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Strategy and Policy

Ruminant Health Center

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Review of Idaho's Brucellosis Management Program, 2021

A Review of Idaho's Brucellosis Management and
Mitigation Activities

2021 Review of Idaho's Brucellosis Management Program

Dates of the Onsite Review: November 2 - November 4, 2021

Review Team Members

- Mark Camacho, Brucellosis Epidemiologist, APHIS, VS, CHC
- Ryan Clarke, Brucellosis Epidemiologist, APHIS, VS, CHC
- Aimee Hunt, Brucellosis Staff VMO, APHIS, VS, CHC
- Randy Wilson, Animal Identification Coordinator, APHIS, VS, Field Ops
- Ted Johnson, Animal Identification Coordinator, APHIS, VS, Field Ops
- Luci Dimick, Epidemiology Officer, APHIS, VS, Field Ops

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Employees Joining in Person

- Cindy Gaborick, ID AVIC, APHIS, VS, Field Ops
- Kelly Scheuer, ID Epidemiology Officer, APHIS, VS, Field Ops
- Angela Yates, Laboratory Technician, APHIS, VS, Field Ops

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Employees Joining in Person

- Scott Leibsle, State Veterinarian, ISDA
- Christie Hammons, Assistant State Veterinarian, ISDA
- Daniel Salmi, Idaho State Animal Health Laboratory Bureau Chief, ISDA
- Deb Lawrence, State VMO/Epidemiology Officer, ISDA
- Kelly Mortensen, Livestock Agent, ISDA

Idaho Department of Fish and Game Employees Joining in Person

- Tricia Hebdon, Wildlife Health Program Coordinator, Idaho Fish & Game
- Nicole Walrath, Veterinarian, Idaho Fish & Game

Review Objectives

- I. Review the adequacy of state's brucellosis rules and infrastructure to prevent the spread of brucellosis beyond the DSA.
- II. Assess the enforcement of state and federal brucellosis rules.
- III. Assess cattle surveillance, diagnostics/laboratory capability, and producer education and cooperation.
- IV. Assess wildlife surveillance and risk mitigation activities.
- V. Evaluate DSA boundaries, testing, and movement restrictions for overall effectiveness.

Executive Summary

This is a follow up brucellosis review to USDA's initial Idaho program review in 2018 and therefore will not cover all the specific sections in as great a detail as the initial review. Also due to Covid travel restrictions in 2021, there was a smaller contingent of onsite visitors from USDA but still a full investigative team to visit markets and slaughter plants in order to verify performance of the program. Dr. Mark Camacho joined the review meetings in Boise, ID virtually while Drs. Clarke and Hunt attended in person.

The review team requested brucellosis program data from Idaho State Department of Agriculture during the summer of 2021 and then met with Dr. Scott Leibsle, ID state veterinarian, and other members of his executive team during the week of November 2th to 4th, 2021.

There was a significant change to the Idaho brucellosis program leadership since our last review in 2018 with Scott Leibsle replacing the retired Bill Barton as ID State veterinarian. There is also a new assistant state veterinarian, Christie Hammons as well. There was also a significant change to their Chapter 2 State Brucellosis Program rules since the 2018 review with the lowering of the test-eligible age from 18 months or older to 12 months or older for sexually intact animals residing or grazing within the DSA between January 1-June 15. This brings Idaho into agreement with the other two GYA states with regards to test eligible age. Finally, the review team noted an improved working relationship between ISDA and IDFG during our visit and our interactions with both agencies.

Producers and the cattle industry seem to be fully engaged and cooperative with the Idaho brucellosis program and recognize that this is necessary for them to do business in an area of endemic wildlife disease. There is an excellent statewide, online permitting and ICVI management system employed by ISDA and accredited veterinarians. It appeared very intuitive, easy to use and widely used by most practitioners within the state.

Idaho is still working to correlate Brand Inspection records with brucellosis test charts to validate that premovement testing out of the DSA is working properly, but this will need to be confirmed during the coming months with local VS ID. Brand Inspection is not under ISDA authority, but

under the Idaho State Police. Brand inspection has a relatively new electronic data base, but still depends a lot on paper records in the field.

The Idaho DSA has about 158 resident herds with about 20,000 breeding cattle. Seasonal grazers amount to another 100 herds. As a result of following their Chapter 2 rules, Idaho tests roughly 30-50% of their DSA cattle on an annual basis. This is excellent. See the table below for details.

FY	# HEAD TESTED	% TESTED	# HERDS	% HERDS	# WHOLE HERDS	% WHOLE HERDS
FY 2018	12649	50.6	137	75.7	43	23.8
FY 2019	8581	34.3	146	80.7	37	20.4
FY 2020	9865	39.5	141	77.9	35	19.3

As far as markets, producer cooperation and slaughter plants, the review team observed a functioning program with excellent cooperation between the ISDA, Idaho state brand inspection, USDA personnel, yard ownership and veterinary practitioners. Knowledge of the DSA and its producers amongst these players and their cooperation at the Blackfoot market is the strength of the brucellosis program and in the Eastern portion of Idaho as a whole. Livestock investigators visit producers and livestock markets on a regular basis. Educational posters have been posted at the livestock markets. The ISDA brucellosis epidemiologist has begun quarterly visits to the DSA. However, knowledge of the brucellosis program was not nearly as evident in the western part of the state and could be improved with some maps and lists of DSA producers at western markets. There were also some concerns raised by the review team regarding Idaho cattle that move directly from the Idaho DSA to out-of-state markets (particularly Dillon, MT) without those markets being notified to test those cattle.

