

Illinois Chosen to Simulate Livestock Disease Outbreak

Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. - Federal officials are planning to simulate a livestock disease outbreak for a security training in northeastern Illinois this summer.

The two-day training will simulate a foot and mouth disease outbreak. It's hosted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Foot and mouth disease is a highly contagious livestock disease. It is not related to hand, foot and mouth disease which affects humans.

The idea is to train and prepare health officials, local authorities and first responders for an emergency involving the disease.

About 100 people are expected to participate at the event in Wheaton this June.

The project is federally funded.

AVMA Releases State Legislative End of Year Report

The AVMA State Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Department issued a comprehensive report on December 24, 2008 which summarizes state legislative activities in 2008. The introduction to the downloadable [written report](#) is written below:

(Courtesy AVMA) 2008 was another eventful year for veterinary medicine in state capitols. Several issues continued to dominate animal-related legislative agendas, including scope of practice issues, potential non-economic damage allowances, several animal welfare issues, and most recently, proposed taxes on veterinary services.

States continued the post-Michael Vick conviction push to increase penalties for animal cruelty and expand its definition to include additional acts. Legislatures in several states passed measures regulating living conditions in commercial kennels and limiting the number of dogs and cats that can be maintained at one facility. After much debate and negotiation, the Pennsylvania legislature approved a new law which provides minimum standards for dog kennels.

States and local governments are increasingly considering ways to encourage or mandate sterilization of pets. Most recently, Colorado passed a bill requiring dogs and cats to be sterilized before adoption from animal shelters and rescues, and the city of Los Angeles enacted an ordinance requiring most dogs and cats to be spayed or neutered by the age of four months.

Farm housing practices continue to generate interest and controversy. After a highly-publicized battle, California voters approved Proposition 2, the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act, with 63% of the vote. It requires that by 2015, egg-laying hens, veal calves and pregnant sows have room enough to lie down, stand, turn around, and fully extend their limbs. The proposition primarily targeted egg producers in the state. Colorado's legislature adopted a similar bill concerning calves raised for veal and gestation sows.

Several states this year introduced legislation to allow for the recovery of non-economic damages in actions alleging veterinary negligence. None of these bills ever reached final adoption and Illinois and Tennessee continue to be the only states that allow for the recovery of non-economic damages, in limited cases involving intentional conduct.

States did adopt several measures regulating veterinary prescription drugs and controlled substances, much of it through regulations issued by various state agencies. Most notably, Arizona, Alaska, New Jersey and Kentucky were added to the growing list of states that have programs monitoring controlled substances. A Kansas task force was authorized to study whether prescription

monitoring programs should apply to veterinarians dispensing drugs, and if so, how to structure such a program.

States also addressed various scope of practice issues. Several legislatures adopted laws which allow non-veterinarians to perform certain procedures such as animal massage, animal chiropractic and animal dentistry. All of these bills, however, require some sort of veterinary supervision. Oklahoma increased the penalty for practicing veterinary medicine without a license from a misdemeanor to a felony.

Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Washington and Wyoming approved new laws providing some type of loan repayment assistance to veterinarians who agree to practice in large-animal veterinary medicine. In addition, Ohio, Missouri and Wyoming promulgated regulations to begin implementing such programs.

California Governor Schwarzenegger recently introduced a budget proposal that would include a tax on veterinary services for the first time. Currently only three states, Hawaii, New Mexico and South Dakota, collect taxes on veterinary medical services.

This summer, the AVMA officially launched a pilot program of veterinary outreach to law schools and the legal community to explain the veterinary perspective on animal law issues such as non-economic damages and guardianship. We have developed a group of approximately 20 speakers who are veterinarians, lawyers, or both. In 2008, we presented at the University of Wisconsin Law School, the Massachusetts Bar Association, and the Colorado Bar Association, and are in the process of setting up additional presentations at several law schools this coming spring. The completed presentations have been successful and have generated robust discussions and insightful feedback. We look forward to expanding the program this spring and we anticipate continued success.

2008 was an election year, and in November, 79% of all state legislative seats in the U.S were up for election. Twelve veterinarians won re-election to their state legislatures, while Dr. Steve Abrams, Kan. and Dr. Dan Brown, Mo. won election to their state legislatures for the first time.

Three veterinarians lost in the general election and Dr. Robert Jackman, Ind., Dr. Bob Bastian, Pa. and Dr. Shawn Webster, Ohio retired or did not run due to term limits. Dr. Kurt Schrader left the Oregon Senate to win election to Congress and thus become the sole veterinarian in the U.S. House. As a result, 22 veterinarians will be serving in state legislatures at the beginning of 2009.

There is no shortage of veterinary issues arising in states throughout the country. In 2008, the AVMA Department of State Legislative and Regulatory Affairs has tracked over 3,000 measures and distributed 825 legislative and regulatory alerts to state veterinary medical associations.

