

## Mission Statement

The Animal Health Branch is the State's organized, professional veterinary medical unit that protects livestock populations, consumers, and California's economy from catastrophic animal diseases, disasters that impact animals, and other health or agricultural problems. The Branch addresses diseases and other problems that cannot be successfully controlled on an individual animal or herd basis but require state-wide coordinated resources. Implementing programs that protect California's livestock industries and consumers, ensures the availability, affordability, and wholesomeness of food.



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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

# Animal Health Branch Newsletter

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## Message from the Branch Chief

By: Mandy Murray, DVM, MPVM, PhD, AHB Branch Chief



Happy Fall!

As we head out of summer and into fall, the Animal Health Branch (AHB) staff continues to be busy. The diseases we were focused on this past quarter included continuing to respond to the Vesicular Stomatitis outbreak, diligently watching detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza around the world, and working-groups to prepare for a possible African Swine Fever outbreak. This past quarter also saw a continued return to in-person events including outreach at a variety of county fairs and the State fair; the first all-staff meeting of the Branch, USDA, and California Animal Health Food Safety Lab staff in six years; and a variety of training and industry meeting opportunities. Field staff continue interacting with our industry partners, producers, and veterinarians, responding to the routine and the unusual. The Animal Health Branch is still undergoing a multitude of staffing changes. I am proud of the AHB staff for their resiliency, innovation, and flexibility to adapt as we all work tirelessly to fulfill our mission to protect California's animal agriculture.

## Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Update

By: Alexi Haack, DVM, CAHEN

October brought a resurgence of Eurasian H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in wild and domestic flocks nationally. In California, as of October 25, 2023, there has been a detection of HPAI in a domestic flock of birds in one county.

The previous domestic bird detection in California was April 12th, 2023 in a backyard flock in Modoc County. Summer had infrequent wild bird detections, with the last ones in a red-tailed hawk and turkey vulture sampled on August 1st, 2023 in Monterey County

Avian influenza is a highly contagious and often fatal disease in birds. The disease is spread through movement of infected or exposed birds, direct or indirect contact with infected wild

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and domestic birds or contact with virus on fomites (surfaces) such as hands, shoes, clothing, or feet and fur of rodents and other animals. Wild waterfowl and raptors remain the largest threat of Eurasian H5N1 introduction to domestic poultry in California, so separation of owned flocks and wild birds is imperative.

Remain vigilant and report any unusual or suspicious sick or dead domestic, pet, or collection birds via the CDFA Sick Bird Hotline at (866) 922-2473.



## California Vesicular Stomatitis Update

By: Josh Kloeppe, DVM, Ontario

California continues to respond to the outbreak of Vesicular Stomatitis virus (VSV). Since the first positive detection on May 17, 2023, as of October 20, there have been 228 VSV-affected premises in three states (California, Nevada, and Texas) with 225 of those premises being in California. Of these 225 premises, 222 have had equine only affected animals, while three premises have had affected bovine, and one had affected rhinoceroses.

Throughout this incident the classification of cases and the issuance of quarantines have been as follows:

- Premises with a laboratory diagnostic confirmation of VSV are categorized as confirmed positive premises.
- Once a county is confirmed as VSV-positive, new equine premises with horses showing clinical signs of VSV in that county are not required to be tested for confirmation of the disease, but the premises will be quarantined and classified as a suspect premises upon reporting by the practicing accredited veterinarian.
- Quarantines are issued based on either confirmed lab results or on subsequent reports of clinically symptomatic animals in known positive counties (suspect cases).
- Confirmed positive and suspect premises are quarantined for at least 14 days from the onset of lesions in the last affected animal on the premises.

