

Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Emergency Response

Goals and Philosophy

The goal of the National Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Emergency Response Program is the proper development and implementation of a nationwide system to survey for wildlife diseases and respond to a variety of emergencies including natural disasters and disease outbreaks. The system, which is managed by the Wildlife Services (WS) unit in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is designed to provide assistance to Federal, Tribal, and State agencies with wildlife disease threats. Partnerships have been developed with other APHIS programs (including Veterinary Services and International Services), with other Federal entities (including the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and with Canadian and Mexican agriculture, health, and natural resources agencies. The nationally coordinated wildlife disease surveillance system will support existing programs with the collection of samples, facilitate information exchange among the programs, ensure that samples are adequately collected, and provide additional laboratory infrastructure.

The program is implemented through a national coordinator and wildlife disease biologists assigned to APHIS field offices. These biologists conduct monitoring and surveillance activities and collect biological samples through a variety of techniques (e.g., trapping, mist netting, lethal means, etc.). To maximize efficiency, efforts are made to obtain samples in coordination with existing WS operational (e.g., protection of livestock, airports, and aquaculture, urban wildlife management, etc.) and research activities. Wildlife disease biologists are available to respond quickly to assist with disease outbreaks and other such emergencies requiring program participation. In the event of an emergency, biologists are required to immediately mobilize and arrive at the emergency site within 48 hours of notification.

In addition to providing assistance to the many different cooperators, WS is focusing on strengthening emergency preparedness and response and managing issues related to the health of U.S. animal resources and conflicts between humans and wildlife. The strategies to accomplish these objectives include developing a more robust, nationally coordinated pest and disease-surveillance system. An international border disease-surveillance system will proactively reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks on agriculture, wildlife, and humans. The international partnership will allow for better implementation of a border disease-surveillance program in both livestock and wildlife.

Research Activities

An important component of the program is science-based knowledge provided by research on disease organisms, their reservoirs, their transmission cycles, and ways to block the transmission. WS' National Wildlife Research Center supports the program by conducting research on reservoir populations, methods to control diseases, and diagnostic and epidemiologic support.

Locations of WS' Wildlife Disease Biologists

At present, biologists are stationed in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Some Diseases of Interest

- Avian influenza
- Bovine tuberculosis
- Chronic wasting disease
- Classical swine fever
- Plague
- Pseudorabies
- Rabies
- Swine brucellosis
- Tularemia
- West Nile virus

Additional Information

You may obtain more information about wildlife diseases by contacting any State APHIS–WS office. For the address and telephone number of State offices, call the WS Operational Support Staff at (301) 734-7921. You can also visit the WS Web site at <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws>>.

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