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National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps:

You Can Make a Difference



When a large outbreak of a foreign animal disease occurs in the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Veterinary Services (VS) in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will need your help to combat threats to U.S. livestock and poultry.

With the cooperation and assistance of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the North American Veterinary Technician Association, VS is working to establish a roster of private and State animal health technicians and veterinarians for VS' National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps. These technicians and veterinarians can be activated quickly to serve as temporary Federal personnel to help meet emergency staffing needs. As part of this program, veterinarians can supplement APHIS' existing employees for periods of 30 to 60 days and technicians for up to 220 days per year. Response Corps personnel may be deployed to help contain diseases in other countries, as was the case with the 2001-02 foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in the United Kingdom. VS temporary employees will serve as Veterinary Medical Officers and Animal Health Technicians during the emergency situation.

Variety of Work

The type of work done at emergency sites may include examining herds or flocks for clinical signs of disease, vaccinating animals, conducting post-mortem examinations, collecting specimens, collecting epidemiologic information, euthanizing diseased animals, supervising the disposal of animal carcasses, or inspecting livestock markets, trucks, and vehicles. You will have a chance to protect the Nation's animals and poultry while gaining valuable field experience.

Salary

The current salary rate for veterinarians ranges from General Schedule (GS) 9 to 11, depending on experience. The current salary rate for certified animal health technicians or veterinary technicians is at the GS 5 to 7 level, depending upon qualifications. New positions are being developed to include veterinary school students at rates starting at the GS 5 level, depending on their year of study. Overtime pay is provided, and all travel and daily living costs are covered by APHIS.

Because Federal salaries are adjusted annually, we encourage you to visit the Office of Personnel Management's Web site at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/payrates/index.asp> to check current rates for the GS grade levels listed above.

Animal health officials take great precautions not to spread disease from one premises to another. Dr. Jane Ridky served two rotations during the exotic Newcastle disease outbreak in Southern California in 2003.



“I did two rotations with the exotic Newcastle disease (END) task force in California. Working with the Emergency Response Corps gave me a chance to be part of a team doing something different from everyday practice. I headed a euthanasia team. Despite the members’ very different backgrounds, we worked well together, and our team was requested for many of the difficult situations. It gave me a chance to use my people skills as well as my veterinary skills. When I was in veterinary school, the faculty talked about the Newcastle disease outbreak of ’71, so for me, serving in California on the END task force was a chance to be part of history, and at the same time to contribute to eradicating the disease.”

*Jane Ridky, D.V.M.
Oakland, ME*

“I spent 4 weeks in the U.K. during the height of the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak working with the USDA and U.K. Ministry of Agriculture. It was an excellent opportunity to observe firsthand the wide-ranging impact that FMD had on so many sectors of the British economy. Stockyards and packing plants were closed; sheep shearers, inseminators, and livestock haulers were unemployed; and large-animal veterinary practices ground to a halt, not to mention the effects on tourism. The more U.S. veterinarians are exposed to real-life situations, the more prepared we will be. This is especially true for vets seeing large numbers of livestock in their daily practices. As the chairman of the American Association of Swine Veterinarians’ Foreign Animal Disease Committee, I believe that continuing education, especially in the form of firsthand knowledge, is extremely important. The Emergency Response Corps enhances our ability to protect the livestock industries that U.S. agriculture relies on and ensures the quality of U.S. agricultural products integral to the export market.”

*Harry Snelson, D.V.M.
Manager, Swine Tech Services
Schering–Plough Animal Health*

Dr. Carla Taylor–Huston identifies farm locations of infected premises and buffer zones in the Divisional Office of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department during the FMD outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001.



“I was finishing my doctoral dissertation at the time of the FMD outbreak in the U.K., so the timing was right for me. I spent 3 weeks in Scotland, where I was warmly received. People really welcomed the help. I especially liked the cultural experience of living and working in another part of the world. It was educational to work with animal health professionals battling disease in an outbreak situation. This was a very worthwhile experience.”

*Carla Taylor–Huston, D.V.M.
Assistant Professor
Department of Pathobiology and
Population Medicine
Mississippi State University*

“We spent a month in the U.K. during the FMD outbreak, and it truly opened our eyes to the global threat of disease and the enormous number of problems that a foreign animal disease would pose if it happened in our country. Our experience was very positive—from our housing, to the people we helped, to those we worked with. We’re semiretired in private practice, working mostly with small animals, so this was a unique experience, and we would highly recommend working with the APHIS program to others.”

*Wayne Dollarhide, D.V.M.
Nancy Dollarhide, D.V.M.
Grants Pass, OR*



To prevent a foreign animal disease from spreading during an outbreak, biosecurity measures such as quarantine, control, and cleanup are implemented.

How To Apply

If you are interested in being considered for this type of work during an emergency outbreak, please call the VS Area Office in your State for forms OF 612 and OF 306. You can find a listing of State area offices at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs> and then click on "Area Offices." Or you can download these forms from <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mpis/library/forms/forms.html> by clicking on "Optional Forms" and selecting the two forms mentioned above.

Where the OF 612 calls for "Announcement number," please write: "Emergency AHT" or "Emergency VMO." The completed forms and other pertinent information should be faxed or mailed to:

USDA, APHIS, Minneapolis Business Site
100 N 6th St., Suite 510
Minneapolis, MN 55403
FAX: (612) 370-2209

If you have questions or would like additional information about this endeavor, contact VS' Emergency Programs unit at (301) 734-8091 or e-mail inquiries to: EmergencyVMO@aphis.usda.gov

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