



VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM NO. 573.1

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Veterinary Services

Washington, DC

TO: Veterinary Services (VS) Management Team

FROM: John R. Clifford
Deputy Administrator
Veterinary Services

SEP 16 2008

SUBJECT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), VS Animal Health Policy in Relation to Wildlife

I. PURPOSE

This memorandum outlines VS' animal health policy in relation to wildlife.

II. CANCELLATION

VS Memorandum No. 573.1, dated March 2, 2006, is hereby canceled.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

The fundamental goal of VS is to prevent, control, or eliminate infectious agents/diseases/vectors in animal agriculture and wildlife, as appropriate. All VS activities related to wildlife will be conducted in collaboration with Federal, Tribal, and State wildlife agencies. For the purposes of this policy, VS defines wildlife as all free ranging animals, including native and exotic wildlife species, as well as feral domestic animals. This definition does not include privately-owned captive wildlife, whether native or exotic, nor does it include zoological collections, which are defined as captive animals. A wildlife reservoir may be defined as a population of free ranging/free living species in which an infectious agent/vector has become established, lives, and multiplies and is therefore a potential source of infection/infestation to other domestic and free ranging species. VS recognizes that the initial source of infection of a wildlife reservoir may be an agricultural animal population.

In cases where VS policy supports eradication of an infectious agent/disease/vector, VS will seek measures, through (1) movement and testing requirements; (2) herd plans; and (3) emergency response plans, to keep wildlife and livestock apart and to eradicate the disease from all potential reservoirs when eradication is deemed technically feasible. Regardless of the current official disease status of a State or zone, the program should require States or zones to include effective efforts to survey, prevent, control, and eliminate the causative agent/vector from wildlife. VS' emergency management plans for response to foreign animal disease (FAD) incursions must explicitly address the eradication of the infectious agent/disease/vector from affected wildlife.



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VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM No. 573.1

Page 2

For VS control programs whose current objective is something less than complete eradication of a causative agent, VS will address the occurrence of the particular causative agent in wildlife populations through (1) surveillance; (2) mitigation measures; and (3) movement controls. Finally, for infectious agents/diseases/vectors for which VS has no formal control program, VS will support surveillance efforts in wildlife populations on a case-by-case basis.

IV. GENERAL

VS manages many infectious agents/diseases/vectors through its eradication and control programs. When no formal program exists for a particular infectious agent/disease/vector, VS may conduct surveillance, if requested and supported by the State animal health agencies and industry stakeholders.

Infectious agents/diseases affecting animal agriculture are often transmitted between free-ranging wildlife and other species. As a result, the design and management of livestock and/or poultry health programs have increasingly encompassed concerns involving wildlife interactions and the potential for disease transmission. Such transmission has historically been bi-directional. Many diseases of concern were first transmitted from livestock and/or poultry to free-ranging wildlife and have remained in wildlife reservoirs even after being eliminated or reduced in the livestock and/or poultry population. A wildlife reservoir may be defined as a population of free ranging/free living species in which an infectious agent/vector has become established, lives, and multiplies and is therefore a potential source of infection/infestation to other domestic and free ranging species.

The fundamental goal of VS is to prevent, control, or eliminate infectious agents/diseases/vectors in animal agriculture and wildlife, as appropriate. This VS policy represents a measured approach to infectious disease/vector occurrence in U.S. wildlife populations. In cases where VS policy supports eradication of the disease agent/vector, VS will work with State and Federal wildlife agencies to eliminate it from all potential reservoirs that might re-introduce infection/infestation, in order to protect the health of domestic and wild animals and the public health, and to provide assurances to other animal health authorities and stakeholders that eradication has been achieved. If eradication is not technically feasible at the time, measures must be taken to keep these potential reservoirs (wildlife and feral animals) separate from domestic livestock until research efforts can develop improved procedures to eliminate the disease from the wildlife/feral populations. In cases where VS policy is to control rather than eradicate an infectious agent/vector, VS' policy will be to also collaboratively control the agent/vector in wildlife populations in partnership with wildlife agencies. If there is no formal VS control program for an infectious agent, then no domestic animal disease/vector concerns would apply to U.S. wildlife populations.

For the purposes of this policy, VS is including in the definition of wildlife all free-ranging animals, including native and exotic wildlife species, as well as feral domestic animals.

VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM No. 573.1

Page 3

The natural history of each infectious agent/disease/vector determines which wildlife species should be considered. If a species of wildlife is susceptible to infection by a particular infectious agent/disease/vector then, as a general rule, this VS policy must apply to that wildlife species, when they are in an area where the disease/vector occurs. This wildlife definition does not include privately-owned captive wildlife, whether native or exotic, nor does it include zoological collections, because they would be enclosed by fences and would be defined as captive animals.

