



Veterinary Services 2015 Project

**Agricultural Emergency Management
Preparedness and Response Planning
(AEM-PReP)**

Strategic Direction

**The AEM PReP Working Group
Final for inclusion in Synthesis Plan, 3/1/11**

Executive Summary

Introduction: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Services (APHIS VS) leads the way to ensure our Nation is prepared and effective in managing animal health issues that could threaten the U.S. economy or quality of life for people or their animals. When faced with livestock and poultry health incidents, VS will lead national and regional responses. When requested, and when applicable resources are available, VS will also support responses to other incidents and hazards, especially those involving animals.

Key Challenges and Goals: To become a more proactive response organization, there are three broad aspects of emergency management that the AEM PReP Working Group (WG) focused on:

1. **All Hazards / One Health Mission: Defining roles and responsibilities and response scope**

This includes:

- Clarifying the core and secondary scope of responses
- Clarifying roles, responsibilities, and resources

2. **Preparedness: Cultivating a culture of response readiness that permeates VS**

This is accomplished through:

- Developing new tools and methods
- Ensuring that VS has a capable system to effectively and efficiently manage and share emergency management data
- Training employees in field capabilities and methods that are essential to our response
- Developing succession plans, the key to ensuring an ability to respond with the required expertise
- Expanding the pool of resources by sharing similar capabilities across APHIS and across other agencies
- Expanding exercise opportunities including a comprehensive training/exercise calendar
- Strengthening VS incident management teams
- Focusing on continuity of business planning and other ways to help industry recover from emergencies.

3. **Collaboration: Refining the VS interface with the broader response network**

This is accomplished through:

- Improved collaboration with States and other partners
- Leveraging the resources of other agencies and organizations and improving VS' ability to integrate outside resources into responses.
- Flexible and scalable responses
- Incorporation of accredited veterinarians and other resources into responses
- Alignment with Administration, USDA, and APHIS strategic directions.

Small Scale Trials: The AEM PReP WG has worked or is currently working on 5 trials:

- 1) Orientation to Animal Emergency Response
- 2) Collaboration Project
- 3) Emergency Data Management
- 4) State and Local Animal Emergency Response Teams Participation Project and
- 5) Framework Survey.

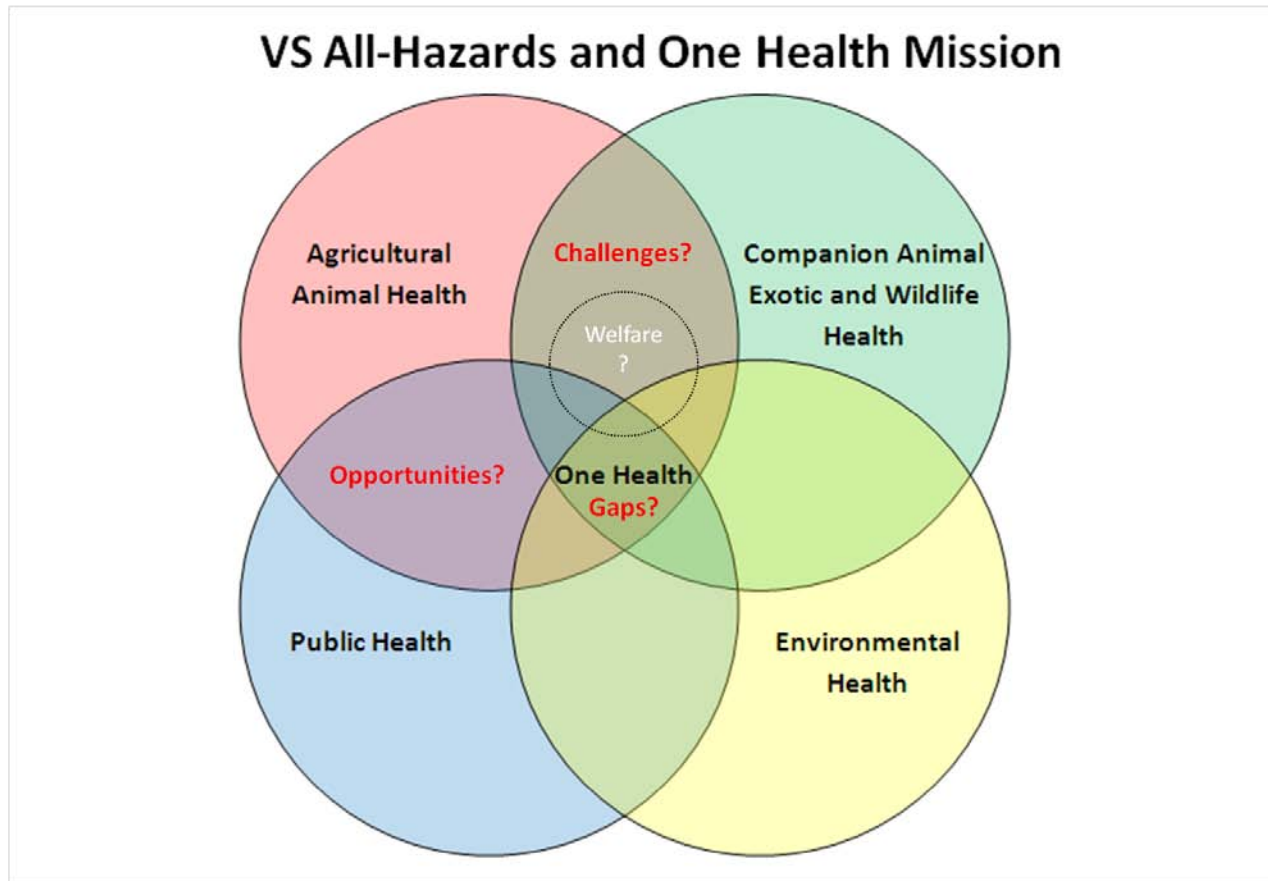
Priorities: By the end of 2012, the AEM PReP WG recommends that these priorities are accomplished in the following order of importance:

