Table Top Exercise: Exotic Newcastle Disease

PARTICIPANT BOOKLET

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Local Preparedness and Response for Animal Disease Emergencies

2008
Preparing for an animal disease emergency involves assessment of local vulnerabilities and assets as well as determining the personnel and resources needed to protect, respond to and recover from the incident and the roles and responsibilities they may have during an incident. This exercise was designed to assist local communities in testing their local response plan and local capabilities for the response to and recovery from an animal disease emergency.

This tabletop exercise is designed to stimulate communication among local stakeholders regarding the assets, vulnerabilities and response resources including personnel, skill sets, equipment and supplies, in the community and county. The objectives of this tabletop include:

1. Understanding the response activities needed for an animal disease emergency.
2. Identifying the current resources available at the local level to assist and support a response.
3. Determine personnel and agencies roles and responsibilities when assisting and supporting an animal disease response.
4. Identify critical local assets that may be impacted by an animal disease emergency.

Using the information learned from this tabletop exercise, local response plans should be adapted for a timely and effective response.

Introduction
Animal agriculture is an essential component of Iowa’s economy. The impact of an animal disease emergency or outbreak in livestock could be devastating. Preparedness is essential for the prevention and control of such an event in Iowa, to protect animal health, our economy and possibly human health. Response to such a situation will require interaction between local, state and often federal agencies and personnel.

Exotic Newcastle Disease, or END, is a highly contagious viral disease that affects birds; chickens are particularly susceptible and may die suddenly. The disease is considered a major concern as an animal disease emergency because it can spread quickly and cause great production losses in affected animals. Detection of the disease may result in severe economic impacts from the loss of birds to embargos and trade restrictions. In efforts to control the spread of disease, affected and exposed birds will need to be depopulated, and properly disposed; the premises will also need to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Any persons, vehicles, equipment, etc. allowed onto the farm must be cleaned and decontaminated before being allowed to leave the premises; again this is to reduce the risk of further spread of this highly contagious disease. More information on Exotic Newcastle Disease can be found in the FastFact at the end of this document.
Scenario: Part One.
A veterinarian in your county is seeing her last appointment of the day. Her patient is a dog that was brought in for its annual exam and vaccinations. In the middle of the appointment, the owner asks the vet what she knows about chickens. Puzzled by the question, the veterinarian asks why he’s interested. Apparently, this client recently started raising free-range chickens to produce eggs. He sells the eggs at the local farmer’s market every Saturday, and he’s concerned because the last day or two, his chickens haven’t produced many eggs. In fact, a couple of his chickens don’t look very good at all. The veterinarian asks a few more questions about the hens and finds out that the chickens have access to a hen house and roost at night but are out and about during the day. When she asks about the source of the birds, the owner says he purchased them at a swap meet, where various species of birds and other animals were being sold.

The veterinarian explains that she isn’t a poultry specialist, so she calls the Iowa State University extension poultry veterinarian to get his input. She explains what her client has told her, and based on this information, he wants to examine the flock. The veterinarian discusses this with the owner, and they decide to all meet up at the client’s place in the morning.

By the time the veterinarians arrive to examine the chickens, the owner has already lost two birds and several others don’t look good. The ISU veterinarian observes the chickens and is concerned over what he sees—lethargy and respiratory signs. He explains that the birds could have a few different diseases, with Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza being of most concern. He calls the Area Veterinarian In Charge (AVIC) for input.

The AVIC contacts the State Veterinarian and they concur the farm should be investigated. Within a couple hours, the regional Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) arrives at the house. Because HPAI and END can affect people (it is a zoonotic disease), the VMO and ISU veterinarian put on appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before examining the birds. The VMO is also trained as a Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD), and he collects tissue samples for diagnosis. The veterinarians then disinfect their gear and dispose of the materials appropriately. The VMO leaves to take the samples to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames.

QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS:
While the diagnosis is pending, the following are some questions your county should be prepared to answer:

- At this stage of the response, what is your role in the situation? What information would you want to know?
- What methods of communication exist within your county? Do these need to be updated or improved in any way?
- If END is diagnosed, veterinarians, poultry producers, processing plants, feed suppliers, etc. will need to be contacted. Does your county have an efficient way of locating and contacting these people?
- Does this situation warrant activation of the county or state Emergency Operations Center (EOC)? Where will your EOC be located? Who should report to the EOC?
Scenario: Part Two
The next day, NVSL reports a (presumptive) positive for END (a high consequence disease) in the chickens. The State Veterinarian requests activation of the Emergency Response Plan and quarantines the hens. State and Federal officials are arriving in the county to assist in this response. Some response duties (see attached information on NAHEMS) will include disease surveillance and depopulation and disposal of animals within specific areas. Officials will also be working with the owner to locate the swap meet and identify and locate any other potentially infected birds from that facility in Iowa and other states.

QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS: (30 minutes)
• Please discuss amongst yourselves the Incident Command System and discuss/designate potential roles for the people involved.
• Based on your training, which operational role could you assists with? What actions would you take to address that role?
• What resources would you need to perform that role? What additional local resources would your request at this time?
• What are your primary safety concerns for you or your personnel?
• How will you communicate with other responders and members of your community in this situation?
• Given the seriousness of the situation, the county and state will be swamped by questions from the public and media.
  o Would a local public information officer be identified at this point? Who would it be? How would this be decided?
  o Does the PIO have a way to communicate with state information officers for assistance and establishment of clear, consistent messages?
  o What is the current plan or strategy for providing information to the media and the public?
• How will your county handle the influx of responders, media, and volunteers?
  o What resources will be needed to accommodate these volunteers?
  o What resources and supplies does your county have for the response activities? What resources and supplies does your county have for the responders (e.g., lodging, food), if needed?
• What agencies (local, state, federal), do you anticipate you will be working with?
• Given the potential severity of this disease, its likely many animals will be euthanized.
  o Where will the carcasses be disposed? (It’s likely the Department of Natural Resources will get involved to assist in wildlife management and help find a suitable location for carcass disposal).
  o If not mentioned previously: What equipment does your county need for proper disposal?
  o If not mentioned previously: Where will your county acquire this equipment?
QUESTIONS FOR SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDER GROUPS TO DISCUSS: (30 minutes)

Local Government Officials
• Do you know how to request and process a local emergency declaration?
• What capabilities does your office have to answer the inquiries and concerned calls from the public? Do you have a plan in place to address this?
• What resources or supplies could you provide to help with the response?
• What are your most significant challenges and concerns?
• What are your short and long term needs and concerns for your community for response to and recovery from an animal disease emergency?

Local Businesses
• What impacts could an END outbreak have on your business? Your customers?
• Will you be able to continue your normal work routine?
• What resources or supplies could you provide to help with the response?
• Do you have a business continuity plan, in the event of disruption of your business?
• What are your most significant challenges and concerns?
• What are your short and long term needs and concerns for your community for response to and recovery from an animal disease emergency?

Agricultural Industry
• What efforts can you make to educate those in the livestock industry (veterinarians, producers, processors, sale barns, etc.) on recognizing, reporting, and preventing the spread of END?
• Do you have emergency response plan for your premises that addresses animal disease emergencies??
• What resources or supplies could you provide to help with the response?
• What are your most significant challenges and concerns?
• What are your short and long term needs and concerns for your community for response to and recovery from an animal disease emergency?

Emergency Responders
• What would be your role for an animal disease emergency response?
• How will you coordinate the potentially large influx of volunteers and resources during the response?
• What safety issues do you anticipate?
• What resources or supplies could you provide to help with the response?
• What are your most significant challenges and concerns?
• What are your short and long term needs and concerns for your community for response to and recovery from an animal disease emergency?

General Public
• What impact could an END outbreak have on your family? Your work?
• What resources or supplies could you provide to help with the response?
• What are your most significant challenges and concerns?
Scenario: Part Three (two weeks later)
A quarantine and surveillance zone was established around the chicken owner’s house. As of now, no other END cases have been found in the area or within Iowa. Officials are still attempting to trace all contacts and birds that may have been at the swap meet attended by the owner, and all poultry operations are under strict supervision. Generally, the consequences have been minimal, and all involved are feeling quite relieved considering the circumstances.

QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS (15 minutes)
- What do you anticipate could be the most challenging part of the recovery process?
- What resources in your county are available to help the community recover from this event, both economically and mentally?
- What long-term effects could this outbreak have on your community? On Iowa?

What if the diagnosis had been HPAI instead of END? HPAI is highly contagious and causes severe disease in people. It’s possible this situation could have been much worse, affecting many more states.
- How would your county handle a larger, more long-term animal health emergency?
- What additional resources would you anticipate that your county would need?
- Do you think your county could rebound from such an event and continue with “life as usual”?

HOTWASH QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS AT END OF EXERCISE:
- What parts of the response do you think your county is well-prepared for?
- What will be your county’s biggest challenges during a response?
- What deficiencies exist in training and information?
- What resources would benefit your county in preparation for an animal health emergency?