

Swine HEALTH REPORT

A National Institute for Animal Agriculture Publication

Spring 2007

CAP2 Goal: Control, Eliminate PRRS

It is estimated that 60 percent of the United States' swine herds are infected with Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), a virus that causes numerous health problems from unhealthy pigs to abortion in sows. The annual cost of PRRS is estimated to be more than a half a billion dollars.

To fight this costly disease, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has instituted a two-phase program known as PRRS-CAP (Coordinated Agricultural Project) which is moving into Phase 2. Funding for CAP's Phase 2 (CAP2) comes primarily from the USDA which is investing \$4.8 million in the four-year program. Additional financial support will come from the National Pork Board and private companies.

Dr. Raymond (Bob) Rowland in the College of Veterinary Medicine at

Kansas State University has been charged with managing CAP2.

"CAP2 builds on the advances made under CAP1, which was managed by Dr. Mike Murtaugh of the University of Minnesota, and proposes a new set of goals and objectives to enhance research progress towards the elimination of PRRS," Dr. Rowland elaborates.

Dr. Rowland notes that it is imperative PRRS be controlled and eliminated as the syndrome costs U.S. pork producers \$560 million annually. Research shows that PRRS is significantly more costly than hog cholera and pseudorabies virus which cost the swine industry \$364 million and \$36 million respectively prior to their eradication.

Three Key Areas

Under USDA guidelines, CAP2 funds must be used for research, education and outreach.

Researchers and stakeholders com-

prising the PRRS Steering Committee identified five key areas that demand attention: 1) the development of a new generation of vaccines, including those that offer protection of naïve pigs and possess a DIVA (ability to differentiate infected from vaccinated animals) component; 2) the study of immunity; 3) the investigation of PRRS epidemiology/ecology; 4) diagnostics improvement including the development of DIVA companion tests and a new generation of surveillance tools; and 5) determining how host genetics influence susceptibility to viral infection and identify genes or alleles that are associated with resistance to the virus infection and disease.

"Consistent with the philosophy of CAP1, CAP2 will continue to recruit new ideas and new talent into the PRRS research community," Dr. Rowland adds.

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Pork Industry Seeks 100% Premises Registration

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) and the National Pork Board (NPB) have initiated a year-long push to have 100 percent of swine producers' premises registered under the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) by December 31, 2007.

About 40 percent of swine premises have been registered, and the NPPC and the Pork Board are working diligently to have the remaining premises registered as soon as possible. The effort is possible through a cooperative agreement between the USDA and the Pork Board on premises registration—the first such agreement signed

between the agency and a livestock industry organization in support of the NAIS. Under the agreement, the USDA is making \$400,000 available to assist the pork industry with its premises registration efforts.

A first step toward 100 percent premises registration is the hiring of regional swine identification coordinators. These coordinators will work with the state pork producer association and state ID coordinators to encourage producers in each state to register their premises.

"As the coordinators talk to pro-

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CAP2 Goal (cont'd from page 1)

Education Centers on Three Groups

Education efforts will continue and expand activities performed under CAP1 and focus on three groups: 1) scientists; 2) veterinarians; and 3) producers. As with research, the educational activities will be conducted in conjunction with the NPB, which will operate the PRRS CAP2 website, support the preparation and distribution of materials and provide expert advice on communication.

"The future of PRRS research productivity and creativity depends on the training of young scientists," Dr. Rowland states, adding that support for science education is in the form of supporting the mentoring activities of PRRS researchers.

"CAP2 will develop opportunities for undergraduate and veterinary students to participate in summer internship program opportunities and provide support for graduate student fellowships. A special emphasis will be

placed on the support of veterinarians seeking Ph.D. degrees.

"Funding will come from within the grant and through matching funds from the stakeholder community and from mentors. PRRS scholars will be expected to present research progress at the International PRRS Symposium. Other education activities will be in the form of scientific workshops for scientists."

Dr. Rowland says CAP2 findings regarding PRRS will be shared with veterinarians through educational workshops and with producers via activities at local and national producer meetings. Information will also be disseminated in professional journals and lay publications.

"CAP1 laid a strong foundation for the outreach activities that will be continued under CAP2," Dr. Rowland continues. He adds that CAP2 outreach will target scientists, practitioners and producers as well as the public.

