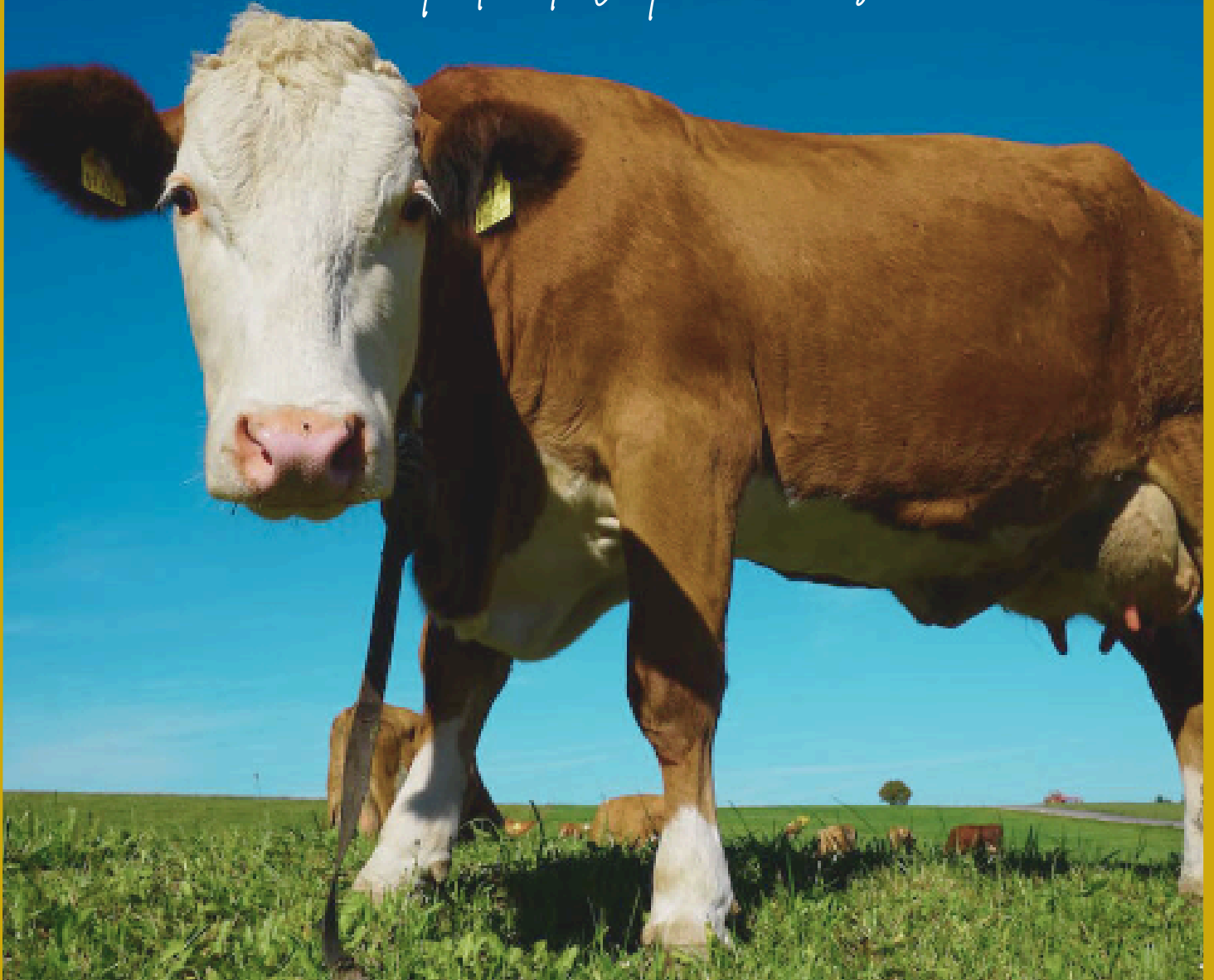




*100+ Years of Service to  
Federal Veterinarians*



# NEWSLETTER

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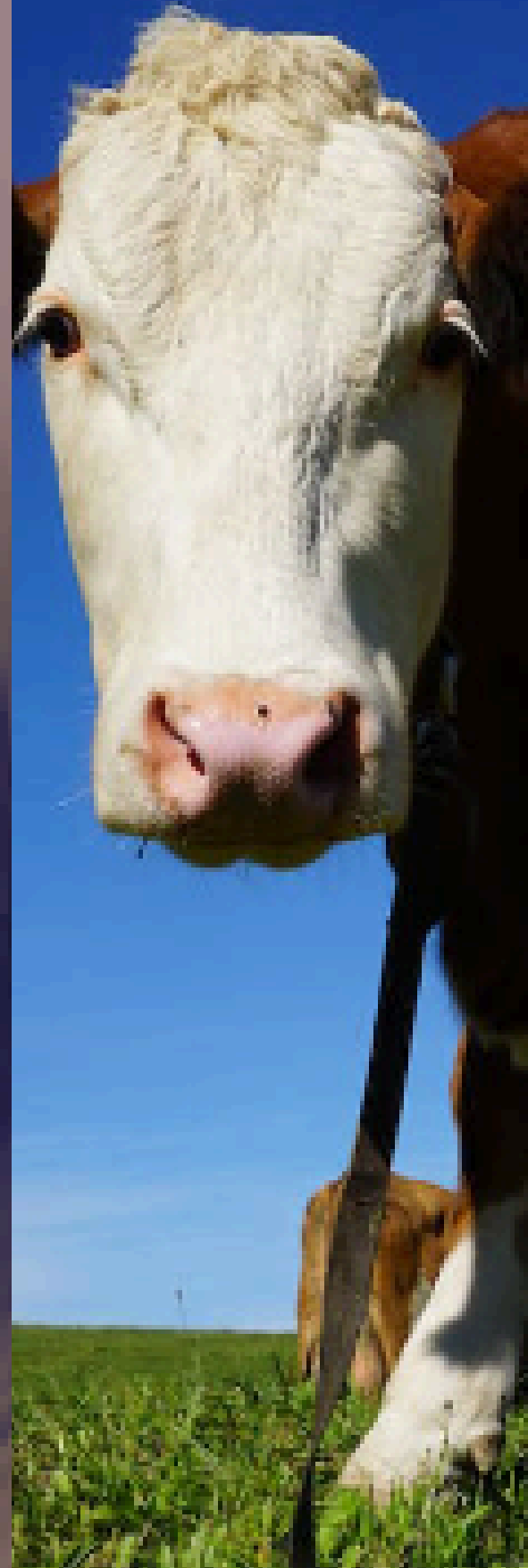
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Any veterinarian employed full-time by the federal government may become an active member. Dues are \$260.00 annually, payable annually, semiannually, via PayPal (annually or monthly), or by federal pay- roll deductions (eligibility for payroll deduction is limited to USDA veterinarians of \$10.00 authorized by signing USDA Form AD 1054 (FSIS) or SF 1187 (APHIS)). All active-duty Uniformed Services veterinarians are granted free membership. Associate membership is granted to active members when they retire from federal service. Associate members pay no dues. Associate members receive the NAFV newsletter by email.

The National Association of Federal Veterinarians is a non-profit corporation and the purposes for which it is formed are to promote the veterinary profession, to improve the professional efficiency and material interests of the members, to acquaint the public with the activities of veterinarians in the federal service, and to cooperate with the American Veterinary Medical Association, the United States Animal Health Association and other similar groups with common interests.

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## ***The Role of the National Association of Federal Veterinarians***

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) measures employee engagement and satisfaction with their workplaces, or in other words morale. The FEVS serves as a tool for employees to share their perceptions in many critical areas including their work experiences, their agency, and their leadership. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and its Office of Employee Experience (OEX) use the results of FEVS to inform efforts and the initiatives currently underway with the "Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" ranking according to the Partnership for Public Service on employee satisfaction, engagement, and morale—all of which support and inform USDA's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary's FY2022 priority to "Make USDA a Best Place to Work."

