

Workshop on mass animal mortality attracts 70 to Austin

More than 70 scientists, policymakers, regulators and industry representatives gathered on Nov. 13-14 in Austin, Texas, for a FAZD Center workshop that focused on the potential problems caused by mass animal mortality in the event of a regional catastrophe.

The event was designed to build upon a similar FAZD Center workshop held in California in 2005. The Austin workshop dealt with the science, policy and environmental impact of proper mass mortality disposal caused by natural, accidental, or man-made disasters affecting the beef, dairy, swine, sheep, equine, goat, and poultry industry. It brought together federal and state regulatory and environmental authorities, county and state emergency management professionals, university and private scientific communities, livestock and poultry producers, feeding industry representatives, and commodity organizations in evaluating, improving, and preparing for an animal related crisis of mass mortality.

Dr. Andy Vestal, professor and extension specialist with Texas Cooperative Extension at Texas A&M University, and a principle investigator at the FAZD Center, managed organization of the event. Participants were presented with two objectives:

- Review current science and policy

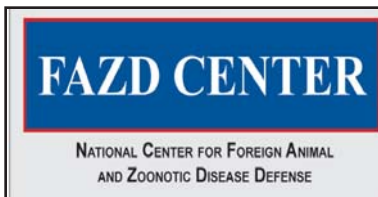


Dr. Floron Faries, a principle investigator with the FAZD Center, leads a breakout session on public awareness during a crisis.

and identify future best practices for proper meta-disposal of mass animal mortality.

- Develop plans and initiatives that will enable them to confidently dispose of mass animal mortality in the event of a natural, accidental, or man-made disaster. Their work will soon result in three deliverables:

- A comprehensive list of interacting policies of the different agencies at federal, state and local levels that contribute to uncertainty, confusion or pose insurmountable obstacles to carcass disposal.
- An emergency action plan, including a decision tree, to tell producers where to go for answers on handling of disposal in specific circumstances and to identify options for disposal that are available and the consequences of each option based on production sector and size.
- A guide to communicating with the public about mass animal mortality.



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Response

USDA's O'Brien offers three keys to prepare for mass animal mortality



Dr. Bethany O'Brien addresses closing session of workshop

Only 1 percent of emergencies are designated for the federal government to handle, Dr. Bethany O'Brien of USDA/APHIS reminded participants during a FAZD Center Nov. 13-14 workshop in Austin.

And that's why leaders at state, local and industry levels must be prepared to address mass mortality among livestock.

Dr. O'Brien, senior staff veterinarian for the National Center for Animal Health Emergency Management, addressed the closing session of the FAZD Center's Emergency Management of Mass Animal Mortality workshop. To prepare for catastrophe, she suggested planners focus on three key items.

1. Identify who is in charge.
2. Identify the players and make a list of their roles.
3. Define key terms to make sure you are all speaking the same language.

Every catastrophe presents a different set of problems, Dr. O'Brien said. "But the good news is that the approaches to solving those problems tends to be very consistent," she said.

Education

FAZD Center leadership attends DHS Scholars and Fellows event

Leadership from the FAZD Center took part in the two-day 2006 DHS Scholars and Fellows Orientation event at the Hyatt Regency in Washington, D.C. during November. The event is produced annually by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T).

The meeting provides

a career fair, an internship fair and an informal networking session to familiarize undergraduates and graduate students who are part of the DHS Scholars and Fellows Program with the DHS Centers of Excellence (COEs) and the national laboratories. The second-day of the event provides a series of breakout sessions with leaders from the COEs, the national laboratories and other DHS agencies and facilities.

Dr. Neville P. Clarke, director, and Dr. Thomas Powdrill, assistant director for external affairs, represented the FAZD Center at the meeting. The DHS awarded 103 new scholarships and fellowships to high-performing undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics that are critical to the the department's mission.

Online

Website now offers guide to FAZD Center investigators

The FAZD Center's website now includes an online guide to the Center's investigators, including links to biographical briefs, contact information and published research. Information on the investigators is divided by the FAZD Center's thematic categories: Biological Systems, IMA (Information, Modeling and Analysis), and Education and Outreach. The guide's address is: <http://fazd.tamu.edu/team/primary-investigators> . Recent publications by FAZD Center investigators include:

- Dr. Tim E. Carpenter, University of California, Davis, "Spatial distribution of foot-and-mouth disease in Pakistan estimated using imperfect data," Preventive Veterinary Medicine.
- Dr. C.J. Peters, University of Texas Medical Branch, "NSm and 78-kilodalton proteins of Rift Valley fever virus are nonessential for viral replication in cell culture," Journal of Virology.
- Dr. Garry Adams, Texas A&M University, "Evaluation of novel Brucella melitensis unmarked deletion mutants for safety and efficacy in the goat model of brucellosis," Vaccine.
- Dr. Carol J. Cardona, University of California, Davis, "Persistence of immunity in commercial egg-laying hens following vaccination with a killed H6N2 avian influenza vaccine," Avian Disease.

The FAZD Center
 1500 Research Parkway, Suite 100A,
 College Station, TX 77843-2129
 Phone: 979.845.2855 Web: fazd.tamu.edu
 News media: Rusty Cawley,
 (469) 338-9478, rcawley@vprmail.tamu.edu