A final target is the international community. Dr. Rowland explains that information gained from CAP2 is essential to PRRS elimination efforts worldwide. He says outreach will be through dissemination of research progress and in the development of community assets, noting that many of these activities are conducted in collaboration with the NPB, NC-229, American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV), policy makers and companies.

Outreach Tactics

Underscoring the fact that outreach is two-way communication between CAP2 and stakeholders, Dr. Rowland says numerous tactics will be undertaken to keep scientists, veterinarians and producers informed.

A key outreach tool will continue to be the PRRS website, www.prrs.org, developed for CAP. The NPB will be charged with updating, expanding and maintaining the website to meet the needs of stakeholders. Expansion of the website will give PRRS researchers a place to share valuable information.

Additional outreach efforts to sci-

entists include dissemination of PRRS research through peer publications and the International PRRS Symposium.


"A major outreach event is the International PRRS Symposium," Dr. Rowland states. "The 2006 International PRRS Symposium was conducted last December and focused on research into methods for the integrated control, prevention and eradication of PRRS. The two-day meeting served as an open forum for PRRS researchers from throughout the world, and the information shared definitely enhanced our knowledge base." (Editor's Note: Proceedings of the International PRRS Symposium can be found at www.prrsymposium.org.)

Outreach tactics targeting practitioners include publishing PRRS control and elimination successes through the AASV website, the proceedings of various industry conferences and meetings and the AASV e-newsletter. CAP2 will also aid the National Pork Board in the development of PRRS-related materials for veterinarians and support the North American PRRSV Eradication Task Force by providing scientific expertise.

Outreach to producers will take several forms: presentations, collateral pieces and communication through producer-oriented trade publications. CAP2 progress will be integrated into existing outreach activities at the National Pork Board, distance learning modules and traveling swine health seminar series carried out at the state level.

"These research, education and outreach activities support the Animal Biosecurity Program's long-term objectives to implement biosecurity protocols on a national scale for program-identified issues that detect, contain, minimize and eliminate spread of diseases from animal to animal and site to site," Dr. Rowland states. "CAP2 is stakeholder driven and under constant review so objectives are achieved.

"This project is definitely a big deal." ●



**NATIONAL
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AGRICULTURE**

**Swine
Health Report**
Spring 2007

Swine 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 Swine Health Committee and is produced in cooperation with USDA-APHIS. Reprinting is encouraged.

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Department of Homeland Security Funds Non-Virus Manufactured FMD Vaccines

To date, available foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccines have been cultured from foot-and-mouth viruses. This technology, however, may become outdated and unnecessary. On Feb. 1 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) signed a three-year contract with GenVec, Inc. to support the development and manufacturing of adenovector-based foot-and-mouth disease vaccines that do not require use of live FMD viruses which are prohibited on the U.S. mainland.

"Put simply, the current FMD vaccine is the virus itself. The new vaccine under development contains only specific protein pieces of the actual FMD virus which allows us to safely manufacture here," states Dr. Rick King, GenVec's senior vice president of research.

Dr. King adds that another benefit of the new vaccines—and a key difference between standard FMD vaccines and the novel molecular-based GenVec vaccines—is that one can tell the difference between vaccinated animals and animals infected with foot-and-mouth disease.

"We're talking exciting, novel vac-

cines that have the potential to change the FMD vaccine landscape," Dr. King adds.

The Department of Homeland Security is providing GenVec with up to \$6 million the first year and has a total of \$15 million available over the next three years if the Department elects to exercise its annual renewal options. Under the agreement, GenVec will be in charge of the development, production and regulatory approval of the vaccine. The Department of Homeland Security will be responsible for conducting animal studies at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center.

GenVec, located in Gaithersburg, Md., is engaged in cutting-edge research and development of gene-based therapeutics and molecular-based vaccines for humans and animals. Other infectious disease vaccines in development include an HIV vaccine in collaboration with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a malaria vaccine in collaboration with the U.S. Navy and PATH's Malaria Vaccine Initiative.

"The FMD vaccines use front-line

technology similar to the difficult disease vaccines we are developing for HIV and malaria," Dr. King elaborates. "The vaccines we are developing—including the FMD vaccines—utilize GenVec's proprietary adenovector technology. The FMD vaccines utilize a novel production cell line capable of producing antigens that would normally inhibit production."

Dr. King notes that the agreement between the Department of Homeland Security and GenVec "is an important step forward in the development of U.S. production of a FMD-marked vaccine to protect the U.S. food supply against a very virulent disease."