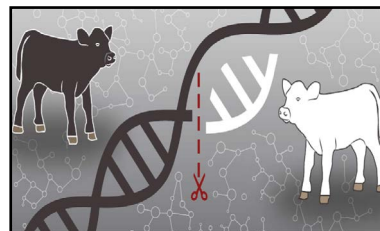
We are currently seeing a decrease in disease activity in the Ontario district but continue to have new cases reported in the Tulare and Modesto districts. As a special note on affected species, we have seen the vast majority of cases being in equine species with a small fraction of the reported cases being in other livestock species. It is important to note that all livestock species are considered susceptible; however, any NON-equine livestock species being reported for VSV rule-out, must be investigated by CDFA Veterinarians. Situation reports are generated and distributed to various equine and bovine industry partners and veterinarians. If you are not receiving these reports and would like to, please contact your local CDFA Animal Health Branch District office and request to be on the distribution list.

A note to remember, it is not uncommon for VSV outbreaks to have a 2-year cycle. As such, it is likely that while we may see decreasing cases over the winter, we will likely see an additional wave of detections next year. Please check the [CDFA VSV website](#) for the most updated situation reports as well as useful outreach material that includes animal event biosecurity, vector control, and other useful information pertaining to VSV and the ongoing outbreak in California.

## A CRISPR look at Sustainable Livestock

By: Kavishti Kokaram, DVM, DACVPM, Bovine Specialist

Recently, I attended the annual meeting of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners. This meeting brought together private, public, and academic veterinarians and veterinary students as well as industry stakeholders from various agencies within the livestock industry. While many of the presentations focused on new research into bovine physiology, immunology, and disease research, others focused on several hot topics in the cattle industry such as sustainability, environmental impact, greenhouse gas emissions, and on-farm welfare. One very well-attended series of presentations was a series on mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and the vast potentials presented for sustainable and rapid change by the livestock industry via gene-editing.



Earlier this year, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that beef from two gene-edited beef cattle does not pose any food safety concerns and enforced their “commitment to using a risk- and science-based, data-driven process that focuses on safety to the animals containing intentional genomic alterations and safety to the people who eat the food produced by these animals”. The Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) technology used to create these slick-coated bovines and enhance their heat tolerance has also been used to address disease resistance in cattle and swine. Various companies have made announcements

this year regarding the production of calves resistant to Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRSS)—resistant swine. The potential that gene editing provides to the industry to address many of the environmental and welfare concerns around livestock farming is highly intriguing for many in the industry as well as those looking critically at the industry.

Many of these projects were supported and applauded by various agencies within the animal welfare sphere; seeing this as a future-focused move by the industry to reduce antibiotic usage through increased disease resistance, reduce welfare concerns around heat stress, and reduce concerns around dehorning practices with production of polled animals. With increased scrutiny on the livestock industry and societal pressure for the industry to do more, gene editing appears to provide some intriguing possibilities for the future; though how these products will be accepted on the grocery shelves will be a discussion that will spark much debate.

## California Live Bird Market Program Meeting 2023

By: Felicia Pohl, Research Scientist, Avian Program

On September 20, 2023, the California Live Bird Market Program Members met virtually for their semi-annual meeting. This was the first occurrence of a combined meeting of both Northern and Southern California Live Bird Markets (LBM) and Suppliers. There were 21 LBM/Suppliers represented at the meeting (including one LBM that had never previously attended) and participation from approximately 28 CDFA, USDA, and CAHFS personnel. The meeting was a resounding success. Dr. Fidelis Hegngi, Senior Staff Veterinarian in Poultry Health and the National Lead of the

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Live Bird Market Program presented an overview of the 2022-23 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in the United States and affected LBMs. He also covered topics such as HPAI Vaccination (and why that is not the solution) and pertinent HPAI Policy Updates.

Dr. Danny Dickason, CDFA Animal Health Branch Wildlife Interface Program and Wildlife Damage Management Lead, gave a presentation on this newly developed program and the assistance the program could offer to Live Bird Market Suppliers and their farms should they have any issues or concerns with wildlife on their premises.

Dr. Sarah Mize, CDFA Animal Health Branch Avian Program and California Live Bird Market Program Lead, gave a presentation on the specific cases of HPAI found in Live Bird Markets this year on the East Coast and what measures were taken to contain any potential spread within the system.

