

Equine HEALTH REPORT

A National Institute for Animal Agriculture Publication

Spring/Summer 2006

USDA Proposes Changes to the Veterinary Accreditation Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is proposing to amend the regulations regarding the National Veterinary Accreditation Program to establish two accreditation categories in place of the current category, add requirements for supplemental training and renewal of accreditation, and offer accreditation specializations.

Under the proposed rule, Category I would authorize veterinarians to perform accredited duties on companion animals only. Veterinarians would be authorized to perform accredited duties on all species to include poultry, equines and livestock under Category II. The new two-

tiered system would replace the current structure under which an accredited veterinarian is authorized to perform accredited duties on all species.

APHIS is proposing these changes in order to support its animal health safeguarding initiatives, to involve accredited veterinarians in integrated surveillance activities and to make the provisions governing the National Veterinary Accreditation Program more uniform and consistent.

These proposed changes would increase the level of training and skill of accredited veterinarians in the areas of disease prevention and preparedness for animal health emergencies in the United

States.

Notice of this proposed rule was published in the June 1 *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before July 31. If you wish to submit a comment using the Internet, go to the Federal eRulemaking portal at www.regulations.gov and, in the "Search Regulations and Federal Actions" box, select "Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service" from the agency drop-down menu; then click on "Submit." In the Docket ID column, select APHIS-2006-0093 to submit or view public comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically. ●

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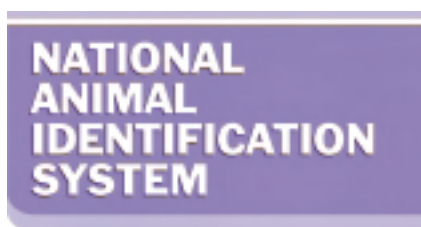
The American Association of Equine Practitioners, Keeneland, the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association and Kentucky Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders were among other sponsors who hosted a Welcome to Kentucky Reception at Churchill Downs for the 2006 annual meeting of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture in Louisville in April. Here, Kathy Sibbel of Iowa found herself within a nose of Virginia's Gale Johnson during a simulated race at the racetrack's Kentucky Derby Museum.

Johanns Releases NAIS Implementation Plan

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns has announced the release of an implementation plan that outlines timelines and benchmarks for the establishment of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), along with a plan for the initial integration of private and state animal tracking databases with NAIS.

"Developing an effective animal identification system has been a high priority for USDA and we've made significant strides toward achieving a comprehensive U.S. system," said Johanns. "We recognize that this represents one of the largest systematic changes ever faced by the livestock industry."

The implementation plan



continues to set an aggressive timeline for ensuring full implementation of the NAIS by 2009. It establishes benchmarks for incrementally accomplishing the remaining implementation goals to enable all components of the NAIS to be operational by 2007, and to achieve full producer participation by 2009.

Several important components have already been accomplished. These include the development of premises registration systems in each state and the issuance of guidelines for the manufacture and distribution of animal identification numbers. More than 270,000 premises are currently registered.

"We have a plan in place and we need producers to take the first step by registering for a premises identification number," said Jim Niewold, a pork producer from Loda, Ill., and member of the Swine ID Implementation Task Force.

"The program was developed by producers to protect animal health. Voluntary implementation of the program by our industry will help us transition smoothly . . ." Niewold said.

Standards for Database Integration

USDA also released the general technical standards for animal tracking databases that will enable integration of private systems with the NAIS. Private data-

base owners are invited to submit applications for system evaluation to USDA and offer feedback as the final technical requirements are established. USDA will then enter into cooperative agreements with owners of databases that meet the standards. The application for system evaluation and a draft cooperative agreement are available on the NAIS web site at www.usda.gov/nais.

By early 2007, USDA expects to have the technology in place, called the Animal Trace Processing System or commonly known as the portal system. The animal tracking databases will record and store animal movement tracking information for livestock that state and federal animal health officials will query only for animals of interest in a disease investigation.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is also finalizing \$3 million in funds that will be awarded to a number of states and tribes to conduct field trials to analyze information pertaining to animal identification. Field trials will focus on the evaluation of new technologies for animal identification and automated data collection. APHIS will also fund an economic study focusing on the cost of NAIS implementation within a state; the development of procedures to measure the performance of identification devices and a bi-state study to develop recommendations regarding livestock exhibitions to achieve compatibility with the NAIS.

