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Animal health experts offer perspectives on future disease preparedness during NASDA Annual Meeting

INDIANAPOLIS – At today’s National Association of State Departments of Agriculture 2024 [Annual Meeting](#), the Animal Agriculture Policy Committee hosted a panel focusing on recent outbreaks of H5 influenza in poultry and dairy populations and its impacts on “secure” plans for the livestock sector.

Serving as panelists were Dr. Danelle Bickett-Weddle, veterinary and public health consultant and Preventalytics owner, Dr. Jim Roth, Clarence Hartley Covault Distinguished Professor at Iowa State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, and Dr. Carol Cardona, Pomeroy Chair in Avian Health at University of Minnesota’s College of Veterinary Medicine.

Panelists discussed current efforts to safeguard the animal agriculture industry against foreign and emerging animal disease threats. As H5 influenza continues to pose a threat to animal health in a few species, panelists discussed how the livestock sector is working toward strengthening biosecurity and sustainability measures and enhancing collaboration among state and federal agencies, industry stakeholders and farmers. NASDA spoke with the participants on the topic of their panel.

“H5 influenza viruses have spread across the globe and now the U.S. where they have become endemic in wild bird populations,” Cardona said. “Annual incursions of the virus into domestic animals are likely to continue because there is a continuous source from this reservoir. Animal production systems need to live with a constant threat and prevent infections and maintain reliable protein sources for the consumer. That’s where the Secure Supply plans can help.”

Current and previous outbreaks underscore the need for robust and adaptable secure plans to mitigate the spread of disease and minimize supply chain disruptions. The panel discussed the need for strengthening biosecurity methods and enhancing producer awareness. Roth emphasized the threat to swine populations and the need for the Secure Pork Supply plan in the event of the current H5 influenza mutating to infect swine populations.

“Swine are commonly infected with influenza,” Roth said. “Commercial swine producers and swine veterinarians are very aware of the H5 influenza in poultry and dairy cows and are monitoring swine to ensure that they are not infected and to be prepared to respond quickly. The biosecurity and surveillance developed for the Secure Pork Supply plan could be very useful in the event of the H5 influenza virus moving into pigs.”

Another focus for the panelists was how to best assist affected producers with recovery, resources and federal support for those operations still recovering.

“When H5 influenza was diagnosed in dairy cattle, the enhanced biosecurity resources from the Secure Milk Supply Plan were promoted as prevention practices,” Bickett-Weddle said. “While SMS was developed for foot-and-mouth disease, the concepts of stopping exposure through cattle, people and vehicle movements apply to H5. Dairy producers can apply for federal funds to develop plans and train on biosecurity. Changing systems is not always easy when faced with new challenges – that is why support for farmers is critical.”



By learning from previous outbreaks and taking steps to enhance biosecurity, improve coordination and support farmers and ranchers, the U.S. agriculture industry can better prepare for and respond to future HPAI and other disease threats. NASDA will continue to engage with industry partners, federal government agencies and farmers to ensure the resilience of secure plans and the long-term health of the animal agriculture sector.

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