



Animal Health Branch News

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Animal Health Branch

Dr. Kent Fowler, Chief
Headquarters: (916) 654-1447
Permit Line: (916) 651-6278

District Offices

Veterinarians In Charge (VIC)

Redding: Dr. Charles Palmer
(530) 225-2140

Modesto: Dr. David Willoughby
(209) 491-9350

Tulare: Dr. Melanie Swartz
(559) 685-3500

Ontario: Dr. David Kerr
(909) 947-4462

State Veterinarian

Dr. Richard E. Breitmeyer
(916) 651-6870

Animal Health & Food Safety Services

Dr. Annette Whiteford, Director
(916) 654-0881

Additional AHFSS Branches

Bureau of Livestock Identification
Greg Lawley, Chief
(916) 654-0889

Milk & Dairy Food Safety
Dr. Stephen Beam, Chief
(916) 654-0773

Meat & Poultry Inspection
Dr. Dennis Thompson, Chief
(916) 654-0504

Emergency Preparedness and Support Unit (EPSU)
John Rowden, Manager
(916) 651-0399

United States Department of Agriculture

Area Veterinarian In Charge
Dr. Kevin Varner
(916) 854-3950/Toll Free: (877) 741-3690

USDA PUBLIC MEETING

To obtain stakeholder input on improvement of the Bovine Tuberculosis Program, USDA is hosting Listening Sessions across the country in December 2008. A California session is scheduled on December 12, 2008 from 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM.

Sheraton Grand Sacramento Hotel
12309 J Street, Sacramento, CA
Registration begins: 7:00 AM

AHB News Briefs

By Dr. Kent Fowler

Since January 2008, bovine tuberculosis has been confirmed in three California dairy herds in Fresno County. The source of the TB is not yet identified. **The California TB Task Force**, comprised of both CDFA and USDA personnel, has tested over 229 dairy herds and 315,000 cattle to date. Based on the finding of more than two herds with TB within a 48-month period, California's TB status was re-classified from TB-Free to Modified Accredited Advanced in September 2008. With this change, veterinarians and producers should check TB testing requirements of receiving states prior to moving cattle out of California. CDFA animal disease control experts are continuing to work with industry to evaluate a "split state" status.

The **United States Animal Health Association (USAHA)** recently conducted its annual meeting in Greensboro, NC. The USAHA serves as the nation's premier animal health forum and consists of membership of state, federal and international animal and public health agencies, national allied organizations, professional organizations and individuals representing academia, animal owners and animal health professionals. It was especially refreshing this year to listen to Dr. John Clifford, Deputy Administrator for USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services, describe necessary changes for various national programs. With respect to the National TB Eradication Program, Dr. Clifford indicated the need for a more flexible program with decision-making based on science and risk assessment. Budgetary cutbacks also dictate that decisions to depopulate large minimal-risk herds will no longer occur. With disease control and eradication remaining the priority, business continuity and science-based decisions will provide framework for livestock disease response in the future.

Amended Feed Ban Rule Will Impact California

Livestock Industries

By Dr. Dennis Wilson

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is amending the feed ban rule (21 CFR Part 589 Substances Prohibited From Use in Animal Food or Feed; Final Rule) effective April 27, 2009. The rule objective is to protect all animals from Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) by prohibiting the processing of brain and spinal cord from cattle 30 months of age or older for use in any animal feed. Such material is referred to as Cattle Material Prohibited from Animal Feed (CMPAF). FDA reviewed the available science and received comments from affected industries, public health, and other interested parties during their review process. The amended rule and a "Question and Answer" document on the rule is available at: <http://www.fda.gov/cvm/bsetoc.html>.

The rule requires rendering companies to put a system and records in place which can be audited for compliance by FDA. There are no direct requirements on producers who supply the materials. The expectation is for the rendering companies to work with the carcass suppliers for material identification and aging, separation, and verification (i.e., letter of guarantee vs. third party audits). There are a number of challenges to overcome for successful

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Amended Feed Ban Rule - Continued

rule implementation. The FDA and the rendering industry must resolve some rule details, then rendering companies will work closely with cattle producers and facilities that process adult cows and bulls to implement necessary steps for compliance. Key California rendering companies have indicated that they will make every effort to continue picking up cattle carcasses and comply with the amended rule.

FDA and the rendering companies must agree on the acceptable methods for determining animal age and the validation of correct animal age identification. Rendering companies will have to determine if cattle carcasses available for processing are above or below the age criterion before processing.

Rendering companies must also determine effective separation methods of the CMPAF from the carcasses. The effective removal of brain and spinal cord from decomposing carcasses is a formidable challenge. Companies are assessing options for investment in equipment and labor to remove only the brain and spinal cord versus other options to include separating heads and vertebral columns. Regardless of the system chosen, decomposed whole carcasses that are not processed become part of the CMPAF. During summer months, especially on Mondays, a large number of whole carcasses may be unsuitable for processing and will require an alternate disposal method. Rendering companies are responsible for the disposition of the CMPAF and question whether it will be cost-effective to set up a separate line to process these materials into a less valuable product or just dispose of them.

