

NAHMS program continues to provide information to decisionmakers

Since the inception of the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) program in 1989, its goal has been to provide timely information to decisionmakers in the stakeholder community. This stakeholder community includes a wide range of interested parties—from regulators and legislators to individual producers and consumers—making it a challenge to have “the right information at the right time.” However, NAHMS’ continuous information-needs assessment process addresses these issues by gathering new information and by using historical data compiled by NAHMS during previous national studies and other targeted investigations. Recent inquiries have included requests for information about antimicrobial use/resistance, spread model parameterization, and animal disease traceability.

The study of antimicrobial use/resistance continues to be a topic of interest to agriculture and animal health. NAHMS has provided information and data on several recent occasions to support legislation and research. On Sept. 25, 2008, the Veterinary Services Deputy Administrator’s office provided testimony before a House subcommittee hearing to “review advances of animal health within the livestock industry,” using information provided by NAHMS on levels and types of antimicrobial use in livestock production processes. For the past 3 years, legislation has been introduced in Congress that would affect the way antimicrobials could be used in agriculture. NAHMS data, not available from other sources, were used in the background for the proposed legislation. The National Pork Board and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians recognize the need to provide more specific and comprehensive information on antimicrobial use in swine operations for risk assessments and regulatory reform. NAHMS data from past swine studies and technical expertise from NAHMS personnel are being provided to supplement data collected from AASV members for this purpose.

Recent outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom and elsewhere have raised concern about APHIS’ understanding of how an inadvertent or intentional outbreak of a foreign animal disease in the United States would be handled. NAHMS was asked by Veterinary Services (VS) staff to collect data on livestock movement, quarantine, and testing. NAHMS has collected data in the Swine 2006, Dairy 2007, and Beef 2007–08 national studies to help parameterize the disease outbreak models.

Collection of data in the small-enterprise pig and chicken studies served to better describe under-served populations. The data are useful in designing surveillance systems and building simulation models in order to design response plans.

VS' program for animal traceability has utilized NAHMS data to help guide its development strategies. NAHMS information on the current use of animal ID technologies is used to better understand how to increase the number of officially identified animals. Documented differences in management practices by herd size has allowed the program to develop targeted outreach and messaging materials for advancing animal disease traceability. When measuring progress in advancing animal disease traceability, NAHMS data often serve as a benchmark against which progress can be measured.

NAHMS provided data for a description of dairy and beef cow-calf industry practices associated with the introduction of tuberculosis; this data was summarized in a chapter of the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health's "Assessment of Pathways for the Introduction and Spread of *Mycobacterium bovis* into the United States." NAHMS information on movement patterns in the dairy and beef cow-calf industries is being used in an attempt to model cattle movement in enough detail to determine where the risk of TB transmission would likely occur.

National estimates on the proportion of the U.S. swine herd vaccinated against swine influenza virus were generated from the NAHMS Swine 2006 national study. The VS Deputy Administrator's office used the information to respond to questions at an April 30 hearing of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce on the swine flu outbreak and the U.S. response.