Table Top Exercise: Foot and Mouth 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.

Foot and Mouth Disease, or FMD, is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed (two-toed) animals. This includes cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, deer, and others; FMD does not affect horses, dogs, or cats. FMD is not considered a public health risk. The disease is considered one of the top diseases of concern for an animal disease emergency because it can spread quickly and cause great production losses in affected animals. Detection of the disease in any country also initiates economic impacts from the embargos and trade restrictions that would occur. In efforts to control the spread of disease, affected and exposed animals 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 Foot and Mouth Disease can be found in the FastFact at the end of this document.
Scenario: Part One.
A local veterinarian in your county is finishing up her morning calls. Upon arriving at her last farm of the morning, the veterinarian is anxiously greeted by her client. One of his pigs is limping and a couple others in the group aren’t eating well. This producer runs a finishing operation, and this group of pigs just arrived from another state a few days ago. Currently these pigs are in a smaller barn, away from the majority of his herd. The veterinarian and farmer head over to see the pigs. It’s easy to find the limping one, and the vet hops into the pen to get a closer look. She can see a blister on one of the pig’s front legs, just above the hoof. She looks at the snout and mouth and can see another blister forming on the tongue. Although there are several causes for this type of a lesion in pigs, the veterinarian wants to rule-out the possibility of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD). She calls the State Veterinarian immediately.

Within a couple hours, the State District Veterinarian arrives on the farm. In the meantime, the veterinarian and producer have found one more pig in the group with similar lesions. Because the VMO is also trained as a Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD), he examines the pigs and collects tissue samples. He then makes arrangements for the samples to be delivered to the USDA’s Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (Plum Island) for diagnosis. After talking with the State Veterinarian (and Federal Area Veterinarian In Charge [AVIC]), the District Veterinarian asks the producer to stop the movement of any pigs on or off the premises and requests that he not visit other farms until more information (i.e., diagnosis) is determined. He also recommends that the producer designate someone else in his family to care for the remainder (healthy portion) of his herd, until results are received. As a precaution, the local veterinarian is also asked to thoroughly disinfect her equipment, including her truck and asked not to make any more farm calls until a diagnosis has been made.

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 FMD is diagnosed, veterinarians, farmers, livestock sale facilities, 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, Plum Island reports a presumptive positive for FMD in the pigs. The State Veterinarian quarantines the farm. Members of the Iowa Veterinary Rapid Response Team have been called in to assist with disease control efforts. The State Veterinarian contacts the County Emergency Manager and requests additional local assistance with necessary response measures. These will include establishment of a quarantine zone (6.2 miles around the affected farm), traffic control measures at determined entry points of the quarantine zone, establishment of a cleaning and disinfection line at the Contact Premise, disposal of animal carcasses (following
depopulation by designated veterinarians), cleaning and disinfection of the premises following depopulation, medical assistance for responder personnel, mental health support for the producer, his family and possibly the responders, and dissemination of information to your community. An Incident Command Structure will be established to coordinate the response personnel. State officials will also be working with the producer to locate the source of these pigs and identify and locate any other potentially infected animals from that facility in Iowa and other states. Maps of the area may be needed.

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 assist 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 FMD 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 place?
- 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 FMD?
- 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 FMD 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)
Fortunately, the source of FMD in the pigs was limited to one facility in the neighboring state. State and Federal officials are still working with them to track all recent shipments, but so far only Iowa and the state of origin have diagnosed animals with FMD. Three farms in your county were required to depopulate their animals, as well as two others in bordering counties. Generally, the response efforts in your community are running smoothly.

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?

Because FMD is highly contagious, it’s possible this situation could have been much worse, affecting many more farms and counties.
- 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?