



Questions and Answers: VS 2015

Q. What is VS 2015?

A. VS 2015 is a strategic vision developed by the Veterinary Service Management Team (VSMT) to guide the organization in making changes that will better position Veterinary Service (VS) to meet animal health needs in 2015. Specifically, VS 2015 places greater emphasis on:

- Disease prevention, preparedness, detection, and early response activities;
- An expanded veterinary health mission that is responsive not only to issues that impact animal agriculture, but also to public health concerns that arise from zoonotic diseases; and
- An expanded portfolio of interstate and international certification services that meet the growing expectations of global customers.

Q. Why is change needed?

A. The national animal health landscape has changed significantly in the last decade and more change is coming. The VS of 2008 is not the same organization as the VS of 1998. We have to continue to adapt if we're going to remain successful in the future. Technological advancements have and will continue to change the animal production environment and the tools available for managing animal health issues. At the same time, globalization and changing environmental conditions are leading to the emergence of new animal diseases, many of which are zoonotic. Solutions to these diseases typically require multidisciplinary approaches and collaborations across

multiple agencies. We're also winding down or have completed some of our traditional disease control and eradication programs like brucellosis and pseudorabies. In addition, we're seeing an increasing demand for animals and animal products, especially in developing countries. On top of all of these factors, Federal budgets are tightening, and we must identify the best ways to utilize available resources.

Q. How does VS plan to accomplish this shift over the next 6 years?

A. We have the vision, but now we need to work with our external partners, including States and industry to get their input. VS will seek stakeholder participation on work teams that will chart further details of this new course and its implementation at State and local levels. To successfully transition VS and the broader U.S. animal health community from the pressing needs of 2009 toward the impending realities of 2015 will require active involvement from multiple parties. Change takes time, and we envision a gradual transition, but we need to set goals now and begin to build the necessary infrastructure. By working together, we can ensure that the final result leads to improved animal health in the United States.

Q. What new partnerships will VS form?

A. VS will continue its strong partnerships with State animal health officials, agricultural producers, and veterinary organizations. VS will also continue to strengthen its relationships with the emergency management community at both the State and national level. At the same time, VS will strive to enhance collaboration with public health and wildlife agencies and organizations.

Q. What would happen if VS chose to continue with business as usual and forego implementation of VS 2015?

A. It's human nature to fear the unknown, and as a result some organizations tend to avoid change even when it's necessary for survival. While VS could do nothing and continue with business as usual, the reality is that change is coming, and VS can either position itself strategically to benefit from changes on the horizon or remain static and be forced to make modifications down the road that may not be in keeping with the organization's overall mission and vision. To ignore today's changing realities would be a disservice to U.S. animal health as well as to VS' many stakeholders. Change is inevitable and absolutely necessary for the continued success of VS as an organization.

Q. How will stakeholders benefit from the VS of 2015?

A. By emphasizing disease prevention, preparedness, detection and early response, VS hopes to minimize or avert industry-wide consequences. Better animal health capacities such as laboratory networks and veterinary stockpiles, will improve VS support when events do occur. In addition, creating greater flexibility will allow VS to shift personnel and funding more quickly to address emerging animal health issues. As a well-trained, practiced nationally deployable response organization, VS can ensure that future responses throughout the United States will be enhanced. To support these efforts, VS plans to evaluate existing rules and regulations to ensure that they are science based and meet the evolving needs of States and industry. In the past it was okay to take a one-size fits all regulatory approach, but in today's global economy we need greater flexibility to help States and industries maintain markets when disease strikes.

Q. The plan lacks critical details; when will those gaps be filled in?

A. The lack of detail in the plan is intentional. The VSMT has identified some overarching goals and established a timeframe for implementation, but how those goals are achieved is ultimately up to VS as well as our traditional and new external stakeholders. VS is committed to moving forward with the vision for 2015, but the management team does not have any preconceived notions of how implementation will occur. We'll fill in those details together, and the result will be a plan that better positions VS to meet the animal health challenges of the 21st century.

Q. How can VS talk about expanding its role in animal health at the same time that budgets are flat lining?

A. It's true that Federal budgets are flat lining and that is one of the key reasons that VS needs to think strategically about the future. In order to continue to provide leadership on issues of national concern, VS needs to prioritize its activities in order to make the best use of existing resources.

Q. Will traditional VS activities get cut to make room for VS 2015?

A. One of the key goals of VS 2015 is to position VS to be more responsive to emerging disease threats. By responding earlier to potential threats, the goal is to reduce the traditional resources that have been necessary to eradicate diseases like brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis. The reality is that funding for these large-scale eradication activities is going to be much more difficult to obtain so we need to think differently about how we protect U.S. animal health in the future. At the same time, the VSMT recognizes that talk of change inevitably leads to concerns about division of labor and allocation of resources. That's why employee and stakeholder input are going to be critical to shaping the plan that ultimately defines the VS of 2015.

Q. Will stakeholder input receive equal consideration?

A. In order for VS to successfully implement VS 2015, the plan must have the support and buy in of both employees traditional and new stakeholders, and allied departments and agencies. Many organizations fail in their attempts to implement change because they forget to consider the input of their most important partners and collaborators. As with any new approach, people will have many thoughts and ideas, and some of those will be divergent from one another. It's up to the VSMT to carefully consider that feedback as a whole and develop a plan for VS 2015 that meets the standards expected by VS employees as well as our external stakeholders. This is no easy task, but VS is committed to a new vision for 2015 that benefits the entire animal health community.

Q. How can I share my thoughts and ideas with VS?

A. VS has identified a project leader to help manage implementation of VS 2015 and ensure that we maintain the current momentum. Nora Wineland, with VS' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health in Fort Collins, CO, has been assigned to this position full time. In the near future, she will be establishing work teams and creating other forums to gather both employee and stakeholder input. More information about these opportunities will be forthcoming.