Animal Health Update

News from the Wisconsin State Veterinarian

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection • Division of Animal Health • 608-224-4872 • animals@wisconsin.gov

April 2009

In this issue

Swine influenza

Contagious equine metritis update

Spot-on flea and tick products under the microscope

VSPS: What's in it for you?

Last chance for accreditation?

Is that livestock deal legal?

Remember rabies testing for large animals

FDA grants a 6-month reprieve

One more go-round for the federal CWD rule

Swine influenza

Despite the name, so far only humans have been sickened by this previously unknown virus. The H1N1 virus combines characteristics from avian, swine and human influenza viruses, and was dubbed swine influenza because those elements predominated. None of the victims in the U.S. to date had any contact with swine.

Nevertheless, this should serve as a reminder to veterinarians to remain vigilant in your biosecurity measures as you travel from farm to farm. This is always important to prevent disease transmission. It is even more important now, because of the potential for the virus to be transmitted from humans to swine if the outbreak continues and spreads, as CDC officials are predicting it will.

We also need veterinarians to report any unusual morbidity or mortality in swine herds, and to submit samples for testing in such situations.

Commercial swine producers generally practice better-than-average biosecurity. If they've slacked off at all, now is the time to tighten up biosecurity. We've posted biosecurity guidelines from the National Pork Board on our website.

From Dr. Bob Ehlenfeldt, Wisconsin State Veterinarian:

The truth about premises registration

Animal identification and premises registration are back in the news. Congress is pushing the USDA to take another look at all this nationally, wondering about the $120 million spent so far to get a voluntary program started that's not doing much to protect animal health, but is creating a lot of controversy - mostly based on misinformation, disinformation, and no information. And here in Wisconsin, one legislator is trying to change premises registration from mandatory to voluntary.

Let's set the record straight.

First, animal identification is not really new. The USDA and Wisconsin have for decades required official identification numbers for some disease control programs and for movement. There are some new technologies available, and the concept of a common national numbering system kept in a database is fairly new - but is used in Europe and Canada already. This new technology under the National Animal Identification System, or NAIS, remains voluntary. Official identification for most animals moving in interstate commerce remains mandatory.

Second, premises registration is mandatory in Wisconsin - not because I or the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection say that it is, but because the Legislature passed a law five years ago. We supported the law then, and we support it now - but it took elected representatives to make it reality. We're one of only three states with mandatory premises registration; once again, Wisconsin is leading the rest of the nation in an animal health issue.

Third, premises registration and animal ID won't drive anyone out of business. Premises registration is free. Expensive ID technology isn't necessary - ear tags work fine.

Fourth, none of this is about wanting to spy on people or animals or using satellites to track implanted microchips. If we ever get to mandatory ID and a tracing system, all anyone cares about is that cow XYZ123 is born and dies, and where she is in between, so we can find at-risk, exposed animals and eliminate disease outbreaks quickly. To accomplish that, when an animal moved, that information would get entered into a database. That would be done by a person or by an electronic reader at markets for those animals that are chipped - it wouldn't be a satellite tracking the animal's location every minute of its life.

For the record, premises registration, animal identification, and a tracing system are about public health, animal health, and economic health. It's that simple, and that important.

Contagious equine metritis update

As the investigation continues into a nationwide outbreak of contagious equine metritis, or CEM, Wisconsin has found seven positive horses to date - one mare and six stallions. As of April 22, we had about 155 stallions under quarantine and about 65 mares, and four semen collection facilities were involved. The number of quarantined animals fluctuates as we trace more exposed animals and release others from quarantine after they complete the testing and treatment regimen.

Nationwide, 18 stallions and five mares in nine states have tested positive for the equine venereal disease, and another 750 exposed horses are located in 47 states. Wisconsin has found more positives than any other state, but that may be because we are looking so hard. Most stallion exposures have likely occurred from artificial insemination equipment. When we have one positive stallion, we check all stallions collected in the same facility within a week before and after the positive stallion was collected. We are now examining breeding records from 2001.

The USDA has sent us help to enter the growing stack of records into the national database, so that other states can access them and do their own traces. Disease tracebacks are time-consuming, and the testing and treatment for this particular disease can extend to several weeks, so it may be six to 12 months before we can put this outbreak behind us. We hope that traces will show us how the disease entered the country - it has been considered a foreign animal disease - but we may never find that ultimate source.

We do know one thing: That CEM has spread because biosecurity procedures were lacking. That may be because the artificial vaginas don't lend themselves to disinfection, or because disinfectants inhibit the stallion's response. This outbreak may lead the industry to find a way around those problems so that good biosecurity becomes the standard. The outbreak has cost the owners of the exposed horses a great deal in veterinary fees as well as lost opportunities for shows, races and breeding.

For more information about CEM, visit the USDA website.

Spot-on flea and tick products under the microscope

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is intensifying evaluation of spot-on flea and tick control products because of a recent upswing in reported adverse reactions ranging from skin irritation to seizures to death.

Adverse reactions have occurred with sprays, collars, and shampoos as well. However, the majority have been tied to EPA-registered spot-on treatments that are sold in tubes or vials and usually applied between the shoulders or along the animal's back.

Although these products may be appropriate to prevent tick-borne diseases, the EPA recommends that pet owners consult a veterinarian about using these products safely and effectively. It also reminds pet owners to follow label directions precisely and watch for reactions, especially the first time they use the products.

