

Coordinated Response ICP-Rapid-Sustained Response Action Plan

Date: November 30, 2004

Issue Group: Coordinated Response

Specific Activity Area being addressed by this Action Plan:

The Coordinated Response Committee combined recommendations dealing with the Incident Command System (ICS) and Rapid/Sustained Response in a single action plan. We need to develop and utilize a national response system that utilizes all necessary resources to adequately respond to an animal health incident regardless of the duration. We also need to modernize and expand the existing response systems, ICS, and Rapid/Sustained Response when responding to animal health threats and potential natural and man-made disasters. Assess and ensure the compatibility of local, state, tribal, and federal emergency management systems.

Safeguarding Review Recommendations Covered:

111. Assess the Regional Emergency Animal Disease Eradication Organization (READEO) system and take steps to ensure that it is prepared, staffed and funded to fulfill its mission.

114. Create national personnel pools of emergency responders from the ranks of retired state and federal animal health officials, other government agencies, skilled private practitioners, non-veterinarians with specific skills (slaughterhouse personnel, wardens, wildlife services staff), and appraisers. Re-assess the use of military and reserve veterinarians and support staff as key participants early in a national emergency response. Utilize veterinarians that work with specific species to teach others the Foreign Animal Diseases (FADs) of that species at national, regional, and local meetings.

115. Continue working aggressively to integrate the US Emergency Response Plan System (USERPS) into the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Federal Response Plan as quickly as possible. Inclusion could be either an annex or through development of a new emergency support function.

117. Fund and support the development of cooperative agreements with individual states for specific response plans and state personnel.

125. Define specific responsibilities during a disease response for the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) staff; field and operations support; wildlife, and APHIS-Veterinary Services Emergency Programs (VS EP), and Regional Emergency Animal Disease Eradication Organization (READEO) staff.

Issue Group Findings:

A number of steps have been taken within VS and APHIS which address the Animal Health Safeguarding Review recommendations regarding ICS and other federal response plans. These steps are reviewed below and additional activity needed in the future is identified.

APHIS shift to the ICS and NIMS

Within VS, an ICS based response team has replaced READEO as directed by Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5, which states that the National Incident Management System (NIMS) will be used for all hazards response. This integrates ICS into the APHIS emergency response system.

The Emergency Management Leadership Council (EMLC) has made the implementation of the National Incident Management and Incident Command System the number one priority and will develop a comprehensive ICP training program to ensure consistent response capabilities across APHIS. The EMLC has also committed to developing an inventory roster that identifies the skills and abilities of agency personnel (i.e. typing).

Eastern Region policy Memorandum 2004-02 and Western Region Memorandum 04-004 dated May 25, 2004 both address employee participation in response actions and provide an explanation for rotation schedules. In addition, VS Memorandum 555.13 dated 9-7-04 details VS policy regarding out-of-state and international emergency details.

Training

There is a need to have increased training exercises in utilizing NIMS in response plans. Training requirements are not clearly identified for all VS personnel, local responders, private practitioners, etc., in part based on the lack of typing of positions needed in an agriculture emergency response.

Adequate funding for the training has not been committed, and an audit process is not in place for certification of skills and position qualification. During the Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) in 2002 and 2003 VS did not have a sufficient number of trained and credentialed people for the response. The concept is for an Incident Management Team, as defined by NIMS, to organize the response. Lack of certification and credentialing has led to confusion and inconsistent and inefficient utilization of personnel.

Personnel issues which need to be addressed

During an emergency response, people may be expected to perform duties that are perceived to be at a higher grade work than their regular work. In the END response, this led to ill feelings that negatively impacted effective response. Inconsistencies also existed in pay levels for employees performing the same work, which impacted morale.

Performance evaluations are a valuable tool for creating an effective work force. However, at the END response, people did not always rotate on the same schedule as

their incident supervisor, resulting in performance evaluations based on very limited information. Therefore, the evaluation conducted on the last day of an employee's rotation did not result in an effective evaluation. In many instances, performance evaluations did not occur.

The END response showed excellent examples of how APHIS personnel with their individual skills and abilities can be utilized at the incident site, as well as how APHIS units', i.e. groups within CEAH, Headquarters Staff, Laboratories (National Veterinary Services Laboratory [NVSL], Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory [FADDL], and State Diagnostic Labs), Wildlife Services (WS), and Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) can provide excellent support to the incident response. (The END after action report should be reviewed for specific concerns and actions to improve this.) However, at the Headquarters (HQ) and CEAH levels, the people from these utilized units who were working at their home locations were not always allowed to be 100% focused on the event, i.e. they were not assigned to the incident response but were assigned collateral duties. In the END response, there was a team at the national level (National Response Management Team) that was supposed to coordinate support efforts for the incident response but these roles were not well defined or codified.

