

Sheep Health Report

A NIAA Publication
Fall 2001

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Long awaited plan announced by USDA

Scrapie eradication will require dedication of producers, industry

A plan to eradicate the fatal disease scrapie from the nation's sheep flocks and goat herds, announced in August by the US Department of Agriculture, will require dedication and commitment of producers and other stakeholders, say industry leaders.

"To be successful, the scrapie eradication program will require the cooperation of every segment of the industry, from producer to meat packer, including local veterinarians, and state animal health officials," says Glenn Slack, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA).

"We are tackling scrapie because it has the potential to jeopardize the future of sheep and goat production in the United States."

The USDA-announced plan to eliminate scrapie from the U.S. will be administered by the Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Key elements include:

- Interstate movement restrictions on animals from infected and source flocks and high risk and exposed animals from other flocks;
- An indemnification program for owners of high risk, test positive, and suspect animals;
- A nationwide individual identification program for breeding sheep and

goats and sheep over 18 months of age; Surveillance and testing of sheep at slaughter; and

- Uniform minimum standards for state scrapie programs.

Especially important is that each flock identified as scrapie-infected will

number of other problems, it is important that we get on with the eradication program because of the length of time it will take," she says.

"The disease takes two to five years to show clinical signs, therefore we expect that it will take a minimum



of a decade to eradicate scrapie. In addition, it will take another seven years without a scrapie outbreak for the US to be rec-

ognized internationally as 'scrapie free.' So this is at least a 17 year project," she concludes.

be required to prepare a plan to eradicate the disease and to monitor for recurrence of the disease in that flock or herd. To that end, producers will be provided with professional expertise, testing, and indemnity for animals required to be removed. The federal government earmarked \$10 million in Commodity Credit Corporation funds for the program in 2001.

"As with the other eradication programs, this will take a long term commitment from everyone involved," states Dr. Cindy Wolf, a small ruminant specialist at the University of Minnesota and a flock owner. "While this may be a tough time for producers because of low prices, drought and a

number of other problems, it is important that we get on with the eradication program because of the length of time it will take," she says.

"Further, increased concern and attention is being paid to all transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) diseases, including scrapie, as a result of the discovery of TSEs in cattle, cats and people in Europe," concludes Dr. Wolf.

According to the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), scrapie costs American sheep and goat producers an estimated \$20 to \$25 million annually.

Frank Moore, president of ASI and a Wyoming sheep producer, said "ASI

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National Foreign Animal Diseases Advisory Committee appointed

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced the appointment of 18 people with a broad knowledge of agriculture, livestock, and veterinary medical issues to serve on the Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases Advisory Committee.

The committee collectively provides valuable information on methods, techniques and policies directed at preventing the introduction of foreign diseases without imposing impractical restrictions. It advises the department on the most effective and efficient disease control plans and policies to effectively eliminate disease without substantially restricting the industry.

The committee also advises the secretary of agriculture on the practicality of programs and industry sup-

port for the programs, provides experience and knowledge of the livestock and poultry industries, and evaluates disease control programs. In addition, this committee suggests policy changes and participates in public hearings.

The following people will serve two years on the Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases Advisory Committee: John B. Adams, National Milk Producers Federation; Tobin Armstrong, Armstrong Ranch; John H. Blackwell, Food Marketing Services International, Inc.; Richard E. Breitmeyer, state veterinarian, California Department of Food and Agriculture; Corrie Cabell Brown, University of Georgia; Richard Crawford, McDonald's Corp.; Gus

Reuben Douglass, West Virginia Department of Agriculture; Carol A. Ecker, Clayview Animal Clinic; Robert J. Eckroade, University of Pennsylvania; Niall D. Finnegan, American Veterinary Medical Association; Don Alvado Franco, National Renderers Association, Inc. and the American Protein Producers Industry; James M. Niewold, Hog Haven, Inc.; June M. Reed, self employed; Jeremiah T. Saliki, Oklahoma State University; Charles Richard Sherron, self-employed rancher; Fred Small, self-employed rancher; Wesley H. Towers, state veterinarian, Delaware; and Saul T. Wilson, Tuskegee University.

Committee members serve a two-year term. The previous committee disbanded in December 2000.

NIAA postpones international study tour

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) has announced that it will postpone the international study tour to France scheduled for December.

"The uncertainty caused by the terrorist actions of September 11, the subsequent build-up of military forces, and the potential impact this could continue to have on air travel are the reasons that the NIAA Board of Directors have taken this action," said Glenn Slack, NIAA President and Chief Executive Officer.