And this is where an association such as the National Association of Federal Veterinarians (NAFV) can come in. Today's veterinarians are the only doctors educated to protect the health of both animals and people. These dedicated professionals apply their medical skills not in "private practice" but in "public practice" in the service of every American through the many programs administered by the federal government. Though federal veterinarians touch the lives of every American every day, many feel under-compensated, underappreciated, and overworked. These feelings can contribute to high employee turnover rates, which impact overall morale of the team, the health and wellness of Americans, and the agency's bottom line. Many times, there are significant gaps between the perceptions of an agency's executive leadership and the realities of mid-level management. This can be even worse when including agencies rank and file grassroots employees.

The majority of NAFV members (and most of the veterinarians employed by the federal government) work for the USDA. The results of FEVS indicated that morale is low, ranked 16 of 17 large federal agencies, only slightly better than the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). When you look at the sub-agency rankings our major membership comes from the Food Safety and Inspection Service (ranked 298 out of 411) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (ranked 294 out of 411). For those working there, this may not come as a surprise. But, how can these agencies benefit from working with NAFV, as an association of managers and supervisors? There are finer points of job satisfaction that the FEVS cannot measure. The impact of mandatory deployments on people's job satisfaction, for example. When that deployment is seen as furthering the mission of the agency, it can be a positive motivating factor; however, if that mandatory deployment is seen as making up for an agency's failure to fill critical vacancies, it has just the opposite effect on morale.

When deployments are viewed as employed where certain individuals seem to be exempt from deployment, then it can destroy the sense of accomplishment. This level of detail can't be reached by the FEVS, but through consultations with our members and executive leadership, these insights can be addressed. In many cases, just hearing a third party explain the situation can make all the difference in how the issue is perceived. In service of these public servants, the NAFV strives to serve both veterinarians and the agencies they work for by facilitating communication, making suggestions for improvements, and working collaboratively to address issues of concern. This advocacy includes emphasizing professionalism and expertise in federal service but also promoting continuing education, teamwork and morale, and a standard of excellence. NAFV can work with you to improve it and your professional working environment.

NAFV can approach senior leadership in the department with your concerns and possible solutions, not as a union but as an organization that represent you medical / scientific professionals. Our goal is to enhance your work life's productivity and impact, instilling a positive sense of accomplishment. When a veterinarian is lifted, that positively reflects the team, and that morale boost translates into increased productivity and pride in your work which makes all the difference.



## THE ONE HEALTH SECURITY ACT

Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response (OPPR): Established by Congress in 2023 by the Prepare for and Respond to Existing Viruses, Emerging New Threats, and Pandemics Act (PREVENT Pandemics Act), OPPR advises the President on matters regarding pandemic preparedness and response. As a member of the Domestic Policy and National Security Councils, OPPR crafts policy related to preparedness for, and response to, pandemic and other biological threats that may impact national security, and support strategic coordination and communication with respect to relevant activities across the Federal Government. One Health as a Biosecurity and Pandemic Preparedness Priority: According to the Global Health Security Strategy, the U.S. Government promotes a One Health and transdisciplinary approach, not only for human animal, plant, and environmental health, and health security, but also to meet national and global goals for climate, resilience, food security and nutrition, economic development, biodiversity, and

conservation. Government implements a range of activities to reduce the risk for zoonotic disease spillover through improved bio surveillance and biosecurity measures for those working with animals; information sharing across sectors to prevent human cases from growing to become outbreaks or health emergencies; as well as efforts to prevent and mitigate unsafe trade and trafficking in wildlife and wildlife products (primarily high-risk mammals and birds supplying demand for meat, pets, and traditional medicines). The One Health Security Act would codify a One Health Security approach to federal pandemic preparedness and biosecurity. A One Health Security approach works to prevent, detect and counter natural disease, accidental and deliberate threats to humans, animals, and the environment. It requires the integration of veterinary, agricultural, environmental, and human health expertise with security, foreign policy, and intelligence expertise at the local, regional, national and global levels. The One Health Security Act would:

- Strengthen the White House Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response (OPPR):