The goal of the Department of Homeland Security funding is to have vaccines safely manufactured in the United States that can protect animals from infection resulting from bioterrorism or accidental exposure to the disease. The importance of this goal is underscored by the USDA's Inter-Agency Working Group's January 2003 Final Report which states that a FMD outbreak in the United States could have more than a \$100 billion impact on the U.S. economy. ●

Pork Industry Seeks 100% (cont'd from page 1)

ducers and explain that premises registration is animal health driven, they get it and want their premise registered," states NPPC President Joy Philippi, a producer from Bruning, Neb. "Most producers understand what can happen should the pork industry have a disease disaster. They remember pseudorabies and sign up."

Philippi calls the pork industry's goal of 100 percent of premises registered by the end of 2007 "needed" and "attainable."

The pork industry's premises registration push builds upon the industry's state-federal partnership that has been in place since 1988. When NAIS entered the scene, the pork industry

formed a swine identification task force comprised of industry stakeholders and government representatives to begin implementing needed enhancements to the existing swine ID system.

In addition to premises registration, which includes owner and location data, by 2007, the group has two other goals in place: 1) animal identification for groups/lots by end of 2008; and 2) individual animal identification for market breeding swine and show pigs by end of 2008.

"NAIS is about maintaining the national herd health and ensuring that we can quickly control and recover from disease outbreak," she summarizes. "Getting each producer's premis-



es registered and entering the premises number in each state's database is the only way to create an effective and functional NAIS. From this first step, we'll continue to move forward." ●

Vaccine Found to Address PCV2

A new viral disease that kills hogs in the late finishing stage of production has been identified by researchers at Kansas State University (KSU) and Kansas veterinarians. Dr. Raymond (Bob) Rowland, a virologist with KSU, reports that the virus is a variation of Porcine Circovirus type 2 (PCV2), the third most important viral pathogen in the U.S. pig population. The good news is that a blind, randomized study shows that a commercial vaccine shows promise as an effective tool in controlling the PCV2 disease in pigs.

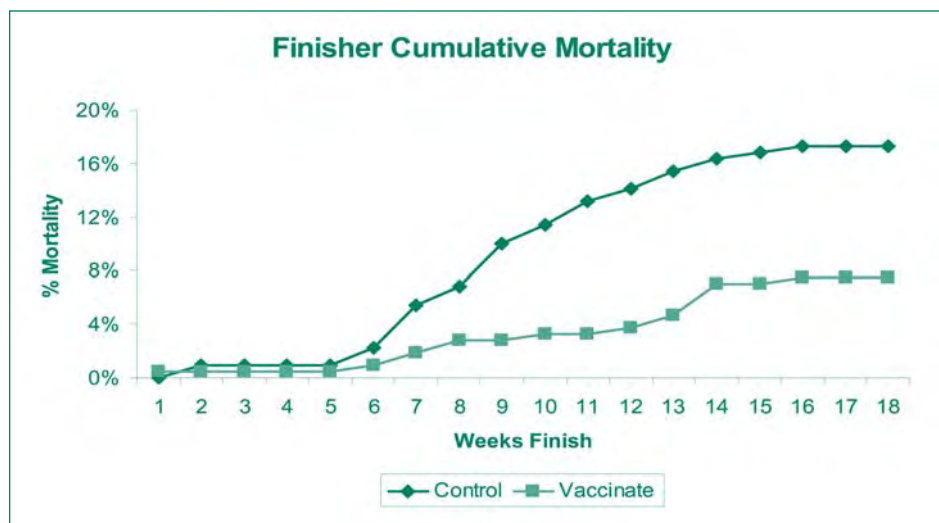
"What we have discovered is that there are A and B versions of PCV2, and the latter can be lethal," Dr. Rowland states, adding that the virus is "very stable and hard to kill."

Dr. Rowland stresses that the virus tends to strike in the final feeding stages and many producers may not be aware of its presence until it's too late. Infected herds may suffer death loss of 20 to 40 percent of their growing pigs 10 to 20 weeks of age.

Clinical signs of the disease include extreme and sudden weight loss, labored breathing, jaundice and diarrhea. In severe cases, skin lesions, immune suppression, neurological deterioration, kidney failure and eventually death are part of the clinical syndrome.

