

Executive Summary

Workshop on Enhancing Foreign Animal Disease Response Communication Channels

In March 2014, a workshop was held at Smithsonian's Conservation Biology Institute. The goal of this workshop was to assemble stakeholders primarily from Veterinary Services District 1 to discuss Foreign Animal Disease concerns for the exotic animal community. Topics included communication gaps and other critical issues identified in previous AZA and USDA collaborative projects. Continuing dialog strengthens the industry's prevention, preparedness response, and mitigation capabilities for Foreign Animal Diseases. The number of exotic or managed wildlife is very low compared to agricultural species, however they represent high emotional, monetary and genetic value to our Nation.

The following broad topics were included in a lively discussion over 1 ½ days.

- A facilitated discussion on current FAD Communication chain
- A facilitated review and discussion of the Zoo and Exhibitor plans (The 2009 HPAI Plan, and the 2001/2002 Foot and Mouth Disease Plan).
- A presentation of a 'Special Avian Collections and FAD Emergency Planning' program in North Carolina
- A facilitated discussion on response to FADs detected in special collections

Closing Critical Gaps: Suggested Action Items

The following actions could be taken by the zoological community and regulatory agencies to address concerns and further prepare the zoological community to prevent, prepare for, respond to and mitigate the impacts of a Foreign Animal Disease:

- There should be more zoo/state get-togethers through meetings, conference calls and exercises. Determine how to bring these groups to the table. This helps to formalize/legitimize zoological collections as objectives in a State's Incident Action Plan.
- Make sure that State Vets are provided with 'good science' for decision-making from our industry: while the industry should understand that sometimes, politics may trump science.
- **Explore development of a "Secure Zoo" model (based on other industry templates). The following bullet points were identified as critical gaps that would be addressed in a "Secure Zoo" model:**
 - Zoos should address public visitation and business continuity in the face of disease
 - Address/assure species continuity (sustainability!!!) where possible in the face of disease
 - Determine where exotic species are located in a State
 - Provide contact lists for State vets for USDA AC licensed exhibitors.

- Prioritization of species for vaccination, if available
- Make contingency planning a requirement of accreditation for AZA. (A recent amendment to the Animal Welfare Act regulations would make this a requirement for licensure when the current stay is removed from the final ruling)
- Require ICS compliance and training
- Strengthen relationships within and across states with stakeholders
- Understand resource support: understand supply chains for critical materials.
- Biosecurity plans : use risk assessment for differences across institutions
- Biosecurity plans should be developed pre-event and be scalable
- Get the “community” to recognize that the economic impact is HUGE. This will require this understanding and buy-in of zoo directors. Directors need a better understanding of regulatory response and its impact on business continuity (depopulation=’no animals, no zoo’)
- What is the ‘window’ of facility sustainability? What are the economics of closure for 72 hours? 5 days? How long **can** you remain closed?
- Animal welfare issues will be critical in a response.
- Understanding ‘animal value’ and ownership issues, including International implications for certain species (i.e. Giant Panda, kiwi, tamarins, etc.)

There was tremendous feedback from meeting participants when solicited for feedback after the meeting. Comments included:

“The broad cross disciplinary coverage especially on the regulatory side was very valuable. I think it fosters much better understanding of the reality of how to respond. The Secure milk and secure pork models are outstanding.”

“Wonderful energy, enthusiasm from all participants. Great overview of the issues and challenges. Great that there was some overview, but also a lot of impromptu discussion.”

“I liked the inclusiveness of the meeting...it seems like we are continually remaking the wheel rather than trying to take advantage of the resources that are already out there. Bringing together all of the players and potential players for a face to face is very important.”

“The concept and ideas behind the meeting were all good, seems like a timely topic. In many ways, it was quite eye-opening and I learned a lot.”

Many attendees expressed an interest in continuing to assist the zoological community in planning and preparing for disease incidents that impact our unique species. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and the University Of Illinois College Of Veterinary Medicine thanks USDA Animal Care for support for this workshop.