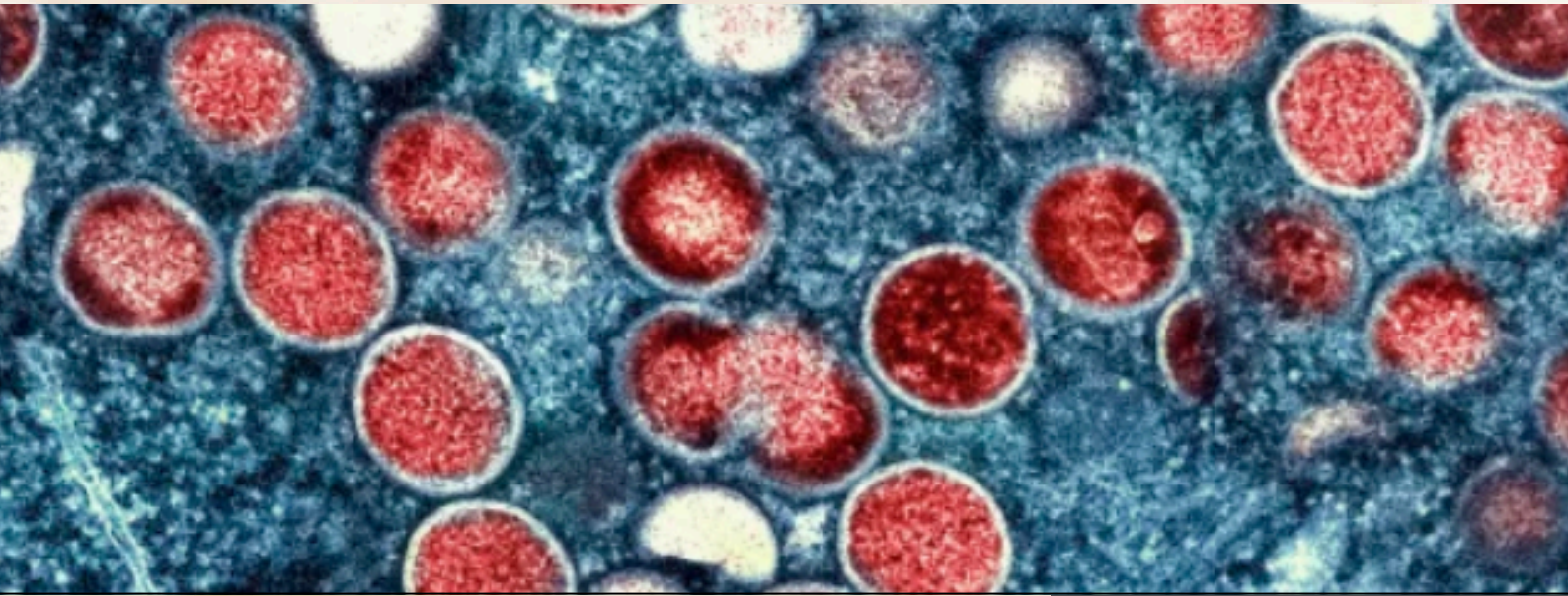
- Coordinate with the Office of Management and Budget to develop a unified annual biodefense budget submission, and provide guidance to Federal departments and agencies for the submission of biodefense budget requests

- Facilitate annual national level exercises for biodefense

- Develop and issue a governmentwide after-action report following a large-scale biological event affecting the United States

- Enhance Interagency Coordination During a Pandemic: During a pandemic or biological threat incident, it is critical that agencies overseeing One Health policies have equal voices to respond. The Secretaries of Agriculture and State will be added as leading roles in the hierarchy of pandemic response.

## WHO declares MPOX a Global Public Health Emergency for the second time in two years



The World Health Organization on Wednesday declared mpox a global public health emergency for the second time in two years, following an outbreak of the viral infection in the Democratic Republic of Congo that has spread to neighboring countries in Africa.

A “public health emergency of international concern,” or PHEIC, is the WHO’s highest level of alert, and it can accelerate research, funding and international public health measures and co-operation to contain the disease. Earlier this week, Africa’s top public health body similarly declared mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, an emergency after warning that the viral infection was spreading at an alarming rate.



