

NEWS FROM THE FAZD CENTER

May 2007 | Vol. 2, No. 1

FAZD Center investigator to receive \$200,000 in funding

Dr. C.J. Peters, a principal investigator with the FAZD Center, will receive \$200,000 in funding to study Rift Valley Fever in Kenya through the Department of Homeland Security's Centers of Excellence International Proposals competition. Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is a mosquito-borne viral disease of sub-Saharan Africa recognized as a major foreign animal disease threat by USDA,



APHIS, the National Science and Technology Council Subcommittee on Foreign Animal Disease Threats, and OIE. Dr. Peters is a professor in the Departments of Pathology and Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Texas Medical Branch, a FAZD Center core partner.

Public radio program broadcasts interview with FAZD Center director

The April 10 broadcast of the public radio program "Homeland Security Inside & Out" featured an interview with **Dr. Neville P. Clarke**, director of the FAZD Center. "Homeland Security Inside & Out" is a weekly program airing in Washington, D.C., and in College Station, Texas. In this interview, Dr. Clarke discussed the consequences of an outbreak of avian influenza, and how the FAZD Center generates products to reduce the risk of H5N1. To listen to the audio of the interview, visit <http://fazd.tamu.edu/audio-files>.



Dr. Jason Cleere of Texas A&M introduces workshop participants to animal diseases that are exotic to the United States or are transmitted from animals to humans. (Photo by Jean Wulfson, digital imaging specialist, Office of the Vice President for Research, Texas A&M University)

Workshop trains communicators to work with news media during outbreaks of exotic animal disease

The FAZD Center sponsored a two-day "train the trainer" workshop how to handle risk communications during an outbreak of an animal disease that threatens the public health or the economy. Twenty-eight communicators participated in the April workshop, representing Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, Ohio State University, Iowa State University, Purdue University, Kansas State University, the University of Arizona and the University of Georgia. The workshop was held April 24-25 at the La Salle Hotel in downtown Bryan, Texas, near Texas A&M.



*Products to reduce the risk
of engineered and exotic animal diseases
to America's health and economy*



Vinayak Brahmakshatriya of the FAZD Center (left) accepts his award from DHS Science and Technology Director of Research **Dr. Starnes Walker**. (Photo courtesy of DHS Student & Alumni Network.)

Texas A&M student wins first place in University Network poster contest

Texas A&M University graduate student **Vinayak Brahmakshatriya** won first place in the student poster contest held during first DHS University Network Summit on Research and Education, March 15-16, in Washington, D.C. Brahmakshatriya's winning entry was titled "Evaluation in Chickens of a Live Attenuated NS1 Mutant Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) Vaccine." Brahmakshatriya represented the FAZD Center.

S&T Conference to include presentations, demonstrations from FAZD Center team

The FAZD Center will take part in the 2007 Homeland Security Science & Technology Conference at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington D.C. on May 21-24. **Dr. Neville P. Clarke**, director of the FAZD Center, will join the other directors of the DHS Centers of

Excellence for a roundtable on May 22 at 2 p.m.. The roundtables will discuss the DHS University Network and the role each COE plays in supporting the DHS mission. In addition, FAZD Center graduate students will make presentations and display posters. **Vinayak Brahmakshatriya** will make an oral presentation. **Shannon Degenhart** and **Wei Huang** will present posters. All three are from Texas A&M University. The FAZD Center also will have a booth in the University Network exhibit in Exhibit Hall, where investigators will demonstrate key products.



Doug Watson remains concerned about the "engineering of AI strains that are more difficult to detect, more highly pathogenic, or more easily transmitted to humans." (Photo courtesy of DHS Student & Alumni Network.)

Product from former intern is featured in article about anti-bioterrorism research

Doug Watson, a 2006 intern with the FAZD Center, is featured in the May 2007 issue of the DHS Student & Alumni Network Newsletter. Watson, a bioengineering Ph.D. candidate at the University of California-San Francisco, believes the risk of malicious attempts to transmit Avian Influenza H5N1 can be reduced through rigorous disease surveillance of wild birds. He has developed an assay that he believes eventually could be modified to profile exposure to all AI subtypes in a single test.