Disposal of material that cannot be rendered is also of serious concern in California. In some areas of the state, rendering is the only practical, legal, disposal option for dairy producers since on-site burial disposal may not be allowed in an area and composting of mammalian flesh is prohibited in the state. Alternate off-site disposal options

are limited. Current laws and regulations eliminate landfills as a viable option and most landfills have permit restrictions for disposal of large animals. Livestock producers, rendering companies and various government agencies recognize these unique disposal challenges. A multi-agency working group is actively developing potential solutions.

Several important points must be understood as rendering companies try to meet the amended rule. Since only fresh carcasses will process successfully, rendering companies will need the full cooperation of producers for timely coordination of carcass pickup. The rapidity of carcass decomposition is amplified especially in summer months. Without carcass pickup coordination, many carcasses may be unable to be processed. The cost of additional handling will likely result in higher costs to producers for processing.

In the near future, California rendering companies will provide producers and other affected entities information on the anticipated procedures to attain compliance with the rule change so that cattle carcass pick-up and disposal in the state is maintained. Although FDA enforcement of the rule begins April 27, 2009, the compliance system must be in place before this date. Time is short. Expect updates as more is learned. 🐾

Electronic Distribution of AHB Newsletter

Effective February 2009, mail delivery of the AHB Newsletter will discontinue. The AHB Newsletter will be posted on the AHB website every three months. To receive an electronic reminder of newsletter posting, please forward your email address to dvenable@cdfa.ca.gov

Equine Foreign Animal Disease Enters Florida

By Dr. Katherine Flynn

On August 15, 2008, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services confirmed Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) in 7-year-old gelding euthanized after a prolonged illness. EP is a tick-borne disease affecting

horses, donkeys, mules and zebras, caused by the parasite *Babesia caballi* and *Babesia equi*, a parasite endemic in 90% of the world. Latrogenic transfer of infected blood on contaminated needles or surgical instruments is also a potential route of transmission. EP is a reportable foreign animal disease in the US. The US was declared free of EP in 1988 after an extensive eradication campaign. Canada, Australia, Japan and England are also Equine Piroplasmiasis-free.

Florida animal health officials immediately began an epidemiologic investigation to determine the source and extent of disease spread beyond the index animal. Traces led to twenty-five premises and the subsequent quarantine and testing of 201 horses. Nineteen horses were confirmed positive for EP. Preliminary investigation and area tick surveillance indicate that the spread of the disease was the repetitive use of contaminated needles, not tick-related. However, tick surveillance continues in the involved areas.

Clinical manifestation of EP depends upon the number of cells destroyed and the extent of immune system activation. Carrier horses may be asymptomatic for many years and, in rare cases, sudden death occurs. Horses with acute EP infection may present with fever, lethargy, dyspnea, anemia, jaundice, congested mucous membranes, petechial hemorrhages and posterior weakness. Chronic cases may show nonspecific clinical signs such as poor appetite, reduced performance and weight loss. *Before collecting samples from an EP suspect horse, notify state or federal animal health officials.* Horses diagnosed with EP are quarantined and handled according to state regulations.

Due to the non-specific clinical signs of EP, diagnosis is difficult. EP may be diagnosed by the identification of the organism in a Giemsa-stained blood smear. Horses surviving an acute infection may become carriers

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Foreign Animal Disease - Continued

of the parasite capable of transmitting the disease through ticks or mechanical transfer. The organism is more difficult to detect in a carrier animal than in one with an acute infection. Serologic tests, such as the competitive enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (cELISA) and the complement fixation test (CFT), are used to diagnose infection in carrier animals.

Horses in EP endemic countries are treated for the disease; however, complete elimination of the parasite in carrier animals is a challenge. Currently there is no vaccine for EP. Although the cELISA and CFT are internationally recognized EP diagnostic tests, the cELISA is the official test for importation of equines into the US. Based on the difficulties in detecting, diagnosing and treating the carrier horse, preventing the disease from entering and being established in the US is critical. All horses entering the US must complete EP serologic testing prior to importation. Horses positive on cELISA test are denied entry. Following a risk analysis, some exemptions to allow temporary entry for international shows are made. Horses granted this exemption are under strict quarantine and isolation from all susceptible animals. The United States Department of Agriculture and California Department of Food and Agriculture monitor all situations to prevent disease transmission and to protect the health of the California equine population.