He said that the NIAA Board of Directors in making the decision felt that rescheduling for sometime in 2002 might provide ample time for much of the uncertainty to fade away.

Slack said that he and the organi-

zation are still very much committed to providing this continuing education opportunity for animal agriculture and animal health professionals. "The program for the study tour to France was shaping up to exceed expectations," said Slack. "This was going to be a very unique opportunity for our participants. It will be a unique opportunity for participants in 2002."

Slack said that he is working with Dr. Will Hueston, director of the Center for Animal Health and Food Safety at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, who is serving as the program coordinator for the study tour, and with contacts in France to identify a suitable date to reschedule for next year.

Sheep Health Report

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Veneman announces state grants for animal disease preparedness activities

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman recently announced the distribution of nearly \$2 million in grants in thirty-two states to bolster emergency animal disease prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery systems.

“These grants will be used to help various states better prepare and coordinate emergency preparedness activities and coordination related to animal disease protection,” said Veneman.

“Funding will be used for training, equipment purchases, and to conduct emergency preparedness exercises to help strengthen these important programs.”

Grants have been awarded in the following states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Grants were also awarded to the National Emergency Management Agency and several native-American agencies to assist with livestock and wildlife surveillance.

The goal of the grant program is to assist states in meeting and exceeding animal disease response standards set by a steering committee of the National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS). NAHEMS is a comprehensive system that includes federal, state and community governments, voluntary organizations, academic institutions, and indus-

try groups.

In remarks made during the 47th Annual Conference of the National Chicken Council, Veneman also called for the establishment of a permanent agriculture infrastructure investment fund that continuously protects agriculture.

“We need to take a stronger, more proactive approach to the infrastructure needs of our producers,” said Veneman. “This includes

examining our pest and animal disease protection systems, our labs, research, and food safety programs.”

Veneman noted that these are not programs typically addressed in a farm bill. She said farmers and producers face many new and emerging issues including, BSE, various strains of *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and biosecurity, which were not commonly discussed during previous farm bill debates.

“However, today, we live in a different world,” said Veneman. “As our farm policy report indicates, we must take a different look at how we structure farm policy. We cannot afford to risk our food and agriculture system by failing to adequately address these and other critical issues.”



USDA increases veterinary presence at ports of entry

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced the hiring of 18 veterinarians to protect American agriculture against the entry of agricultural products that may contain foreign animal diseases like foot-and-mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

The new veterinarians will provide guidance and training on working with and handling animal products, animal by-products and international garbage; work cooperatively with USDA's plant protection and quarantine officers when dealing with issues involving foreign animal diseases; act as a liaison between APHIS' plant protection and quarantine and veterinary services programs; conduct port reviews; and continue to work closely with state agricultural officials, thereby improving the federal-state partnerships crit-

ical to protecting American agriculture.

“The addition of these veterinarians to USDA's comprehensive agricultural quarantine inspection program is part of Secretary Ann M. Veneman's continuing effort to bolster the United States' agriculture infrastructure,” said Bill Hawks, under secretary for USDA's marketing and regulatory programs. “We are always looking at ways to continue to improve our strong safeguarding programs.”

The new veterinarians will be working for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's plant protection and quarantine program and will be stationed in Florida, Georgia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Illinois, Puerto Rico, Texas, Arizona, California, Washington, and Hawaii.

Report urges increased investment in U.S. animal health protection system

“A dramatic national and international acceleration in trade of animals and animal products, together with exponential increases in worldwide travel, mail parcels and emerging animal diseases have converged to significantly raise the stakes for animal disease control.”

Recommendations from an eight-month review of the nation’s system for safeguarding livestock and poultry producers from the introduction of foreign animal diseases has been jointly released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). USDA commissioned the report and selected NASDA to conduct the independent review.

The report, compiled by a panel representing state animal health officials, university and private animal health specialists, and livestock producer groups, noted the success of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in preventing, controlling, and eradicating animal diseases, but urged increased federal funding to upgrade laboratory and diagnostic facilities and the staff of APHIS’ Veterinary Services (VS), in order to meet the “rising and vital challenges of animal health issues in the U.S.” The report also stressed the need to create an Emergency Operations Center, a National Surveillance System, and a National Response Plan.