Industry discussion was also facilitated and the 2024 “Down Days” (quarterly dates in which LBMs sell down all their birds and CDFA inspect their cleaning and disinfection process) were determined for the year.

## Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program

By: Kavishti Kokaram, DVM, DACVPM, Bovine Specialist

Since the announcement of the detection of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the Dominican Republic and Haiti in 2021, both the US Pork Industry and USDA APHIS have taken significant strides towards ensuring heightened awareness amongst producers, ramping up surveillance efforts, and introducing programs to mitigate the risk of introduction as well as plans to respond rapidly to any potential detection in US Pork. A 2020 estimate by the National Pork Board placed the net effect of an ASF detection in the US at close to \$10 billion dollars in cost to the US pork industry resulting from loss of export markets, cost of disease response, and cost of enhanced surveillance to regain disease-free status with the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). Two programs that have been launched in the last year are the US Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP) and the Certified Sample Surveillance Program (CSSP) for US herds.



The US SHIP is designed upon tenets similar to the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) and predominantly targets the maintenance of continuity of business for pork producers following an ASF detection or outbreak. This program would allow herds that have demonstrated adequate surveillance and biosecurity practices against ASF to maintain some level of business continuity, including the ability to market products during an outbreak. As a national initiative from USDA, it is still in the early stages of development.



The CSSP program, however, is geared towards rapid disease response following a detection. In the event of a large-scale foreign animal disease outbreak, such as ASF, there will be a significant demand upon state and federal resources. There will be an immediate need for personnel trained in sample collection and biosecurity to assist regulatory officials with initial disease surveillance and to support permitted movement. Personnel such as pork industry veterinarians, producers, caretakers, and industry partners such as extension agents would be crucially poised to fill that role. The Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program would allow USDA category II accredited veterinarians to provide surveillance oversight and training

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expertise to significantly increase the number of qualified people who can reliably collect, package, and submit samples during the disease response. During an ASF outbreak, producers, caretakers, and industry partners could be asked to collect and submit samples for diagnostic surveillance testing, significantly strengthening the ability of the state to regain disease-free status or demonstrate freedom from disease much more quickly and efficiently following an outbreak.

Additional information on these programs and the training process associated with CSSP may be found on the [Certified Swine Sample Collector Training – Secure Pork Supply Plan website](#) and on the [U.S. Swine Health Improvement Plan website](#).

## Sudden Death and Blue Green Algae

By: Steven Gallego, DVM, District Veterinarian, Redding

The Redding district had two suspected toxicosis incidents with multiple animals affected. One was a closed herd of 25 mature Angus cows grazing irrigated pasture on a former dairy farm. Eight cows were seen lying down under the old loafing shed when the owner went out to irrigate on the afternoon of day one. Approximately six hours later all eight of these cows were found laterally recumbent and were determined to be dead. It was a particularly hot day, with daytime temps exceeding 110 degrees and nighttime temps remaining above 100 degrees. On the morning of day two, the owner called Dr. Rob Moeller at CAHFS Davis diagnostic laboratory who in turn notified CDFA's Redding office of an unexplained cattle die-off.



*Water tank filled With BGA.*

Arriving at 10:30am, temps were already approaching 100 degrees. A quick walk of the pasture showed bunch grasses, Bermuda, Crab, and occasional thistle (including Star Thistle). Cool, fresh irrigation water flowed across the field in which the remaining cattle were seen standing, eating, and drinking. Neighboring olive orchards surrounded the premises, but no spraying of herbicides or pesticides had occurred recently and no cyanogenic plants were noted; both of which were rule-outs for cause of death. Before approaching the shed, it was determined it no longer had electrical service, as electrocution could serve as a cause of death for the cows and the investigator. No recent feed changes had occurred. Nor