- 1) Provide support to develop and transition to a fully-capable data management system
- 2) Complete small scale trials addressed in the body of this document
- 3) Continue to support business continuity planning and risk assessment
- 4) Use the Incident Command System (ICS) methods more in VS employees' non-emergency work and train VS personnel to be official ICS trainers
- 5) Enhance the support for Incident Management Team (IMT) methods, training, and qualifications
- 6) Support efforts to recruit for emergency management positions and to incorporate the National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps (NAHERC) and accredited veterinarians into responses.

For 2013 and beyond, the WG suggests investing in the following:

- 1) New tools and methods
- 2) Training and hiring practices that will ensure VS continues to have needed core expertise
- 3) Exercise programs to ensure effective responses
- 4) Steady, predictable funding streams.

The following Venn diagram represents VS emergency management considerations in one picture:



Introduction

APHIS-Veterinary Services (VS) leads the way to ensure our Nation is prepared and effective in managing animal health issues that could threaten the U.S. economy or quality of life for people or their animals. When faced with livestock and poultry health incidents, VS will lead national and regional responses. When requested, and when applicable resources are available, VS will also support responses to other incidents and hazards, especially those involving animals.

Veterinary Services has a long history of animal health emergency and incident response and had to continually adapt its long-standing approaches to the changes occurring at the Agency, Department and Federal levels. While much of the basic framework for emergency response is in place, VS is challenged to become a more proactive response organization. To do this, VS needs to cultivate a culture of response readiness and leverage available resources, including people and information systems, so the organization is ready to respond and continue to learn and adjust to how best to work within this larger response network that has been created.

In the wake of 9/11 and several hurricane disasters including Katrina, the U.S. Federal Government paved the way for better intergovernmental collaboration and consistency by adopting and encouraging the use of the National Incident Management System and the National Response Framework as guiding principles for national emergency management and response. USDA developed staffs to help organize departmental emergency management efforts. USDA is the coordinator and APHIS is a primary agency responsible for Emergency Support Function #11 concerning agriculture and natural resources. The APHIS Emergency Management Leadership Council (EMLC) now helps to organize emergency management and response efforts. The APHIS Emergency Management Safety and Security Division (EMSSD) also has emergency planning and preparedness responsibilities in APHIS. All-hazards approaches to emergency response continue to be developed, clarified and improved in the Agency.

To address these issues, VS formed the Agricultural Emergency Management Preparedness and Response Working Group (AEM PReP WG) in November 2009. The group met in December 2009 and in June 2010 to:

- 1) Develop and implement pilot projects to learn the best way to address emergency management priority issues.
- 2) Develop a written plan detailing the WG's recommended strategic direction for emergency management.

The list of those who comprise the AEM PReP can be found in Appendix A on page 12.

This document consists of AEM PReP WG's recommended Strategic Direction, which is divided into four sections:

- 1) Key Challenges and Goals
- 2) Current Work Group Initiatives: Small Scale Trials
- 3) Planning Priorities and Initiatives for 2011 and Beyond

- 4) Appendices:
- A) AEM PreP Working Group Transition
 - B) Results of the Framework Questionnaire.

As results of the other pilot projects become available, that information as well as recommendations from the AEM PReP on whether to amplify, modify, or terminate the projects will be shared with the VS 2015 Synthesis Group and the Veterinary Services Management Team.