Utilization of outside resources

A reserve personnel pool has been developed and is being enhanced by the VS Emergency Management Staff. Some of the reserve pools, such as Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT) or temporary federal employees have procedures to pay these people. During the END response, some responders could not be used because the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) was not endorsed by CA. Also during END, some of the volunteer responders did not have satisfactory knowledge and skills for the jobs they were assigned to. The current screening process to recruit and evaluate applicants for the reserve pool was inadequate.

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the military is specific for veterinary resources. The current MOU does not address other types of assistance from the military, such as non-veterinary personnel, equipment, etc.

A compact (EMAC - Emergency Management Assistance Compact) has been developed and agreed upon to allow licensed professionals, including veterinarians, to perform work in every state except California after a governor's declaration of emergency has occurred. Authority and payment procedures are in place to make this possible. It will be very important that all states are members of this compact to address gaps in our response capabilities to utilize available local resources and provide training opportunity.

Some industry species specialists (swine and poultry) have been trained in FADs. Industry has paid for this training. However they are not full Foreign Animal Disease Diagnosticians (FADDs) for all species and so are not FADD designated.

The Tribal lands MOUs have been completed. Federal/state MOUs are being evaluated and updated. The new ESF 11 will reduce the need for Federal to Federal MOUs.

Guidelines

The USERPS is being integrated into the new National Response Plan (NRP).

Emergency Support Function (ESF) #11 contained in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Annex of the NRP supports local, state, and tribal authorities and other federal agency efforts to address: (1) provision of nutrition assistance; (2) control and eradication of an outbreak of a highly contagious or economically devastating animal/zoonotic disease, highly infective exotic plant disease, or economically devastating plant pest infestation; (3) assurance of food safety and food security (under Department of Agriculture (USDA) jurisdictions and authorities), and (4) protection of natural and cultural resources and historic properties (NCH) prior to, during, or after an Incident of National Significance. This document has been completed and is waiting on final approval and signatures of participating Federal Agencies.

Under the Animal Health Protection Act, the Secretary of Agriculture can release funds from contingency or program accounts as needed to indemnify producers for animal and suspect animal and plant products seized or facilities held to control a disease as well as to pay operational costs of the eradication of disease. It also allows the Secretary to declare an Extraordinary Emergency to pay compensation and to allow for the use of Federal authorities to take action within a State if the State is unable to take appropriate action to control and eradicate the disease.

Response plans have been developed and exercised at various levels to help identify weakness and strengths and make adjustments to the plans based on these exercises.

Many states have used Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and VS Emergency Management funds to enhance their preparedness levels. This includes developing emergency support functions, response plans, acquiring equipment and conducting exercises. The most recent national assessment of state preparedness indicates additional actions are needed.

State standards are already in place in some states. Some industries and states are choosing not to participate because of a lack of willingness and concerns about inadequate or inconsistent funding. Good progress has been made in the development of industry standards but they have not all been completed.

Proposed Actions:

Many of the findings above indicate that significant progress has been made; however, these activities need to continue to ensure that everyone involved understand their role.

- 1) Develop a broad response network that has the ability to effectively respond to an emergency at the local, state, regional, tribal, or federal level. This includes establishing a system to maintain the list of responders that was developed during the END response. The personal data for these responders does not exist in the Emergency Management Response System (EMRS) at this time. The system should also ensure that the information is current and include skills, abilities, ICS training, previous performance, etc.
- 2) Finalize and exercise the National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS) guidelines.

Implementation Plan:

An initial implementation for each proposed action is provided below.

Action 1: Develop a broad response network.

Tasks

Continue to mandate that VS employees be required to participate in response efforts, as needed. This includes participation from duty locations such as HQ, Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), NVSL, or CEAH, in addition to participation at the incident response site. The requirement that all VS employees participate should be documented in their position description. Supervisors should also inform employees of their possible roles within the response organization and make sure they understand it is part of their job description.

Identify and record the skills required for each position in the ICS response organization and develop certification/credentialing process for emergency responders to document their availability and qualifications.

Identify the training needs and develop training for all the positions in the response system. (The Coordinated Response Infrastructure action plans address a large part of the training needs; this action plan should identify the specific training requirements.)

Provide the necessary training for all VS personnel and other emergency response personnel and track and audit the process to ensure that the training is being performed and that it meets the needs of the response organization. (The Coordinated Response Infrastructure action plan addresses a large part of the training needs; this action plan should address the tracking and audit process to ensure that training is being conducted.)

