on limited resources could place American agriculture, and potentially human health, at risk."

### Current Animal Health Infrastructure

The U.S. government, including the uniformed services, currently employs approximately 2,050 veterinarians. Over half, about 1,059, work for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Another 463 are in the uniformed services. APHIS employs 531 veterinarians; 99 are in either Animal Care or Plant Protection and Quarantine, leaving only 432 in VS. Of those, 322 work in the field, with the balance performing duties in laboratories, regional offices, and headquarters.

Since 1994, the number of field veterinarians has fallen from 404 to 322, a decrease of more than 20 percent.

"Reductions of this magnitude have stretched remaining resources beyond the point where they can be responsive to both ongoing work and emergencies," DeHaven says.

One very important part of the ongoing APHIS-VS work is the investigation of suspected foreign animal diseases (FADs). After 10 years of consistent demand for about 300 such investigations per year, numbers rose to 384 in 2000, 792 in 2001, 835 in 2002 and, as of November 20, 2003, 376 for fiscal year 2003.

"Responding quickly to reports of suspected FADs is nearly as important as responding quickly to

### Inside This Issue...

#### PAGE 2

Secretary Veneman Lists National Animal ID System Among Top Priorities

#### PAGE 3

USAHA Accepts Animal ID Plan

#### PAGE 5

USAHA Urges Moratorium on New EIA Lab Personnel Training

#### PAGE 6

Euthanasia: Guidance for a Difficult Decision

#### PAGE 7

NIAA Urges Vigilance Among DHS Customs, Border Officers

*(continued on page 4)*

# Secretary Veneman Lists National Animal ID System Among 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.,

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,

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

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."

"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

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."



## Equine Health Report

Fall 2003

*Publisher*

National Institute for  
Animal Agriculture  
Glenn N. Slack, President & CEO

*Contributing Writer*

Linda L. Leake

*Equine Health Report* provides the latest information on issues pertinent to equine health initiatives, strategies, research and regulatory action. It is a communications initiative of the NIAA Equine Health Committee and is produced in cooperation with USDA-APHIS. Reprinting is encouraged.

For a free subscription, send your name and mailing address to NIAA at:  
1910 Lyda Avenue

Bowling Green, KY 42104-5809  
ph.: 270-782-9798 fax: 270-782-0188  
e-mail: [NIAA@animalagriculture.org](mailto:NIAA@animalagriculture.org)  
Web site: [www.animalagriculture.org](http://www.animalagriculture.org)



# 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.

"We are pleased with the action of the USAHA," said Robert Fourdraine, co-chair of the National Animal ID Development Team Steering Committee and vice chair of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture's (NIAA) Animal Identification and Information Systems 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 USAHA committee on livestock identification and the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) 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](http://www.usaip.info). Comments

may be emailed to [Communication@USAIP.info](mailto: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.

The National Animal Identification Development Team comprises a diverse group of livestock industry participants including producers, producers organizations, breed associations, marketers, and processors as well as state and federal animal health officials committed to the goal of developing a standardized national identification system to assist in rapid animal traceback in the event of an animal health emergency.

## USDA Implements Electronic Health Certificate

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 can 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](mailto:teresa.k.howes@aphis.usda.gov).

# APHIS Challenged with Increasing Risks, Decreasing Staff

(continued from page 1)

actual disease outbreaks," DeHaven says. "The mere report of a suspected case of foot-and-mouth disease can dramatically impact markets and if an FAD exists, a quick response can limit the magnitude of an outbreak."



**Dr. Ron DeHaven**  
Deputy Administrator  
USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services

## Higher Trade Volume

The value of U.S. imports has doubled since 1993. With this steady upward trend in the number of products entering the country, the opportunity for exotic pests and diseases to grace us with their presence has increased accordingly.

Moreover, there was a 127 percent increase in international arrivals in the U.S. from 1980-2000, including Americans traveling home from overseas, and foreign tourists and business passengers coming here.

"Each of these international travelers could potentially be bringing with them a prohibited product that harbors a FAD agent," DeHaven says.

"Since federal veterinarians have

responsibilities in both the import and export areas, APHIS veterinarians have become more involved in importation issues related to commodity clearance, certification of disease-free status, and risk analysis," he reports. Reservoirs of infection in wild animals also offer a constant threat to domestic livestock populations, he adds.

