

Animal Health *Network*

Your Local Information Link for Animal Safety and Security

Introducing the Animal Health Network to Local Feed Retailers

The following text can be used as a conversation starter when introducing the Animal Health Network to local feed retailers.

The area of agriculture and food systems is an extensive, open, interconnected, diverse, and complex structure making it a potential target for terrorist attacks. Any disease, pest, or poisonous agent, which occurs either naturally, is unintentionally introduced, or is intentionally introduced by acts of terrorism could potentially cause catastrophic health effects or economic losses to the United States.

The Animal Health Network is a state-adaptable, local network concept connecting underserved populations of non-commercial livestock and poultry owners with vital animal disease related alerts and information from the State Veterinarian through their local feed retailer via the existing Extension system for the protection of our food and agriculture infrastructure.

You might ask ...isn't there already a system in place that sends messages out in an emergency? The answer is no. In fact, it's very difficult to reach into these underserved communities of local non-commercial livestock and poultry owners – many of whom do not want to be known.

Commercial producers are connected through professional associations – but the local, non-commercial livestock and poultry owners are the ones that get missed. Many individuals ASSUME that the system being described is already in place...in fact, in a recent meeting – a state veterinarian was asked, "How do we reach backyard producers" – the vet responded: "Our Extension agents do this." The Extension agents responded – "We know some backyard producers ...but not all of them." Thus ...the need for a system was realized.

Something very basic ... but very important.

The goal of the network is to add value – not serve as a news release systemthe goal of the network is to deliver the state veterinarian's message through the established Extension system at critical times. The message to be delivered MUST be very specific, tell what has happened and tell groups what to do.

