

Questions and Answers: The National Veterinary Stockpile's Exercise Program

The National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) program, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), provides support to States, Tribes, and Territories responding to damaging animal disease outbreaks. Within 24 hours, the NVS can provide veterinary countermeasures—including certain types of animal vaccines, antivirals, supplies, equipment, and response services—to animal health officials in affected areas. To learn more about this program, see the NVS factsheet on APHIS' Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/veterinary_stockpile.pdf.

As part of NVS efforts, we conduct an exercise program to help our partners prepare logistically for an animal health emergency response.

Q. What is the NVS exercise program, and who is involved?

A. The NVS exercise program is designed to provide a training environment for participants to practice the NVS request process and validate their animal disease response plans. The program involves Federal, State, Tribal, Territorial, and local government officials, as well as our staff and "3D" (depopulation, disposal, and decontamination) contractors.

Q. Why does NVS hold these exercises?

A. These exercises help our partners learn how to effectively request, receive (i.e., receipt), process, and distribute NVS countermeasures during an animal disease event. By discussing the process ahead of time and conducting discussion- and operations-based exercises, everyone involved becomes more confident in their role. This advance communication and preparation then allows the process to flow more smoothly should an actual event occur.

Q. What types of exercises does NVS conduct?

A. We conduct two types of exercises: discussion-based exercises and operations-based exercises.

Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, and tabletop exercises. These experiences allow our partners to learn more about the program, develop their plans, and use simulated scenarios to assess those plans, policies, and procedures.

Operations-based exercises include drills and full-scale exercises. These types of exercises test and validate NVS processes, our response services and support contractors, and partner response capabilities and procedures.

We use Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidelines in conducting these exercises to ensure the highest level of preparation.

Q. If my State, Tribe, or Territory wants to partner with NVS to conduct a full-scale exercise, what do we need to do?

A. The first step toward a full-scale exercise is to create a written NVS plan if you do not already have one in place. The NVS State-Federal Liaison (see contact information below) will work with you to review available planning tools, conduct seminars, and help develop your written plan.

We select our full-scale exercise partners based on current NVS priorities, APHIS goals and directives, lessons learned and corrective actions from previous exercises/training events, and available resources.

Q. How far out are NVS exercises planned?

A. We plan exercises several years ahead of when they are conducted.

Q. Who should I contact with questions about NVS' exercise program?

A. Questions about the NVS exercise program should be directed to Dr. Lee Myers, the NVS State-Federal Liaison, at lee.m.myers@aphis.usda.gov or (301) 910-7336. You can also contact the NVS office at nvs@aphis.usda.gov.

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