

## National Veterinary Stockpile and Navajo Nation Conduct Successful Logistics Exercise

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Navajo Nation conducted a National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) logistics exercise on April 27, 2011 in the Navajo capital city of Window Rock, Arizona. The event represented the first APHIS-sponsored full scale exercise on Tribal lands. Conducted at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds, the exercise illustrated the partnership between APHIS and the Navajo Nation in preparing to respond logistically to an animal disease outbreak.

USDA Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Edward Avalos and Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly both attended the exercise and commemorated the occasion with a press conference.

"The exercise was an opportunity for APHIS and Tribal member participants to gain valuable experience in implementing veterinary response measures in the event of an emergency," said Undersecretary Avalos. "The joint exercise allowed us to identify gaps and improve processes to ensure we're well equipped to protect American agriculture in the future."

The one day exercise was a culmination of years of planning by subject matter experts and representatives of numerous agencies. "Hopi Tribal leaders were key players in the exercise. Other Tribal members of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe were present to observe our full scale exercise. Federal and State partners validated our planning and our reciprocal discussions between agencies to protect our animal resources from a foreign animal disease incident," explains Glenda Davis, Program Manager of the Navajo Veterinary and Livestock Program and team leader of the exercise. "This has been three years of planning for the Navajo Nation and we are able to see our work pay off with a successful exercise. We tested our plan, and were able to activate and deploy our warehouse."

The exercise was designed to provide a learning environment for players to exercise sections of the *Navajo Nation National Veterinary Stockpile Tribal Plan* and to exercise the ability of NVS staff members, support personnel, and the Navajo Nation to logistically respond to a simulated Rift Valley fever outbreak. Exercise players reacted to exercise injects and took the necessary actions to respond to a variety of simulated circumstances. The exercise was planned, designed, and conducted in accordance with guidance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).

In preparation for the exercise, the Navajo Nation developed an extensive *Navajo Nation National Veterinary Stockpile Tribal Plan*. A simulated incident command developed an incident action plan which included a map of the outbreak scenario; layout of the warehouse facility used to receive and manage NVS assets; summary of current actions to the point of requesting assistance from the NVS program; incident objectives; Incident Command System (ICS) organizational chart and assignment list; communications plan; medical plan; and safety message. The supply unit leader and his staff prepared the warehouse the day prior to the exercise to receive deployed NVS countermeasures. Preparations included mobilizing staff,

preparing for warehouse activities; and coordinating with other key ICS leaders and technical specialists.

A series of briefings kicked off the exercise. Participants were prepared for the day's schedule and were informed about the Rift Valley fever outbreak exercise scenario, the resources required to respond immediately, and the justification to request Federal assistance from the NVS program. Following the briefings, animal health officials from the Navajo Nation, State of Arizona, APHIS Veterinary Services Arizona Area Office, APHIS Veterinary Services Western Region, and NVS headquarters exercised the NVS request process by placing a series of phone calls through management channels, including the National Center for Animal Health Emergency Management 24/7 emergency hotline (800- 940-6524). The Navajo Nation also requested assistance from NVS 3D (depopulation, disposal, decontamination) commercial services and, as part of their request for 3D support, submitted the required statement of work (SOW).

The tractor trailer containing NVS countermeasures for the exercise backed up to the warehouse door and the exercise play began. The receiving and distribution manager directed warehouse teams to offload the shipment using a forklift, inspect for damages and shortages, report inventory discrepancies, and store each tri-wall container in its predetermined storage location on the warehouse floor. The inventory manager remained busy responding to injects throughout the exercise that required inventory controls. The inventory manager processed requests for supplies from responders in the field, generated pick sheets, monitored and adjusted on-hand balances, and forwarded reorder requests while managing other tasks.

Multiple injects for the warehouse teams required them to pick a variety of supplies from the NVS tri-wall containers, move them to staging, and prepare them for distribution to field responders. The occasional safety and security issues challenged the warehouse teams to exercise their safety and security plans. The NVS shipment contained simulated vaccine which required specialized cold chain management. Warehouse teams quickly unloaded the simulated vaccine, checked its temperature to ensure the required temperature was maintained during transit, conducted inventory, and quickly stored under refrigeration. The storage temperature was monitored frequently in accordance with the Navajo NVS Tribal plan.

As the exercise came to a close, the warehouse facility was shut down and returned to normal operations. During this time, warehouse teams and managers conducted actions to return accountable NVS countermeasures to the warehouse, pack and prepare them for return, and load them back onto the tractor trailer for return shipment to the NVS program. A hotwash with all exercise participants was held immediately following exercise play to identify positive attributes, areas for improvement, and lessons learned. Immediately following feedback submission, each participant was presented with a certificate of participation.

More than 28 agencies and organizations participated in the exercise with representatives serving in the roles of players, observers, evaluators, or controllers. Exercise observers were provided the opportunity to view the exercise from designated observation areas. The injects and expected actions were reviewed in real time with the exercise play, providing observers with the details of the warehouse activities they were observing. Kirkwood Community College provided

observers with a donning and doffing demonstration of personal protective equipment, and allowed observers to don/doff to improve their biosecurity technique.

The *Navajo Nation and National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) 2011 Logistics Exercise* was a success in meeting the exercise objectives of testing the NVS program's ability to deploy and ship NVS countermeasures based on a request from the Navajo Nation. The exercise tested the implementation of the *Navajo Nation NVS Tribal Plan* to conduct logistics warehouse and inventory management operations and the performance of duties as a mobile logistics team. Observations and lessons learned will be captured in an after action report from which the sponsoring agencies can generate its improvement plans.

With the NVS program's readily available resources, APHIS is prepared to respond to introductions of the most damaging livestock and poultry diseases. Continued improvement and regular testing of NVS capabilities with exercises like the one held in the Navajo Nation help ensure the United States is prepared to deploy vital resources to quickly stop the spread of animal disease to protect the health and value of animal agriculture.

The NVS program exists to provide States, Tribal Nations, and U.S. Territories with the resources they need to respond to a damaging animal disease outbreak. The stockpile is the national repository of critical veterinary supplies, equipment, vaccines, and services that can be deployed to the site of a damaging animal disease outbreak within 24 hours. A major goal of the NVS program is to help States, Tribal Nations, and U.S. Territories to plan, train, and exercise for the receipt, management, and distribution of NVS countermeasures during a logistics emergency response.

All States, Tribes, and U.S. territories are encouraged to develop a written NVS plan to ensure responders receive the NVS countermeasures they need. For planning tools, question and answer documents, and other information, visit the NVS website at <http://nvs.aphis.usda.gov>.



Under Secretary Avalos and President Ben Shelly of the Navajo Nation pictured with NVS exercise participants.



More than 28 agencies and organizations participated in the Navajo Nation NVS exercise.



Navajo, State of Arizona, and Veterinary Services animal health officials requesting assistance from the NVS program.



Receiving NVS countermeasures.



Inspecting NVS countermeasures for damages and shortages.



Picking supplies from the NVS tri-wall containers for field responders.



Immediately storing simulated vaccine to maintain acceptable cold chain.



Maintaining accurate on-hand balances of warehouse inventory.



Staging orders for delivery to farms.



Delivering orders to field responders on farms.