

USDA to Publish First-Ever U.S. Animal Health Report

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The United States has vast livestock, poultry, and aquaculture resources. Maintaining their health is of utmost importance. Historically, the United States has been blessed with an abundance of safe food and has been fortunate to have eradicated and prevented many foreign and domestic animal diseases successfully. However, there are several factors that present an array of challenges to maintaining a healthy animal population, including increased global trade, larger and more concentrated animal populations, and the potential for complacency in assuming that our domestic and wild animal populations will always be healthy.

The U.S. Animal Health Report will provide a national overview of animal health in the United States and serve as a valuable source of information on the state of America's livestock, poultry, and aquaculture populations. The report also will take an indepth look at specific programs and strategies used to ensure the continued health of America's livestock industries.

To be published annually, the U.S. Animal Health Report is the direct result of an external review of the Nation's animal health safeguarding system. The Animal Health Safeguarding Review assessed the performance, processes, and procedures used to ensure the success of the mission of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary Services' (VS) program: to protect and to improve the health, quality, and marketability of our Nation's animals, animal products, and veterinary biologics. The review, completed in October 2001, presented a number of specific recommendations:

- Develop an annual APHIS-VS animal health report.
- Create a national surveillance system.
- Provide a framework for a national surveillance system, including standardization, identification, and information management (data capture, description, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination).
- Communicate surveillance findings to stakeholders.
- Expand the role of the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) as the Nation's epidemiologic reference center.
- Expand participation in international animal health discussions and activities.

In addition, the U.S. Animal Health Report will highlight significant annual epidemiological events and provide insight into the Nation's animal health surveillance activities. Within its chapters, the report will address many components of the U.S. animal health infrastructure, animal populations, new initiatives, and approaches to foreign animal disease surveillance.

The first U.S. Animal Health Report is expected in late 2005. As an annual publication, it will be updated and refined each year to ensure that it addresses issues of current importance to our stakeholders.