“A dramatic national and international acceleration in trade of animals and animal products, together with exponential increases in worldwide travel, mail parcels and emerging animal diseases have converged to signif-

icantly raise the stakes for animal disease control,” the report stated. “This review finds (APHIS) performance adequate in handling most assigned roles, and even heroic in some historical efforts to eradicate diseases that have infected U.S. livestock, but resources are fast becoming overwhelmed. This review calls for improvements in areas including, but not limited to, staffing, equipment, surveillance, detection, applied research, communications, and border security.

“The best minds in the U.S. have come together in this report to protect the future viability of animal agriculture.”

**Commissioner Gus R. Douglass
National Animal Health
Safeguarding Review Chairman**

Many of the committee’s recommendations will require increased federal funding,” the report stated.

The stakeholder panel, composed of 42 members, was organized into four committees, which examined key areas including domestic detection and surveillance, exclusion, international information, and response. Gus R. Douglass, commissioner of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, chaired the review team, which oversaw the work of the four committees

and produced the final report.

“The recent foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Europe was a wake-up call for us,” Douglass said. “The best minds in the U.S. have come together in this report to protect the future viability of animal agriculture. These recommendations now await acceptance and action by the Secretary and by the Congress. As we are in a security mode, a major part of this report is security related.”

NASDA Executive Vice President Richard W. Kirchhoff noted that USDA has already increased funding for APHIS, adding nearly \$40 million to the current budget and another \$174 million next year for infrastructure improvements. “Agriculture Secretary Veneman has acted swiftly to increase resources to APHIS. We hope that Congress will make it a priority to ensure we have an effective safeguard-

ing program that is fully funded. The new farm bill provides an excellent opportunity to do just that.”

The NASDA Research Foundation prepared the report under a cooperative agreement with APHIS. NASDA is the national association representing the state commissioners, secretaries, and directors of agriculture throughout the United States. Copies of the report can be downloaded from NASDA’s website at www.nasda.org.

Harvard study shows very low risk of BSE in the United States

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released a landmark study by Harvard University that shows the risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) occurring in the United States is extremely low.

The report showed that early protection systems put into place by the USDA and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have been largely

responsible for keeping BSE out of the U.S. and would prevent it from spreading if it ever did enter the country. Even so, officials outlined a series of actions to be taken that would continue strengthening programs to reduce that risk even further.

The risk assessment was commissioned by USDA and conducted by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis. It evaluates the ways BSE could spread if it were to ever enter the United States. The report's purpose is to give agencies a scientific analysis to evaluate preventative measures already in place and identify additional actions that should be taken to minimize the risk of BSE.

"The study released...clearly shows that the years of early actions taken by the federal government to safeguard consumers have helped keep BSE from entering the United States," said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. "Even if BSE were to ever be introduced, it would be contained according to the study. However, we cannot let down our guard or reduce our vigilance."

"Based on three years of thorough study, we are firmly confident that

BSE will not become an animal or public health problem in America," said Dr. George Gray, deputy director of the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis and director of the project.

"We found that even if BSE were ever introduced, it would not become established," said Gray. "With the government programs already in place, even accounting for imperfect compliance, the disease in the cattle herd would quickly die out, and the potential for people to be exposed to infected cattle parts that could transmit the disease is very low."

BSE has never been detected in U.S. cattle, nor has there been a case of the human form of the disease, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD), detected in the United States. Since 1989, USDA has banned the import of live ruminants, such as cattle, sheep and goats, and most ruminant products from the United Kingdom and other countries having BSE. The ban was extended to Europe in 1997. To stop the way the disease is thought to spread, HHS prohibited the use of most mammalian protein in the manufacture of animal feed intended for cows and other ruminants. Should a case of BSE ever be detected in this country, an emergency response plan has been developed to immediately control suspect animals and prevent them from entering the food supply.

This summer, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson announced an action plan outlining new steps to improve scientific understanding of BSE that incorporates a comprehen-

sive approach to further strengthen surveillance, increase research resources and expand existing inspection efforts (see sidebar).

BSE is a chronic, degenerative neurological disorder of cattle that belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Other TSEs that have been diagnosed in the U.S. are scrapie in sheep and goats and Chronic Wasting Disease among deer and elk. Also included in that family of illnesses is vCJD, which is believed to be caused by eating neural tissue, such as brain and spinal cord, from BSE-affected cattle.

A complete copy of the Harvard Report can be obtained from USDA's official website at www.usda.gov.

BSE 'Understanding' Plan unveiled

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson has announced a department-wide plan outlining new steps to improve scientific understanding of BSE and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs).