KEY CHALLENGES AND GOALS

1. **All Hazards / One Health Mission: Defining roles and responsibilities and response scope**
VS should be clear concerning its core and secondary areas of expertise. The AEM PReP WG suggests the following statement be used to guide the decisions about what incidents VS should be involved in: *VS will lead responses to livestock and poultry health incidents. When requested and within the scope of its resources and capabilities, VS will support responses to all other incidents, especially those involving animals.* This statement allows for flexibility in deciding what to be involved in but lacks clarity about response specifics. Where possible, the AEM PReP WG recommends that communications internal and external to VS should be as clear as possible on the scope of VS emergency response.
2. **Preparedness: Cultivating a culture of response readiness that permeates VS:** An effective response agency has ingrained processes which support and perpetuate the effective emergency management: Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. VS should be ready to respond effectively and efficiently and ensure that, VS-wide, there is a clear understanding of scope, roles and responsibilities, organizational structures and a common understanding of emergency response terminology. The AEM-PreP WG has focused its efforts on improving the agency's functionality in all four categories.

The WG overwhelmingly recommends that data management resources be in place in order to effectively and successfully create and support this environment. While there are many strategic projects to improve our capabilities already in progress in VS and among our partners, the AEM PReP WG identified additional areas of critical importance to instilling and maintaining a culture of response readiness in VS:

- a. **General Planning (in addition to specific response plans):**
 - i. **Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources:** Employees should know and be trained for their roles and responsibilities in a response.
 - ii. **Tools and methods:** Developing new tools and methods is a must. Research and development that will identify new technologies or processes for animal emergency management and response should be supported. For example, based on lessons learned from recent UK, Japan, and South Korea FMD outbreaks, mass depopulation and burial of carcasses was found to be an extremely undesirable option. Vaccination was found to be a desirable strategy. Improved vaccination, routine biosecurity, and mass depopulation/disposal methods are needed to minimize economic losses.
 - iii. **Information technology:** Ensure that VS has a capable system to effectively and efficiently manage emergency management data and to be able to meet shared data needs with our State partners and laboratories.
- b. **Preparedness:**
 - i. **Training:** Incorporating more ICS methods into VS employees' non-emergency work would significantly enhance readiness. Employees need to be trained in field capabilities and methods that are essential to our response (safe animal handling, field investigation, surveillance, sampling techniques, OSHA hazardous waste and emergency response operations, and information/data systems to name a few).
 - ii. **Exercises:** Exercises should reflect scenarios where responses are organized and funded by VS as well as situations in which VS has a support role. A comprehensive

- training/exercise calendar is needed. We can sometimes expand local exercises to a wider scale, and/or test individual components and capabilities on a smaller scale by planning drills. Not all exercises need be comprehensive or expensive or wide in scope. Expanding the use of drills may be an economical way to exercise specific components of our response. Exercises should combine other disciplines and agencies that also are planning to respond to animal health emergencies and incidents.
- iii. Maintaining readiness: Instill awareness among all employees and response partners and clarify their expected response roles and responsibilities even during times of infrequent mobilization. Strengthen VS Incident Management Teams. Invest in the development, training, and maintenance of the IMTs and their members.
- c. *Response and Recovery*:
- i. Use of ICS: In addition to exercises, deployments to small events or utilization of ICS for domestic disease response will maintain expertise and readiness.
 - ii. Continuity of Business: Continuity of business (COB) planning should become a principal focus of VS response and recovery planning efforts in 2015. Continue to explore ways to develop response methods and solutions that facilitate industry recovery. For example, investigate alternative strategies to stamping out, such as improved routine biosecurity and vaccinate to live policies.
- d. *Enhancing Resources*:
- Funding and staffing challenges are a permanent component of the planning landscape. Several key issues identified or discussed by the working group are:
- i. A steady and predictable stream of funding is needed. Overcome budget hurdles by exploring innovative approaches to funding (see examples from other agencies). Explore opportunities to tap into funding streams for animal health that are going to other agencies. Explore opportunities for having our partners share resources.
 - ii. Personnel, staffing, and recruiting: Need succession planning for the technical workforce as well as management positions. Identify and continue to ensure our access to the necessary field and oversight capabilities, new technical capabilities, and other skills and knowledge. Recruitment policies and practices should support hiring and retention of qualified and experienced staff to fill the technical needs of animal emergency response efforts. There should be built in redundancy in our capabilities to avoid an inability to respond due to lack of required expertise.
 - iii. Resource efficiency: Expand the pool of resources by sharing similar capabilities across APHIS and across other agencies (e.g., administrative and logistics functions in IMTs).
3. **Collaboration: Refining the VS interface with the broader response network**
- a. Collaboration: Improve our collaboration with States and other partners (DHS, CDC, FDA) to clarify and define our respective roles, responsibilities, and resources.
 - b. Facilitate flexible and scalable response depending on the needs of stakeholders, States, tribe, or regions. Develop ways to facilitate integration and/or communication with entities with differing response perspectives including local, State, regional, and international perspectives.
 - c. We have an ongoing need to closely align our plans with the Administration, USDA, and APHIS strategic directions. Within APHIS, the Emergency Management Leadership Council is our primary link to the bigger picture. VS should continue to improve program visibility, recognition of accomplishments, and increase utilization of VS capabilities.