A Look at the Year Ahead

2009 promises to bring its own set of challenges for state and local veterinary advocates. Scores of new legislators, new leaders, and significant economic pressure will combine to change the landscape in every capitol and make advocacy more unpredictable. As the economic downturn continues, states may try to increase revenue by taxing veterinary services and drugs. State funding for projects such as subsidized spay/neuter, animal control and loan repayment may dry up, and even enforcement of veterinary state board regulations may be affected adversely.

Many of the issues from past sessions are sure to return, such as animal welfare, scope of practice, and hopefully more bills that provide for loan repayment for large-animal veterinarians. Some states may consider laws providing for the recovery of non-economic damages, while appellate courts in Vermont and California are expected to issue closely-watched decisions on that topic.

We will also be watching the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court on the request from the Department of Justice to reverse the decision of an appeals court that found as unconstitutional a federal law banning the sale of depictions of animals being tortured.

All states are scheduled to meet in 2009. Except for New Jersey and Virginia, bills will not carry over from the 2008 session to 2009.

In 2009, the AVMA will continue to track all of this activity carefully and respond in partnership with state veterinary medical associations. In addition, the AVMA will host a third state public policy symposium on November 7-8, 2009 in Tampa, Fla. The theme is "exploring strategies and overcoming challenges in state and local advocacy." The event will feature workshops designed to gain a deeper understanding of emerging policy issues. Registration will open in Aug. 2009 at www.avma.org.

The following is a summary, by topics and subtopics, of several key animal and veterinary-related issues that arose in 2008. We have included both "adopted" measures, those that were signed into law or received final regulatory approval, as well as some of the most significant bills and regulatory proposals that were introduced but not adopted into law. For a more detailed analysis on any of these topics, please contact the [AVMA State Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Department](#).

Please Plan to Attend the ISVMA Lobby Day on April 1, 2009

The Fifth Annual ISVMA Lobby Day has been rescheduled and will now be held on April 1, 2009 in Springfield. The original date of April 8 conflicted with another event that would limit our participants' opportunities to meet with their legislators.

ISVMA members are strongly encouraged to join us for Lobby Day this year. We must work quickly to build strong relationships between veterinary professionals and legislators prior to ISVMA opening the Veterinary Medicine and Surgery Practice Act for amendments and renewal. ISVMA may open the Practice Act as early as 2010, so the 2009 legislative session is our last chance to build the relationship capacity we need to fend off organizations that would seek to limit the scope of practice and otherwise diminish the profession through hostile amendments to our Practice Act.

The ISVMA Lobby Day is a very rewarding experience. So far, every veterinarian that has attended in the past returns in succeeding years. ISVMA staff and lobbyists provide a comprehensive orientation and training session for participants before they go to the Capitol to meet with their legislators. We also provide talking points on the key issues on which we want you to lobby. You can leave the handouts with your legislators with a business card so that they know to contact you on issues related to animal and public health and welfare. ISVMA staff and lobbyists will also be at the Capitol all day to assist anyone that needs additional information or support.

If you plan to attend the Fifth Annual ISVMA Lobby Day please send a confirmation email to info@isvma.org. We really need your support.

About the Photo

The [Boreal Chickadee](#) (*Poecile hudsonica*) is a brown-capped chickadee of the northern boreal forest. It is a species deserving of its name. It is one of a very few passerine species with a range almost completely restricted to the boreal forest of Canada and very small parts of the United States. The Boreal Chickadee is a permanent resident of these boreal forests. It occurs almost entirely in coniferous forests, but is found to a lesser extent in mixed woodlands.

Boreal Chickadees feed principally on tree-inhabiting spiders, insects, pupae and eggs. They tend to be omnivorous and opportunistic supplementing this insectivorous diet with conifer seeds and occasionally fruit. Most of the foraging takes place in the middle and upper forest canopy.

Like most chickadees, the Boreal Chickadee hides food regularly. Such storage is probably vital for winter survival in the harsh boreal environment. An analysis of the items a Boreal Chickadee cached found that the only seeds stored were those of spruce trees. Most of the stashed items were insect larvae.

During winter Boreal Chickadees usually form flocks of 4-8 birds but, will sometimes remain as a pair or an individual. These flocks sometimes combine with Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Golden-crowned Kinglets during winter months.

Little is known about the conservation status of the Boreal Chickadee. The populations in most areas are considered stable and unthreatened. It has been hypothesized that the species' ability to use young forests, without being completely restricted to mature forests, has made it less vulnerable to some of the negative impacts of logging in boreal forests. Availability of old growth spruce may be critical to winter survival of local populations. These mature habitats are under increased pressure from logging. In eastern regions of the Boreal Chickadee's range "salvage-cutting" of budworm damaged forests has reduced much of the suitable habitat for the species. Relatively few studies have been done on the Boreal Chickadee and active monitoring of its different populations will be necessary to adequately assess the negative impacts of increasing habitat loss.

I photographed this Boreal Chickadee in the boreal forest located near Sax, Minnesota on December 26, 2008.

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