National Veterinary Stockpile and State of Colorado Conduct Successful Logistics Exercise

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) partnered with the Colorado Department of Agriculture to conduct the Colorado and National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) 2012 Logistics Exercise on September 19-20, 2012 in Brighton, Colorado. The exercise included a field response component for the first time involving deployment of NVS animal-handling equipment and response support services. Conducted at the Adams County Regional Park, the exercise illustrated the partnership between APHIS Veterinary Services (VS), and Colorado state, tribal, and local officials in preparing to respond logistically to an animal disease outbreak.

"Participants gained valuable experience in implementing a logistics response for a damaging animal disease outbreak over the course of this two-day exercise," said NVS Director, Rodney White. "The second day of exercise play was particularly valuable to validate NVS processes and identify gaps to ensure we're well prepared to deploy animal-handling equipment and 3D (depopulation, disposal, and decontamination) contractors."

The full-scale exercise was a culmination of years of planning by a diverse group of subject matter experts and representatives from numerous agencies, and it provided a venue for Colorado state, tribal, and local leaders to collaborate on emergency response requirements. "The NVS exercise was a perfect model of what can be done through good teamwork with our staff, state and federal agencies, tribal nations, and other entities who would be involved in a significant livestock disease outbreak in Colorado" explains Nick Striegel, Colorado Assistant State Veterinarian. "We truly value the process that took place in developing the *Colorado National Veterinary Stockpile and Agricultural Logistics Plan* and in the implementation of the two-day NVS exercise. It increased our capability of responding to livestock emergency incidents and it was very rewarding to see all of the planning pieces come together, interconnect, and result in a successful outcome. The planning and exercise also strengthened the relationships that will be needed in an effective response to a potential catastrophic livestock event in Colorado."

More than 24 agencies and organizations participated in the exercise with representatives serving in the roles of players, observers, evaluators, and controllers. Participating organizations included the Adams County Emergency Management; APHIS ESF #11 FEMA Region VIII; APHIS VS Area offices (Colorado, Kansas); APHIS VS Western Regional office; Colorado Department of Agriculture; Colorado Department of Emergency Management; Colorado State University; Department of Defense US Northern Command; Eastern Colorado Incident Management Team; Kansas Department of Agriculture; NVS, including 3D response support services; Southern Ute Indian Tribe; Texas Animal Health Commission; Ute Mountain Ute Tribe; and the Wyoming Livestock Board.

The exercise was designed to provide a learning environment for players to exercise sections of the draft *Colorado National Veterinary Stockpile and Agricultural Logistics Plan* and to prepare NVS staff members, support personnel, and Colorado personnel to respond logistically to a simulated foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak. 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).

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The Eastern Colorado Incident Management Team developed incident action plans for both days and activated its medical unit to support exercise participants. The supply unit leader and his staff prepared the warehouse prior to day 1 of the exercise to receive deployed NVS countermeasures and simulated FMD vaccine, and to manage inventory. 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 informed about the FMD 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 State of Colorado, APHIS VS Colorado Area Office, APHIS VS 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). In addition to NVS countermeasures, the State of Colorado requested FMD vaccine, animal-handling equipment, and assistance from NVS 3D contractors, submitting the required statement of work (SOW).

The tractor trailer containing NVS countermeasures for the exercise backed up to the warehouse door and the warehouse 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 modules, move them to staging, and prepare them for distribution to field responders. The NVS shipment contained simulated FMD 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 it under refrigeration. The storage temperature was monitored frequently in accordance with the written plan.

As day one of 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. All exercise participants were involved in the hotwash to identify positive attributes, areas for improvement, and lessons learned.

On day two, participants gathered in an indoor livestock arena with a dirt floor that simulated a ranch environment. Following a series of briefings, including safety and medical, exercise play began with the tractor trailer delivery of NVS animal-handling equipment. Players responded to injects by unloading mobile cattle head gates/squeeze chutes, panel and gates, and a mobile

corral in the staging area from the flatbed trailer using an all-terrain forklift. The equipment was assembled, staged, and transported by pick-up trucks to two simulated ranches in the indoor arena. Additional injects stimulated exercise play to assemble and disassemble equipment in two different configurations. Following lunch, cattle were processed through the mobile corral and mobile head gate/squeeze chute. Near the end of the exercise, the equipment was transported by pick-up trucks back to staging where it was cleaned, disassembled for long haul transport, and reloaded onto the flatbed trailer for return to the NVS.

On both days 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 day's activities as they unfolded. One observer who serves as an emergency manager for a state agriculture agency commented that she had attended many exercises in the past and that this logistics exercise was one of the most organized and informative that she had ever attended.

The Colorado and National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) 2012 Logistics Exercise was a success in meeting the exercise objectives of validating portions of the draft *Colorado National Veterinary Stockpile and Agricultural Logistics Plan* and testing the NVS program's ability to deploy NVS countermeasures and 3D contractors based on the State of Colorado request. The exercise also validated Colorado's ability to conduct logistics warehouse and inventory management operations, and exposed exercise observers to the NVS countermeasures, simulated FMD vaccine shipments, Colorado's warehouse operations, NVS animal-handling equipment, and NVS 3D contractors in action. Observations and lessons learned will be captured in an after action report from which the sponsoring agencies can generate their 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 State of Colorado 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 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.

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Participants from more than 24 agencies and organizations receiving exercise briefings.
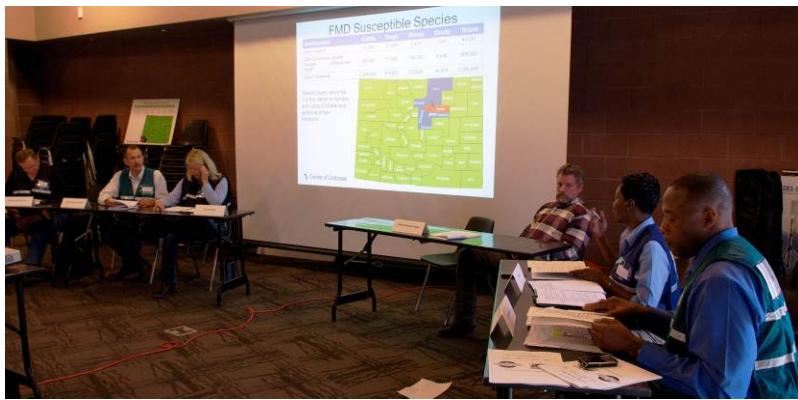
Colorado State and Tribal animal health officials requesting assistance from the NVS.

Receiving NVS countermeasures.

Immediately offloading simulated vaccine from NVS pallet shipper to maintain acceptable cold chain.

Inspecting NVS countermeasures for damages and shortages.

Picking countermeasures from NVS modules to fill resource orders.

Packing simulated vaccine to maintain cold chain for delivery to a Colorado vaccination group in the Operations Section.

Maintaining accurate on-hand balances of warehouse inventory.

Performing quality control checks of staged orders prior to delivery to ranches.

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Shrink-wrapping orders for delivery to field responders on ranches.

NVS deploys mobile cattle headgates/squeeze chutes, mobile corral, and panels and gates.

Colorado unloading animal handling equipment.

NVS 3D contractors assembling mobile corral and portable headgate/squeeze chute.

Colorado vaccination group processing cattle through animal handling equipment.

NVS 3D contractors dissemble panels and gates from mobile headgate/squeeze chute.

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NVS contracted driver securing the load for return to the NVS.