- d. Leveraging the resources of other agencies and organizations: Planning is always needed for integration of outside resources such as contractors, accredited veterinarians, and other surge capacity resources into our response. Plan for an adaptable VS role when surge resources are mobilized. Plan exercises to test and practice surge capacity options.

CURRENT WORKGROUP INITIATIVES: SMALL-SCALE TRIALS

To mobilize VS toward action on the Key Goals (Culture of Readiness; Leveraging Resources; and Broader Response Network), the AEM-PReP Working Group developed several small-scale trial projects. Each project represents an initial, targeted set of steps to begin work under one or more of the Key Goals. The following are highlights of the plans for these ongoing small-scale initiatives.

- **Orientation to Animal Emergency Response:** This trial project is developing and will pilot with VS-PDS a hands-on course that could become a mandatory, recurring training for all Veterinary Services employees who may be involved in handling animals in an emergency response. The Orientation will include various training methods, such as on-line and CD training modules leading to an “On-Farm Animal Handling” course.
 - a. **Objectives:** Develop a cadre of trained and ready VS field employees available to respond to an animal emergency and/or assist State and industry personnel in safely handling animals. Avoid any situation in which Federal or State employees are needed to handle animals but may be unprepared to do so.
 - b. **Status:** Approved by VSMT. The VS Ohio Area is participating and helping to coordinate university and State of Ohio resources. Course materials are under development, and the course is targeted for initial delivery by October 2010.
- **Collaboration Project** identified two pairs of willing State and Federal animal health officials (TX and NY), including other relevant stakeholders, to participate in a couple of collaborative workshops to discuss our respective roles, resources and responsibilities in all hazards agricultural emergency management. The project team developed all-hazard scenarios with the two States as a means of facilitating the workshop discussions.
 - a. **Objectives:** Document the identified needs, questions, lessons learned and recommendations resulting from these discussions that will 1) provide guidance in formulating VS 2015 roles and responsibilities; 2) facilitate and improve future State/Federal/industry collaborative efforts; and 3) develop a template for discussing roles and resource needs and expectations with all States, partners, and stakeholders.
 - b. **Status:** Approved by VSMT. The New York workshop was held October 6, 2010 and the Texas workshop was held October 21, 2010. Results from these discussions have been summarized and will be published.
- **Emergency Data Management** is proposing a series of mini-projects that will pilot methods to collaboratively review State emergency systems; to train key VS personnel and State-designated counterparts to adeptly enter data into and troubleshoot the most functional system(s) available now (for VS this is currently the Emergency Management Response System); and continue pursuing a more ideal system(s) for the long term use by VS and the States.
 - a. **Objectives:** Partner with States to establish requirements for operational and emergency data management response. Establish a cadre of emergency data management experts at the VS and State levels. Establish and implement training plans and operations for continuity of operations. Identify, document and spread best practices of State offices that effectively use selected data management tools.

- b. **Status:** Tabled until EMRS status is verified and operational.
- **State and Local Animal Emergency Response Teams Participation Project** is a survey designed to evaluate VS involvement with State and local animal emergency response teams and organizations. Existing and developing State and local animal emergency response teams across the country (SARTs and CARTs are examples) represent an opportunity where the skills, knowledge and expertise of our field personnel can be leveraged in these and other local animal emergency response organizations. If the project is able to document significant contribution to VS AEM-PreP mission and goals, further support for field participation and involvement can be considered. One part of the survey would be completed at the Area management level by the AVIC through the AEC and the other part of the survey would be completed by participating employees. The survey would be administered through the online service SurveyMonkey.
 - a. **Objectives:** Document the types of activities and experiences that VS personnel gain through their involvement these types of response organizations (SARTs and CARTs as an example) and assess whether or how that contributes to the VS AEM-PreP mission and goals by surveying VS Areas and their participating employees.
 - b. **Status:** Approved by VSMT. The survey development was completed in November and surveys were deployed and completed before the end of December.
- **Framework Survey:** To garner broader emergency management perspectives beyond the AEM-PreP group, a preliminary survey of Area Emergency Coordinators and others was conducted. The survey was coordinated by the Framework Subgroup and compiled responses to twenty four sets of commonly recurring emergency management framework questions. The responses provide insight into current perspectives, approaches to certain problems, and a feel for what items seem to be priorities for VS field emergency management personnel. Contributors also provided suggestions on potential solutions. The input was summarized and information and ideas was used by the other subgroups to utilize.
 - a. **Objectives:** To garner broader emergency management perspectives beyond the AEM-PreP Working Group.
 - b. **Status:** Completed April 2010.
 - c. **Results:** See Appendix B Executive Summary of Framework Questionnaire Findings

PLANNING, PRIORITIES, AND INITIATIVES FOR 2011 AND BEYOND

In addition to the 2010 smaller-scale trial projects described above, the Working Group identified the following initiatives, in order of priority, designed to achieve a more effective and efficient VS organization by 2015.