## Responding to Emergency Outbreaks

On a positive note, to minimize market losses from pests and diseases entering the country, APHIS has been increasing its access to and use of technology. Moreover, APHIS partners with states and other federal entities to ensure consistent data analysis capabilities, tracking systems, and compatible software and hardware.

APHIS recently opened a state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center in Riverdale, MD for managing agricultural health emergencies.

"However, the recent exotic Newcastle disease (END) emergency in California has demonstrated the critical need to have more veterinarians and other animal health professionals available for quick deployment to the outbreak site," DeHaven says.

## State and Local Government Animal Health Infrastructure

APHIS has traditionally relied on states to provide support for emergencies and hoped to do the same for the END program.

However, 40 states have fewer animal health personnel today than they did 20 years ago. Key border states have seen dramatic reductions between 1983 and 2003: California from 95 animal health

professionals to 74; Florida from 401 to 147; Texas from 334 to 201.

*"The mere report of a suspected case of foot-and-mouth disease can dramatically impact markets and if an FAD exists, a quick response can limit the magnitude of an outbreak."*

What's more, DeHaven points out, diseases are also now being found in urban settings, where normal farm biosecurity measures are not in place. "The bottom line is that states that receive a large amount of traffic from foreign countries are at a special risk," he says.

The number of animal health professionals in the agriculture sector is declining and so is the number of veterinarians. Specifically, the American Veterinary Medical Association count of state and local government veterinarians decreased from 740 in 1998 to 554 in 2002 (322 are state government veterinarians), a reduction of 25 percent.

## Potential Solutions

APHIS has identified several ways to help address the problem of handling emergencies, a combination of which is probably necessary, DeHaven says. "However, the one essential component is to increase the number of veterinarians actually on board in APHIS and available for immediate deployment," he emphasizes.

To that end, APHIS is considering:

1. Creating a cadre of full time APHIS veterinarians whose primary responsibility would be emergency action to deal with animal pest and disease outbreaks.
2. Making the best possible use of contract veterinarians. "The level of contractor training in regulatory animal health is significantly lower than that of our permanent staff," DeHaven says, "so we would have to educate them in federal methods and procedures."
3. Enhancing the use of veterinarians from other federal and state agencies and hire temporary employees on an as-needed basis.
4. Enhancing the use of accredited veterinarians to perform, for a fee, tasks such as monitoring caged birds remaining on dangerous contact premises in programs like END.
5. Making APHIS a more competitive employer.

APHIS is exploring the possibility of creating non-supervisory technical positions at higher pay levels, DeHaven says.

"We have exciting work in APHIS, not just in emergency response and preparedness, but also in tackling some of the endemic and emerging diseases," he relates enthusiastically. "More outreach to veterinary professionals will help us attract top notch people."

*Linda L. Leake*

*If you are a veterinarian interested in USDA APHIS, Veterinary Services employment opportunities, VS Careers Program job announcements can be found at: [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/vs-cp.htm](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/vs-cp.htm); APHIS job announcements can be found at [www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/job\\_search.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/job_search.html), or contact Eileen Cramer, VS Management Support Staff, at 301-734-3826.*

## USAHA Urges Moratorium on New EIA Lab Personnel Training

### *Three-Tier System for EIA Serologic Diagnosis Advocated*

The Committee on Infectious Diseases of Horses of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) is urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture to place a moratorium on the training of new personnel for new equine infectious anemia (EIA) laboratories for a period of two years, starting immediately.

In a resolution passed by members attending the association's 107th annual meeting in October, USAHA expressed concern that there are currently over 500 approved EIA testing laboratories, with wide variation in the number of laboratories per state. USAHA says the high number of laboratories impedes federal and state oversight and assessment of quality control of testing.

"There is inconsistency among states in regards to the number of EIA laboratories allowed and these decisions are not always based on EIA program goals," stated the resolution.

Saying the success of the EIA control program is dependent upon adequate quality control in approved laboratories, USAHA wants to stem this laboratory "proliferation" trend until a reassessment of the EIA program, currently underway, can be completed.

In related resolutions, USAHA is requesting USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, to work with the infectious diseases of horses committee to develop a proposal for a national EIA certification program and consider adopting a three-tier system for EIA laboratory diagnosis.