More than 17,000 suspected mpox cases and 517 deaths have been reported on the African continent so far this year, a 160% increase compared to the same period last year, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Cases have been reported in 13 countries. Mpox has two distinct viral clades, I and II. Both versions can spread through close contact with an infected person or via direct contact with infected animals or contaminated materials. The outbreak in Congo began with the spread of clade I, a strain that is endemic in central Africa and known to be more transmissible. Clade I can also cause more severe infections; previous outbreaks have killed up to 10% of people who got sick.

A new version of that strain, clade Ib, is now spreading and appears to be more easily transmissible through routine close contact, including sexual contact. It has spread from Congo to neighboring countries, including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, triggering the action from the WHO. “It’s clear that a coordinated international response is essential to stop these outbreaks and save lives,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.



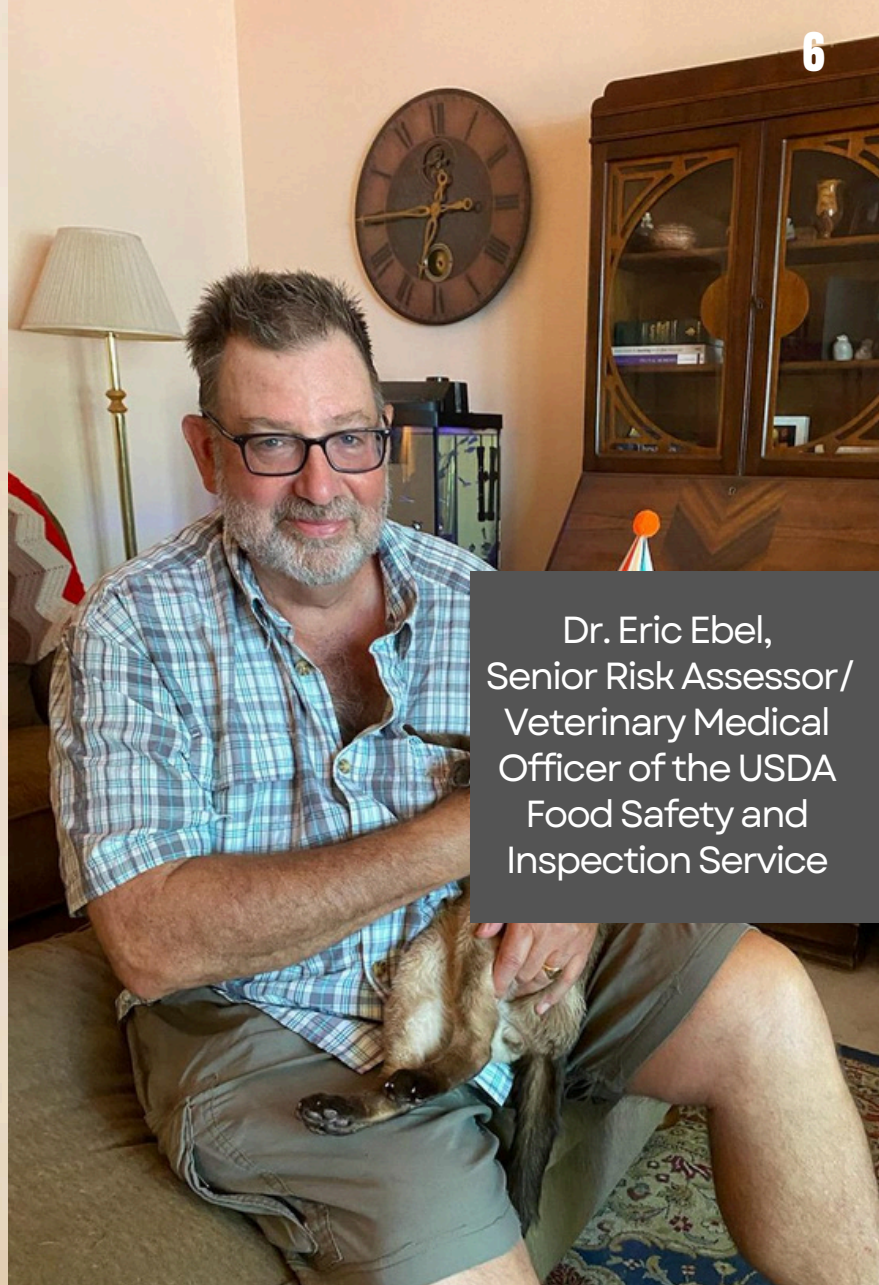
A strain of clade II, meanwhile, was responsible for the global spread of mpox in 2022, which prompted the WHO to declare a public health emergency. Infections from that clade are far milder than those from clade I – more than 99.9% of people survive, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But it's still capable of causing severe illness, particularly in people with weakened immune systems.