- All of the recommended initiatives work in concert to maximize our ability to be a premier animal health and response agency that is adaptable and focused.
- A lack of action on one or more of these initiatives will contribute to maintaining a static and unresponsive approach to our mission in the face of a rapidly changing world.
- Without growth and improvement in our procedures and processes VS runs the risk of becoming an irrelevant agency as others assume roles and responsibilities to fill the gaps and needs.
- Choosing to address only a portion of the list below will reflect the degree to which we can excel in particular area.
- The initiatives are, in some cases, linked or related to others so the impact of inaction may be compounded.

It is strongly recommended that an individual be assigned as a project coordinator to oversee and track the assignment, progress, and implementation of projects. Prioritized initiatives which are in the initial concept phase will need to be funneled to the appropriate individuals or teams for further development. Suggested assignments of projects are included, in brackets, below with each item.

Staff should be integrated into a routine planning cycle for VS AEM-PReP to carry out the 2015 effort and future planning from a technical perspective as well as management level. This will help move the Agency into a more proactive state.

Prioritized Initiatives for 2011-2012 (within the existing annual budgets)

1. **Data and Information Management:** Provide full support to develop and transition to a fully-capable data management system. Information is the foundation for everything that we do. Managing that information, whether it involves case data, lab results, operational field assignments and work progress, personnel and other resource availability, communication with State and other partners, or any other aspect of our response, is a basic necessity. This capability warrants priority attention in order to ensure that we are effective and timely in our response. The consequence of inaction in this area will be an inability to respond appropriately, delayed decision making, confusion in field operations, wasted resources, inaccurate reporting and inaccurate disease status /spread assessments, a general appearance of ineptitude, and other complications resulting from roadblocks in the capture and flow of data and information. [Suggest assignment to office of CIO]
2. **Current Projects:** Complete the 2010 trial projects and determine if parts or all of those projects should be expanded, modified, or discontinued in 2011. [These projects are currently assigned to AEM PReP subgroups.]

3. Business Continuity and Risk Assessments:

- a. Continue support and development of biosecure agricultural movement and marketability plans using the Secure Egg Supply Plan and the Secure Milk Supply Plan as examples of Continuity of Business (COB) planning and participate in exercising them as they are completed. [Projects are under development and/or currently assigned; consult with NCAHEM and CEAH on progress and new areas needing development].
- b. Identify vulnerable agricultural sectors and commodities including large and small rural producers. Collaborate on risk assessments of industry processes and practices and on the movement and marketing of products and animals. [Some risk assessments may be in progress; suggest compiling a prioritized list of needed risk assessments and assign to appropriate personnel or teams in CEAH, Regional Offices, or Area personnel with expertise]
- c. Participate in interagency, multi-state and industry development of COB guidelines, plans and exercises. [Suggest assigning a team to identify guideline needs. Prioritize list and assign each needed guideline to individuals or teams with appropriate knowledge and expertise to begin initial drafts].
- d. Develop skills of VS field staff in the kinds of inspection, certification or auditing of industry practices that may be needed to support COB planning. [Following development of guidelines, assign training development to PDS].

4. ICS Utilization and Training: Incorporate more ICS methods into VS employees' non-emergency work; employees need more than the rare on-line basic ICS courses. Train VS personnel to be official ICS trainers and utilize them to deliver ICS training for VS and other animal health partners. [Suggest having AECs, IMT members, and possibly Regional ESF 11 coordinators develop process for an ICS trainer program within VS. As part of ICS training, new VS ICS trainers can incorporate examples, relevant to our personnel, of how to apply ICS concepts to non-emergency work such as managing projects, etc.]**5. IMT Methods, Training, and Qualifications:**

- a. Utilization of Incident Management Teams should continue. They provide essential continuity and efficiency in response. Training and exercising as a team provides continuity and clarity as a result of the familiarity acquired among team members. Developing new working relationships, when single resources are haphazardly assembled for command and general staff positions in the midst of an emergency, is costly in terms of time, energy, efficiency, and achieving operational objectives. The working groups recommends routine annual funding of IMT training and exercises; scheduling inter-team operational meetings and trainings; and exercising team transitions. Training and exercises should be incorporated into overall APHIS training schedule.
- b. Build familiarity and experience in emergency response by using ICS structure and methods for selected non-emergency events. The current structure of teams composed of Command and General Staff, plus key technical specialists, should continue.
- c. Positions below Command and General staff should be defined and qualified/certified personnel identified to fill them. Qualification and certification information needs to be communicated to field personnel. Employees should know what their roles and responsibilities are in a response; what response positions are available; which ones they are qualified for; and what the requirements are to become qualified. Operational

processes should be improved and solidified, including a process for consistent transition from one IMT to the next.

