

INFO SHEET

Veterinary Services

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Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

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NAHMS to Study Catfish Industry in 2003

The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducts national studies on the management and health of America's domestic livestock populations. These studies are designed to meet the information needs of the industries, as identified by people working within these industries.

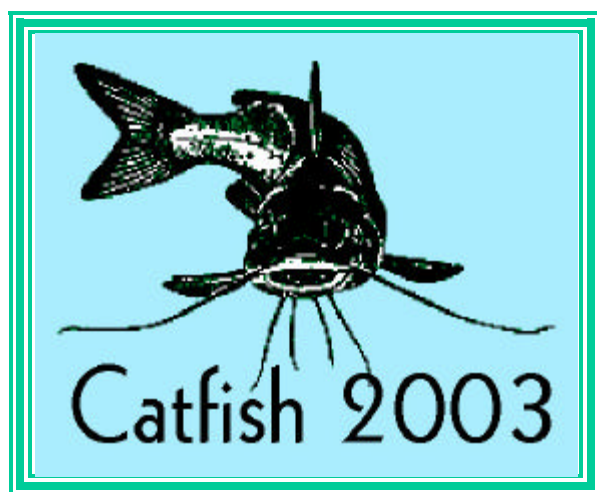
The upcoming Catfish 2003 study will be NAHMS' second national study of the catfish industry. The first, Catfish '97, described and evaluated the general health and management practices of the foodsize fish component of the industry.

NAHMS is a voluntary program that relies on the interest and participation of producers and the industry as a whole. Planning for Catfish 2003 has involved an extensive effort to obtain input from representatives of producer organizations, universities, State and Federal catfish health and production personnel, and others allied with the industry.

In addition to contacting a number of individuals for their input, a formal focus group was convened at the Thad Cochran National Warmwater Aquaculture Center in Stoneville, Mississippi, to identify study objectives and begin prioritizing topics. A short

industry needs survey also was distributed to attendees at this year's Catfish Farming Tradeshow in Greenville, Mississippi. This stakeholder input was used to identify four main objectives for Catfish 2003.

The first objective is to investigate foodsize fish production practices. Management practices for foodsize fish are continually evolving as producers adjust to changes in market demands and refine their methods. Stocking practices, feeding practices, pond management, and general practices will be addressed to meet this objective.



The second objective focuses on fingerling production practices. Specifically, the study will focus on brood stock management, hatchery management, vaccination practices, fingerling pond management, fingerling stocking, and feeding practices.

The third objective will address a broad range of issues, including: the prevalence of disease problems in foodsize fish and fingerlings as reported by producers; disease control and treatment practices; and risk factors associated with contracting these diseases. Predation by birds also will be included because of its potential association with the spread of disease and the direct loss to producers.

The final objective focuses on undesirable flavors in fish that render them unmarketable, known as off-flavor. This objective will examine the off-flavor problem by assessing the annual percentage of ponds affected, and by describing the duration of off-flavor episodes. The use of diuron and copper sulfate as pond treatments also will be assessed.

These objectives were used to develop the Catfish 2003 study questionnaire. In early 2003, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) enumerators will conduct personal interviews with producers in the four primary catfish production States (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi). As with all other NAHMS studies, links between NAHMS data and the operations on which the data were collected are confidential.

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