The version that spread in 2022 – largely through sexual contact among men who have sex with men was known as clade IIb. The WHO ended that emergency declaration 10 months later. In the U.S., mpox cases have declined considerably since their peak in 2022. Average daily cases fell to zero in the week ending Aug. 1.

# 2024 NAFV UNsung VETERINARIAN AWARD

The NAFV is proud to present the 2024 Unsung Veterinarian Award to Dr. Eric Ebel. At the start of his career with USDA, Dr. Ebel worked at APHIS Veterinary Services' Center for Epidemiology and Animal Health where he worked on preharvest food safety as part of the Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) Task Force and as a field veterinary epidemiologist in Idaho. Eric joined FSIS-OPHS and forged the field of food safety quantitative microbiological risk assessment (QMRA), leading the Salmonella Enteritidis in eggs risk assessment to bring eggs under Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and as the lead on Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health Organization (FAO/WHO) expert committees and Codex working groups. His steadfast commitment to developing and applying epidemiology and risk assessment to guide food safety decisions has directly led to changes in on-farm practices (i.e., through the Poultry Improvement Program).

Dr. Ebel conducted groundbreaking work to streamline the traditional QMRA process and created a prevalence-based risk assessment method, which has shaped federal pathogen reduction performance standards for both Salmonella and Campylobacter in a variety of regulated products. As a result of his leadership, there has been a substantial reduction in Salmonella and Campylobacter contamination in raw poultry products over the years, leading to safer food in the marketplace in the United States and around the globe.



Dr. Eric Ebel,  
Senior Risk Assessor/  
Veterinary Medical  
Officer of the USDA  
Food Safety and  
Inspection Service

“The Unsung Veterinarian Award recognizes federal veterinarians who have positively influenced a program or organization from behind the scenes with a positive attitude, a willingness to help, in whatever capacity necessary, and a commitment to excellence. The Unsung Veterinarian Award is presented to an individual who extraordinarily performed their job; and who has made a substantive yet unrecognized contribution to his/her organization, public health, or society as a whole. The award is broad in its reach and by design meant to recognize those not usually recognized through traditional awards criteria.”

*In 2020, Dr. Ebel developed a new risk-based approach for evaluating pathogen testing data from countries with alternative (rather than “same as”) inspection procedures. These new analytics were published in the peer reviewed literature and have helped improve the evidence basis for trade decisions. Most recently, Dr. Ebel was one of the key architects of two new Salmonella in poultry risk assessments.*

# The Veterinarians Preventing the Next Pandemic



In the summer of 1999, a pathologist at the Bronx Zoo noticed an unusual number of dead crows in the vicinity of the zoo. Then, over Labor Day weekend, one of the zoo's cormorants died, as did a pheasant, a bald eagle, and three flamingos. In Queens, physicians at Flushing Hospital saw six patients with encephalitis, all within a few weeks. Normally the city saw about ten cases a year, but now similar cases were turning up across the city. The disease presentation suggested a viral cause—but which virus? By the end of September, seven human patients had died, and others had had to be hospitalized for weeks. After the virus was identified as West Nile—a mosquito-borne virus that infects both birds and humans, and which no one expected to see in North America—the dead crows suddenly made sense. “I think it was really the West Nile virus that was the impetus for recognizing the value of having veterinarians work in public-health departments,” Sally Slavinski, a veterinarian at New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, told me.

