

## Surveillance a Key Topic at USAHA/AAVLD Meeting

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Surveillance was a frequently discussed topic at the annual United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) meeting and American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) conference last month in Reno, Nevada. Surveillance-related presentations included: comprehensive and integrated surveillance, vesicular disease surveillance, foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) modeling, FMD BioPortal<sup>1</sup> for global surveillance, brucellosis surveillance, scrapie surveillance, emerging disease surveillance, non-traditional data sources for surveillance, information technology systems in surveillance, disease reporting, and the state of the National Animal Health Surveillance System (NAHSS).

**State of the NAHSS**—An update on the continuing development of the NAHSS was presented to the committees on transmissible diseases of poultry, transmissible diseases of swine, and animal health information systems. The NAHSS is a chain of partners, all contributing to the final “product:” accurate disease information to support national policy decisions, trade markets, consumer confidence and a healthy industry. With a solid disease control and eradication infrastructure in place, the development of a comprehensive, integrated NAHSS is moving into new phases. Next steps include

- continued development of standardized national surveillance systems that are comprehensive, where applicable, across populations, species, and geography, and;
- integration of national surveillance systems. The integration step seeks efficiencies in budgeting, sampling strategies, laboratory processes, database and IT management, and analytic and reporting methods.

**Brucellosis**—The USAHA committee on brucellosis passed two resolutions pertaining to surveillance. The first resolution endorses proposed changes to national brucellosis surveillance to reflect declining budgetary resources, reduce redundancy, and improve program efficiency. The resolution recommends caution in reducing brucellosis ring testing and reliance on slaughter surveillance to prevent the unintended re-occurrence of brucellosis, as has occurred in the past. Furthermore, the committee urged that no funding changes be implemented until any necessary Code of Federal Regulations

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<sup>1</sup> A web-based surveillance and information system about FMD around the world.

(CFR) changes are finalized and the adjustments are publicly reviewed. The second resolution proposes that Veterinary Services (VS) expedite the move toward a system of regional brucellosis laboratories by consolidating existing brucellosis testing laboratories. The committee resolved to establish 12 regional laboratories and maintain funding for 7 additional State laboratories. Regionalization of laboratories supports national surveillance testing standardization and efficient use of resources.

**Comprehensive surveillance**—A resolution on funding and planning of integrated and comprehensive animal health surveillance was proposed and passed by 11 USAHA/AAVLD committees. The resolution urges VS to ensure continued highest priority for integrated and comprehensive surveillance planning and implementation.

**Scrapie**—The National Surveillance Unit (NSU) along with other VS employees and State counterparts are collaborating to develop a comprehensive scrapie surveillance plan. A summary of ongoing national scrapie surveillance planning efforts was presented to the USAHA Committee on Scrapie. Scrapie surveillance is conducted to identify infected and source sheep flocks or goat herds for eliminating the disease. Current planning efforts include development of strategies to improve existing activities and document scrapie status, with a future goal of substantial eradication of the disease from U.S. sheep and goat populations. The presentation highlighted recent enhancements to scrapie surveillance, including revisions to the sampling criteria for ongoing Regulatory Scrapie Slaughter Surveillance (RSSS) and efforts to expand RSSS to additional collection sites. Demographic information on known risk factors and identification of sampling gaps are being used to develop national and State/area sampling goals and targeting criteria. As the prevalence of scrapie decreases and the epidemiology of the disease evolves during the eradication campaign, the surveillance program will be regularly adjusted to ensure targets and goals are appropriate and being met.

**National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS)**—A NAHRS update was presented at the joint USAHA/AAVLD Committee on Animal Health Information Systems and at the Infectious Diseases of Poultry Committee. In 2008 the direction of NAHRS will move from recruitment to increasing national awareness of the program, with continued improvement and validation of NAHRS reporting. The NAHRS Online Reporting Tool

was updated and the new version released this month (*See related article on NAHRS in this issue.*)

**National Reportable Animal Disease List**—The joint USAHA/AAVLD Committee on Animal Health Information Systems called for the development of a national reportable animal disease list. While all States have some type of reportable disease list or reporting requirements, there is a significant lack of standardization between States. Currently, requirements exist for international animal disease reporting with no corresponding U.S. national reporting requirement. Diseases that now require reporting at the national level are listed in multiple regulations and memorandums and are thus difficult to find. Also, State reportable lists lack standardization and are not updated regularly to provide accurate and timely information.

*To read more on the USAHA/AAVLD annual meeting online, go to [www.usaha.org](http://www.usaha.org).*