The plan incorporates an approach to further strengthen surveillance for vCJD, increase research resources, and expand existing inspection efforts to prevent BSE and TSEs from entering or taking hold in the United States.

Thompson's plan involves four areas of responsibility: surveillance (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), protection (Food and Drug Administration), research (National Institutes of Health) and oversight within HHS.

This effort will be coordinated with other agencies, the private sector and the international community.

"Based on three years of thorough study, we are firmly confident that BSE will not become an animal or public health problem in America."

**Dr. George Gray, Deputy Director
Harvard Center for Risk Analysis**

New scrapie rules now in effect for U.S. sheep and goat producers

Most sheep and some goats, 18 months and older, must be officially identified (ID) and breeding sheep and goats must be accompanied by a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate) to move into interstate commerce. These requirements, part of the new federal program to eradicate scrapie in the U.S., went into effect Nov. 19.

Those categories of sheep and goats that must be identified (ear tags or tattoos) are:

- All sheep 18 months and older;
- All breeding sheep regardless of age;
- All scrapie exposed, suspect, test-positive and high-risk animals;
- Breeding goats, except low-risk commercial goats;

- All sheep and goats for exhibition other than castrated males.

The following groups need no ID and have no movement restrictions:

- All sheep under 18 months of age moving into slaughter channels;
- All goats moving into slaughter channels;
- Low-risk commercial goats such as those:
 - Raised for fiber and/or meat;
 - Not registered or exhibited;
 - Which have not been in contact with sheep;
 - Not scrapie positive, high-risk or exposed animals;
 - Not from an infected or source herd.
- Wethers for exhibition;
- Animals moving for grazing, if no

change in ownership occurs.

Owners of commercial whiteface breeding sheep less than 18 months of age will have until February 19, 2002, to comply with the ID and movement restrictions. The requirements for all scrapie-exposed, suspect, high-risk and positive animals have been in effect since September 20.

“If they haven’t already done so, producers should call their local APHIS office or State Veterinarian’s office to be assigned an official ID number and to get free ear tags,” explains Dr. Diane Sutton, National Scrapie Program Coordinator with USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services. Producers can find their local APHIS office by calling, toll-free, 1-866-USDA-TAG (873-2824).

The regulations needed for implementation of the scrapie eradication program became final in August. In addition to the identification requirements, the rule also provides indemnity to compensate producers whose flocks or herds are found to be infected with this always-fatal disease. More information is available on the Internet at www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie or www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie.htm.

Scrapie eradication will require dedication of producers, industry

Continued from page 1

has requested since 1996 that USDA take assertive action on a national scrapie eradication program.”

“We will work closely with APHIS and the states to successfully implement this eradication program and to help assure that it has the least negative impact possible,” said Moore.

To help producers learn about the new requirements, NIAA applied for and was awarded an educational grant from USDA, according to Slack.

“Sheep and goat producers have received an ERADICATE SCRAPIE! pamphlet in the mail which briefly explains the program and the identification requirements,” said Slack. “In a second mailing, producers received detailed information explaining what producers need to know in order to

implement the program and where to go for help or questions,” he said.

Packets of information have also been mailed to sheep and goat veterinarians and other industry stakeholders across the nation to assist in communicating the new regulations. NIAA is also making information available on the Internet at www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie.

In addition, persons can obtain official information about scrapie and the identification requirements on USDA’s website, www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie.htm or contact your local APHIS Veterinary Services Area Office by calling, toll-free, 1-866-USDA-TAG (873-2824) or the State Veterinarian’s office.

Questions?

More information about the new scrapie eradication program, including a section of Questions and Answers (Q&A), is available on the Internet at www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie.

USDA to allow educational process before enforcing new identification requirements

Enforcement of new identification requirements for most U.S. sheep and goats that went into effect on Nov. 19 will be lenient during the first several months, according to indications from officials with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

As part of the new federal program to eradicate scrapie in the U.S., most sheep and some goats are required to be officially identified. In addition, breeding sheep and goats must be accompanied by a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate) to move into interstate commerce.

With producers and markets still learning about the new requirements, and some states still implementing a

premises identification system, USDA inspectors will be more involved with education than enforcement in the coming months. The relaxed enforcement period will have its limitations, however. Willful disregard of the regulations would likely be the exception to any leniency during the first several months.

"Consistent with APHIS policy in the initial days of a new regulation, the emphasis will be on education," said Dr. Cindy Wolf, a small ruminant specialist at the University of Minnesota and chair of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture's (NIAA) Sheep Health Committee.