had any husbandry practices such as pour-on insecticide or vaccine boosters (rule-out misapplication of drugs). Anthrax hasn't been diagnosed locally for years nor had any recent pasture excavation occurred. However, the sole water tank was found to be filled with a bright green, warm, bubbling algae mass. The history and pictures shown put Blue Green Algae (BGA) at the top of our differential list. These cattle were thought to have ingested large volumes of contaminated water due to the ambient heat. Once they began feeling ill, they took refuge under the shed's shade where they died. Under ideal circumstances, liver, rumen contents, and water samples would be submitted. However, after a quick consult with Dr. Moeller, over 24 hours had probably passed since exposure and ambient heat plus advanced decomposition rendered the livers and the rumen contents non-diagnostic.

BGA are a global issue during warmer months in often stagnant freshwater bodies and are categorized under Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB). BGA can be surface-floating or benthic (at the bottom of the water). For reasons we don't yet understand, BGA produce over 100 varieties of cyanotoxins (CTX) depending on the species of algae. In other words, finding CTX indicates BGA presence, but finding BGA doesn't necessarily indicate CTX is present. Once ingested, BGAs release CTX when the algae are ruptured. The free CTX gain access to liver cells where they are actively transported into the hepatocytes. Once inside, CTXs disrupt cellular protein production and intoxicated cells

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lose integrity, disassociate, and the liver essentially necrotizes. Hemorrhage and death soon follow. Survivors are left with compromised livers, poor production, and/or photosensitivity; all secondary to the liver insult. Simply swimming in contaminated waters can cause a contact dermatitis and CTXs are lethal to many animal species including companion animals, livestock, waterfowl, and people. For these reasons, vigilant monitoring for BGA is of paramount importance in maintaining livestock (and all) animal health.

For those interested, an excellent case write up from Dreher, et al, *Anabaena/Dolichospermum* as the source of lethal microcystin levels responsible for a large cattle toxicosis event can be found in *Toxicon* X 1 (2019).

For more information on Harmful Algal Blooms, please visit the [Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment website](#).



*Deceased cattle under the shed.*

## Animal Health and Food Safety Services Division at the California State Fair 2023

By: Felicia Pohl, Research Scientist, Avian Program

CDFA staff managed two tables (one livestock and general information booth and one avian/poultry-focused booth) in the livestock area at the California State Fair in Sacramento from July 14th- 27th delivering animal health outreach to fair-goers. Volunteers from many different branches and programs from the CDFA Animal Health and Food Safety Services Division rotated to cover the different shifts and provided information, answered questions, and distributed hundreds of pieces of outreach materials including Avian Calendars, informational factsheets, brochures, Sick Bird Hotline magnets, stickers, coloring books, pencils, etc. While high-temperature days seemed to limit foot traffic this year, staff were still able to make valuable connections and increase public awareness about our important role in agriculture. This collaborative outreach opportunity is one of our highlights each year and we appreciate the California State Fair staff extending the invitation to us again this year.

*CDFA staff at the CA State Fair managing the CAHEN booth (top) and the Livestock booth (bottom).*



## A Day in the Life: CAHEN

By: Drs. Bradley, Rivera, Haack, and Ikelman, CAHEN

California Avian Health Education Network, CAHEN for short, is an avian health and disease mitigation program within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The following is just another day in the life for CAHEN staff.



*Luis performing LBM surveillance.*

It is 7:00am and the Sick Bird Hotline was quiet overnight, but the CAHEN text messaging chat is going off as animal health technicians and livestock inspectors are reporting in for their assigned duties, ranging from visiting feedstores to delivering educational materials to testing live poultry for avian influenza and virulent Newcastle disease.

By 8:00am, staff are ready to begin their day coordinating laboratory submissions, training, data entry, vehicle maintenance, logistics, orders, reviewing and filing laboratory results from the day before, presentation preparations, and compiling metrics for month-end reports.

