

ADVANCING ANIMAL DISEASE TRACEABILITY ROAD MAP FOR US VIRGIN ISLANDS

A Three-Year Plan

Submitted by:

DR. BETHANY BRADFORD

DIRECTOR OF VETERINARY SERVICES

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

RR1 Box 10345

ESTATE LOWER LOVE, KINGSHILL, VI 00850

340-778-0997

[SIGNATURE]



Submitted to:

DR. Towana Guinyard

Assistant Area Veterinarian in Charge

District 1

VETERINARY SERVICES

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

6/5/2019

1. Executive Summary

The Virgin Islands is a small US Territory located in the eastern Caribbean. It is made up of three islands St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas. St. Croix is a rural area of rolling hills and a long history of agriculture. St. Thomas and St. John have steep terrain and an economy based on tourism.

The population of the Virgin Islands is widely diverse with people from throughout the Caribbean, the United States mainland as well Europe and the Middle East. The Territory is a border of the United States.

The Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture (VIDA) is mandated to protect the public health and food supply by providing veterinary services to farmers, animal owners and regulating imported animals. The small division of Veterinary Services (VIDA VS) has oversight on livestock, poultry and other animal health issues.

These small islands include intricate networks of farmers and animal owners who are connected by family and proximity to other owners and stakeholders. Local knowledge of farms and persons involved with the small industries is an integral part of our day's work. The Animal Disease Traceability program has greatly assisted with the building and maintenance of a livestock and farmer data base complete with geophysical coordinates and contact information for and identification of registered animals.

In 2017, two category 5 hurricanes devastated the USVI and negatively effected the number of farms, animals and animal owners and the infrastructure upon which they depend. VIDA continues to assist in recovery for clients and internally.

2. Current Traceability Situation

- VIDA VS provides veterinary services, regulates import/exports and responds to stray animals reports. We examine over 1000 animals every month including sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and poultry. Regular farm visits are scheduled daily and include tagging, registration of animals and farms to the extensive farm database, tick spraying services. We also implement federal animal health programs such as avian health surveillance, swine health surveillance and traceability.
- VIDA educates farmers and horse owners and poultry owners on animal health and management issues. We work with the ubiquitous game bird populations to educate, to improve biosecurity and to register all poultry premises.
- Farm premises information is held in the Access database and is available 24/7 by authorized VIDA VS staff.
- Funding has provided a contracted data manager which allows for efficient submission of information for PIN designation in EMRS as well as assistance with the Access program and database.
- VIDA VS currently serves nearly 400 animal owners and premises. 75% of these farm premises

have been identified and registered. The information collected includes owner contact information, species on the premises, tagged animals, geophysical coordinates and physical location. This information is continually being collected by VIDA VS and submitted to the contractual data manager.

- Feed shops, veterinarians, abattoirs, racetracks and animal exhibit areas have all been identified. There are no livestock markets in the Virgin Islands.
- The avian health surveillance program also ensures compliance with enhancing traceability each year. At each surveillance visit, premises information is updated and new premises are added. Most of the poultry premises are backyard gamebirds.
- VIDA VS is responsible for tagging and registration and are the only official tagging station in the USVI. Owners do not tag their own animals generally and there are no active livestock groups or markets in the territory who provide this service. No one has requested to become an official tagging station. Local veterinarians also are not involved with livestock. Approximately 70% of all livestock and horses have been identified.

2.1 Strengths and Weaknesses

- VIDA VS is dependent on and benefits from the staff who have personal and trusting relationships with the farmers and horse owners and poultry owners in the territory. Outreach to animal owners to update information and register premises is on-going.
- The major problem facing VIDA is the lack of veterinary staff in the St. Thomas district. There is no veterinarians and there are no staff specifically assigned to veterinary services. It is very difficult to maintain the tagging of animals and registration of farms and premises. Tagging of animals is not done as completely as needed.
- Providing uniform services on each island is difficult. Resources, supplies and equipment must often be duplicated for each island. Lack of staff and other resources hampers ability of VIDA VS to complete tasks in St. Thomas/St. John district.
- VIDA does not have an IT person and is dependent on the expertise of the contracted data manager supported by traceability funding.