Develop training exercise programs that involve both federal and state plans. (The exercises are also covered under infrastructure action plan; however, the development of the exercises should be covered here after training needs are identified.)

Provide FAD training to industry and university specialists so they can be utilized to train others at local, regional, and national meetings. Make sure these people understand their role. Consider development of alternative FAD training, rather than the traditional FAD School, for industry or university specialist, and link it to Continued Education (CE).

Associate Deputy Administrators for VS need to meet to determine preparedness roles. (One option is a working group of representatives from each unit to meet and agree on preparedness roles.) Response roles should be covered by the development of Area Emergency Response Organization (AERO) document using NIMS standards. Response roles are not the function of a VS unit, but rather should meet the needs of the incident.

Review the END after action report to define roles for support personnel from units such as CEAH and headquarters staff. Benchmark our goals against the Forest Service (FS) national response coordination group.

Action 2: Finalize and exercise the National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS) guidelines

Tasks

Support finalization of ESF for production agriculture into the National Response Plan. States will be required to have a similar ESF covering production agriculture as part of their state emergency response plan. (ESF 11 has been completed and is waiting for final approval – see “Issue Group Findings” above for details.)

Ensure NAHEMS guidelines are consistent with ESF and NIMS as well as Homeland Security Presidential Directives.

Develop a uniform MOU that all states and sovereign entities can use to ensure uniformity, coordination and seamless response.

Develop Cooperative Agreements with states and sovereign entities when additional funding is required to ensure adequate preparedness and response. (Participation in training exercises is covered in the Infrastructure action plan; however, entities that need additional assistance should be provided through cooperative agreements if necessary.) The cooperative agreements would fund and support the development of specific response plans and support specific state personnel when needed.

Develop guidelines to understand the proper use of EMAC.

Support established industry guidelines developed by National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS) Steering Committee and encourage adoption of these guidelines at the state level.

Implement an equitable national cost-sharing plan to ensure the compatibility of local, state, industry, tribal, and federal emergency management systems. The plan should take into consideration risk and impact, and state and industry funding contributions. A proposed rule has been published for comment but has not been finalized.

Accountable Individual/Group

Associate Deputy Administrator for Emergency Management and Associate Deputy Administrator for Field Operations

Veterinary Services Management Team (VSMT) should inform employees of their roles within the response organization and make it part of their job description and determine the training requirements for employees. Professional Development staff should develop and deliver the training.

EP staff

When required, the AVIC should develop Cooperative Agreements and submit them to the Regional Directors for signature.

EMLC

Other Key Players

State and federal supervisors including AVICs and state veterinarians.

State Emergency Managers, DHS, Area Emergency Coordinators (AECs).

Farm Services Agency (FSA), Industry groups, etc.

Resources Needed

Action 1: Develop a broad response network.

- Two staff-years per region to develop the certification/credentialing process for emergency responders to track their availability and qualifications; GS-13, Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) positions.
- IT support for above; \$50,000.
- Identify training needs and materials; one staff year, GS-13, at the national level and \$100,000 for materials.
- FAD Training for Specialists; train 30 people nationally @ cost of FAD school.

Action 2: Finalize and exercise the NAHEM guidelines

- Cooperative agreements for entities needing assistance; 10 nationally @ \$100,000.
- Develop EMAC guidelines, AERO document, and define roles of support personnel; one half staff year for one person, GS-13, and one meeting for 20 people - \$20,000.

Statutory/Regulatory Impacts

None noted.

Political Sensitivities

Requirement that all employees participate.

Personnel that participate off site as a collateral duty to their normal work sometimes feel that they are not given enough credit for their contributions.

Funding provided by the Stafford Act vs. Animal Health Protection Act can create confusion especially when an extraordinary emergency is not declared.

Need to notify congress of intent to develop MOU's.

Equitability of funds distribution.

Sequencing

Recommend organizational dynamics group be involved in issue. Response group can help define roles, with organizational dynamics group helping in communication and education throughout VS.

Partnering/Cooperation/Communication:

The MOU's will provide uniform commitment.

Funding for training and preparedness through DHS will encourage response participation and uniformity.

Exercises utilizing the NAHEMS guidelines will allow cooperators to learn the guidelines and provide training for response activities.

Expected Outcome and Performance Indicators:

Competent and trained response force.

Animal health emergencies will be incorporated into NIMS per Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5.

All parties will have a signed MOU submitted.

Allows for a documented coordinated response.

Resources will be available when needed to facilitate more effective and efficient animal health emergency responses.

Linkage to the VS Strategic Plan:

Objective 1.3: Improve readiness to respond to disease incursions.

Objective 3.1: Respond effectively to animal health events and continue to improve the national animal health emergency response capabilities.