- d. Clarify VS personnel roles when contractors are also deployed.
- e. Continue APHIS Emergency Qualification System (EQS) efforts to clarify and document VS employees' roles, responsibilities, and resources. [Suggest that a working group be assembled from current IMT members, plus other management and field input, to address IMT issues. Previous documents and/or projects (there are several) related to IMT issues should be reviewed as part of this effort].

6. Personnel recruiting, staffing, and other resources:

- a. Need ongoing planning for filling/retaining key emergency management positions such as the IMTs, other ICS positions, and emergency management staff.
- b. Continue to support and promote NAHERC; investigate methods of collaborating with and tapping into other existing veterinary emergency response organizations; develop methods for recruitment and indoctrination of unaffiliated professionals during response. [Suggest assigning this to EM staff with input from IMTs, NAHERC, etc] .
- c. Under the enhanced National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) program, a certification should be developed for an "Area Veterinarian Emergency Responder." The training requirement would be a collaborative effort developed between NAHERC and NVAP. This training may cover several modules and will be available to all Area Veterinarians. To remain certified, this training must be renewed in a time frame determined by NAHERC and NVAP. All AVICs and NAHERC have access to the database that will track these certifications. [Suggest assigning this to NVAP and NAHERC personnel].

Prioritized Initiatives for 2013 (may need new money)

1. **New Tools and Methods:** Develop new tools and methods for response to animal health emergencies. Such measures would include but not be limited to, improved preventative control measure such as new generation FAD vaccines, more efficient and reliable depopulation and disposal measures, and better field detection technologies such as pen-side testing. Develop tools to assist decision makers in evaluating the need for response and/or the level and type of resources to respond with. [Suggest assignment to technical groups appropriate to a particular topic; for decision making tools CEAH resources may be appropriate].
2. **Training and Expertise:**
 - a. Add more training for field and technical capabilities that are essential to our response (safe animal handling, field investigation, surveillance, and sampling techniques, information/data systems, OSHA hazardous waste operations and emergency response, etc). Be the experts – train the trainers so that we are the resource for expertise for states and other partners. [Need assessment of where gaps may be and have PDS work on this].
 - b. Develop and hire expertise so that VS can be recognized as the authority on all animal health issues – not just traditional poultry and livestock
3. **Exercise:** Develop a comprehensive VS training/exercise calendar. VS should fund and organize more exercises at the local and state level. VS Areas should have a lead role in

planning and organizing animal and zoonotic disease exercises. Surge capacity options should be included in the comprehensive exercise plan. [Suggest NCAHEM for this].

4. ***Funding Innovation:*** Steady, predictable funding streams are needed in AEM-PreP. Overcome budget hurdles by exploring innovative approaches to funding issues (see examples from other agencies). Improve agency emphasis on our role in mitigating the effects of animal disease on non-agricultural areas such as tourism (total impact picture). This needs to get us in to the resource stream, and not just the responsibility stream [Suggest assigning to Carol Tuszynski's group: Budget and Planning].

DRAFT

APPENDIX A

AEM PREP WORKING GROUP TRANSITION

The AEM-PreP Working Group plans to complete its tenure in Winter 2010/2011 and facilitate a smooth transition to parties who will continue AEM-PreP planning in 2011. The 2009-2010 AEM-PreP WG will complete documentation of their pilot projects, findings, and recommendations, and present their reports to the incoming team for 2011. This section of the document summarizes the Working Group's purpose, process and results:

PURPOSE -- Expand on the APHIS-VS in 2015 AEM-PreP concept paper written by VSMT in 2009. Use those concepts to further articulate the strategic direction for 2015 and plans for VS actions now and through 2015. In 2010, emphasize action over traditional strategic planning and document production.

TIME FRAME: November 2009 to February 2011

PROCESS:

- Identified major issues and initiated trial projects to inform the planning effort to come
- Gathered structured input from all VS Area Emergency Coordinators (AECs)
- Drafted, circulated and revised the Strategic Direction document
- Summarized results of the trial projects
- Held two in-person meetings: December 1-2; June 16-17.
- Communicated via weekly/biweekly teleconferences and e-mail
- Exchanged, discussed and archived documents on Lotus Notes Quick Place

CONTRIBUTORS:

- Executive Sponsors: Jose Diez (NCAHEM), Jack Shere (ER)
- 2015 Coordinators: Roxanne Mullaney, Nora Wineland (to 4/2010)
- NASDA Representative: Martha Littlefield (LA)
- Members: Brian Archer (KS), Fred Bourgeois (OCIO, to 4/2010) Linda Cox (NVSL), Lawrence Elsen (CVB), Daniel Harpster (OH), Todd Johnson (NY), Jerad Linneman (RMS, to 5/2010), Suzan Loerzel (FL), Lori Miller (NCAHEM), James Peak (CEAH), Barry Pittman (KS), Byron Schick (OK), Charles Singer (MA), Lynn Thomas (NAHPP), Lynette Williams (HR, to 3/2010), and Beth Wittenbrader (PA), Darrel Stiles (MD).
- Facilitators: David Cummings (PFS), Kenneth Waters (PPD)

PRODUCTS:

- Strategic Direction document – August 2010
- Summary of AEC Input on the AEM-PreP Framework – April 2010
- Summaries of Lessons Learned in the Trial Projects – February 2011
- Detailed Plans from the Trial Projects – February 2011

APPENDIX B

Executive Summary Framework Questionnaire

Background

The goal of this project was to:

- Help define and clarify how and when VS would engage in response activities
- Refine and improve processes to maintain response capabilities, communication, and preparedness.
- Determine what resources are most appropriate to mobilize, when, and with what expectations, and develop consistent and fair processes for evaluating and prioritizing requests for assistance.