VS recognizes that State fish and wildlife management agencies have primary authority and responsibility for managing free-ranging wildlife. VS also recognizes that this authority and responsibility extends to most Federal lands, except designated National Parks, and that Congress has affirmed this through enabling legislation for several Federal agencies. In general, States manage the fish and wildlife while the Federal agencies, as landowners, own and manage the habitat. Congress has given some Federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Fisheries) certain statutory responsibility for selected fish and wildlife conservation programs, such as threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and anadromous fish (fish born in fresh water that spend a portion of their life history in marine waters before returning to fresh water to spawn, e.g., salmon), but the States retain concurrent jurisdiction with the Federal agencies for those species. Congress has given exclusive jurisdiction to Federal agencies for marine mammals only.

VS has statutory authority in the Animal Health Protection Act to implement disease control and/or eradication actions for wildlife under certain conditions. In the case of an extraordinary disease emergency, the Secretary of Agriculture has broad and expansive authority to seize and dispose of any animal, including wildlife. However, if fish or wildlife are affected by control or eradication measures proposed by the Secretary, the Secretary will consult with officials of the State agency having authority for protection and management of such wildlife. Therefore, it is important to clarify that VS will implement and coordinate this policy in cooperation with the appropriate wildlife agencies to address infectious agents/diseases within wildlife populations. VS will also aggressively pursue non-lethal approaches for eliminating disease in wildlife whenever possible.

V. INSTRUCTIONS

A. Cooperation with Federal, Tribal, and State Wildlife Entities

VS managers' efforts to prevent, control, or eliminate transmission of infectious agents/diseases/vectors between animal agriculture populations and wildlife requires a collaborative relationship with the respective wildlife agencies. Such a relationship may allow VS to contribute to overall wildlife and public health risk mitigation while focusing on its own program goals. In order to develop such relationships, VS has created institutional links to wildlife agencies and wildlife disease professionals. These include the VS Wildlife Disease Liaison positions, formal ties with the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease

VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM No. 573.1

Page 4

Study, partnerships with APHIS' Wildlife Services, and regular interaction with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

VS managers and employees should use these resources to build communication channels with wildlife agencies and professions to develop measures that reduce risks of disease transmission. In addition, VS managers must contact their respective wildlife managers within the States to develop and maintain effective working relationships – including collaboration, assistance, and coordination of disease management – prior to an occurrence of a disease of concern in wildlife.

B. Infectious Agents/Diseases that are the Subject of Eradication and/or Emergency Programs

In cases where VS policy supports eradication of the infectious agent/disease, VS will seek, in collaboration with livestock and poultry producers, wildlife management agencies, and other partners, measures to keep wildlife and livestock apart and to eradicate the disease from all potential reservoirs when eradication is deemed technically feasible. Funding for the costs of mitigation, biosecurity and eradication will be determined by each program. Such programs include: the Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Program; Swine and Bovine Brucellosis Eradication Programs; Pseudorabies Eradication Program; Scrapie Eradication Program; and all the FADs encompassed by Emergency Programs. If eradication is not technically feasible at the time, VS will, in collaboration with producers, wildlife management agencies, and other partners, seek measures to keep the wildlife (and feral animals) separate until eradication can be achieved. Funding for these costs will be determined by each program and will include cost sharing with the producers and agencies.

Specific sections of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), applicable Uniform Methods and Rules (UM&Rs), and various Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) will incorporate language that reflects this VS policy regarding wildlife. These policies should be in place within 12 months of issuance of this memorandum.

1. Movement and testing requirements

VS' eradication programs' requirements to achieve particular State or zone status levels and testing (and other) requirements for interstate movement should factor in the occurrence of the infectious agent/disease/vector in wildlife populations. Regardless of the current official disease status of a State or zone, the program should require States or zones to include effective efforts to survey, prevent, control, and eliminate the causative agent/vector from wildlife. Interstate movement requirements for livestock and/or poultry, including captive animals, should require States or zones with known wildlife reservoirs of the causative agent/vector to conduct more extensive mitigation activities than States or zones of equivalent status that do not have a wildlife reservoir.

VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM No. 573.1

Page 5

The program staff, in collaboration with wildlife disease experts and State wildlife agencies, would determine the susceptible species and the domestic and wildlife species that would be surveyed in order to determine whether infection/infestation exists in the animal population. Minimum surveillance standards would be collaboratively developed by VS and the respective State/Federal wildlife agencies involved. VS would not pay indemnity for any wild free-ranging wildlife sampled for surveillance purposes. VS could reimburse wildlife agencies for some or all costs involved in surveillance activities, provided program funding is available.