The NAIS implementation plan, along with more information about the program, is available at www.usda.gov/nais. ●



Equine Health Report

Spring/Summer 2006

Equine Health Report provides the latest information on issues pertinent to swine 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.

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ID/INFO EXPO 2006 to Highlight Practical Animal ID Solutions

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) has announced plans for ID/INFO EXPO 2006, a national conference and trade show devoted to animal identification and information systems technology. This year's event will take place, August 22-24 in Kansas City, Mo.

"We are expecting a great meeting for the latest information in animal identification," said R. Scott Stuart, NIAA Chairman of the Board and CEO of the National Livestock Producers Association. "Our planning committee is working diligently in finalizing what looks to be an excellent program."

A trade show, showcasing a variety of animal identification and information systems technology, will take place on August 22 & 23. In addition to the trade show, ID/INFO EXPO 2006 will feature:

August 22:

- Pre-Conference seminar outlining the basics of NAIS with exclusive species working group reports and a review of pending revisions to ISO standards.

ID•INFO EXPO 2006

- An in-depth seminar looking at key elements of USDA's IT Infrastructure, specifically the AIN Management System and the recently announced Animal Trace Processing System (ATPS).
- A half-day of technology seminars from the leading developers, suppliers, and information managers engaged in animal identification and traceability.

August 23:

- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns has been invited to provide the keynote address.
- A review of state legislative



efforts to implement the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), including legal authority and FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) issues.

- A review and discussion on ongoing NAIS education and outreach efforts.
- A panel discussion featuring NAIS proponents and opponents discussing the merits of a national animal identification system.

The third and final day will go beyond NAIS with a complete focus on the practical application of animal ID solutions. Presentations and discussion will highlight current services and value-added programs that have already been implemented and are working for producers.

Online registration is now open. NIAA is offering membership and early registration discounts with discounted rates offered until July 31. Information, including registration, lodging, and preliminary schedule of events, is available on the Internet at animalagriculture.org/id/IDINFOEXPO2006/Default.htm, or by calling 270-782-9798. ●

Equine Species ID Working Group Releases Informational Booklet on NAIS

The Equine Species Working Group (ESWG) has developed an informational booklet titled *NAIS and Horses: the Facts Surrounding the National Animal Identification System as it Applies to the Horse Industry in the U.S.*

This booklet was put together in an effort to answer the many questions and concerns that have been raised from the equine industry on the very important and difficult issue of the potential application of the national ID sys-

tem to horses.

The booklet addresses the following topics: history of the NAIS, why the horse industry should be involved in developing an acceptable NAIS, equine diseases of concern, methods of equine identification, potential benefits, current status of the NAIS, frequently asked questions, and a list of Equine Species Working Group members.

According to the American Horse Council, it is important

that equine organizations, events, service providers and horse owners know the facts so they can learn about the NAIS, the efforts of the ESWG, and how a national equine identification plan might affect them, should one become mandatory. The booklet is currently available to download from the AHC website, www.horsecouncil.org.



Forward Progress with NAIS

As of June 19, 2006, nearly 273,000 livestock premises have been registered under the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), accounting for approximately 13 percent of the national total, according to Dr. John Wiemers, senior staff veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"Twenty states have registered 10 percent or more of their premises," Wiemers says. "The states have been doing a great job of promoting premises registration, but there is still a lot of work to be done to meet our goal of having 25 percent of all premises registered by January 2007."

As of June 2006, Wisconsin is the only state with a mandatory premises registration program. The state legislation establishing mandatory registration was driven by the efforts of the livestock industries in the state. "This attests to the fact that livestock producers understand the value of having a national identification program and registering their premises," Wiemers says. "Even though the law has only been in effect for a short time, nearly seventy percent of the estimated number of premises in Wisconsin have been registered."

While the states have been busy registering premises, USDA has been busy evaluating applications from manufacturers interested in producing NAIS-approved tags. "We hope to complete the



Dr. John Wiemers

evaluations and provide feedback to the manufacturers by the end of the summer," Wiemers relates. "Tags that are compliant with our performance standards can then be put on the market." All

approved tags will include an official U.S. shield, the U.S. country code (840), plus 12 additional numbers.

The USDA is also evaluating private animal movement databases to facilitate the integration of these systems with the NAIS.

"USDA is building a portal, referred to as the Animal Trace Processing System, that will allow state and federal animal health officials to query the private databases during a disease investigation to identify the premises where an animal has been and other animals that came in contact with that animal," Wiemers explains.