The project team organized the findings into seven areas:

1. Scope, Type and Level of Response, Framework Decision Processes/Parameters
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Capabilities, Resources, Capacities, Qualifications, Credentialing, Readiness
4. Collaboration, Interagency Coordination, Planning, Communication
5. Information Management, IT and Technology Issues
6. Preparedness, Prevention, Recovery
7. Response Procedures, Processes, Strategies, Tactics

The items selected for inclusion in the executive summary were based on several criteria:

- Suggestions that were in line with the Framework Subgroup goal statements,
- Suggested actions that were raised by multiple contributors and represented a consistent message,
- Items that could be formulated into a recommendation that could be presented to management for further consideration or decision
- Items that had the potential to be developed or explored as test projects. Some items will have overlap with other subgroups or other working groups.

The findings from the survey contributed to the AEM PReP Working Group's proposed statement of the VS scope for responding to emergencies:

VS will lead responses to agricultural livestock and poultry health incidents. When requested and within the scope of its resources and capabilities, VS will support responses to other incidents especially those involving animals.

Findings

Scope, Type and Level of Response, Framework Decision Processes/Parameters

The questions in this section relate to perceptions and opinions related to involvement in all-hazard and all-species planning and response as well as to VS involvement in new animal health areas. More detailed suggestions addressing these points are in the extended summary document.

- Comments indicate a wide ranging, although not universal, **support for VS involvement in all-hazard response as well as an expansion of the species that we cover and the types of activities that we respond to**. This perspective is, at the same time, almost universally tempered by the recognition that there must be some **constraining parameters** around our EM planning and response so that we do not over extend, dilute, or waver from our core missions and authorities. Several key points extracted from this are:
 - In general, VS should focus on livestock, poultry, and other species and activities for which we have a mission, authority, and jurisdiction. These should remain our **primary** core functions.
 - VS should provide **support** for other activities and agencies that relate to non-livestock animal health or indirect animal health issues. In general, comments indicated the belief that this support should be according to the capabilities and training that we have (we can participate more if we develop specialty knowledge or capabilities, personnel, and budget).
 - We need **clear communication** within our agency and to our stakeholders **regarding our focus and our capabilities**.
 - **Emergencies start locally** and our processes and prioritizations should reflect that.
 - To enable effective supportive engagement in new or emerging areas, there must be a **regular funding stream for “one-health” type activities** (AHMS one-health account? for VS and not just as a cooperative agreement to the states)
 - **A process for SMEs**: need to develop and implement processes/procedures to determine what technical specialties/SME capabilities we need, what the qualification are to be an SME, what training is acceptable to meet those qualifications, and who and how will these roles be filled.

Roles and Responsibilities

Questions in this section related to the need for clarity related to EM roles and responsibilities, potential future roles of field personnel including VMOs, AHTs, AECs, AEOs, etc.

- Comments indicated that there are many **initiatives that are in progress or that have already been proposed** that will significantly improve communications related to roles and responsibilities. There is frustration at the slow or absent communication related to who is working on what piece of this picture, as well as with the lack of feedback when proposals are sent up the chain. The following recommendation in this area, while not new or original, are key

pieces in ensuring that VS becomes a premier animal health agency (efficient, focused, timely, and effective):

- Develop a comprehensive, functional set of Animal Health Program Elements or Guidelines (AHEMP Guidelines?) that include parameters around the functioning of AECs (roles, responsibilities, training, capabilities, etc) as well as other field personnel. Maintain consistency with NCAHEM.
 - Complete credentialing and resource typing effort and communicate this internally and externally.
 - Completing position descriptions and qualification task books for field operation level positions in ICS response structure. Communicating to field personnel what they are qualified for and how they can pursue additional qualifications.
- There was a **very strong emphasis among most contributors that maintaining a field force** was exceptionally important. A trained and experienced field force and the day to day skills that they maintain is what enable them to function as responders also. Maintaining a field force is part of having a complete veterinary infrastructure. Our field force is responsible for the early response to FAD investigations and disease incidents. As incidents grow our field personnel are the most appropriate to provide oversight and guidance to less experience animal disease responders as more personnel are deployed. It was suggested that the field role should have some level of both field capability and overseer. Need overall QA/QC role provided by VS. It may be useful to train field personnel to be leaders /supervisors in response situations. We need to maintain a competence and connection with the local industries we serve. The best and perhaps only way to do that is through a field presence. Field personnel could function as local liaison to various agencies (county level emergency management and public health officials, university extension, producer organizations, and any sister federal agency) – “all disasters are local.”
 - **Review the management and utilization of the AECs** as a key field level EM role as well as a potential resource to fill new support roles related to liaison and multiagency/multispecies preparedness. Divergent suggestions on various supervisory, direction and control structures (AVIC, Regional, or National direction), indicate a need to discuss the management of the AEC position to determine if a new organization structure would be more effective. Suggestions that more fully integrating AECs in to VS programs and field activities would improve the effectiveness and utilization of those positions.