Health Canada has noted similar problems, and will join EPA in meetings with manufacturers to discuss whether further restrictions are necessary.

EPA recommends that veterinarians report incidents to the National Pesticide Information Center. EPA also provides other information on pet products and pet safety.

VSPS: What's in it for you?

Accredited veterinarians can register for a "webinar" to learn about Veterinary Services Processes Streamlining (VSPS), used to file certificates of veterinary inspection and EIA specimen submission online.

VSPS is free and has been enhanced to reduce data entry time, allow sharing client records, and eliminate the search for a laboratory from a long list. The webinars - online seminars - are aimed at large-animal veterinarians who want to learn more about what VSPS can do for them. Each webinar is an hour and 15 minutes long and has room for 15 participants, so pre-registration is necessary. Email your preferred time and date to Kristin.D.Keller@aphis.usda.gov.

The schedule for Basic VSPS for Accredited Veterinarians is:
- Wednesday, April 29, 10-11:15 a.m.
- Wednesday, April 29, 2-3:15 p.m.
- Thursday, April 30, 2-3:15 p.m.
- Thursday, April 30, noon-1:15 p.m.
- Friday, May 1, 2-3:15 p.m.

There will also be an advanced webinar for those already using VSPS on Friday, May 1, noon-1:15 p.m.

Read more about VSPS online.

Last chance for accreditation?

If you're a veterinarian who completed your orientation session for federal accreditation before 2003, but never applied to be accredited, the record of your orientation is about to be deleted. That means that if you want to seek accreditation so you can do regulatory work such as official TB testing, you will need to retake the orientation.

Eventually, USDA-Veterinary Services, which accredits veterinarians, also plans to delete records for those who completed the orientation in 2003 and later. The intent is to accredit only those veterinarians who have completed orientation within the past three to five years.

For more information, contact Dr. Michael Dutcher at USDA-VS at 608-270-4000.

Is that livestock deal legal?

We recently sent out a reminder that livestock consignment sales and auctions, as well as buying and reselling animals - even for fair projects - must be licensed under state law.

It's becoming more common for several families or neighboring farms to hold consignment sales or auctions, so they can draw a larger group of buyers than if just one farm holds a sale. If it's just

one farm selling animals that they raised, a license isn't necessary, but when animals from two or more owners are involved, an animal market license is required.

It's also common at this time of year for one individual to buy animals either in Wisconsin or out of state and resell them to young people for fair projects. These animals need all the appropriate health papers, and the seller needs an animal dealer license. The dealer license is for the person who sells animals shortly after buying them without changing them - for example, by using them as breeder or feeder animals. These animals also need to have all the appropriate health papers.

We've been lenient in the past, but it's becoming clear that these activities are common enough to pose a threat to our animal agriculture. It is vital to keep a record of where animals are commingled and of animal movements in case of a disease outbreak. We're starting with an education effort, and will work with people to get them licensed, but will move to enforcement eventually.

Animal market licenses cost $220 a year, if the licensee holds sales on four days or fewer during the year. Animal dealer licenses are $220 a year. Applications for animal market and dealer licenses are available by calling 608-224-4889 weekdays 7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Information about health requirements for imported animals is available online.

Remember rabies testing for large animals

Remember that veterinarians who treat or euthanize cattle and horses with clinical signs of central nervous system disorders must submit the heads for rabies testing. In recent years, Wisconsin has seen rabies in both cattle and horses. Rabid bats and skunks may bite animals on pasture, or even get into barns. (Cattle must also be tested for BSE and horses should also be tested for West Nile virus and equine encephalitis.) If you are unsure of submission procedures, call the State Laboratory of Hygiene before taking the sample. Questions? Call Dr. Yvonne Bellay, 608-224-4888.

FDA grants a 6-month reprieve

The FDA has effectively delayed the enhanced feed ban that will prohibit using any part of cattle 30 months or older in livestock feed or pet food without removing the head and spinal cord. The FDA, which regulates animal feeds, is attempting to strengthen the 12-year-old ban on mammalian protein in cattle feed by keeping parts at high risk for containing prions out of all animal feeds - not just cattle feed.

It's been a complicated dance with effective dates in this matter. The bottom line is that the new rule is effective April 27, but will not be enforced until October 26. The change is in response to renderers who said they were not prepared, and to producers who need to find ways to handle carcasses that may no longer have a market.

For more information about the enhanced feed ban, read the FDA's Q & A online.

One more go-round on the federal CWD rule

The USDA is accepting comments until June 1 on proposed changes to the rule on chronic wasting disease. The rule had already undergone one comment period, and been published. However, before the effective date, petitions for reconsideration led to these proposed changes and the new comment period.

The rule would set CWD herd certification requirements for animal identification, testing, herd management and movement into and out of herds for participating deer, elk and moose herds. The intent is to help eliminate CWD from farmed and captive herds in the United States. Changes in the new proposal include:

- Recognizing state bans on cervid imports for non-CWD reasons
- Prohibiting interstate movement of cervids monitored for CWD less than 5 years
- Setting parameters for interstate movement of cervids from herds in or near CWD outbreaks in the wild population

● Allowing accredited veterinarians, rather than state or federal, to certify herd inventories

You can read the entire proposal and post online comments here. You'll need to go to the end of the list that comes up, to the item dated March 31, 2009 on page 5. If you prefer to mail hard copies of your comments, the instructions are on the first page of the proposed rule.

Email Marketing by

Constant Contact®
TRY IT FREE