The ultimate goal is to be able to initiate a search with an animal identification number and to find out all the places where that animal has been, while maintaining data security. Once the database systems are evaluated, USDA may enter into cooperative agreements with the database owners to gain access to the animal movement data, Wiemers says.

"We're still on target to have the NAIS fully implemented by January 2009." Wiemers reports.

Questions remain

Nonetheless, livestock producers have lots of questions regarding the identification and tracking

Premises Progress

The states with the greatest number of registered premises are:

1)	Wisconsin	51,037
2)	Pennsylvania	29,790
3)	Texas	16,014
4)	Idaho	15,246
5)	New York	13,288
6)	Michigan	13,250
7)	Tennessee	10,159
8)	Indiana	9,711
9)	Minnesota	9,442
10)	Nebraska	8,515

Relative to percentage of premises registered, the leading states are:

1)	Wisconsin	68%
2)	Idaho	51
3)	Pennsylvania	43
4)	North Dakota	38
5)	Utah	35
6)	New York	33
7)	West Virginia	29
8)	Michigan	28
9)	Massachusetts	22
10)	Nevada	21

portions of the program, according to Dr. Robert Fourdraine, Chief Operating Officer for the Wisconsin Livestock ID Consortium, a nonprofit group currently represented by 59 livestock producer and allied industry organizations.

"Producers are picking up little bits and pieces of information here and there, but some of the information being disseminated is incorrect, Fourdraine says. "We must explain to producers what NAIS is and what it isn't. It's important that we keep providing people with the right messages and explain clearly how NAIS will be implemented."

On June 2, 2006 USDA released a document entitled *The National Animal Identification System: A Guide for Small Scale or Non-Commercial Producers*. "There is a misunderstanding about NAIS in regards to commercial, non-commercial, small or large farms," Fourdraine says. "NAIS is not about size of operation, but rather about the type of events livestock owners participate in. The document released by USDA pertains to producers that do not participate in commerce."

The NAIS will have little or no impact on those types of operations, Fourdraine says. "Some states may or may not require non-commercial operations to register their premises," he points out. "However, as explained in the USDA document, identification of individual animals or movement reporting would not be needed for those not participating in any events that involve higher risks for spreading or obtaining a disease."

On April 5, 2006, Fourdraine served as moderator of a major animal ID seminar at the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) Annual Meeting.

The following take home messages emerged during that event, Fourdraine reports. 1) People are still looking for directions on how the NAIS effort will be implemented. 2) There are various points of view on NAIS. 3) There is respectful disagreement among stakeholders on the best approach to implementing NAIS. 4) There's agreement that stakeholders need to explain the correct facts about NAIS to livestock producers. 5) There's a need for all stakeholders to continue working together, and the input of all parties is crucial to resolving gray areas. The gray areas include issues such as the nuts and

bolts of developing the NAIS database, the cost of implementing NAIS, how the technology will work, data security and confidentiality issues.

Stakeholder forum

"All of these concerns warrant further discussion," Fourdraine says. "The NIAA ID Info Expo August 22-24, 2006 in Kansas City will offer opportunities for interested parties to hear recommendations from all the species groups and view technologies currently available to producers. It's important for everyone to know that the ID Info Expo is not about taking sides, instead its intent is to be a forum for all stakeholders to obtain the latest information."

Some people think NAIS is a whole new program and animal ID has never been done before, Fourdraine says. "But there are animal health, identification and movement regulations in effect today depending on the state you live in," he points out.

There are disease control initiatives like the scrapie program for sheep and Coggins testing for horses. "No one wants to mess up these existing programs," Fourdraine says. "So stakeholders are still working on how to fit all the pieces together to create one animal ID program with common standards that works for producers without compromising successful disease programs currently in place."

Stakeholders agree there's a need to improve the existing system to have traceability for disease issues, Fourdraine says. "Most people don't have a problem with premises registration," he relates. "Producer groups are actively



Neil Hammerschmidt, Dr. Dave Morris and Dr. Robert Fourdraine address questions during the NIAA Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee meeting.

involved promoting premises registration. Most people aren't opposed to a national system for animal identification. They just want to know how it will work and what the various roles of the federal and state governments and industry will be."

"The biggest challenge we're facing right now is that NAIS facts are not being correctly represented by the media," Fourdraine emphasizes. "Those with the wrong information are getting more media exposure than livestock industry stakeholders that participated in the design and development of the NAIS. Livestock producers, industry and USDA need to cooperatively do a better job of getting correct information out there."