The strain of PCV2 associated with the recent outbreaks was identified in Europe in the 1990s and in Canada in 2004. Since then, PCV2 has been recognized in nearly all major swine-producing states, first appearing in Kansas

Online proceedings are available from the NIAA Annual Meeting: BioFuels Energy: Animal Agriculture at the Crossroads
April 2 - 5
Hyatt Regency Sacramento
www.animalagriculture.org
270.782.9798



Cumulative mortality of finisher pigs. Mortality of vaccinated pigs was 50% less than that of control pigs. As shown by the increased slope, the highest incidence of mortality for control pigs came during weeks 6-14 of the finishing phase.

swine herds in the winter of 2005.

Dr. Rowland underscores the fact that how the strain of circovirus spreads—and spreads so rapidly—is unknown. Outbreaks have occurred unexpectedly in swine operations with the highest levels of biosecurity. Control strategies like quarantine have not been effective as the virus has been shown to bypass the barriers.

Vaccine Study

With support from the National Pork Board and contributions from Kansas producers whose herds were affected with the disease, researchers from Kansas State's Department of Diagnostic Medicine and Pathobiology began a field trial last summer using a vaccine in commercial development.

The vaccine: a baculovirus-expressed capsid protein from Intervet.

"Although several commercial vaccines have become available to producers, this study is the first reported as an independent, clinical trial," Dr. Rowland states.

The Kansas State study, which concluded in late January 2007, was conducted on a 300-sow, three-site, farrow-to-finish, PRRSV-free, commercial farm that had a known history of several PCVAD and high prevalence of PCV2b. A total of 485 pigs across six groups representing about 60 sows were vaccinated intramuscularly in accordance with

the manufacturer's directions at three and six weeks of age. Weights were measured at weaning, upon entering the finisher phase and at marketing.

The study found a 50 percent reduction in mortality of vaccinated finisher pigs, with the growth rate increased by almost 10 percent. Mortality was reduced from 16 percent for non-vaccinates to 6 percent for vaccinates. Weights for vaccinates were close to 20 pounds heavier in the same number of days compared to non-vaccinates.

"We want to make it clear to producers that this vaccine, licensed by the USDA Center for Veterinary Biologics, is a safe and effective tool for controlling PCV2-associated disease," Dr. Rowland states. He adds that producers who suspect their pigs are experiencing PCV2 outbreak should contact their veterinarian to first confirm the diagnosis and then to acquire the vaccine which is now commercially available in limited supplies.

"While how the virus spreads remains a bit of a mystery, we have found a way to control it," Dr. Rowland summarizes. "And our team concurs with other research results which suggest that PCV2-associated disease is the result of the interaction between PCV2 and other pathogens that are present in swine populations." ●

PCV2 Control Measures

Dr. Antonio Palomo Yague, a veterinarian with a practice in Europe who spoke at the Allen D. Leman Swine Conference last fall, outlined measures he has found to be effective in controlling PCV2:

- Adequate colostrum intake during the first 36 hours,
- All-in/all-out production, full partitions between pens,
- Reduced batch mixing and weaning piglets at the same age,
- Replacements gilts quarantined

- for at least nine weeks,
- Reduced cross-fostering,
- Low density and smaller pens,
- Optimal climate control— especially at weaning,
- Increased diet digestibility,
- Reduced simultaneous vaccinations,
- Plenty of water and organized pig flows throughout the farm.

Dr. Yague said he has found PCV2 to be highly resistant to inactivation by common detergents and

disinfectants. He agrees with Dr. R. Bob Rowland of Kansas State University that sound biosecurity practices do not ensure freedom from PCV2-associated diseases.

“Collaboration between veterinarians and producers is essential for the exchange of information, building producer confidence and fostering continued positive interaction,” Dr. Yague summarizes.

Foot-and-Mouth Disease Focus of UC Davis Research Study

A nationwide research study aimed at protecting the livestock industry from the consequences of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) has been undertaken by the Center for Animal Disease Modeling and Surveillance (CADMS) in the University of California Davis, School of Medicine. The study, conducted in collaboration with the National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Diseases and supported by the USDA and Department of Homeland Security, seeks to expand a 2004 statewide FMD study that concentrated on just California.

In the new study, livestock producers from across the United States are being asked to participate in an online study regarding animal movement and husbandry practices. Information will then be used in a simulation model developed in the previous study to characterize the size, duration and economic impact of an FMD epidemic anywhere in the United States.

