

Commercial Aquaculture Health Program Standards (CAHPS) Concept

The Commercial Aquaculture Health Program Standards (CAHPS) establish a nonregulatory framework for the improvement and verification of the health of farmed aquatic animals produced in U.S. commercial aquaculture industry sectors to facilitate trade. Principles outlined in the CAHPS may be used by industry, Federal, State, Tribal, and regulatory and private veterinary authorities to provide for early disease detection, surveillance, reporting and response for the control of aquatic animal pathogens—especially those listed by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)—and to prevent pathogen dissemination via movement and trade of aquatic animals.

CAHPS will support various business objectives including efforts to improve health management, protect and expand aquaculture business opportunities, promote and facilitate trade, as well as efforts to improve resource protection and environmental sustainability. The five principles of CAHPS are Aquatic Animal Health Team; Risk Characterization and Management; Surveillance; Investigation and Reporting; and Response.

Aquatic Animal Health Team – This principle requires that a commercial aquaculture facility engage aquatic animal health and aquaculture professionals to develop a site-specific health plan (SSHP) and assist with activities that may impact animal health and the status of specific pathogens in the site population(s). This team of experts may be composed of American Fisheries Society certified professionals, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) accredited veterinarians, diagnostic laboratory representatives, and other knowledgeable subject matter experts.

Risk Characterization and Management – The CAHPS participant will work with its aquatic animal health team to develop strategies and training for early disease detection and to establish site-specific thresholds that trigger a disease investigation. A written biosecurity plan will identify the risk pathways and mitigation practices for all participating facilities. The plan is a component of the SSHP.

Surveillance - The sampling and surveillance strategies for specific pathogens will depend on the specific farm site and the susceptibility of the species being cultured. If a site cultures species that are susceptible to OIE-listed pathogens, then surveillance plans and analyses must address these pathogens. The plans are a component of the SSHP.

Investigation and Reporting - When morbidity or mortality exceeds established thresholds for a CAHPS site, a disease investigation is initiated to determine the cause of the problem. Disease investigations will vary depending on the scope, pathogenicity, and specific pathogen suspected. If either an OIE-listed or emerging disease associated with an identified pathogen is diagnosed, then the CAHPS participant must ensure that it is reported to the appropriate authorities (State and/or APHIS). Regional level information sharing among partners also needs to be established for zone participants.

Response - Participating CAHPS sites must establish an aquatic animal health infrastructure (i.e., technical expertise, risk management) capable of identifying and responding to significant pathogen findings. Responses will depend on the pathogen identified and the impact of that pathogen.

CAHPS Participation

There are three categories of participation in CAHPS - 1) Establishment, 2) Zone, and 3) Compartment. All five CAHPS principles will be implemented in each category; but, extent of risk management and surveillance will vary by category. Participation is voluntary and participants determine what category meets their needs.

Establishment – site may have risks for pathogen introduction but a participant is able to show that their animals are low disease risk because of pathogen testing and site biosecurity practices.

Zone – site is able to claim a disease freedom status for specific pathogens or establish known health status with mitigations. Participants in this category may, over time, be able to reduce pathogen testing through cooperation with regional partners (e.g., industry, State, Federal entities) to define disease status for the surrounding animal populations in the zone.

Compartment – site can claim a stable specific disease freedom status or establish known health status with mitigations. Pathogen introduction risks are greatly reduced, and over time surveillance may be reduced.

All categories will facilitate the participant in trade, domestic and international. All participants must develop a site-specific health plan.

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CAHPS Frequently Asked Questions

What is CAHPS?

The CAHPS are a new initiative that sets forth a model framework for the health of commercially farmed aquatic animals. The CAHPS recognize and build on current activities and existing guidelines for health of aquatic animals and aim to establish uniform standards for U.S. farmed aquatic animal health and movement. The goal of CAHPS is to provide uniform standards for U.S. commercially farmed aquatic animal health and movement and a template for known national aquatic animal health status. Implementation of CAHPS will provide leverage for APHIS in trade negotiations.

How much will CAHPS cost me?

For those electing to participate in the CAHPS program, there will be direct and indirect costs. However, over time, participation in CAHPS may result in reduction in testing costs as stable health status is achieved. Participation in CAHPS can provide a marketing advantage to participants as healthy animals are more desirable to consumers. Pathogen testing and population health will provide more meaningful data and powerful leverage for trade negotiations and animal movement.

Who started it?

The CAHPS program was initiated by industry (the National Aquaculture Association) and developed by industry and APHIS, the competent veterinary authority for farmed animal health. To be most effective CAHPS will need cooperation from States, other Federal agencies, and private industry when implemented.

Is CAHPS regulatory?

No. The CAHPS are nonregulatory standards based on the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan. The standards implement certain components of the NAAHP for commercial aquaculture in the U.S.

Is CAHPS mandatory?

No. Participation in CAHPS is voluntary.

Who can participate?

All aquaculture producers (public or private) may participate in this voluntary program.

What are the objectives of CAHPS?

- To improve the health of U.S. farm-raised aquatic animals.
- To facilitate safe interstate and international trade and/or movement of live aquatic animals
- To improve the marketability of animals produced by CAHPS participants.

What does CAHPS mean to me as a participant?

There are five principles in the program standards and three options for participation. All options implement the five principles. Selection of an option for participation is driven by needs of the establishment (e.g., animal movement). Each option is implemented as a site-specific health plan.

What is the minimum I can do and still be a part of CAHPS?

The Establishment option provides the foundation for participation. This option provides a credible science-based approach to farmed aquatic animal health assessment, management and status.

How do I participate?

Once the final version of the CAHPS is ready for implementation, APHIS and industry sector leaders will provide information on the enrollment process.

Where can I go for more information on the concept of CAHPS?

A ten page document on CAHPS will be posted to the APHIS VS Aquaculture webpage at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/aquaculture>.

How can I provide input?

Comments and input may be sent to APHIS at VS.SPRS.Feedback@aphis.usda.gov.