For more information about NAIS, check out: animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml.

For more information about the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium, check out: www.wiid.org.

For more information about the 2006 ID Info Expo, check out: www.animalagriculture.org/id/IDINFOEXPO2006/Default.hm. ●

*By Linda L. Leake
Contributing Editor*

News Briefs News Briefs News Briefs News Briefs News Briefs News Briefs

FSIS Establishes Fee-For-Service Program for Ante-Mortem Inspection of Horses

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service has announced an interim final rule establishing a voluntary fee-for-service program under which establishments that slaughter horses can continue to receive ante-mortem inspection.

The FY 2006 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act included a section prohibiting the use of appropriated funds to pay the salaries or expenses of personnel to inspect horses. However, report language attached to the Act recognized FSIS' obligation under the law to inspect horses.

This program will allow slaughter establishments to apply and pay for ante-mortem inspection of horses. The interim final rule was effective March 10.

New Director of NADC Named

Animal reproductive physiologist Kurt A. Zuelke is the new director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Disease Center (NADC) in Ames, Iowa, effective May 28.

ARS Administrator Edward B. Knipling said Zuelke, who for the past five years has served as research leader at the agency's Biotechnology and Germplasm Laboratory in Beltsville, Md., was officially appointed in April after a yearlong international recruitment process.

Prior to serving with ARS, Zuelke was with the Victorian Institute of Animal Science in Attwood, Australia.

Timoney Elected to NIAA Board; Beeman Retires

Dr. Peter Timoney, an internationally renowned expert in equine infectious diseases, was elected to the board of directors of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture at the organization's annual meeting in Louisville in April.

Timoney is chair of the University of Kentucky Department of Veterinary Science and director of U.K.'s Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center, considered by many as the preeminent equine research center in the world. Known for his work on the pathogenesis and epidemiology of equine infectious diseases, Timoney is an internationally recognized authority on equine viral arteritis.

Timoney received his Ph.D. from the University of Dublin and is a graduate of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Timoney was elected to a three-year term. He served as chairman of the NIAA Equine Health Committee from 2004 until his election to the board.

Recognized in April at the annual recognition banquet for his service to the organization was Dr. Marvin Beeman, an equine practitioner from Littleton, Colo., who stepped down from the NIAA board of directors after completing a three-year term. Beeman has provided NIAA with leadership in the area of equine health issues for a number of years and was the first chairman of the organization's

Equine Health committee, established in 2002.

In addition to his service to NIAA, Beeman is a past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners, a former member of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases, and serves on the American Horse Council board of trustees.

Dr. Beth Lautner Selected as NVSL Director

Saying that the new director of APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) "brings an impressive wealth of knowl-



Dr. Beth Lautner

edge and experience to this position," USDA APHIS Deputy Administrator Dr. John Clifford recently announced the selection of Dr. Elizabeth Lautner to the position.

Most recently, Lautner served as Center Director, Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) within the Science and Technology Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). She was the first DHS Center Director and served in that capacity from January 2004 until March 2006.

Prior to joining DHS, Lautner served as Vice President for Science and Technology at the National Pork Board and was a practicing veterinarian for more than 12 years in LeMars, Iowa.

Lautner began her duties on May 9. ●

Horse Council Encouraging EEE, WNV Vaccinations

The American Horse Council wants horse owners to remember that it is the time of year to vaccinate their horses to guard against serious diseases.

With warmer months come mosquitoes and other vectors that can spread viral diseases that seriously affect horses. Encephalitic diseases, such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV), are spread by mosquitoes and are often experienced during the summer months. Vaccinating now ensures horses have a strengthened immune system when the virus starts circulating in the mosquito population.

"Diseases like EEE and West Nile Virus can significantly affect horses. Fortunately, they can be prevented with vaccination," says Jay Hickey, president of the American Horse Council. "Horse owners need to remain vigilant in their vaccination programs."

EEE is a viral disease of horses that is very often fatal. Mortality rates are commonly reported above 90% in horses affected with EEE. Despite its name, Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis also affects humans.

West Nile Virus is another encephalitic disease of importance to horse owners. It also can be fatal in

horses but the mortality rate is significantly lower than what is seen with EEE, generally between 30 and 40%. Humans can also be infected with WNV.