“Our model will provide decision-makers with a valuable tool for rapid response and will help determine the best strategies, including vaccination to contain an outbreak and minimize impact to the livestock industry,” states Dr. Tim Carpenter, School of Veterinary Medicine professor and director of the study.

The online survey of producers went live last October and will be ongoing. Data collected by June of this year will be analyzed with additional

data analyzed periodically from that point forward.

“We’re after information from producers of all cloven-hoofed animals,” Dr. Carpenter adds. “The more producers who participate, the better the data—and the better the model predictions.”

“At present, the data set is a bit weak for pigs and dairy, and that is ironic as these two groups could be the hardest hit should an FMD epidemic strike.”

The producer survey is simple, educational and takes very little time to complete. Questions are answered with a click of the mouse. The questionnaire starts with such questions as “primary type of livestock raised,” “state and county of primary livestock” and “number of animals” and proceeds to animal movement questions and such.

Information provided by producers is kept confidential and is used only for modeling purposes.

Individuals can participate in the survey at www.cadms.ucdavis.edu and clicking on the “U.S. Livestock Disease Survey” button located in the upper left hand corner of the CADMS home page. This click results in a page asking if the person is a livestock producer and explains the importance of participating in the survey.

The next step is to click on the “Start U.S. Livestock Disease Survey” button located in the upper left hand corner or on “Start Survey” at the bot-

tom of the page.

“The response from the livestock industry from California during the initial study was outstanding, and we are hoping to get the same response from the rest of the country,” Dr. Carpenter states.

Ongoing survey results can also be viewed at the CADMS website. The steps to view the results include clicking on the “U.S. Livestock Disease Survey” button located in the upper left hand corner of the CADMS home page, then clicking on the “View Ongoing Survey Results” button in the upper left hand corner of the next page.

Participation results are updated daily and can be viewed by several different variables by state, livestock operation type, operation subtype, aggregated herd size, receive animals from out of state and/or ship animals out of state.

“Because FMD spreads so quickly and is easily transmitted, the threat of FMD to the U.S. is very serious, and we need to be prepared,” Dr. Carpenter summarizes. “This model will help us be better prepared.”

Participants by species as of Feb. 6, 2007

Dairy cattle	6.4%
Beef cattle	31.7%
Swine	2.1%
Sheep	45.7%
Goats	8.3%
Calf or heifer ranch	1.6%
Total	100% ●

EPA Official Reviews Agency Initiatives on Air Quality and Agriculture

Explaining that the overall policy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to “. . . work with agriculture to produce solutions,” Sally Shaver, Associate Counselor for Agricultural Policy in the agency’s Office of Radiation, addressed a number of initiatives regarding animal agriculture (including poultry) at the International Poultry Exposition held in Atlanta in January.

To illustrate EPA’s national agriculture strategy, Shaver described an industry-funded air study that operates under a consent agreement which contains a limited covenant that protects participants from Federal regulatory enforcement. More than 2,600 participants representing more than 13,900 poultry, dairy and swine operations in 20 states will participate in this two year study.

“Our goal with this study is to determine what the emissions are from

these sources and to use the results to determine the applicability of various regulatory requirements under the Clean Air Act, CERCLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act), and EPCRA (Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act),” stated Shaver.

Another important area of interest is the regulation regarding particulate matter (PM) and ozone. For example, large dairy operations located in ozone-sensitive areas could be impacted by Federal environmental laws and regulations because of their emissions of VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds). “This research will give us a better handle on how significant this problem is and how we can all work together,” explained Shaver.

In September of 2006, EPA issued new, tougher standards for PM NAAQS

(National Ambient Air Quality Standards). The PM standards are being implemented over a several year span as each state sets forth their individual requirements. The ozone standards revisions are due in March of 2008.

A number of other initiatives that involve agriculture center around clean water, superfund (CERCLA-EPCRA), Spill Prevention Control and Containment measures (SPCC), and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

“In all of these areas EPA is working with agricultural interests to provide positive options, focusing on results that are both effective and economical, and that require patience and communication,” according to Ms. Shaver. She invites anyone with questions or comments to contact her at shaver.sally@epa.gov. ●

APHIS Stakeholders Announcement:

USDA Endorses Industry-Recommended International Standards for Animal Identification Technologies

The U.S. Department of Agriculture strongly believes that the best approach to establishing the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is as a voluntary system driven by the states and the private sector. Accordingly, USDA has adopted a technology-neutral position regarding animal identification methods and processes and purposefully not designated any specific identification technologies for use with NAIS, recognizing that the market must ultimately determine which methods should be used.