2. Herd plans

Herd plans are used in eradication programs to manage known affected herds and to manage accredited herds in areas where wildlife reservoirs are known to exist. These herd plans should incorporate requirements to prevent transmission or reintroduction of the causative agent between a known wildlife reservoir and agricultural animal populations.

3. Emergency response plans

VS' emergency management plans for response to FAD incursions must explicitly address the eradication of the infectious agent/disease/vector from affected wildlife. Eradication measures will vary widely depending upon disease characterization, pathology, epidemiology, level of risk, and other factors.

C. Infectious Agents/Diseases that are the Subject of Control Programs

Programs such as the Johne's Disease Program; Chronic Wasting Disease Program; National Poultry Improvement Program; and other programs whose current objective is something less than complete eradication of a causative agent must address the occurrence of the particular causative agent in wildlife populations.

Specific sections of the CFR, applicable UM&Rs, and various MOUs will incorporate language that reflects this VS policy regarding wildlife.

Control programs are usually applied at a herd or animal level, intending to limit the transmission of infectious agents/diseases/vectors from known-affected/infested herds or animals. Ultimately, these programs serve to reduce the prevalence of a causative agent to an acceptably low level and may be precursors to eventual eradication. Nevertheless, these programs do not intend to eradicate the causative agent/vector from animal agriculture. Therefore, the VS policy regarding wildlife infected with these infectious agents/diseases/vectors is to collaborate with wildlife agencies to simply control or limit their propagation among wildlife and between wildlife and animal agriculture populations. Although the objective of control programs is something less than complete elimination of a causative agent/vector, these programs still endeavor to control transmission and the

VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM No. 573.1

Page 6

consequence of infection/infestation; therefore, the role of wildlife in transmission cannot be ignored.

1. Surveillance

For domestic/captive herds known to be affected with an infectious agent/disease/vector, the role of wildlife as a source of infection, or as a vector of transmission, should be examined in each case. At minimum, control programs must require that potential wildlife reservoirs surrounding known affected livestock herds or poultry flocks be surveyed in collaboration with wildlife agencies to determine if the disease/vector has spread between the wildlife and domestic/captive animal populations. Such surveys should be conducted in a manner to reasonably demonstrate the absence, presence, or prevalence of the disease in the wildlife and the species affected. If wildlife infections/infestations are detected, then preventive measures should be instituted to reduce the incidence of infection within the domestic and wildlife herd or flock.

2. Mitigation measures

Disease preventive measures in infected/infested wildlife will depend on several factors: physical and geographical conditions under which free-ranging animals exist; complex dynamics of wildlife behavior; sentiments of public opinion; conflicts over jurisdiction; and wildlife management philosophies of State, Tribal, and Federal land management authorities. Such factors will require discussion and consensus to develop a successful strategy that can be incorporated into a VS control program.

3. Movement controls

Herd-level or animal-level interstate movement testing requirements should be bolstered when a wildlife reservoir is known to exist in an area surrounding the herd or origin of the shipment. Specific requirements will depend on the infectious agent and its epidemiology.

D. Infectious Agents/Diseases/Vectors Not Currently the Subject of Formal Control Programs

VS' policy regarding the occurrence in wildlife of infectious agents/diseases/vectors for which no formal control program exists is to support surveillance efforts on a case-by-case basis. Decisions about surveillance for these infectious agents/diseases/vectors will be made by the VS Deputy Administrator after receiving input from animal health and wildlife agencies.

Infectious agents, such as bluetongue virus, Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome virus, *Anaplasma rickettsial* organisms, and many others, are important in terms of international trade or as disease agents within U.S. animal agriculture. Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, these infectious agents/diseases are not subjects of formal VS programs.

VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM No. 573.1

Page 7

Periodic surveillance of animal agriculture for these diseases/agents/vectors is sometimes used to facilitate international trade. Some are reportable diseases in many States. Often, veterinarians in private practice identify these agents.

Regardless of how the diseases/agents/vectors are identified, the VS response to reported infection in livestock and/or poultry is usually limited to consultation on available local methods for preventing or controlling infection. However, if a severe outbreak is determined to warrant VS involvement, it is possible that wildlife surveillance conducted in cooperation with wildlife agencies may be included in the VS action plan. There may also be other circumstances under which the VS Deputy Administrator may elect to include wildlife in his/her plan for responding to these types of infectious diseases/vectors.