The Idaho State Animal Health Laboratory seems to be working well with excellent performance and response rates to brucellosis tests. Idaho does not use the high capacity, high sensitivity FPA plate test, but instead uses the FPA tube test at their lab which explains their dramatically lower FPA responder rates than MT or WY. Finally, the lab requested that they be allowed to run their brucellosis tests first before recording all animal ID for each sample and then focus on recording animal ID around non-negative samples to improve efficiency of their sample management process.

Wildlife surveillance of hunter-harvested elk samples in Idaho are collected by game management units (GMUs). Idaho collected 270, 384 and 245 elk samples in and around the DSA for FY 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively with just a few reactors each year. Any hunting district that has had a reactor or suspect within the last 5 years gets 100+ hunter sample kits from IDFG. After the Idaho feedgrounds went away, the number of elk in the DSA GMUs dropped. One new improvement to report is that depredation Techs/ Managers are now full-time employees and able to address depredation within 24 hours. IDFG receives a total of \$21,000 in cooperative agreement funds through ISDA. \$15,000 are a lump sum for contractual activities such as hazing to prevent elk-cattle interaction, landowner assistance with elk depredation, and fencing. An additional \$6,000 is passed through to IDFG for hunter test kits.

Idaho has one of the largest raw milk dairy industries in the US accounting for roughly 200 raw milk premises throughout the state. Current Idaho regulations mandate that ISDA BRT test all dairies in the state quarterly in addition to an annual brucellosis test placing a difficult burden on ISDA personnel to collect individual samples from all raw milk dairies. Idaho is therefore requesting that USDA allow a change in their rules to require only BRT testing within and around the DSA since there is robust and redundant slaughter surveillance and movement testing to protect the state.

Idaho has excellent compliance with voluntary Herd plans (after risk assessments) within the DSA and consider herd plans critical in educating producers of potential risk and for monitoring DSA cattle movements.

Idaho expects three new slaughter plants to open in 2022, one killing cattle and bison and two killing cattle only.

Finally, VS Idaho has strongly recommended to the review team that the open vacancies for a VMO-Boise and an AIC position be filled in order to properly support the program.

Conclusion

Idaho has demonstrated to the USDA review team that they are properly administering the brucellosis program in their state in order to manage their designated surveillance area (DSA) and prevent infection from escaping the endemic zone. This fulfills the USAHA request to regularly monitor GYA states and their brucellosis programs. USDA will look to review Idaho again in 2024.

Recommendations

1. We recommend brand inspection and ISDA work together to verify that movement requests correlate with a valid Brucellosis test ensuring that all animals leaving the DSA have a valid test.
2. We recommend all agencies (VS, ISDA, and IDFG) cooperate in the risk assessment project started by Tricia Hebdon. VS-ID would like to help in any way they can with this effort.
3. We recommend VS and ISDA incorporate any new slaughter plants with an appropriate kill and catchment area into the national brucellosis slaughter surveillance system.
4. We recommend Idaho continue to do live-capture elk surveillance along the borders of their DSA. It is opportunistic for other diseases and we encourage IDFG to continue this sampling with support from USDA cooperative agreement funds.
5. We recommend updating the livestock market lists of DSA producers every quarter or twice a year to stay current.

6. We recommend developing a backup plan for veterinary service at the Blackfoot market in case the accredited veterinarians should retire or are otherwise unavailable to service the market.
7. We recommend that a current list of Idaho DSA producers be provided to Dillon, MT auction yard personnel as well as Montana department of agriculture and brand inspection. We anticipate no issues with this recommendation as the auction yard in Dillon and the Blackfoot auction yard have the same ownership.
8. We recommend that ISDA work to verify that animals leaving the Idaho DSA to a sale yard out of state or to a private treaty sale are tested for brucellosis and identified accordingly. Once verified, these Idaho cattle that are tested in Montana should be identified as Idaho testing numbers when Idaho brucellosis surveillance metrics are reported.
9. We recommend that Treasure Valley Livestock Auction and Dr. Casper be provided with a map and current list of producers within the Idaho DSA.
10. We recommend that blood collection be performed on animals over 24 months as required by Idaho regulation and Northwest Premium Meats and other slaughter plants be provided with a current list of DSA producers so that animals arriving from these producers will have blood collected from animals over 12 months. ID collection at this plant on tested animals was minimal, which could be corrected with education by both ISDA and VS personnel visiting the plant.

Request from ISDA to RHC:

1. Current ID regulations mandate that ISDA BRT test all dairies in the state quarterly placing a difficult burden on ISDA personnel to collect individual samples from all 200 raw milk dairies. These dairies also undergo an annual brucellosis herd test. Therefore, Idaho wants to confine their required BRT testing to herds within the DSA. They would like acknowledgment in writing that this is an acceptable practice. Since this is an Idaho state requirement above federal regulations the review team has no problem with this request. VS will respond to a written request from Idaho to address this issue.
2. Upon receiving blood samples at the lab and initially recording all animal identification prior to the sample being separated from the submission bag (which holds ID) and the testing beginning, Idaho lab personnel would like to test all samples (using sequence ID) first and go back and record all animal ID on the submission forms for all the non-negatives. The review team recommends that animal ID be collected and recorded for 10 samples prior to and after each non-negative sample as standard practice. ISDA would like acknowledgment in writing that this is acceptable practice. VS will respond to a written request from Idaho.
3. Create and support another Brucellosis Epidemiology course similar to the one in January 2019. ISDA volunteered to help host and plan the course in Boise.

Request from VS-ID to RHC:

1. Ensure the continuity of the supply of 16-1 tags to slaughterhouses.
2. VS-ID would like support for the VMO-Boise and the ID AIC vacancies to be filled