Although humans can contract both diseases, horses play no role in the transmission of either virus to humans. Mosquitoes and birds are primarily responsible for the spread of both viruses. Mosquitoes feed on the blood of infected birds and spread the virus when they bite another host animal such as a horse or human. Although humans and horses can become ill from the infection, the level of virus in their blood is too low to infect mosquitoes so they are unable to spread the disease either directly human-to-human, horse-to-horse, horse-to-human or vice versa.

In 2005, Florida experienced a high number of cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in horses. On average each year, the state has approximately 60 cases of EEE annually in horses but in 2005, there were more than 140 confirmed cases of the disease. The year rivaled the two highest years: 1982, when 203 cases were confirmed and 2003 when 207 cases confirmed.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed 1,075 equine

cases of West Nile Virus nationwide. The largest number of cases was reported in California with 456 confirmed cases. Idaho had the next largest number of cases at 114.

"An effective vaccine for horses is available and horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate their horses regularly against these diseases," says Dr. Michael Short, Equine Programs Manager for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry.

"We often hear from horse owners asking why is it necessary to vaccinate our horses, as 'they don't get these diseases anyway'," observed Amy Mann, AHC's Health and Regulatory Affairs director. "The truth is, little evidence of infection is seen when horses are vaccinated because their immune systems are protected and able to fight infection if exposed to these viruses. However, when horses are not vaccinated, their immune systems don't have the necessary tools to fight the virus and subsequently the number of cases goes up." The increased incidence of disease includes an increase in virus-related deaths in horses also.

For more information regarding vaccination programs for horses, horse owners should consult with their veterinary practitioners. ●

California Readies for Another Strike By WNV

Unseasonably warm weather earlier this year in California is renewing the threat of West Nile virus. Last year, 456 horses in the state were known to have contracted the disease, with 200 deaths. In the great majority of those cases the horses were either not vaccinated or vaccinated improperly.

"Outbreaks of West Nile virus are expected to continue this year," said California State Veterinarian Dr. Richard Breitmeyer. "Horse

owners should contact their veterinarians as soon as possible to ensure current vaccination status, so that horses will have maximum protection against the disease."

Signs of West Nile virus include stumbling, staggering, wobbling, weakness, muscle twitching and inability to stand. Horses contract the disease from carrier mosquitoes and are not contagious to other horses or people. Not every horse exposed to the virus will die.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is collaborating with state, federal and local agencies to detect and respond to the disease in California. CDFA has distributed a video public service announcement about West Nile virus and has taken a public education program directly to the equine community over the last several years, including tips on mosquito control. ●

Preparedness Makes All the Difference!

Natural disasters or widespread emergencies are inherently stressful and dangerous.

Decision-making can be particularly difficult amidst the logistical challenges which surround urgent situations. That's especially true for the horse owner who's failed to prepare adequately. A lack of



There are many housing options for horses in the event of an emergency. Here a horse stands safely enclosed in temporary stabling after a tornado struck the area.

preparation often invites hasty, last-minute decisions which may prove costly and/or hazardous for both horses and humans.

That's why the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) is reminding horse owners and veterinarians about the importance of doing your homework ahead of time. The best interest of the horse is dependent upon advanced contingency planning. As such, AAEP recently updated its online equine emergency and disaster preparedness resources. The updates are in time for the start of the Atlantic hurricane season.

"As we've learned from recent disasters, preparedness can mean the difference between life and death for humans and horses alike," said James Hamilton, DVM, chairman of the AAEP Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee. "Housing for animals, food and water supplies, and evacuation transportation options are just a few of the key decisions that should be made before an emergency occurs."

Items available include AAEP's "Hurricane Equine Evacuation" informational plan



A horse being lifted by crane out of deep mud. The aftermath of a disaster may require extreme measures to rescue animals.



which provides resources for those living in coastal states. Also available through AAEP is the popular "Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Guidelines". The comprehensive overview outlines various considerations for proper response and a listing of resources for disaster and emergency management.

To access these materials, or to learn more about disaster preparedness, visit www.aaep.org/emergency_prep.htm.

AAEP's Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee is dedicated to the development of beneficial resources for veterinarians and horse owners. The Committee invites others to support ongoing efforts by providing updated information regarding state and national animal emergency management information.

For more information about the AAEP's emergency and disaster preparedness efforts, website or printed materials, please contact Keith Kleine, director of industry relations, at 859/233-0147 or kkleine@aaep.org. ●

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