

Building Multi-agency Response Capacity to Emergent or Bioterrorism-related Zoonotic Disease Outbreaks in Georgia



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Background

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) routinely conducts surveillance for notifiable zoonotic diseases, including those that are emergent or agents of bioterrorism. DPH and the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) collaborate whenever sporadic cases of notifiable zoonotic diseases are identified in humans or animals to ensure appropriate case management and disease containment. While responses to these cases have been efficiently managed, DPH and GDA identified the need to develop a coordinated multi-agency response strategy for zoonotic disease outbreaks (naturally occurring or man-made) to include public health, agriculture, veterinary professionals, and emergency management partners.

Methods

- In July 2013, DPH and stakeholders (GDA, Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA), Georgia Veterinary Medical Association (GVMA), and others) began collaboration through a series of meetings sponsored by the Georgia Health Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) to determine agency response actions and educational needs for the animal health/veterinary community following the detection of a zoonotic disease outbreak
- A Zoonotic Disease Outbreak Response Plan was authored by stakeholders wherein protocols for interagency notification/communication, laboratory testing and data/information sharing were developed
- The companion animal veterinary community was engaged through educational seminars and an outbreak notification/communication drill which directed participants to call the DPH Surge for Public Health Emergency Response (SuPHER) hotline to receive information and instructions in response to a notional zoonotic disease outbreak
- A multi-agency tabletop exercise was conducted in July 2014 to test the Zoonotic Disease Outbreak Response Plan, identify gaps and discuss next steps

Results

- Approximately 130 veterinarians attended the 2013 GVMA Fall Convention “Biological/Biosecurity Planning and Response: The Veterinarian is Critical” breakout sessions on November 9, 2013
- 26 veterinarians participated in the GEMA-sponsored Companion Animal Decontamination Training held at the University of Georgia on May 31, 2014
- A multi-agency Zoonotic Disease Outbreak Plan draft was completed in June 2014
- 582 companion animal veterinarians participated in the SuPHER hotline zoonotic disease outbreak notification/communication drill on July 10, 2014; 89% of post-exercise survey respondents indicated the hotline was an effective information sharing tool
- A one-day zoonotic disease outbreak tabletop (TTx) exercise for HSAC members and animal/human health stakeholders was conducted July 22, 2014; 70 persons attended representing 27 organizations

Conclusions

- Georgia’s novel approach to engage animal health professionals in zoonotic disease outbreak planning and response resulted in formalized interagency notification and communication protocols and identified state and federal animal laboratory testing facilities that may be called upon during a response
- Multi-agency planning and engaging veterinary clinicians are critical for response to MANY situations such as natural disasters, zoonotic disease outbreaks (HPAI, H3N2v swine influenza, pandemic influenza, bioterrorism), and radiological events, etc.
- This effort facilitated an efficient and timely real-world response to Ebola Virus Disease in the Fall of 2014 and has been tremendously valuable for the multi-agency planning activities currently ongoing for highly pathogenic avian influenza

Figure 1. GVMA Fall Conference Preparedness Session to educate/engage veterinary clinicians

2013 GVMA Fall Conference			
	Respiratory <i>Lesley King, MVB, DACVECC, DACVIM</i>	Vector Borne Diseases <i>Lash Cohn, DVM, PhD, DACVIM</i>	Typical or Terrorism? What's a veterinarian to do before, during and after?
8 - 9:40 am	Pulmonary edema symptoms: why does it occur, and how best to treat it	The increasingly complicated story of ehrlichiosis	Veterinary basic disaster life support for biological events – <i>Ed Rolter</i>
10:20 am - noon	Managing pleural space disease: a case-based approach	Cytauxzoonosis urinary tract infection	BioWatch: A bio-surveillance system for Georgia – <i>Paul Williams, DVM</i>
Noon - 1:30 pm	LUNCH IN EXHIBIT HALL		
1:30 - 3:10 pm	Behavior <i>Lynne Seibert, BS, DVM, MS, PhD, DACVB</i> Successful behavior modification techniques	Other vector transmitted infections of regional relevance	Emergency and critical care in disaster events – <i>Tim Crowe, DVM DACVS, DACVECC</i>
3:20 - 4:10 pm	Case discussions of anxiety conditions	Pathogens of CIRDC: more than bordetella	Nuclear and radiological incidents: if Georgia has a Fukushima – <i>Cham Dallas, PhD</i>

Figure 2. Companion animal decontamination training for veterinary professionals at the University of Georgia, May 2014



Figure 3. Multi-agency zoonotic disease outbreak TTx participants

Federal	State	Local	Private/University
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Georgia Department of Public Health	5 Metro Atlanta Local/County Public Health Jurisdictions	Georgia Veterinary Medical Association
U.S. Department of Agriculture – APHIS	Georgia Department of Agriculture	Atlanta-Fulton Co. EMA	University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services	Georgia Emergency Management Agency	Wellstar Health System	Fort Valley State University
Dept. of Homeland Security – Office of Health Affairs	Georgia Poison Center	Grady Health System	Emory University/Yerkes National Primate Research Center
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	Veterinary Clinicians	Georgia Veterinary Medical Reserve Corps

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