

Mobile Rabies Command Post

Background

Rabies is one of the oldest known viral diseases, presenting a significant wildlife, domestic-animal, and public-health management challenge. According to the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 90 percent of rabies cases reported in the United States each year are found in wildlife. The cost of living with rabies in the United States is thought to exceed \$300 million annually, including the use of domestic-animal vaccinations, postexposure treatment of bite victims, and prevention programs. Oral rabies vaccination of wildlife is a key component of Federal and State cooperative rabies management programs. The goal of this multi-State effort is to stop the spread of this deadly disease.

Wildlife Services (WS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, is charged with providing leadership to alleviate or minimize wildlife damage to agriculture, property, and natural resources. An integral part of the WS mission is protecting people from health and safety threats posed by wildlife in addition to providing assistance in wildlife disease management.

WS has a long history of involvement with State, local, and other Federal agencies in the campaign to directly control the spread of rabies in the United States. These partnerships form the basis for coordinated rabies control programs and provide the tools needed to stop the spread of rabies.

Mobile Rabies Command Post

The mobile rabies command post is one of the tools WS' National Rabies Management Program uses to manage rabies in wildlife. Operated by WS, the mobile unit is equipped with the most advanced technology to help coordinate aerial distribution of rabies vaccines. It is a one-of-a-kind vehicle built to WS' specifications and provides continuity of operations in States where specialists are working to control wildlife rabies.

Oral rabies vaccination (ORV) operations require the use of fixed-wing and rotary aircraft to effectively and efficiently distribute oral vaccines over large

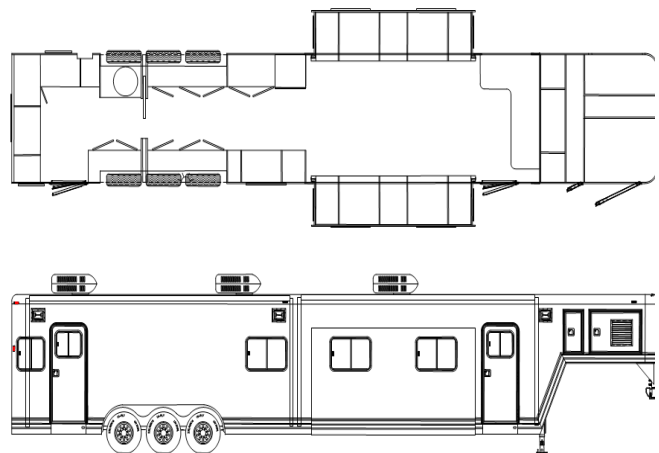
rural areas. Coordinated vaccine placement is crucial to increase the likelihood of wildlife finding and ingesting the matchbox-sized vaccine-filled baits.

Flight-following in this environment is critical for providing crew safety and for ensuring that vaccines are distributed in prime wildlife habitat. The mobile command post is equipped with a separate flight-following station designed to allow personnel to track aircraft movement through radio communication and global positioning system (GPS) technology. On an average workday, WS distributes about 300,000 oral rabies baits. In 2005, the mobile command post tracked approximately 148,400 flight miles, which is the equivalent of circling the world almost six times.

WS frequently conducts ORV programs in remote rural areas, where communication networks are weak or absent. To address this challenge, the unit is equipped with a retractable, 50-foot transmission tower to receive clear communication signals without interference.

In addition, the command post is equipped with a meteorological station and satellite television for weather and news updates. This is important because the aircraft distributing baits fly at an altitude of 500 feet, making weather an important consideration when coordinating flight schedules.

The command post is also a self-sufficient mobile office that provides WS personnel and cooperators with seven workstations and a 40-foot-long work area that is 12 feet wide, along with an additional storage area that makes the overall length of the trailer 53 feet. Traveling about 10,000 miles annually, the entire unit is deployed using a 250-horsepower diesel-powered truck that requires a professional driver.



Mobile Rabies Command Post

The mobile command unit is equipped with:

- Hard-wired telephone lines;
- Two-way satellite communication;
- Backup power provided by a 25-kilowatt onboard generator;
- Geographic information systems (GIS)-capable computers;
- Seven networked stations for access to Internet and printing;
- A large-format color printer; and
- Refrigerator, microwave, storage cabinets, and a heating/cooling system.

Emergency Response Trailer

In addition to the mobile command unit, WS has a trailer designed to provide equipment, laboratory space, and communication infrastructure to assist with wildlife rabies outbreaks. The 16-foot trailer can be dispatched to serve as a Biosafety Level 2 laboratory to conduct real-time rabies surveillance and testing. A Biosafety Level 2 laboratory is suitable for work involving biologically active viruses, such as rabies, that pose a moderate potential hazard. The laboratory can be sealed off to maintain a sterile environment. An office workstation wired for telephone and Internet is located in the front portion of the trailer to facilitate immediate communication capabilities in the event of a rabies outbreak.

Stainless-steel work shelves fold against the wall in order to store equipment when not in use. Biological samples can be stored in the refrigerator/freezer. Any vehicle capable of towing 6,000 pounds can pull this trailer.

Additional Information

For more information, please visit the National Rabies Management Program's Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/rabies/index.html> or call 1-866-4-USDA-WS to contact your WS State office.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.