



Producer Response to Suspicious Animal Diseases and Unauthorized Activity

Adapted by Dean Ross, Michigan State University Extension Regional Dairy Educator from Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 445-002, July 2002, by Dr. Dee Whittier, Dr. Ernest Hovingh, Dr. Marie Suthers-McCabe

If someone suspects that an act of agroterrorism has occurred or that any foreign animal disease is present on a farming operation, appropriate response to the situation will limit economic and legal liability for the producer and protect the interests of neighbors and agriculture in general. Producers thus have a major responsibility to report any suspicions. How the reporting should be done and what will happen following the report are important items of interest for any agricultural producer.



Whom should a producer contact if he/she is concerned about suspicious animal diseases or activity relating to animal health?

Contact the state veterinarian's office if there is any suspicion that a foreign or other reportable animal disease is present on an operation or that any activity has occurred that might be related to the risk of introduction of such a disease.

Such a report can be made in at least three ways:

1. Contacting the farm's regular practicing veterinarian.

This contact will be most comfortable for many producers. The veterinarian is likely an accredited veterinarian who can answer many questions about diseases as well as the regulations that pertain to them. Because the practicing veterinarian is trained in the diagnosis of disease, he/she can assist in assessing the signs that are present and in making recommendations for the initial very important steps if the disease is truly a threat. Because the veterinarian is accredited, he/she is mandated to report any suspicious disease signs to the state veterinarian.

2. Contacting the MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health.

This laboratory is located on the Michigan State University campus. It is equipped with diagnostic facilities for processing dead animals for diagnosis as well as performing a number of tests on tissues and blood. The laboratories of this facility are in direct contact with the Michigan Department of Agriculture Animal Industry Division which regulates animal disease in Michigan. Listed below are the addresses and phone number for contacting the MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health.

Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health
P.O. Box 30076
Lansing, MI 48909-7576
Call 517-353-1683.

Who regulates animal disease?

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Animal Industry Division and the state veterinarian are the immediate authority in regulating animal disease in the state. By administering veterinary medical regulatory programs, the MDA works to protect domestic animals and poultry from contagious and infectious diseases. The MDA has regulatory authority to enforce regulations and quarantines to control the spread of disease through commerce both in and out of the state.

The accredited veterinarian is a resource that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the MDA use to regulate animal disease. Most veterinarians who deal with livestock and poultry in Michigan are accredited veterinarians. This means that they have been trained and have entered into an agreement with the USDA and the MDA concerning animal disease regulation. They perform such tasks as issuing health certificates and testing animals or regulated diseases (historically tuberculosis and brucellosis). Accredited veterinarians, because they regularly visit farms as part of their private veterinary practice activities, serve as a first line of defense against the introduction of animal diseases that could be propagated as an act of agroterrorism.

3. Contacting the Michigan Department of Agriculture Animal Industry Division.

Call 517-373-1077

What will happen following a report of suspicious animal diseases or unauthorized activity relating to animal health?

At least four activities will occur if a suspicious disease is suspected:

1. Diagnostics: Tissue samples will be collected as soon as possible and will be sent directly to laboratories, where tests will be performed that are as rapid and accurate as technology currently allows.

2. Investigation: Various investigative agencies will make every effort to determine the source of a disease agent and to follow the spread so that the outbreak may be dealt with as quickly as possible.

3. Steps to stop disease spread:

* Quarantine. This is a powerful tool to prevent the spread of a disease. The extent of the quarantine — animal movement, product movement (milk, meat,

eggs, etc.), and people and traffic movement — and the length of the quarantine are determined by the state veterinarian and the USDA.

- * Testing, slaughter and disposal of infected animals.
- * Vaccination, if available and deemed to be beneficial.

4. Possible reimbursement or indemnity for those who suffer economic losses through no fault of their own.

Summary

A system is in place to deal with a potential act of agroterrorism that involves the introduction of animal disease. Producers and practicing veterinarians are under obligation to work with state and federal agencies in reporting and dealing with suspicious animal disease or activities that threaten the profitability and healthfulness of Michigan's animal agriculture.



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