



Farm Security - "Treat it Seriously"

Security for Animal Agriculture: Producer Response to Suspicious Animal Diseases and Unauthorized Activity

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If there is a suspicion 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 quickly and forthrightly 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.

Who regulates animal disease?

The Office of the Virginia State Veterinarian is the immediate authority in regulating animal disease in the state. By administering veterinary medical regulatory programs, this office works to protect domestic animals and poultry from contagious and infectious diseases. This office has regulatory authority to enforce regulations and quarantines as the mechanism 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 branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the Virginia State Veterinarian use to regulate animal disease. Most veterinarians who deal with livestock and poultry in Virginia are accredited veterinarians. This means that they have been trained and have entered into an agreement with USDA and the Office of the Virginia State Veterinarian concerning animal disease regulation. In this capacity they perform such tasks as issuing health certificates and testing animals

for regulated diseases (historically Tuberculosis and Brucellosis). Accredited veterinarians, since they regularly visit farms as part of their private veterinary practice activities, serve as a first line of defense against the introduction of animal disease that would be propagated as an act of agroterrorism.

Who should a producer contact if there is a concern about suspicious animal diseases or activity relating to animal health?

The state veterinarian's office should be contacted if there is any suspicion that a foreign or other reportable animal disease is present on an operation or that any activity has occurred which 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 concerning 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.

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2. Contacting a Regional Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

These laboratories are located strategically throughout Virginia to allow access by producers and veterinarians. They are equipped with diagnostic facilities that allow the processing of dead animals for diagnosis as well as performing a number of tests on tissues and blood. These buildings also house the divisions of the Office of Veterinary Services that regulate animal disease in Virginia. Listed below are the addresses and phone numbers of the five regional laboratories.

Wytheville Laboratory

250 Cassel Road
Wytheville, VA 24382
Phone: 276.228.5501
FAX: 276.223.1961

Warrenton Laboratory

272 Academy Hill Road
Warrenton, VA 20186
Phone: 540.347.6385
Fax: 540.347.6404

Lynchburg Laboratory

4832 Tyreeanna Road
Lynchburg, VA 24504
Phone: 434.947.2518
Fax: 434.947.2577

Ivor Laboratory

34591 General Mahone
Boulevard
Ivor, VA 23866
Phone: 757.859.6221
Fax: 757.859.6428

Harrisonburg Laboratory

116 Reservoir Street,
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Phone: 540.434.3897
Fax: 540.434.3880

3. Contacting the Office of the Virginia State Veterinarian directly.

The office can be contacted at 804-786-2481.

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

At least 4 activities will occur if a foreign animal disease is introduced into Virginia:

- 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.], 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 Virginia's animal agriculture.