Our Sick Bird Hotline (SBH) operators soon begin fielding and triaging calls. Call operators interview callers to determine if they need general or additional veterinary assistance. A call is received from a backyard flock owner residing in Southern California with one deceased hen and another that is sick with respiratory signs.

One of our CAHEN veterinarians takes the case and returns the call with follow up questions. Together, the CAHEN veterinarian and owner plan on submitting the deceased hen to the California Animal Health and Food Safety Lab (CAHFS) in San Bernardino for necropsy. Our CAHEN veterinarian jumps onto our CAHEN text chat to request an animal health technician to meet the owner in San Diego. Luckily, a team member was already enroute to deliver requested educational materials and the ever-popular Avian Health Calendar and will be able to pick up and deliver the carcass upon returning from delivering his outreach and education duties.



*Dr. Haack presenting at CA Poultry Federation.*



*CAHEN staff at the Orange County Fair.*

It is 9:00am and time for our Gamefowl Wellness Program team to collect samples from participating flocks in a vaccine efficacy study. Another team prepares for a visit to an animal shelter and a veterinary office to give a presentation on the CAHEN program, foreign animal diseases affecting avian species, and biosecurity recommendations. Meanwhile in our conference room, one of our veterinarians meets with our fairs, shows, and exhibition liaison to discuss logistics for the upcoming fall fair season.

As the morning progresses, other team members in the office or at home duty stations are completing data entries, writing reports, scheduling outreach events, responding to inquiries from the public regarding avian health, analyzing legislation, creating outreach materials (and translating these into Spanish), participating in specialized training courses, creating social media posts, and meeting with other departments and districts on collaborative projects.

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At the end of the day, after completing vehicle carwashes for biosecurity, field staff return to the office to submit their samples to our laboratory coordinator to be carefully packed and shipped to the CAHFS lab in Davis. Results will be reviewed by our veterinarians in a few days. Quality Assurance Program certificates will be signed and delivered to our participating feed stores, auctions, and other regular participants. Poultry border crossings into Ontario District are reviewed and any crossings flagged by state border patrol agents are investigated by one of our veterinarians.

By the end of business day, the Sick Bird Hotline is transferred to one of our overnight on-call veterinarians and the office is closed. We accomplished a lot: we educated poultry owners on disease prevention, investigated and responded to a concerning animal disease case, and performed routine voluntary testing for diseases of high concern. Tomorrow, we get to do it all over again!



*CAHEN staff at Live Animal Auction.*



*CAHEN booth at the Orange County Fair with Erika and Elise.*

## Darling Fresno Rendering Plant Closure Fall/Winter 2023

By: Lisa Quiroz, Emergency Program Manager III, Emergency Preparedness and Response Section

The Darling Rendering Plant in Fresno will soon be closing permanently. The Darling Turlock location has received a permit for an additional line to increase capacity and capabilities. The company will transition business to their Turlock location which, when up and running, the additional line is expected to absorb the material currently processed by the Fresno plant. This transition is anticipated to begin early November 2023.

Rendering plants are working together to minimize the impacts to clients over the anticipated two or three weeks for the transition. With this coordination, CDFA does not anticipate any disruptions in services to animal agriculture producers. In an abundance of caution, CDFA has notified the dairy industry and partner regulatory agencies of the impending plant closure. CDFA's Meat Poultry and Egg Safety Branch, who regulates rendering plants, is working closely with the renderers to monitor this situation for any impacts to producers in order to anticipate disposal issues that may arise.

CDFA met with Cal Recycle and the State and Regional Water Boards to coordinate alternative disposal options for animal agriculture producers should rendering pickups be interrupted during the Darling transition. Should it be needed, CDFA is prepared to provide emergency animal mortality disposal guidance which typically targets dairy operations during extreme heat events. The guidance and accompanying Notice of Quarantine Action will exempt impacted producers from relevant portions of the Food and Agricultural Code, enabling them to work with county officials to employ alternative disposal options, including landfill and composting. The CDFA Emergency Animal Mortality Guidance which aligns with Cal Recycle's [Animal Carcass Composting Regulatory Pathway During a Declared Emergency](#) will be issued if it is confirmed rendering cannot continue animal mortality pick-ups. While we do not anticipate needing this guidance during this time, CDFA and partner state agencies are ready to enable alternative mortality disposal methods when needed.



