

## Early Assessment of Animal Disease Events

Written by Kathy Orloski, DVM, Center for Emerging Issues

The last issue of NAHSS *Outlook* highlighted the Center for Emerging Issues' (CEI) use of electronic scanning of open source media. In this issue, we describe the process by which information on animal disease events obtained through electronic surveillance evolves to actionable intelligence for Veterinary Services (VS).

After CEI identifies a disease event of potential concern to the United States, analysts verify its significance. Often CEI analysts determine that no further follow-up is needed because the information reported initially was inaccurate or the event was not significant to the United States. For disease events in other countries, verification occurs through official reports from the country of interest, such as press releases and reports to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). Additional verification takes place through the country's veterinary officials and APHIS' International Services staff, who then check the accuracy of the information obtained by electronic scanning and acquire new information. For domestic animal disease events, CEI works with the office of the Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) during the verification process.

Once details of the disease event have been verified, CEI may develop an analytic report. An impact worksheet is one type of report produced by CEI. Impact worksheets are designed to rapidly provide critical trade risk information to VS decision-makers in order to determine if the disease event has the potential to substantially affect the U.S. livestock industry. Generally, the worksheets are prepared for disease events in the United States and overseas and involve OIE List A and significant List B diseases. Impact worksheets describe the potential exposure of the disease event by examining live-animal and animal-product production, trade, passenger travel and agricultural products carried by air passengers, and relevant political issues. CEI publishes approximately 20 to 25 impact worksheets annually. They are generally distributed within five days after verification.

The emerging disease notice is another type of analytic report published by CEI. Emerging disease notices are published on emerging or reemerging animal diseases relevant to the U.S. agricultural community. The notices are formatted differently than impact worksheets and provide an in-depth overview of the epidemiology and ecology of a disease. Recent emerging disease notices include the *Epidemiology of Hepatitis E in the US*, *Overview of the Mediterranean Basin Bluetongue Epidemic 1998-2004*, and the *Emergence and Colonization of *Cryptococcus gattii* in British Columbia*.

News items that do not elicit publication of an analytic report are maintained in the Emerging Veterinary Events (EVE) database. This database is currently under development and will be available in the near future to all VS staff via the Internet. Future plans for the database include developing a prioritization process for news items and analysis.

Impact worksheets and emerging disease notices are emailed to a broad audience within VS, including managers, AVICs and area epidemiologists. These documents are available to those outside APHIS on the CEI home page at [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cei/index.htm](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cei/index.htm). To subscribe to receive impact worksheets and emerging disease notices by email, please contact Liz Williams, Technical Information Specialist, CEI, at [Elizabeth.S.Williams@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.S.Williams@aphis.usda.gov) or (970) 494-7329.