"APHIS has indicated that it will do everything possible to educate producers and the industry about the new

requirements before compliance takes full effect," said Wolf. NIAA is the organization selected by APHIS to inform and educate producers and the industry on the eradication program.

Sheep and goat producers with questions about the new rules should contact their local veterinarian, or the agency managing the scrapie program in their state. By calling 1-866-USDA-TAG (873-2824), producers or veterinarians will be put in contact with either the State Veterinarian's Office or the local APHIS office. Information is also available on the Internet at www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie or www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie.htm.

Summary: Scrapie Eradication Program Identification Requirements

Step # 1

Determine if your sheep or goats need official ear tags or other official identification (ID) to move interstate.

Step #2

Request a Premises (Flock) ID Number.

Step # 3

Determine which of the approved ear tags or other approved ID systems work best for you.

Step #4

Set up a system to record the ear tags or other official ID that are applied.

Step #5

Apply official ID before sheep/goats leave your premises (or arrange application elsewhere).

Step #6

Get a health certificate.

Step #7

Retain ID records for 5 years.

Step #8

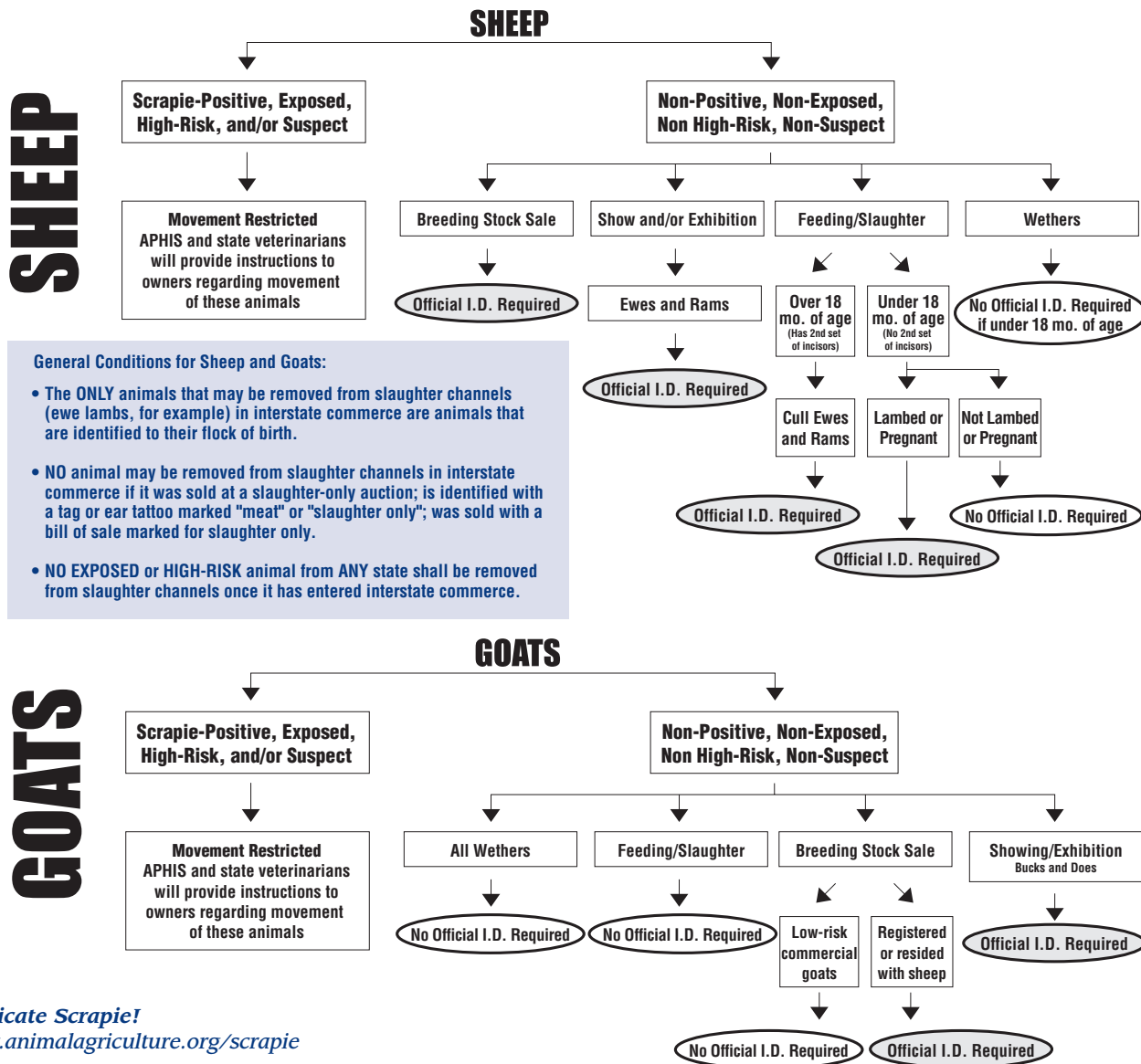
Call toll-free for help if needed. **866-USDA-TAG (866-873-2824).**