## Foreign Animal Disease Investigations

By: Alireza Javidmehr, DVM, MPVM, Ph.D., Emergency Preparedness and Response Section

Being aware of foreign animal diseases (FADs) and their potential impact on the food supply chain and international trade is crucial. Although these dangerous diseases have been eradicated or never occurred in the United States, a widespread outbreak could have severe consequences, including posing a public health risk if they are zoonotic in addition to the agricultural and economic impacts. Therefore, early detection and immediate action are critical to controlling and eradicating FADs. California is investing significant resources to safeguard the livestock industry against FAD outbreaks. To learn about the critical activities when an FAD is detected in the state, 13 infographics and three short video clips have been developed and can be viewed on the [CDFA Preparedness and Response web page](#).

Between June 16 and September 15, 2023, FAD diagnosticians investigated a total of 137 FAD suspicious cases (Table 1) to protect California's livestock industry. Out of 137 investigations conducted, almost 90 percent were to rule out Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in pigs being shipped to slaughterhouses. The lesions observed in these cases were found to be caused by Senecavirus A (SVA). Although SVA is an endemic disease in the US, it triggers an FAD investigation due to the similarity of lesions to FMD. It is essential to treat any animal diseases presenting similar signs to FADs as such until the FADs can be ruled out.

All Emergency conditions listed in the [California reportable animal disease list](#) must be reported to the relevant local animal health authorities within 24 hours of detection. The AHB district offices' contact information is listed on the last page of this newsletter as well as in the reportable disease list.

Table 1. Summary of FAD investigations from June 16 to September 15, 2023

AHB Districts	Disease	Species	Sample Type	Number of Investigations	Destination Lab*
Modesto	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Senecavirus A (SVA)	Porcine	Swab	112	CAHFS-Davis
	African Swine Fever (ASF)	Porcine	Tissue	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
Ontario	FMD, SVA	Porcine	Swab	1	CAHFS-Davis
	FMD, Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV)	Bovine	Swab	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	VSV	Elephant	Swab	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	FMD, VSV	Pygmy hippopotamus	Swab	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
Redding	VSV	Caprine	Swab	2	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD)	Rabbit	Carcass	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
Tulare	FMD, SVA	Porcine	Swab	11	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	FMD, VSV	Bovine	Swab, Serum	3	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	FMD, SVA	Caprine	Swab	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	VSV	Ovine	Swab	2	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis

\*NVSL: National Veterinary Services Laboratory

CAHFS: California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory

## California Condor Concerns

By: Danny Dickason, DVM, MCM, Wildlife Interface Program

Just centuries ago, The California condor's habitat range included much of the Pacific Coast of North America, spanning from British Columbia (Canada) to Baja Mexico. But as recently as 1982, The California condor population had declined to approximately 22 individuals mostly due to human activities such as hunting, poisoning (lead, DDT insecticides, trash ingestion), and other disturbances as well as hunting of large game such as elk - the carrion of which serve as a food source for condors. Around that time, individual condors were taken into captivity and a captive breeding program was started. This captive breeding program has proven quite successful, and the United States Fish and Wildlife service began releasing condors back into the wild in 1992, with numbers reaching 175 captive and 329 wild birds as of 2020. As the breeding and release program continues, they are being released in southern and central California, Arizona, Baja California, and more recently in Northern California on the Oregon border.



