

RESOLUTION #6—2017
Regular Annual Session

Submitted by —
National Association of Federal Veterinarians

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEDERAL VETERINARIANS IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) supports the recruitment and retention of veterinarians in the Federal Government to build a veterinary emergency response surge capacity. Further, the AVMA supports providing veterinary specialty and board certification pay for federal veterinarians, as well as recruitment and retention incentives to address this need.

Statement about the Resolution

Federal veterinarians (Supervisory Public Health Veterinarians (SPHVs) and Veterinary Medical Officers (VMOs)) are actively involved in responding to all types of emergency situations including catastrophes, human and animal epidemics, terrorist attacks, etc. Most importantly, veterinarians lead emergency response efforts when preventing and detecting the introduction of foreign animal/border/ and emerging diseases and responding to outbreaks when these occur. SPHVs also protect the nation's food supply every day by overseeing a network of inspection activities.

VMOs develop policies, strategies, and activities for effective coordination of incident management directed at rapid response capabilities. VMO's operate the nation's repository of vaccines, personnel protective equipment, and other critical veterinary supplies, equipment, and services for providing resources within 24-hours for state and local emergency response teams in the fight against dangerous animal diseases.

In addition, VMOs and SPHV's constantly strive through research and analysis to improve information systems, field investigation methods, laboratory networks and quality controls, risk and threat analysis and mitigation, provisions of vaccines and treatments, and rapid responses to health emergencies, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises.

When zoonotic diseases strike any given geographical location, animal health and public health veterinary professionals are the first source of informed opinion on veterinary issues for governments, veterinary surgeons, the media, civil society organizations and charities, action and consumer groups, and the public. The most recent outbreak in the US includes highly pathogenic avian influenza and new world screwworm, disastrous diseases for the livestock and poultry industries and, in some cases, significance to human health.

Veterinary professionals have knowledge and experience with biosecurity, and for that reason are essential partners in outbreak biosecurity. Current movement and animal trade practices dictate that conventional natural barriers cannot be relied upon to stop the dissemination of diseases and pests from country to country, or domestically.

In this view, the public health (VMO and SPHV) veterinarians and private practice veterinarians are sentinels for the early detection of, and a key player in the early response to, accidental or deliberate introduction of foreign and emerging diseases. Veterinarians are a key line of defense that society counts on against agro-terrorism and bioterrorism. Veterinary professionals are key

players in biodefense, and for national security, food safety and security, and animal/ human welfare.

It has long been recognized that early and rapid response to animal diseases is critical, especially in the case of those diseases with the potential to result in an animal and/or human epidemic. This rapid response requires a well-staffed and well-trained veterinary workforce.

In reality, the USDA veterinary workforce is not robust enough to adequately respond to major animal disease outbreaks and the severe repercussions of that event. Most specialists do not question “if” a major animal disease outbreak will happen, but rather “when” that will occur. Current funding is not adequate to maintain a viable well-trained veterinary response workforce. Targeted pay incentives are needed to encourage veterinarians to join and remain federal animal health responders.

Financial Impact:

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #5	House of Delegates
Recommend Approval		X		
Recommend Disapproval				
Recommend Referral to...				
No Recommendation				
Recommend Postpone Indefinitely				
(use this space for additional narrative, if needed)				