Capabilities, Resources, Capacities, Qualifications, Credentialing, Readiness

Questions in this section related to maintenance and utilization of IMTs, maintaining readiness, improving processes, and surge capacity. There is overall between this section and the previous one on Roles and Responsibilities. Key points and perspectives include:

- **IMTs should be used for all-hazard response.** They should be used for small events and multiagency event in order to maintain readiness.
- **Invest in the development, training, and maintenance of the IMTs and its members.**
- **Improve how we engage stakeholders in efforts to build surge capacity** and explore the concept of utilization of EMAC for animal health response.

- **Fully utilize the AECs** as an animal health emergency management and response resource.

Collaboration, Interagency Coordination, Planning, Communication

Questions in this section related to improving planning, collaboration, and communication with a wide array of stakeholders; adapting to variability among states or regions; refining the state/fed response interface, integration and coordination; and exploring the federal to SART or NGO interaction, and evaluation of adequacy of inclusion of small/local/niche farmers.

There were very few ideas or suggestions that could be consolidated into an overall approach to these issues.

- One somewhat common theme to the responses covering these questions was the idea that **utilizing exercises** at the local, regional, and national levels would improve collaboration, communication, integration, and coordination. It was recommended that funding streams be made available to coordinate local/state/regional level exercises (with VS as lead), and that AECs, VMOS, and ESF 11 coordinators should be utilized in this arena and in facilitating other collaboration and communication processes. Regarding response integration and SART/NGO interface, ICS was recommended as the most appropriate way to incorporate various entities into response and the emphasis should be on response starting locally.
- Other suggestions included developing public information teams, using the Health Alert Network (HAN) model, expanding and defining the role of extension, including “niche” groups in planning phases.

Information Management, IT and Technology Issues

The questions in this section related to information systems and information exchange processes used in response and how IT fits into our planning and response.

- There was agreement that there is a need for a comprehensive software system that can manage emergency data specific to the needs of animal health emergencies. Many of the responses also indicate a need to develop data transfer protocols between state level systems to our federal system and within the federal system. The consensus was that EMRS is currently the only option that is designed with our disease response needs in mind, but there was strong support for dedicating resources to improving and maintaining the .
- Comments regarding IT systems were not uniform but key items seemed to include issues such the needed ability to integrate with other data systems and sources, and provide timely situational awareness with ‘dashboard’ like features/functionality. A suggestion was proposed for a policy change to manage IT onsite through ICS and not from region to allow state and federal responders to work together while maintaining respective security firewalls.

Preparedness, Prevention, Recovery

Questions in this section related to increasing effectiveness of response, recovery issues, and business continuity.

- Items identified as providing improved ability to detect or respond to disease incidents included a universal / mandatory Animal ID system, increased border security with strict import requirements that are enforced with vigilance and coordinated with CDC, USFWS, and CBP. VS

should have authority over all live animal imports (whether they are companion animals or not) and continue support for IS and foreign missions, and improved surveillance systems to make us for reduction in personnel.

- Comments indicated that opinion that VS should incorporate recovery into EM planning but no clear consensus on how that would look. Suggestions to help business continuity included a rapid local permitting process developed ahead of an outbreak, and incorporating risk assessment-gap analysis into decision making. Another suggestion was to facilitate industry acceptance of routine biosecurity measures by working towards an ISO standard or other type of internationally accepted standard for agricultural biosecurity.

Response Procedures, Processes, Strategies, Tactics

The questions in this section related to specific areas of our EM response methods or protocols and how we prioritize our response efforts.

- Responses related to our traditional depopulation and carcass disposal options indicated that views varied widely on this question suggesting that there is no clear consensus on how VS response should proceed except that the old rapid eradication model was no longer relevant or the best solution.
- Regarding prioritization of response one suggestion was: public health, food security, economics, and animal health. Prioritization schemes should be discussed. A crucial element that should be developed is a cost vs. benefit response tool, regarding any possible response activity (e.g. vaccination, stamping out, etc.). Development of a risk assessment/prioritization scheme may be a useful tool when weighing potential response options. Without such analysis, it is difficult for VS to weigh directions and when to implement what response.