Is there a significant EP risk to the California horse industry? Horses from around the globe enter California and California has competent tick vectors for the spread of this disease. Vigilance is critical for protecting the California equine industry. 🌻

Requirements for Pasture to Pasture Permits

With the recent change in California TB status to Modified Accredited Advanced, requirements are in place for beef breeding herds moving on Pasture-to-Pasture Permits:

- The cattle must be from a valid beef breeding herd, established more than six months, moving for grazing without change of ownership.
- Breeding beef herds moving for grazing on a commuter herd agreement (Pasture to Pasture Permit) have the TB test requirement waived for the next 12 months.
- Both the premises of origin and destination are highly recommended to have a National Premises Identification Number. Please call the **Permit Line at (916) 651-6278** with questions on these new requirements. 🌻

Radio Frequency Animal ID

By John Evans, Ph.D

Animal identification (ID) is a familiar topic for livestock veterinarians and their clients. Livestock producers routinely identify livestock with ear tags, brands, and tattoos. The use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) to identify animals is a growing trend and important for the future of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The NAIS is a standardized and efficient means of identifying and tracing livestock to protect US animal agriculture. In the event of a disease outbreak, the NAIS would help animal health officials trace all animals and premises in contact with suspect animals within 48 hours of disease detection. Veterinarians and agricultural professionals should familiarize themselves with RFID applications.

RFID functions as a data signal between two antennas. Current animal health program technology uses a low frequency bandwidth to relay information between a transponder (ear tag or microchip) and a reader. Commonly used RFID ear tags are read-only, passive devices with the RFID reader providing power to the ear tag instead of a battery. A unique 15-digit identification number that cannot be modified is written to the ear tag. To record the ID number, the reader sends a signal to the RFID tag energizing the tag and the tag emits a signal with the ID back to the RFID reader. The identification in-

formation can be recorded on the reader or transmitted to a software system.

The NAIS Cattle Species Working Group recommends the use of tags meeting International Standards Organization (ISO) specifications for animal health programs. Most major RFID tag companies for livestock meet ISO standards. RFID tags should be applied in the left ear following the manufacturer's recommended application site. Disinfecting the tag and cleaning the ear prior to tag placement minimizes infection and enhances tag retention. Eight hundred and forty RFID tags are official ID devices, so it is illegal to remove them.

RFID technology has benefits to veterinarians for herd health management. RFID use enhances record keeping of routine health checks, herd inventory, artificial insemination, pregnancy detection and certificates of veterinary inspection. Pilot project work in California shows that producers enhance health management practices with RFID and herd management software.

Federal and state animal health officials are using RFID technology with USDA Tuberculosis testing software to record test data. This effort advances the NAIS and provides producers with new management tools. USDA and CDFA are planning to further advance the use of RFID technology and electronic capture of animal health information for regulatory programs.

Livestock producers are independently implementing RFID and data management technologies to leverage the management and marketing benefits. The dairy industry, the largest user of RFID, has producer use on a daily basis. Beef producers are increasing their RFID use for herd management and the marketing benefits associated with export market programs and Country of Origin Labeling. Some equine owners use microchips as unique identification for recovery after a theft or a natural disaster. **Additional information is available on the following Internet sites:**

www.californiaid.org/ & www.usda.gov/naiss 🌻



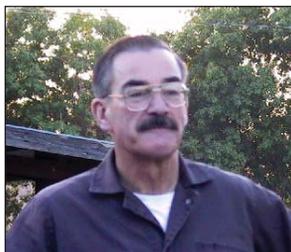
California Department of Food and Agriculture
Animal Health and Food Safety Services
Animal Health Branch
1220 N Street, A-107
Sacramento, CA 95814

Staff Biographies



CDFA Animal Health Branch had the good fortune of hiring **Rhonda Smith** as an Office Technician in 1992. Rhonda quickly became familiar with the diverse AHB programs and activities. She exceeded our expectations with her understanding of animal agriculture and the interest she took in her new position. After several years doing clerical work, Rhonda was ready for a new challenge. In an effort to retain her and all the knowledge she had gained, a novel Training and Development assignment was developed to train her as a Livestock Inspector. In 2002, Rhonda became the first AHB clerical to advance to the position of Livestock Inspector. This advancement has worked well for

both Rhonda and the AHB. She has proven to be very capable working with livestock and interacting with producers, and brings many other desirable qualities to this position.



Dr. Richard "Pete" Peterson received his D.V.M. from Washington State University in 1976. Prior to veterinary school he completed a Masters Degree in Nutrition. He worked in private practice in Idaho and Wyoming before coming to work for CDFA in 1984. Pete started in Tulare County, but has spent most of his CDFA career on the Northern Coast. He trained as a Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician at Plum Island in 1988 and has served both CDFA and the livestock industries well during the many disease investigations he has conducted over the

years. Pete became an alumnus of the U.C. Davis School of Veterinary Medicine in 1996 after completing a Masters of Preventive Medicine (MPVM) degree.

Pete has a long time interest in wildlife diseases and Africa. He has made an annual trek to Africa since 1978, initially as a consultant to African beef, dairy, and crocodile farms. Over the last several years, he has worked with a TB eradication program for Cape Buffalo in Kruger National Park.

Pete's unique sense of humor and near encyclopedic knowledge of veterinary medicine make for very interesting and educational experiences to those who have had the pleasure to work with him.

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