Clinical Signs of Scrapie

- Weight loss despite retention of appetite
- Behavioral changes
- Itching and rubbing
- Wool Pulling
- Biting at legs or side
- Lip Smacking
- Loss of coordination
- Increased sensitivity to noise and movement
- High-stepping gait of forelimbs
- Bunny-hop movement of rear
- Swaying of back end
- Tremor
- Down, unable to stand
- Death

You may view a video of clinical signs at www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie.

Identification requirements for sheep and goats in the scrapie eradication program



ASI to launch Sheep Safety & Quality Assurance Program

Ensuring consumer confidence in the safety and quality of sheep products was the impetus behind a program recently developed by the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) and Colorado State University.

The two groups will soon unveil the components of the Sheep Safety and Quality Assurance (SSQA) Program at a "Train-the-Trainer" Workshop slated for Feb. 25-26, 2002, at Colorado State University in Fort

Collins, Colo.

The "Train-the-Trainer" Workshop will enable qualified personnel to instruct producers on the criteria of the SSQA and the mechanisms necessary for implementing the program into production units. The SSQA will be implemented in three levels to be sequentially addressed by sheep producers: Level 1: SSQA Participant - Education; Level 2: SSQA Certified - Development of SSQA Plans; and

Level 3: SSQA Verified - Verification of Plan Implementation.

There is no registration fee for the two-day course, and meals are also free. However, travel and lodging costs are the responsibility of the participant. For more information or a registration form, contact Deb Roeber at CSU (970) 491-3312 or e-mail Deborah.Roeber@ColoState.edu.

USAHA News

Scrapie discussions highlight sheep and goat committee meeting



Scrapie, a serious disease of sheep and goats, dominated discussions during the Sheep and Goat Committee meeting of the United States Animal Health Association, held recently in Hershey, Pa.

Dr. John Clifford with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) gave an overview of the National Scrapie Eradication Program, telling the Committee that the goal is to find no new infections by

2010 and to have the United States recognized as scrapie-free internationally by 2017.

As of Oct. 22, 2001, there were 864 flocks participating in the Scrapie Flock Certification Program, 59 of which were certified. In 2001, there were 68 scrapie infected and source flocks, 51 of which were newly infected. The final rule for scrapie eradication — which covers indemnity, requirements for flock cleanup and pilot projects, test and laboratory approvals, identification requirements and movement restrictions — was published on Aug. 21, 2001.

Identification requirements went

into effect for most sheep and goats on Nov. 19, 2001. All breeding sheep regardless of age, plus all sheep over 18 months of age and all exposed, suspect and high-risk animals and breeding goats — except for low-risk commercial goats — must be identified to move in interstate commerce. APHIS will provide tags free to producers, veterinarians and markets.

The Committee also recommended that a subcommittee be established to evaluate proposed changes to scrapie uniform methods and rules for eradication as they come forward.

National Scrapie Status Board to be established

A resolution was passed by the United States Animal Health Association establishing provisions for a National Scrapie Status Board. The board's primary duty will be to determine the status of states achieving the goals of the eradication program. Applications for state status must be presented to the board for consideration.

The recommendation to establish the National Scrapie Status Board came from the USAHA Sheep and Goat Committee. According to the committee's chairman, Paul Rodgers, the board will be composed of six individuals representing the American Sheep Industry Association, the National Institute for Animal Agriculture and the United States Animal Health Association. Each

organization will have two seats. The original members of the Board will be granted staggered terms and thereafter a Board member may serve for a period not to exceed four years.

The USAHA resolution will be sent to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service requesting the agency's recognition of the Board.

A similar body exists in relation to the National Pseudorabies (PRV) Eradication Program, which is nearing complete eradication. The National PRV Control Board is comprised of six representatives, two each from NIAA, USAHA and the National Pork Producers Council. Rodgers said the National PRV Control Board's role in the eradication program was key and was embraced by the industry and state and federal government agencies.