Unfortunately, the 2022-2023 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak not only had a significant impact on poultry production in California and the United States, but it also claimed the lives of at least 21 condors. When these rare and iconic birds fall ill, they are sometimes brought into veterinary diagnostic and treatment facilities to determine the cause of and appropriate treatment for their illness (top rule-outs are frequently lead toxicosis and HPAI). Just as CDFA protects poultry health and the poultry industry from spread of disease with appropriate quarantines and movement restrictions in times of disease outbreaks, so too must we be vigilant when transporting and housing wildlife that may be a source of infection for our poultry industry. To achieve this goal, CDFA veterinarians including Dr. Sarah Mize and Dr. Andrea Mikolon consult with these facilities to ensure they are following proper biosecurity protocols for disease mitigation such as, separation of patient condors from each other, wild birds, and other birds in the facility; sufficient ventilation; and best practices by the human caretakers including clothing and equipment sanitation, lines of separation, and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Recognizing the interactions between wildlife and domestic animal health CDFA continues to support the recovery of California condors and California poultry alike by combining animal health expertise with good biosecurity measures.

## 127th Annual Meeting of the United States Animal Health Association: October 12 – 18, 2023

By: Mandy Murray, DVM, MPVM, PhD, AHB Branch Chief

Several staff from the Animal Health and Food Safety Services Division attended the 127th annual USAHA meeting held in National Harbor, Maryland from October 12 – 18, 2023. The USAHA is "the nation's Animal Health Forum" that aims to prevent, control, and eradicate livestock diseases in the U.S. The USAHA is a science-based, non-profit, voluntary organization consisting of people from state and federal governments, universities, national livestock and poultry organizations, diagnostic laboratories, university extension services, several foreign countries as well as veterinarians, livestock producers, and research scientists. There are over 1,000 members, including representatives from all 50 states, four foreign countries, and 34 allied groups serving health, technical, and consumer markets. These

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members participate in multiple science-based committees that adopt resolutions and recommendations aimed at improving animal health and management, traceability, welfare, and disease control and preparedness.

The USAHA protects animal and public health by serving as a national forum for communication and coordination, as a clearinghouse for new information and methods for developing policies and programs, and acts to develop solutions for animal health issues. The USAHA has met annually since its founding in 1897 and produces published proceedings of each meeting. The proceedings represent the most complete history of the nation's animal health endeavors over the past century. For more information visit the [USAHA annual meeting website](#).

## Renewal for Trichomonosis Approved Veterinarians and Laboratories

By: Beth Francia Wilson, Senior Livestock Inspector

Thank you for your continued participation in helping detect and control bovine trichomonosis. Approval for veterinarians to officially sample for bovine trichomonosis with the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Animal Health Branch must be renewed every two years. The new agreement will be mailed to you soon. Please update your contact information, sign, and return your renewal before your current agreement expires on December 31, 2023.



Any testing, reading, or diagnosing of trichomonosis samples must be performed in a trichomonosis approved laboratory. Initial laboratory approval requires training with the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory and is renewed on a two-year schedule. Laboratory renewal forms will also be distributed this year in a separate mailing. Reminder: The 2023-24 trich year began on September 1, 2023, and goes through August 31, 2024. The trich approved tags for this year are blue. For more information, please see the [AHB Trichomonosis webpage](#).

## Beyond Boundaries: Collaborating, Thriving, and Amplifying Impact as One CDFA Team

By: Mandy Murray, DVM, MPVM, PhD, AHB Branch Chief

That was the theme of the CDFA Statewide meeting that was held for three days at the end of August 2023. Almost 100 staff from CDFA, USDA, and CAHFS came together to meet in person, review programmatic and policy updates, and discuss program directions to meet the needs of our industries. Prior to coming to the meeting, all staff were asked to submit a picture or quote that represented their personal "Why" – why do they do this job? The commitment, dedication, and passion all the participants have for working with and protecting the California animal agricultural industries was awe-inspiring.

