Focus of Surveillance

Some wildlife diseases are unique to animals. Others (e.g., bovine tuberculosis and highly pathogenic avian influenza [HPAI]) are zoonotic, affecting both animals and humans. Because disease risks are dynamic, the NWDP continually evaluates and alters its focus to address the most current challenges to wildlife, agriculture, and humans.

Other diseases (e.g., chronic wasting disease and foot-and-mouth disease) pose threats to domestic animals and livestock. If these diseases are detected in wildlife, livestock producers can quickly enhance biosecurity to protect their animals, and wildlife managers can begin reducing threats.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI H5N1)

Avian influenza has emerged as an animal disease of worldwide concern, in part due to its potential to mutate into a virus that could lead to a human pandemic. The highly pathogenic (H5N1) avian influenza virus has not yet been detected in North America. In the largest-ever surveillance for a wildlife disease in North America, the NWDP leads a multi-agency effort for the early detection of H5N1 in wild, migratory birds.

Plague

Plague, a bacterial disease not native to North America, is passed through bites from infected fleas. In early spring 2005, a South Dakota Tribal Council asked Wildlife Services to determine whether reported die-offs of prairie dogs were the result of disease or poisoning. AfterAPHIS wildlife biologists collected samples, tests from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the first verified incidence of sympathetic plague in the State. The NWDP activated its Surveillance and Emergency Response System and individually treated burrows in nine prairie dog colonies, covering over 5,000 acres.

Feral Swine Disease Surveillance

Through a joint initiative, the NWDP collaborates with APHIS Veterinary Services and others to sample more than 2,300 feral swine annually for 5 diseases of interest. These results are shared with local animal health authorities to better inform commercial swine producers in more than 30 States of potential risks from feral swine, or wild hogs. This non-native species is a known carrier of many diseases, including pseudorabies and swine brucellosis, both of which have been eradicated from U.S. commercial pork production.

Future Concerns

HPAI will remain an immediate focus of wildlife disease surveillance. The expanding range and population of feral swine make this species a continuing concern for animal health officials and wildlife managers. Where human health risks exist, the NWDP will continue plague and tularemia surveillance as sampling sources are available. The NWDP will also follow emerging diseases impacting wildlife, such as chronic wasting disease and foot-and-mouth disease.

For More Information

• Toll-free (866) 4USDA-WS or (866) 487-3297

• A listing of WS State and Regional Offices is available on the Internet at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage.

Department of the Interior
United States Forest Service
Wildlife Services
On the Watch for Wildlife Disease
National Wildlife Disease Program

Wildlife Services
Protecting People  |  Protecting Agriculture  |  Protecting Wildlife

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Issued April 2009 • Program Aid No. 2002

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CAUTION: Pesticides can be injurious to humans, domestic animals, desirable plants, and fish or other wildlife—if they are not handled and applied properly. Use all pesticides safely and store fully. Follow recommended practices for the disposal of surplus pesticides and pesticide containers.

Cover photo: APHIS wildlife biologists release a dove trapped and hated for bovine tuberculosis.

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The NWDP directly supports the APHIS mission of strengthening the Nation’s safeguarding capabilities domestically and internationally while increasing emergency response capabilities.