NVAP Reference Guide: Aquatic Animal

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Aquatic Animal National Health Plan

APHIS provides agricultural producers with a broad range of cooperative programs for protecting the health of animals and plants. Aquaculture, the managed production of aquatic plants and animals, is one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agribusiness. Because of this rapid expansion, accredited veterinarians are becoming integral to the practice of aquaculture.

APHIS programs currently serve important aspects of both plant and animal aquaculture— especially involving disease control and eradication, pest prevention, and wildlife damage management. APHIS is also involved in facilitating the import and export of aquacultural products because of increased global trade.

APHIS –VS is one of three Federal agencies developing a National Aquatic Animal Health Plan (NAAHP) under the auspices of the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture (JSA). The JSA, a Federal interagency group authorized by the National Aquaculture Act, serves to coordinate aquaculture efforts in the various Federal agencies. The

JSA has many task forces.

The National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force (NAAHTF) has been charged to develop the NAAHP. The rationale for developing such a plan is to protect our country's wild and cultured resources, support efficient aquaculture, achieve efficient and predictable commerce, and meet the United States' national and international trade obligations.

It is expected that accredited veterinarians will play a role in carrying out APHIS activities as they relate to aspects of the NAAHP.

Aquatic Animal Health Activities

APHIS – VS is involved in several activities related to the health of aquatic animals. Those activities can generally be divided into two overarching components:

1. aquatic animal-health certification procedures for aquatic animals and products that are exported internationally and require attestations by the National competent authority APHIS -VS.
2. regulations for the importation and interstate movement of aquatic animals and products and the maintenance development of a laboratory network to support the movement of healthy aquatic animals.

These two complementary aspects of the program ensure that diseases notifiable to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) will be reported and appropriate control measures can be enacted.

Accredited veterinarians have a vital role in certifying documents based on information gathered from farm inspections, onsite sample collections and laboratory submissions. In many cases, aquatic animal health management is provided by accredited veterinarians for a variety of aquaculture commodities including the tropical and ornamental fish, crustaceans, mollusks, amphibians, and aquatic reptiles.

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