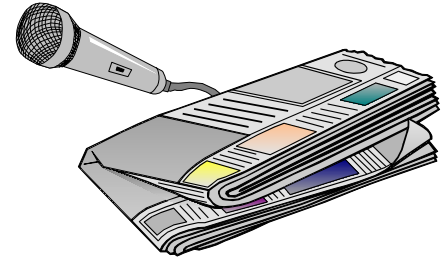




Agriculture Home Economics 4-H

GLENN COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION NEWS FLASH



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Preparing For An Outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease - How You Can Help

Extension Notes by Barbara Reed

According to University of California Farm Advisor Barbara Reed, dairy producers in the region will be contacted this spring by the Center for Animal Disease Modeling and Surveillance (CADMS) in the School of Veterinary Medicine, at the University of California, Davis and asked to participate in a survey. The survey will gather information to help develop the best strategies for dealing with an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease should it ever occur in California. Advisor Reed urges producers to participate in the survey because the information they contribute might one day save their own farm in the event of a contagious disease outbreak. It really won't take producers long to fill out this questionnaire, and it is critical to get all livestock producers to fill out the questionnaires in order to be able to have the best model. This will bring increased safety and security to the livestock industry.

In 2001 an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in the UK resulted in catastrophic economic losses exceeding \$15 billion, including nearly \$1 billion to livestock producers. Because of the epidemic at least 6 million animals were slaughtered. Any outbreak of FMD in the US today where the density of livestock animals is high would likely be as devastating as the one that hit the UK in 2001. The last outbreak of FMD in the US occurred in 1929, therefore specific information on virus transmission and factors that could contribute to its spread through

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current livestock practices in the US are not available for use in creation of strategic plans. Computer models can predict how an FMD epidemic would unfold in a livestock region for which information are available regarding husbandry practices.

In 1998, researchers from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the Center for Animal Disease Modeling and Surveillance (CADMS) in the School of Veterinary Medicine, at the University of California, Davis created a simulation model designed to characterize the size and duration of an FMD epidemic in the Kings, Tulare and Fresno counties of California, which are known for their intensive livestock practices. The model can be used to assess the merit of various strategies to minimize potential FMD outbreaks.

Last November, CADMS along with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) carried out a joint exercise that examined the rapid response team actions and inter-agency coordination at an incident command post during a hypothetical FMD outbreak in Tulare, California. They used the model as a tool to predict how best to contain the outbreak.

According to researchers, "the exercise made it very clear that knowing the precise locations of livestock and the movements of animals, vehicles and people on and off the farm are critical in order to be able to predict where the disease will spread, and the magnitude of the outbreak. The accuracy of this information is what limits the success at which the impact of various alternative control measures can be predicted". Now there are new plans in the works to expand the original model to encompass all of California and ultimately within the next couple of years to a national level.

CADMS is collecting information from other states as it becomes available and already has some information from Texas, Iowa, Pennsylvania and Michigan. In order to obtain the necessary information for the model about livestock operations in California, questionnaires will be sent to livestock producers throughout the state.

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The current project is backed by CDFA and USDA as well as the Department of Homeland Security. According to CADMS analysts Ricardo Ertze and Rui Lopes who have been working to create the new questionnaires, producers can expect to receive the surveys in the mail sometime in March. Producers can be assured that all information is confidential and will only be used for modeling purposes. The bottom line is to develop a model that will provide the best and most effective strategies for protecting California's dairy economy and producers' livelihood, should an outbreak of FMD occur.

Ricardo Ertze and Rui Lopes know that their best chance of being able to do that is by having the most accurate and up-to-dated information possible". Anyone who has any questions about the questionnaire or project in general should call CADMS (530) 297-4621.

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