

## Wildlife Services

Protecting People  
Protecting Agriculture  
Protecting Wildlife

## Factsheet

May 2014

# Wildlife Disease Surveillance and Emergency Response



Wildlife Services (WS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), provides Federal leadership and expertise in managing conflicts between people and wildlife to help protect the Nation's agricultural and natural resources, property and infrastructure, and public health and safety.

Through the National Wildlife Disease Program, WS supports the APHIS mission domestically and internationally via partnerships and cooperative projects with Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies.

**The National Wildlife Disease Program** assists Federal, Tribal, and State agencies, universities, and nongovernmental organizations in addressing wildlife diseases that may impact the public, U.S. livestock and poultry, or our Nation's natural resources. The goals of the program are to:

- Develop and implement a nationwide system to survey for wildlife diseases of agricultural and human health concern; and
- Strengthen APHIS' capacity to respond to a variety of emergencies, including natural disasters and disease outbreaks.

In working to meet these goals, the program has developed partnerships and cooperative projects with:

- APHIS programs, including Veterinary Services and International Services;
- Federal entities, including the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and
- The agriculture, health, and natural resources agencies for Canada, Mexico, and other nations.

The National Wildlife Disease Program's cooperative efforts emphasize sharing information and techniques, such as animal sampling, wildlife disease surveillance methods, and laboratory practices. When possible, the program also works to develop infrastructure—increasing available knowledge, techniques, and expertise—to respond not only to current, but also new and emerging animal diseases. WS wildlife disease biologists, working collaboratively with other Federal and State personnel, have primary

*Program biologists monitor feral swine for the presence of diseases that can affect livestock, people, and pets.*



responsibility for sample collection. Specifically, wildlife disease biologists:

- Collect, preserve, and ship biological samples from a variety of animal species according to guidelines established by USDA, the National Wildlife Disease Program, and diagnostic laboratories.
- Serve as liaisons in their State of responsibility among WS; APHIS Veterinary Services; State departments of health, agriculture, and natural resources; and other State, Tribal, and Federal agencies concerned with wildlife disease issues.
- Participate in WS disease control activities and assist State, Tribal, and other Federal agencies in achieving their disease control objectives.
- Respond to disease outbreaks and other emergencies requiring WS participation.

## Emergency Response

WS is also focused on strengthening its emergency preparedness and response efforts—especially in connection with the program’s activities to protect U.S. animal health and to address conflicts between people and wildlife.

The strategies for accomplishing the program’s emergency-related objectives include:

- Developing a more robust, nationally coordinated pest and disease surveillance system;
- Conducting disease surveillance activities at U.S. international borders to protect agriculture, wildlife, and people; and
- Establishing international partnerships to enhance border disease surveillance programs for both livestock and wildlife.

Within the National Wildlife Disease Program, a nationally coordinated surveillance and emergency response system (SERS) supports existing surveillance and monitoring activities; facilitates information sharing among involved partners; promotes the further development of laboratory infrastructure (such as personnel, equipment, and procedures); and responds to a variety of wildlife-related emergency requests from USDA, other Federal agencies, and States by coordinating and activating APHIS WS’ first responders.

Through SERS, program employees work closely with the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). NAHLN laboratories, which undergo an accreditation and validation process, provide support for routine diagnostic work and critical surge capacity for laboratory testing, a crucial service in large-scale animal disease outbreaks.

During emergencies, SERS works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local governments to formulate effective and efficient responses. Wildlife disease biologists are available to respond quickly and assist with disease outbreaks and other emergency activities that require their unique skills and abilities.

## International Activities

Neither wildlife, nor the diseases they carry, recognize international borders. Therefore, effective interagency and international coordination are both critically important to facilitate trade while continuing to protect U.S. wildlife and agricultural resources. The National Wildlife Disease Program works with numerous agencies and international partners to identify animal and public health threats outside U.S. borders and to reduce those threats at the source.

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## Current Diseases of Interest

Avian influenza  
Bluetongue disease  
Bovine tuberculosis  
Chronic wasting disease  
Classical swine fever  
Foot-and-mouth disease  
Leptospirosis  
Newcastle disease  
Plague  
Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome  
Pseudorabies  
Rabies  
Swine brucellosis  
Swine influenza  
Tularemia

## Learn More

For more information about wildlife diseases, contact any State APHIS-WS office, toll-free at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297). For the address and telephone number of State offices, call the WS Operational Support staff at (301) 851-4009, or visit the WS Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage).



**United States Department of Agriculture**

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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