2.3 Opportunities and Threats

- Much human and animal traffic occurs daily throughout the USVI and Caribbean region. Introduction of a disease or pest is a potential problem. Smuggling of animals through charter flights and boats is a constant threat. VIDA VS works with Customs and Border Protection to decrease this threat.
- Hurricanes are the most serious natural disaster threat to USVI. In September 2017, two Category 5 hurricanes devastated all three islands including infrastructure, electricity, communication, roads, air and sea ports, and delivery of food and other supplies. We continue to recover today including repairing fencing and buildings. The hurricanes have contributed to the loss of farmers and animal owners as well as the reduced progress in obtaining PINs.
- Stray horses are a constant problem in the Territory and are the cause of about 6 car accidents a year. The current traceability program greatly assists VIDA VS in identifying those animals and owners involved.
- The information contained in the VI Farmer database and supported by ADT funding was critical to assessing and reporting on damage to, needs of and assistance for farmers, horse owners and poultry owners after the hurricanes in 2017. Based on the data in the VI Farmer database over 500,000 pounds of animal food was delivered to USVI.

2.2 Inventory

- VIDA VS is a small four person team located on the island of St. Croix. VIDA VS daily provides veterinary services to farmers and is responsible for tagging animals, impounding stray animals to protect motorists and for regulating all imported animals as well as acting as the lead in all farmer and livestock and horse issues. The database is the central component of VIDA VS and the implementation of traceability.
- The daily information collected by VIDA VS is submitted to the contractual data manager to submit for PINs from EMRS. We have about 75% of the VI farms completed. Premises information is needed in St. Thomas and St. John.
- The database is continually being updated with new animal information as well as new farm information. Storage of the data base is held in an external hard drive. The data is copied daily. Information is available during work hours and may be accessed by two of the VIDA VS staff if needed anytime.

- Lists of farmers and horse owners as well as horse identification information are printed out twice a year and kept in each of the VIDA VS vehicles.
- VIDA VS has an adequate supply of microchips and official RFID tags purchases with traceability funding. A wand reader has also been purchased.

3. Vision

VIDA VS recognizes the importance of enhancing traceability as an element of protecting animal health and will continue toward the goal of identifying and mapping all livestock and horse farms and premises in the USVI.

4. Traceability requirements

4.1 Strategic Goals

The goal is to identify all farms and premises and maintain an active data base of premises and animals.

4.2 Objectives

- Horses are microchipped with AVID chips as required by Virgin Islands law and recorded in the VIDA VS database. Transfer of ownership is done through VIDA VS to be legally recognized.
- Cattle, sheep and goats are tagged as required by law by owner request or by VIDA VS request
- All exported animals are identified with official RFID 840 tags.
- All tag and microchip numbers are submitted to the database daily.
- New farms and animals are identified and added to the database.
- Farms are assigned a local identification number.
- Farm and premises information is submitted to SPRS for PINs as required by Animal Disease Traceability program.
- Continue to educate farmers and horse and poultry owners to register their farms and animals with VIDA.

4.3 Performance Measures

- Number of farms and premises identified (percentage of whole)
- Number of animals identified (percentage of whole)
- Number of farms and premises with GPS information and PINs (percentage of whole).
- This information is reported quarterly to USDA.
- Number of animals imported and ICVIs received. VIDA VS will continue to report all CVI information by species and official RFID tags distributed
- USVI does not export or move animals to the US. All movement requires an import permit. Horses are the most commonly imported animal. Cattle are not imported and only one or two goats or sheep occasionally are moved to USVI.
- Traceability exercises and resulting performance measures cannot be completed because of the actual situation that USVI does not import or export cattle.