Dr. Murray's opening presentation reminded staff about the history of the Animal Health Branch; demonstrated the shift in disease response focus from "legacy" diseases such as brucellosis, tuberculosis, and pseudorabies to new and emerging diseases including High and Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza, West Nile Virus, and Equine Herpes Virus; illustrated the growth and turnover of the Branch as between 2017 to 2023 wherein the AHB grew from ~ 70 to just over 100 full-time and seasonal employees with 65 of the current 100 staff being new employees since 2017. Due to COVID, many of the staff had never met in person. The meeting further consisted of presentations by each of the field

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offices and various statewide programs on current strengths, challenges, and opportunities being faced. The meeting concluded with a facilitated discussion on where do we, as a united team, head next to face the current and future challenges. Recruiting and hiring staff will continue to be a Branch priority. The groups and participants also had many great ideas pertaining to increasing communication amongst the staff and partner agencies as well as engagement with our industries.

As we left the meeting, people had a stronger connection to one another and a renewed commitment to our service to the industries about which we feel so passionate.



*Animal Health Branch group photo at the Statewide Meeting.*

## AHB Staff Biographies

### Dr. Linda Flores, California Avian Health Education Network (CAHEN)

Dr. Linda Flores was born and raised in San Bernardino. She grew up in a first-generation Hispanic family, where her parents immigrated from Jalisco, Mexico. She grew up raising a variety of pets including dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, goldfish, and mice. She spent two-and-half years working at the CAHFS laboratory before pursuing her DVM degree. During veterinary school she took on a leadership role as president of the Student Chapter of the American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP) and conducted a



research project on the types of people who become a poultry vet, developing a survey which identified common factors that made them interested in the poultry field. In her fourth year, she traveled to many states to immerse herself in poultry medicine. After she received her DVM degree from Western University of Health Sciences, she joined CAHEN, the California Avian Health Education Network at CDFA, AHB.



Dr. Flores is a goal-setter in both her professional and personal life. One of her goals is to give back to her parents and take them on a nice expensive vacation. Her non-work hours are spent with family and friends, watching Netflix shows, and playing with her cats.

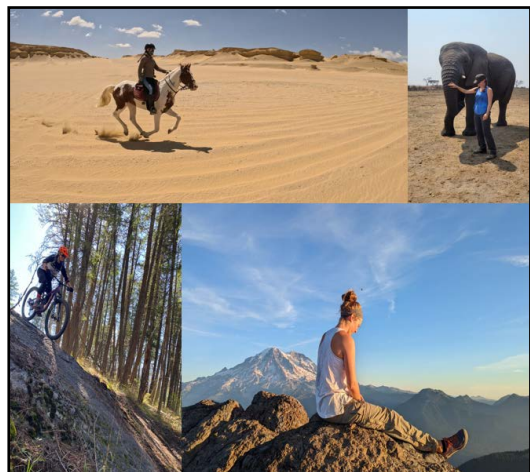
### Ali Thompson, Senior Emergency Services Coordinator, Emergency Preparedness and Response Program

Greetings, Ali here. I'm thrilled to embark on this journey as a member of the Animal Health Branch. Originally hailing from Seattle, my life's journey with the military took me to various corners of the world, most recently in Boston, where I resided for almost ten years. New to California, as of last year, I find myself in a new world of animal agriculture.

If I were to encapsulate myself in a few words, they would be as follows: equine enthusiast, avid traveler, passionate extrovert, leadership-focused, and an intense desire to see my team succeed. My previous work involved the Animal Health Branch in Massachusetts where I was exposed to a diverse array of experiences, including (but not limited to) animal depopulation, farm inspections, milk testing, avian blood sampling, pet shop regulation, large animal rescue, and animal disease traceability.

This comprehensive foundation in Animal Health has equipped me with a well-rounded skill set.

Furthermore, I bring substantial experience in animal rescue, equine management, and local-level emergency response to the table. With that said, I am overflowing with enthusiasm at the prospect of becoming an integral part of the Animal Health Branch here in California. This career path harmonizes perfectly with my deeply rooted commitment to safeguarding animal well-being and my fervor for leadership, as we collectively shape the ever-evolving world of animal agriculture together. Looking forward to working with you all!



# Contact Information



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