

The Animal Health Network

Your Local Information Link for Animal Safety and Security

Shannon H. Degenhart, Shavahn Loux, and Andy Vestal

Texas AgriLife Extension Service:

The National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense; Texas A&M System:

The Animal Health Network is a state-adaptable, local emergency communication network which delivers vital animal disease-related alerts and information from the State Veterinarian to local feed retailers via the established Extension system in each state to reach NLPO. It provides State Veterinarians and State Departments of Agriculture one more tool to communicate with this hard to reach population in the event of an animal disease incident.

Underserved communities of non-commercial livestock and poultry owners (NLPO) are a difficult but vital audience to reach for the protection of our food and agricultural infrastructure. Unlike commercial livestock and poultry operators who stay well informed and have emergency contingency plans, underserved owners may pose a threat from unintentional spread of disease either through live bird markets with small producers or through practices less than adequate for disease prevention and suppression. Also, underserved owners may not be associated with commodity organizations or veterinary practitioners, and may not sustain continuing education opportunities that equate to good stewardship.

Timely notification of NLPO could significantly mitigate the negative effects to the animal agriculture industry from disease incursions, such as the 2002 Exotic Newcastle outbreak in Southern California or the 2003 Bovine Tuberculosis in El Paso, TX. A pilot test of the Animal Health Network in 2008 funded by the National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense, a Department of Homeland Security University Center of Excellence (FAZD Center), indicated that through utilizing the state's Extension System, the Animal Health Network has the potential to reach feed retailers with alerts from the State Veterinarian within 49.8 hours and 797 NLPO per county through local feed retailers within 7 days of message initiation.

The support of Extension is vital to the successful adoption and implementation of the Animal Health Network in each state. Based on lessons learned from the 2008 Pilot Test and adoption in other states, recruitment of an Extension Specialist is vital to the successful adoption of the Animal Health Network in each state. Extension Veterinarians are uniquely positioned to either provide this leadership or identify and support the appropriate Extension Specialist to lead the adoption and implementation of the Animal Health Network in their state.

Guided by the activities and results of the 2008 Animal Health Network Pilot Test, in 2009 a prototype multimedia, web-based Animal Health Network Start-Up Resource was created for use by states in their efforts to adopt and expand the Animal Health Network concept. The Prototype Resource Kit contained procedural guidelines for implementing the Animal Health Network and background concerning animal-disease outbreaks and the usefulness of such a network. The Prototype Resource Kit also contained educational materials such as: Power Point presentations, video clips, interactive educational activities, and downloadable print material.

The Prototype Resource Kit was reviewed by a national advisory council consisting of Extension Specialists, State Veterinarians, county Extension educators/agents, targeted state agency representatives, and feed retailers; and pilot tested during Michigan's state-wide adoption of the Animal Health Network in January - March 2010. Recommendations of the advisory council and results of the prototype pilot test were used to redesign the Resource Kit into a final Animal Health Network Resource Website.

The Animal Health Network Resource Website <http://animalhealthnetwork.org> was officially launched in July 2010, at the 2010 Ag Media Summit in St. Paul, MN, to facilitate national awareness and aid Extension, State Veterinarians, and Departments of Agriculture with the adoption of the Animal Health Network nation-wide. For a description of the 180-day adoption process of the Animal Health Network go to <http://animalhealthnetwork.org> and select "Implementation" then click on one Step-by-Step Guidance documents at the bottom of the page. During 2011 and 2012 the FAZD Center recruited state extension specialists and state veterinarians in 20 states to serve as the Point-of-Contact to lead the

adoption and implementation of the Animal Health Network in his or her state. If adopted nationally, the Animal Health Network will be poised to address key animal diseases and prioritized agro-terrorism animal disease related issues.



- = States participating in the 2012 Cohort
- = States participating in the 2011 Cohort
- ★ = States who participated in the 2008 Pilot Test