

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

Factsheet

March 2009

Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Emergency Response



Wildlife Services (WS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), provides Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts that threaten U.S. agricultural and natural resources, as well as human health and safety, and property.

APHIS' mission is to protect the health and value of U.S. agricultural, natural, and other resources. Through the National Wildlife Disease Program, WS supports this mission domestically and internationally via partnerships and cooperative projects with Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies.

The National Wildlife Disease Program provides assistance to Federal, Tribal, and State agencies, universities, and nongovernmental organizations addressing wildlife disease threats.

The program seeks to develop and implement a nationwide system to survey for wildlife diseases

The goals of the program are:

1. To develop and implement a nationwide system to survey for wildlife diseases
2. To strengthen the capacity to respond to a variety of emergencies, including natural disasters and disease outbreaks

In working to meet these goals, the program has developed partnerships and cooperative projects with:

- State and Tribal agencies, private and non-profit organizations, and universities and other research institutions
- APHIS programs, including Veterinary Services (VS) and International Services (IS)
- Federal entities, including the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The agriculture, health, and natural resources agencies for Canada, Mexico, and other nations

National Wildlife Disease Program activities are implemented by the program's national coordinator and wildlife disease biologists assigned to WS State offices. These biologists conduct monitoring and surveillance efforts, which include collecting biological samples, reporting results, and conducting additional surveillance as necessary. To maximize efficiency, program biologists try to obtain samples in coordination with other existing WS operational activities—such as efforts to protect livestock and aquaculture, and urban wildlife management activities.

A strong laboratory infrastructure is important to safeguarding agricultural and wildlife resources.



Emergency Response

WS is also focusing on strengthening its emergency preparedness and response efforts—especially in connection with the program’s activities to protect U.S. animal health and to address conflicts between humans and wildlife.

The strategies for accomplishing the program’s emergency-related objectives include:

- Developing a more robust, nationally coordinated pest and disease surveillance system
- Conducting disease surveillance activities at U.S. international borders to protect agriculture, wildlife, and humans
- Establishing international partnerships to better implement border disease surveillance programs for both livestock and wildlife

Within the National Wildlife Disease Program, a nationally coordinated surveillance and emergency response

system (SERS) supports existing surveillance and monitoring activities, facilitates information sharing among involved partners, promotes the further development of laboratory infrastructure (i.e., personnel, equipment, and procedures), responds to a variety of emergency requests, and serves as the primary



emergency response contact for APHIS WS.

Through SERS, program employees work closely with the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) to further develop laboratory infrastructure. NAHLN laboratories, which undergo an accreditation and validation process, provide support for routine diagnostic work and also critical surge capacity for laboratory testing, which is crucial during foreign animal disease outbreaks.



During emergencies, SERS works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local governments to formulate effective and efficient responses. Wildlife disease biologists are available to respond quickly and assist with disease outbreaks and other emergency activities that require their special skills and abilities.

In the event of an emergency, program biologists can mobilize immediately and arrive on site within 48 hours of notification. SERS has established an emergency response “hotline” telephone number, (970) 266-6363.

The hotline provides a direct line to a SERS manager and immediate access to SERS support and services.

International Activities

During emergencies, wildlife disease biologists can mobilize immediately and arrive on site within 48 hours of notification





With skills, such as using net launchers to live-capture birds, the program's wildlife disease biologists helped successfully sample more than 150,000 wild birds since 2006 for highly pathogenic avian influenza. The most severe strain has not been found in North America.

Neither wildlife, nor the diseases that they carry, respect international borders. Therefore, effective interagency and international coordination are both critically important to facilitating trade while continuing to protect U.S. wildlife and agricultural resources.

The National Wildlife Disease Program works with numerous other agencies and international partners to identify health threats outside U.S. borders and to reduce those threats at the source. The program's cooperative efforts emphasize sharing information and techniques. When possible, the program also works to develop infrastructures that respond to several—not just individual—animal disease threats.

For example, in more than a dozen countries, the program's collaborative efforts related to avian influenza include activities that also address other wildlife diseases.

Research Activities

National Wildlife Disease Program activities are science-based and rely on the findings of research into disease organisms, their reservoirs, transmission cycles, and ways to block disease transmission. Wildlife Services' National Wildlife Research Center and several universities support the program by conducting research of disease reservoir populations, control methods, and diagnostic and epidemiologic support.

Since 2006, the program and its partners have collected and tested more than 100,000 environmental samples and 200,000 live-captured and hunter-harvested wild birds as part of an early detection strategy for highly pathogenic



A program biologist takes a blood sample from a whitetail deer to run a rapid test for bovine tuberculosis



National Wildlife Disease Program Biologists

At present, biologists are stationed in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey,

New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Some Diseases of Interest

Avian influenza
Bluetongue disease
Bovine tuberculosis
Chronic wasting disease
Classical swine fever
Foot-and-Mouth disease
Plague
Pseudorabies
Rabies
Swine brucellosis
Tularemia

Additional Information

For more information concerning wildlife diseases, contact any State APHIS-WS office, toll-free at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297). For the address and telephone number of State offices, call the WS Operational Support staff at (301) 734-7921, or visit the WS Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage.



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Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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