4.4 Data Requirements

- VIDA VS updates, maintains and stores information within the Access database. Data is shared with police and victims of vehicular accidents involving stray livestock, especially horses.
- In the event of disease outbreak, information will be shared with animal health officials and farmers once retrieved by VIDA VS and uploaded to EMRS.
- Advancing traceability is enhanced daily with farm visits and tagging and registration. VIDA VS tags and microchips livestock and horses in the VI. All tags are secured in the VIDA VS office. VIDA VS is the only official tagging station and no requests have been received for another entity to be a tagging station.
- Official tags are used for cattle and any export animals and are only used by VIDA VS.
- The one abattoir in St. Croix is managed by VIDA and abattoir staff record all animals entering the facility.
- There are no livestock markets or associations in the VI.
- All imported livestock have import permits and are registered and cleared by VIDA VS through the airports and marine ports. Horses are the majority of animals imported.
- Horses are occasionally exported to the US under 9 CFR 72 regulations for the cattle fever tick.
- Farms and premises are given a local identification number by VIDA VS.
- They are assigned a PIN through the Animal Disease Traceability system SPRS once information is submitted.
- Information of farms includes owners, physical location and species present, and identified animals.

4.5 Resources Requirement

- Support of the data manager is essential to advancing traceability. VIDA VS does not have the staff to compile and submit information for PINs.
- The data base is located at VIDA VS in St. Croix. Internet connection is currently supported by ADT.

4.6 Coordination and Oversight

- Retrieval of information is available 24/7 by authorized VIDA VS staff
- VIDA VS takes the lead in the education of stakeholders in an emergency.
- VITEMA is the local territorial emergency management agency. The aftermath of the hurricanes in 2017 revealed that little planning is in place to accommodate the animal populations of companion animals, livestock and horses in disaster preparedness and recovery. Coordination of agencies and other responders has been a subject of various trainings in the past hosted by VIDA VS but more work needs to be done in that area.
- Assistance is needed from FEMA and USDA to support local networking between emergency responder. VIDA has been marginally effective in forming local coordination.

4.7 Budget

- VIDA received \$20,015 in 2018 for traceability. This adequately supports VIDA VS in traceability requirements with the staff available.

4.8 Outreach

- VIDA VS takes the lead in educating and training farmers and animal owners. Any livestock issue involves VIDA VS at some level. The daily farm visit is our most effective outreach tool. At that time, farmers have time to discuss issues with the veterinary staff.
- VIDA VS uses federal funds to educate farmers and horse owners through the media regarding traceability and the laws of the VI. VIDA VS also displays related information at the two local agriculture fairs.
- Feed stores and veterinarians are aware of VIDA programs and VI Code laws and regulations through letters, posters, news releases and personal contact.
- VIDA VS cooperates with the Cooperative Extension Service in farmer workshops.

1. Traceability Implementation

5.1 Priorities of Implementation

- Assigning PINs: Continue to collect GPS information to submit to the contractual data manager.

We have completed 75% of registered farms and will increase 10% each year. We continue with our daily visits and tagging animals, registering new farms and maintaining the data base and educating farmers and horse owners.

- Tagging animals: VIDA VS schedules farm visits as owners request them. VIDA VS will contact livestock owners bi-annually if needed in order to tag animals. Tagging of animals is mandated by VI Code. Farmers on government leased lands are required in their lease to tag animals. The farm census for each farm visit is updated weekly.
- Imports: VIDA VS issues permits for animal imports which enforces traceability implementation. Animals must arrive only by boat or plane.
- Educating Industry: Goats and sheep farms are abundant in various sized herds throughout the territory. There are two horse racing tracks both of which are currently being repaired and not functional. There is an extensive game cock industry. There are no cooperatives or associations within the private sector. Owners are largely educated through outreach by news releases from VIDA VS and University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Program, farm visits, and participation in animal health surveillance programs and fair displays.
- Funding for Implementation: the current funding is adequate with the VIDA VS staff available to continue traceability in the USVI.

5.2 Implementation of Priorities

- Focus on St. Thomas and St. John district- plan visits twice a year to that district by St. Croix based staff specifically for traceability and collecting premise information
- Continue collecting information in St. Croix on daily farm visits

Virgin Islands Animal Disease Traceability Reporting FORM

Measurable Performance Date _____	
Certificate of Veterinary Inspection per species	
CVI received by species	
# animals moved into USVI	
# animals moved out of USVI	
# USDA official tags issued	