Although not selecting or requiring the use of specific technology, USDA recognizes the importance of having a basic level of standardization to ensure, among other things, compatibility across vendors in the national program that technologies are adaptable or compatible with devices produced by different manufacturers, and that other countries recognize the identifi-

cation technologies and/or devices used with NAIS. USDA has reviewed the recommendations of the NAIS Subcommittee that resulted from consensus of species working groups, and endorses the use of technology standards published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

USDA’s decision is supported by the species working groups, several of which (bison, cattle and equine) have recommended that ISO compliant radio frequency identification (RFID) technology be used with NAIS. Specifically, USDA endorses the use of ISO 11784 and 11785, which would establish an RFID technology standard for producers or service providers who elect to use radio frequency technology in the NAIS. While USDA is in favor of standardization and believes basic technology standards should be met, USDA remains technology-neutral

and has not exclusively designated RFID or any other specific identification technology for use with NAIS. Rather, when RFID technology is used, the incorporation of ISO 11784 and 11785 by USDA in authorizing the use of the Animal Identification Number (AIN) will be followed to ensure the compatibility across vendors. “These standards are imperative so industry partners in NAIS can be assured one reader can scan and successfully read all AIN tags that have RFID technology,” states Bruce Knight, undersecretary for USDA’s marketing and regulatory programs mission area. “But USDA is not requiring the use of RFID tags or injectable implants; that remains a choice of the animal owner.”

USDA will continue to consider emerging and developing technologies to

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New Swine Disease Officer

Troy Bigelow, DVM, has joined the USDA/APHIS VS NCAHP (National Center for Animal Health Programs) in Des Moines, Iowa as a swine disease staff officer. His responsibilities will focus primarily on pseudorabies and brucellosis.



Dr. Troy Bigelow

A graduate of Iowa State University, Dr. Bigelow had previously worked three years for FSIS, first as a swine slaughter inspector and then as a district veterinary medical specialist. Prior to that, he was a practicing veterinarian.

The National Center for Animal Health Programs initiates, leads, coordinates and facilitates national certification and eradication programs which promote, ensure and improve U.S. animal health, by preventing, minimizing or eradicating animal diseases of economic concern in light of constituent values.

NPPC Names International Trade Specialist

The National Pork Producers Council has named Laurie Hueneke international trade specialist in its Washington, D.C. office.

"Laurie will be a great addition to our trade team," said Nick Giordano, NPPC's counsel for international trade policy. "She will be an important asset to pork producers."

Most recently, Hueneke was senior biologics specialist with Medtronic, Inc. in Minneapolis, where she developed and implemented strategic global sourcing strategies for pork and beef products. Among her other professional experiences, Hueneke was a marketing associate for Gateway Natural Meats of Bellevue, Iowa and worked as an economic assistant in USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

Hueneke received bachelor's degrees in animal science and international agriculture from Iowa State University and a master's degree in international agriculture trade and development from Oklahoma State University. She is scheduled to begin her duties at NPPC Jan. 16.

Dr. Schulteis Named Associate Director, AASV

Dr. Sue Schulteis has been promoted to Associate Director of the American Association of Swine Veterinarians. Dr. Schulteis joined the AASV office when it was established in 1997 and now plays an integral role in the planning and implementation of the annual meeting. She, an '82 graduate of Kansas State University, undertook the Associate Director's duties effective January 1.

AASV president Scott Dee stated, "In my opinion, our organization could not function without her. Therefore, she is invaluable!"

NIAA Selects Vise-Brown as New CEO; Reorganizes and Makes Other Staff Changes

Michele Vise-Brown was appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the association by the NIAA Board of Directors effective January 1, 2007.

In making the announcement, NIAA Board Chair Scott Stuart said, "We believe we've selected the ideal person to head NIAA. Michele Vise-Brown has been with NIAA since 2003 serving as Director of Member Relations



Michele Vise-Brown

and Committee Operations; she has done an outstanding job for us. Of

particular note is the leadership she has provided this year in the absence of a full-time CEO. Nowhere was that more evident than with ID/INFO EXPO 2006 in Kansas City last August. She and the staff made the 2006 event the most successful in history."

