

First Version of Surveillance Standards Completed

Version 1.0 of the *Surveillance and Data Standards for USDA/APHIS/Veterinary Services* has been completed by the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH). The project was coordinated by the National Surveillance Unit (NSU) and represents a collaborative effort by multiple units within CEAH.

The manual, which provides standards and guidelines for the construction and operation of a surveillance system, represents an essential element of the National Animal Health Surveillance System (NAHSS). A primary objective of the NAHSS is to provide greater protection from endemic, emerging, and foreign animal diseases through enhanced information made available to decision-makers. Timely, useful animal health information depends on the collection and accessibility of accurate, valid, and representative surveillance data. Standardization will help introduce consistency in the way data are collected, stored, and made available, and will streamline the integration of a vast number of data sources from multiple entities and locations.

The standards establish a foundation for building surveillance and data management systems that will better ensure integration and aggregation of surveillance data to facilitate accurate estimates, address pertinent issues and inform decision-makers.

The manual includes three chapters. Chapter 1, Standards for the Key Components of a Surveillance System, is intended to assist planners and managers in considering specific purposes, objectives, design strategies, reporting systems, implementation methods, expected outcomes, and long-term system maintenance. The guidelines ensure that the collection, organization, and analysis of appropriate data are considered before surveillance is implemented. In addition, the manual offers guidelines for review and evaluation to make certain that the surveillance system is achieving its objectives and meeting the standards.

Chapter 2, Standards for Data Categories and Classes, provides guidelines for epidemiologists and database developers on the type and format of data to be gathered. This chapter identifies the commonly used data classes in animal health surveillance systems and provides standard specifications for recording these fields. While the data categories and classes described do not include all fields necessary to address the specific needs of a particular surveillance system, they are intended to provide a helpful starting point for a data dictionary.

Standards for VS Animal Health Surveillance Database Systems are included in Chapter 3. These standards ensure the proper structuring of data systems for easy integration with new and existing databases, as well as proper data entry and storage. This chapter also addresses data confidentiality, security, and quality, and describes expectations for designing, implementing and managing VS data systems developed for national animal health surveillance.

Appendices included with the document provide specific codes for commonly used data classes, including disease/condition, species, and breeds.

Revisions, additions and updates to the standards will be ongoing, and new versions of the document will be released periodically.

More information

The standards are available online at www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahss/resources.htm. For more information, contact the NSU at National.Surveillance.Unit@aphis.usda.gov.