

# **Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report October/November 2004**

## **I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:**

### Surveillance

- Animal identification – USDA announced in late October that an additional \$1.5 million was made available for national animal identification system (NAIS) cooperative agreements with states. States that applied for funding in July and were not selected at that time are eligible for a portion of the \$1.5 million if they meet specified requirements. In November, APHIS announced that it will recognize additional numbering systems for the identification of animals. The systems will apply to interstate commerce and cooperative disease control and eradication programs for animals. APHIS also announced that it is amending its regulations to prohibit the removal of official identification devices except at the time of slaughter. This prohibition also applies to imported livestock. Safeguarding Review recommendation #128 calls for the development of a comprehensive animal identification system which takes into consideration state and regional animal production methods.

### Exclusion

- Avian influenza surveillance in Asia – VS personnel participated in a meeting sponsored by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in October. At the meeting plans were developed for a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Surveillance program for Asia. Safeguarding Review recommendation #10 supports expanded participation in international animal health discussions and activities.

### Response

- Biocontainment/biosafety – VS personnel participated in a meeting of the OIE Ad Hoc Group on biocontainment/biosafety. This OIE Group is charged with developing an OIE international standard that will include guidelines for construction of animal biocontainment facilities for biosafety in veterinary laboratories. Improving biocontainment/biosafety procedures is consistent with Safeguarding Review recommendations addressing response planning and guideline development (#s107 and 115).
- New vaccine antigen bank – VS has awarded a five year contract to Fort Dodge Animal Health to develop an avian influenza (AI) vaccine antigen bank for poultry that will house enough antigen to produce 40 million doses of AI vaccine. The AI vaccine antigen bank is scheduled to be completely stocked by January

2005. Safeguarding Review recommendation #112 addresses establishing vaccination strategies and providing personnel and supplies to implement these strategies.

- VS policy on emergency response – VS has issued to its personnel a revised policy on out-of-state and international emergency details. This policy emphasizes that the mission of VS requires VS personnel to be prepared for work details that require travel away from their duty stations. The policy also establishes some specific procedures for rotations. While not called for in any specific Safeguarding Review recommendations, VS' policy is consistent with the Review's emphasis on emergency preparedness.

#### Information Technology

- Chief information officer – In October, VS announced the selection of its first Chief Information Officer (CIO). Creation of the CIO position reflects the critical importance information technology holds in VS' ability to carry out its mission. The CIO position will foster increased coordination of activities within VS and between VS and other APHIS and USDA units. A number of Review recommendations called for improving the use of information technology (#3, 77, and 82).

## **II. Implementation activities:**

Action plans developed by the seven Safeguarding Issue groups and approved by the Veterinary Services Management Team (VSMT) have been posted to the VS Safeguarding Review website:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/safeguarding/app\\_act\\_plans.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/safeguarding/app_act_plans.html)

The Coordinated Response Issue Group met the week of November 1<sup>st</sup> and the Laboratory Systems and Exclusion Issue Groups met the week of November 15<sup>th</sup> to continue work on action plans. These action plans will be submitted for consideration at the January 2005 VSMT meeting. The Information Technology and Organizational Dynamics Issue Groups held meetings the week of November 29<sup>th</sup> to continue work on action plans.

The National Surveillance Issue Group is finalizing action plans to be submitted for consideration at the January 2005 VSMT meeting.

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