Stuart went on to say that he and the rest of the Board of Directors believe that because Vise-Brown knows NIAA so well, her selection as CEO assures a virtually seamless transition and eliminates any need to relocate the office.

Vise-Brown replaced Dr. Nevil Speer who had been the acting CEO since June. "The association owes Dr. Speer a huge debt of gratitude for his leadership for the past six months," said Stuart. "I'm sure it has been a burden to him as he has many responsibilities at the Department of Animal Science at Western Kentucky University."

"He's been a joy and inspiration for me and the rest of the staff to work with," added Vise-Brown. "We've all learned a lot and grown under his direction and I know I'll be relying on him for help as I start this new challenge."

In other staff changes

Pamela Meador, formerly NIAA's part-time accountant, has joined the staff full time and is responsible for accounting and operational functions.

"Her understanding of NIAA, financial support, agriculture knowledge and exceptional customer service is much welcomed to NIAA staff and members" said Vise-Brown.

Gale Johnson is serving as NIAA's Director of Communications on a contract basis. "Gale has worked with NIAA on numerous projects over the years including the Eradicate Scrapie! outreach program, last year's ID/INFO EXPO and a number of other projects. He is a huge asset because of his familiarity with NIAA and his very extensive background in all phases of agricultural communications," stated Vise-Brown.

Two Western Kentucky University students, senior Cora Newsom and

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junior **Jenna Brown** are working as staff assistants. Newsom, who joined NIAA last summer, is majoring in Economics with minors in Agriculture, Finance, and Business Administration. Brown joined the staff at the beginning of this year and is studying Agriculture Business with an emphasis in Agriculture Communications. Both women have extensive personal animal agriculture backgrounds raising and showing livestock, 4-H, and activities at the University.

Kelly Gill is a graphic designer

under contract. She is a past employee of The Liberty Group, NIAA's printing house. She is on call to design promotional material or complete layout for NIAA publications.

Julie Jones is now a Registered Nurse and is working full time at the Vanderbilt University Burn Unit, but she is still involved with NIAA. She is maintaining the NIAA, Scrapie and Johnes websites and helps train her replacements on her day off.

Nevil Speer, even though he has taken on more duties at Western

Kentucky University, has agreed to help NIAA as needed.

Ken Olson will continue to work on the Johnes Education Initiative. Launched in the summer of 2005, the program is a collaborative effort between industry and government to educate producers, veterinarians and others involved in beef and dairy production about Johnes's disease.

Peggy Logsdon resigned from NIAA effective December 31, 2006. ●

USDA Proposes Disease Status Change for Four Countries

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services has proposed an amendment to its animal import regulations by changing the disease statuses of the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The proposed changes would add these countries to the regions of the European Union (EU) considered low risk for

classical swine fever (CSF) and free of swine vesicular disease (SVD). Latvia and Lithuania would also be added to the list of regions considered free of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and rinderpest.

When the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland became members of the EU, they adopted its animal health, welfare and identification legislation. This includes legislation specific to CSF, FMD and SVD. By adopting

these laws and regulations—as well as undergoing a thorough APHIS risk-assessment—these countries met the requirements for a change in status.

The proposed change in disease status would result in fewer restrictions on the import of animals and animal products from these countries.

An SVD outbreak has not occurred in the United States, and CSF was eradicated in 1976. ●

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Stakeholders Announcement: (cont'd from page 6)

ensure NAIS devices remain current with the marketplace. To encourage flexibility, USDA supports the establishment of standards for other technologies through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI); such standards could then, in turn, facilitate the development of standards for technologies at the international level. ANSI coordinates the development and use of voluntary consensus standards in the United States and represents the needs and views of U.S. stakeholders in standardization forums around the globe. The Institute oversees the creation, promulgation and use of thousands of norms and guidelines that directly impact businesses in nearly every sector. ANSI is also actively engaged in accrediting programs that assess confor-

mance to standards.

Additionally, pilot or field trials will be considered for the demonstration of such technologies to ensure the NAIS can advance with such technologies. At present, APHIS is supporting field trials or pilot projects involving three additional radio frequencies and three biometric markers for use with the NAIS. Companies will have the opportunity to collect data in field conditions under the supervision of state and federal animal health officials, which is a necessary first step in attempting to support the development of standards through the ANSI and, ultimately, the ISO.

For more information on the NAIS, please visit <http://www.usda.gov/nais>. ●