

Colorado Participates in National Animal Health Emergency Preparedness Planning Effort

Lisa Rothe, DVM, USDA-APHIS, CEAH

The need for emergency preparedness has certainly hit home in Colorado during the last year's flooding and already a winter blizzard. How can we be better prepared to face these emergencies and handle the recovery? What if the catastrophic event that hit Colorado were Foot and Mouth Disease in our cattle population? Taiwan's recent outbreak of this disease in their swine population (as a result of one small animal being smuggled into the country) has shown us how devastating it can be to individual producers as well as the entire country's economy. Is Colorado ready to respond to such an event and the myriad of inherent issues associated with a livestock catastrophe?

Dr. Jerry Bohlender (Colorado State Veterinarian) has appointed an "Animal Emergency Task Force" whose charge is to research existing emergency management plans, develop goals and a framework for the Colorado Animal Emergency Management Plan. The effectiveness of both the national plan and the Colorado plan depends on a strong and well designed state emergency management plan. It is imperative that the livestock industry and allied industry representatives assist in the development of a practical and effective plan, and participate in the implementation of this plan.

Representatives from the Colorado Animal Emergency Task Force attended a workshop at the United States Animal Health Association Conference (USAHA) on National Animal Health Emergency Preparedness planning. The workshop was sponsored by the Animal Agricultural Coalition, USAHA, the National Assembly, USDA/APHIS and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). These groups have formed a partnership to develop a new approach to the management of national animal health emergencies. There has been widespread support for moving ahead with a national emergency management system plus defining roles to be carried out by State and Federal governments, by animal industries, by universities and by others. The workshop successfully addressed its objective by initiating dialogue regarding: 1. Basic concepts of emergency management in animal health. 2. Begin to develop appropriate steps at a local level that would improve capacity in the four phases of management (prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery).

This workshop was only the first in a series of actions. The Livestock Conservation Institute (LCI) is proposing to focus part of its spring 1998 conference more directly on the interface between the animal agriculture industries and Federal/State Government in managing the range of types of emergencies facing U.S. producers. Plans are also underway for a national test exercise which will include Colorado participation.

The group in Colorado looks forward to the active participation of the dairy industry in these efforts. If you have any ideas, concerns and/or questions, please feel free to call Dr Jerry Bohlender or Dr Wayne Cunningham at (303) 239-4161.