USAHA elects new officers

Dr. Maxwell A. Lea, Jr., Louisiana state veterinarian, was elected president of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) at its 105th annual meeting held recently in Hershey, Pa.

President-elect of the organization is Robert E. Frost of Lincoln, Calif., with the International Llama Association. Other officers are Dr. Donald H. Lein, Cornell University, first vice-president; Dr. Richard D. Willer, Arizona state veterinarian, second vice-president; Dr. Bret Marsh, Indiana state veterinarian, third vice-president; Dr. J. Lee Alley, retired Alabama state veterinarian, secretary; and Dr. Wes Towers, Delaware state veterinarian, treasurer. Dr. Bob Hillman, Idaho state veterinarian, is immediate past-president.

USDA proposes to pay indemnity for brucellosis-infected sheep and goats

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed an amendment to its brucellosis regulations that would allow indemnity payments for sheep, goats, and horses destroyed because of brucellosis. The indemnity amount will be the appraised fair market value of the animal less its salvage value.

This action would make it easier to eliminate affected animal herds and flocks and will encourage owners to cooperate with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service brucellosis eradication program, according to a USDA press release.

Brucellosis is a contagious disease caused by bacteria that mainly affects cattle, bison, and swine. It causes loss of young through spontaneous abortion

or birth of weak offspring, reduced milk production, and infertility.

Goats, sheep and horses are rarely infected with brucellosis in the United States. However, they are susceptible to certain strains. When they are, it is almost always a result of having been in direct contact with infected cattle, bison, or swine.

The brucellosis eradication program is in its final, critical stages. State, federal, and industry efforts have all but eliminated most cases of brucellosis in the United States. Currently, there are no known U.S. herds or flocks of goats, sheep, or horses infected with brucellosis. However, should any become infected, USDA's ability to pay indemnity for those animals would be a crucial tool in encouraging

livestock owners to destroy infected and exposed animals and eliminate the last sources of infection.

The proposed rule was published in the Sept. 13, 2001 Federal Register. The document is available for viewing on the Internet at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html.

Chronic wasting disease program implemented

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced the authorization of \$2.6 million from Commodity Credit Corporation funds to implement a chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance and indemnity program in the United States.

While considered rare, CWD is endemic to free-ranging deer and elk in a limited area of southeastern Wyoming, northeastern Colorado, and southwestern Nebraska. CWD has also been found in captive elk herds in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. All positive herds are under state quarantines.

The agency said in a news release that the transfer of emergency funds will be used to reduce the spread of CWD in captive elk herds.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will implement the CWD program by purchasing positive and exposed elk from CWD-infected herds, enhance surveillance and diagnostic testing for CWD, and increase training for producers and veterinarians.

There is currently no evidence that CWD is linked to disease in humans, or in domestic animals other than deer and elk. CWD is a progressive disease that affects deer and elk. CWD is part of a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, a group that includes scrapie and bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Currently, there is no live animal test or vaccine for CWD.

GAO supports creation of single food safety agency

The General Accounting Office (GAO) told a Senate subcommittee recently that the current federal food safety system is "a patchwork structure that hampers efforts to adequately address existing and emerging food safety risks."

The GAO highlighted a number of inconsistencies, such as the fact that FSIS spent \$712 million in 1999 to inspect 6,000 meat, poultry and egg establishments, while FDA spent \$283 million the same year to oversee 57,000 food establishments. The area FSIS oversees, says GAO, accounts for 20 percent of federally regulated foods and 15 percent of foodborne illness. In contrast, the area that FDA oversees accounts for 80 percent of the food supply and 85 percent of foodborne illnesses.

In making their conclusions, GAO says that creating a single food safety agency would be the most effective solution to deal with existing and emerging threats, including deliberate contamination of foods with biological agents.

To view GAO's report, log on to www.gao.gov.

Senator Roberts outlines sweeping agroterrorism legislation

Warns farms are at risk

U.S. Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) has outlined a plan to introduce a far-reaching response to threats of terrorism against America's agriculture industry.

"Our nation's crops and livestock are now at very high risk," said Roberts during a meeting with farm groups. "We must move quickly to prevent attacks on grain and livestock production and we must begin a massive research effort to develop vaccines and antidotes to halt diseases that could damage our food supply in the future."