The certification program would provide regionalization protocol for the disease and seek to reduce testing costs. The committee says the horse industry spends \$50 million annually to test for the disease, and with 452 reactors found nationally in 2002, that translates to \$40,000 for each reactor.

The three-tier system for serologic diagnosis calls for EIA ELISA laboratories at the first tier; EIA referral laboratories at the second tier; and EIA reference laboratories at the third tier.

The first tier would only perform ELISA techniques for serologic diagnosis. Referral laboratories would receive and test positive samples from first tier laboratories and forward discrepant samples to an EIA reference laboratory.

Serving as third tier reference laboratories would be USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, and the Kentucky EIA Reference Laboratory located at the University of Kentucky's Gluck Equine Research Center in Lexington.

USAHA advocates that the proposed system will result in increased standardization, oversight and accuracy in reporting of EIA test results. USAHA would like to see implementation of the new system by January 2006.

The Committee also approved a draft Equine Viral Arteritis Uniform Methods and Rules (UM&R), issued September 2003, as a working document subject to possible further amendments, and agreed to assist in its wide dissemination for comment to USDA.

# Euthanasia: Guidance for a Difficult Decision

Difficult as it may be to contemplate, there may come a time when, for humane or other reasons, you need to consider euthanasia for your horse. Choosing whether, or when, to end a beloved animal's life may be the hardest decision you ever have to make regarding your horse's welfare. However, it may be one of the most responsible and compassionate things you can do for your horse.

There is a wide range of circumstances under which euthanasia is a reasonable and responsible choice, and every case is unique. The right choice is clearly the one that is in the best interest of the horse.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) recommends that you discuss the following questions with your veterinarian to help you decide what is right for your horse:

1. What is the likelihood of recovery or at least a return to pasture soundness or some level of usefulness?
2. Is the horse suffering?
3. How long will the horse experience the current level of pain or debility?
4. Does the horse continue to show an interest and desire to live, or has it become depressed or despondent?
5. What kind of special care will the horse require, and can you meet its needs?
6. Can you continue to provide for the horse financially?
7. What are your alternatives?

Veterinarians also consider many factors when determining if euthanasia should be considered as an option. The AAEP has developed guidelines to help your veterinarian assist you during this very difficult time. The AAEP's standards are designed to avoid or end incurable and excessive suffering and apply to all horses, regardless of their monetary value.

Among the AAEP's guidelines for veterinarians are the following test statements:

- Is the condition chronic or incurable?
- Does the immediate condition suggest a hopeless prognosis for life?
- Is the horse a hazard to himself or his handlers?
- Will the horse require continuous medication for the relief of pain for the remainder of its life?

As the horse's owner, you ultimately have the responsibility for determining your horse's fate. Your veterinarian can provide you with medical information and help you fully understand the implications for the horse's future. Your veterinarian can also explain the options and offer comfort and support. But the decision ultimately rests with you, as your veterinarian cannot make this decision for you. If you are in doubt about the prognosis or your options, get a second opinion. It is important for your peace of mind that you feel sure you are making the right decision.

For more information about preparing for and making this difficult decision, ask your equine veterinarian for the euthanasia

client education brochure, provided by the AAEP in partnership with Bayer Animal Health, an AAEP Educational Partner. The brochure can also be viewed online at [www.myHorseMatters.com](http://www.myHorseMatters.com), the AAEP's Web site for all matters relating to horse health.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners, headquartered in Lexington, Ky., was founded in 1954 as a non-profit organization dedicated to the health and welfare of the horse. Currently, AAEP reaches more than 5 million horse owners through its nearly 7,000 members worldwide and is actively involved in ethics issues, practice management, research and continuing education in the equine veterinary profession and horse industry.

*Source: American Association of Equine Practitioners*



# 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 inspectional 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 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 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.

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.

“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.

## DHS Names 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.

Pork Board CEO Steven Murphy said he has mixed emotions about Lautner's opportunity. "... 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 makes her the first female director in the 50-year history of PIADC.

"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.

## 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](http://www.iowastatepress.com); by calling 1-800-862-6657; at Amazon.com, or at your local bookstore.

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 82  
Bowling Green, KY  
42104

**Equine**  
HEALTH REPORT  
National Institute for Animal Agriculture  
1910 Lyda Avenue  
Bowling Green, KY 42104