Roberts said he believes the United States "has the safest and most abundant food supply in the world. Consumers can continue to count on a safe food supply. However, we must

ensure that crop and livestock diseases do not find their way to our feedlots, either accidentally or as a result of terrorism."

Roberts, a member of the Senate committees on Agriculture, Intelligence and Armed Services, told the farm group representatives, "Frankly, I am very worried. At least one of the terrorists on the FBI's most wanted list has agriculture training. Scientists in several countries, including the former Soviet Union, produced mass quantities of pathogens targeted at the North American food supply.

"The loss of markets resulting from the introduction of these pathogens would be devastating to our nation's economy. Markets would collapse. Our ability to deliver the

nation's food supplies would be at grave risk.

"I am suggesting that we make an investment in the future of American agriculture that may well prevent this nightmare scenario."

The Legislation:

Sen. Roberts' legislation calls for spending of about \$1.1 billion next year and about \$271,000 million in each of the next 10 years in a crash program to:

- Update and modernize USDA facilities at the Plum Island Animal Disease Laboratory in New York, the National Animal Disease Center in Iowa, the Southwest Poultry Research Laboratory in Georgia, and the Animal Disease Research Laboratory in Wyoming.
- Implement stiff security procedures at those USDA research facilities as well as the Foreign Disease Laboratory in Fort Detrick, Md.
- Fund training and implement a rapid response strategy through a consortium of top universities, the USDA and agriculture industry groups.
- Fund grants to top agriculture universities and researchers across the nation to develop vaccines, antidotes and plant varieties that can resist such diseases as Foot and Mouth Disease, Karnal Bunt or Avian Flu, as well as other diseases that have been cultivated for use in bio-warfare.

Veneman selects James G. Butler as deputy under secretary of marketing and regulatory programs

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman has selected James G. Butler as the new deputy under secretary of USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

For the last 11 years, Butler worked for The Texas A&M University System in several positions. Most recently, he was the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Agriculture and Life Sciences. Prior to that, he served as the Associate and Assistant Vice Chancellor for External Affairs for the University.

"I have a very high regard for Jim and the work he's done in agriculture, both in academia and in the private

sector," Veneman said. "He brings to USDA a thorough knowledge and understanding of agriculture that will serve our Department well."

Before joining Texas A&M, Butler worked for the National Wool Growers Association as their Executive Vice President. His previous experience includes working with sheep producers and the industry as an Extension Sheep Specialist with Colorado State University. Butler also gained extensive ranching, sheep feeding and wool warehouse management experience while living in New Mexico.

AASRP retains new management services provider



The American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners (AASRP) has announced that it has contracted with the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) to provide AASRP with management and administrative services. AASRP President Richard Stobaeus, Jr., DVM, of Brunswick, Ga., made the announcement following the association's annual meeting held in Boston in July.

The transition to NIAA from Nashville, Tenn.-based Walker Management Group, an association management firm that provided administrative services to AASRP since 1997, was completed in August.

"NIAA deals with a number of animal health and veterinary-related issues and will be very sensitive to the needs of AASRP and our members," said Stobaeus. "I, along with the other officers and members of the board who

were involved with NIAA's selection, feel that this new relationship established between AASRP and NIAA will be very positive for our organization."

Formerly known as the Livestock Conservation Institute (LCI), NIAA works closely with the veterinary profession in addressing animal health, well-being and food safety issues. Its membership roster includes the American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Bovine Practitioners, American Association of Equine Practitioners, American Association of Swine Veterinarians and American Association of Avian Pathologists.

"Disease prevention, control and eradication, and animal health issues in general, are a cornerstone of our organization," said NIAA Chief Executive Officer Glenn Slack. "Our staff is accustomed to serving the needs of the veterinary medical community, and we take pride in providing professional courtesy and service to private practitioners, as well as corporate, research, extension and government veterinari-

ans."

Slack's principal assistant, Peggy Logsdon, has been assigned responsibilities of serving the AASRP membership and seeing to it that the day-to-day fulfillment of AASRP's needs are met. Other specialized staff at NIAA will lend support in areas such as book-keeping services and website maintenance.

AASRP Executive Director David McCrystle, DVM, of Healdsburg, Calif., said a Management Services Agreement was prepared and signed for an initial term of one year. He said NIAA will provide membership support, financial management, and general management services.

McCrystle said that the AASRP Board of Directors considered a number of options and proposals, and subsequently accepted NIAA's proposal. "I am familiar with NIAA and their work, and believe that this will be a positive relationship for both organizations," said McCrystle. "It's a good fit."

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