Slavinski focusses on zoonotic diseases—infectious diseases that can move from an animal to a human. Diseases cross over very rarely, with less than a tenth of one per cent of animal viruses ever successfully making the leap. And yet from another perspective the crossovers are common: more than two-thirds of emerging diseases in humans have animal origins. Diseases can also travel in the other direction, in what is called reverse zoonosis. “I’ll never forget the call from my colleague at the Bronx Zoo saying they had a tiger testing positive for SARS-CoV-2,” Slavinski said. Her office worked on contact tracing for the big cats. She also does a lot of work with less regal urban friends, such as skunks, bats, and raccoons—“They’ve adapted incredibly well to urban life,” she said—which often means dealing with rabies, perhaps the only zoonotic disease so storied as to have its own adjective. Canine rabies was eliminated from the United States in 2004, but the disease persists in other animals. Slavinski recalled the 2009 outbreak of raccoon rabies in Central Park, in which some five hundred raccoons needed to be trapped, vaccinated, and released. [Read More](#)

# 8 Researcher Warns Pet Cats Risk Getting Bird Flu and Possibly Infecting People



Bird flu can infect and kill pet cats, which may also put humans at risk. The world is barely out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the threat of another virus jumping from animals to humans looms large in our daily newsfeeds. As public health officials follow the spread of the rapidly evolving bird flu H5N1, a review of the scientific literature suggests domestic cats can get bird flu and transmit it to humans, and should be monitored.

“As companion animals, domestic cats provide a potential pathway for avian influenza viruses to spillover into humans,” said Kristen Coleman, an assistant professor in the UMD School of Public Health, and an affiliate professor in the University of Maryland Department of Veterinary Medicine.

“We looked at the global distribution and spread of bird flu infections in feline species between 2004 and 2024 and found a drastic rise in reports of feline infections starting in 2023, with a spike in infections reported among domestic cats, as opposed to wild or zoo-kept animals. This increase coincides

with the rapid spread of the current strain of H5N1 among mammals.” Bird flu is not currently reported to be contagious between humans, and it is not guaranteed to evolve in that direction, but the disease is clearly changing. The current strain of the H5N1 has been spreading to animals that have never been affected before, and pets that can pass it to people could play a role in how it evolves.

Coleman’s study, currently in preliminary form without peer review on MedRxiv, found that cat owners, veterinarians, zookeepers, and cat shelter volunteers may be at greater risk of contracting the H5N1 infection if the virus continues to circulate unabated.



Coleman’s study, currently in preliminary form without peer review on MedRxiv, found that cat owners, veterinarians, zookeepers, and cat shelter volunteers may be at greater risk of contracting the H5N1 infection if the virus continues to circulate unabated. The CDC, which provides guidance for veterinarians working with potentially infected animals, says the risk of contracting the disease from pets is low, but Coleman suggests pet owners should still take precautions to protect their cats and themselves. In addition, the virus has been reported in house mice, which cats also prey on, so it appears the opportunities for cross-species transmission are increasing, and pet cats may be at increased risk.



Pet owners should be watching for respiratory and neurological symptoms. If your cat seems to have trouble breathing or is acting unusual, you should consider taking them to the vet. The current H5N1 strain has also reportedly caused blindness in cats. Since the emergence of H5N1 in U.S. dairy cattle, 21 domestic cats have been reported to be infected to date. Full genetic sequences of the viral strains infecting 2 of these cats have been reported in the scientific literature. Coleman said sequencing and demographic data for the other cat cases are urgently needed.





## US Undercounts Bird Flu in Cattle as Farmers Shun Testing

The U.S. bird-flu outbreak in dairy cattle is much larger than official figures suggest due to farmers' reluctance to test their animals and risk the economic consequences of a positive result, according to Reuters interviews with dairy experts, veterinarians, and farmers in six states with known cases.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has counted bird flu in about 190 dairy herds in 13 states since March. The virus's jump from birds to cows heightened concerns that it could adapt to spread among humans. Scientists have warned that limited surveillance could weaken the U.S.' ability to respond to further human spread. Thirteen dairy and poultry farm workers have been infected with bird flu this year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reuters spoke with more than a dozen researchers, veterinarians, farmers, and livestock industry groups to understand whether the bird-flu spread in dairy cattle is being accurately tracked. State animal and human health experts in three states who work closely with veterinarians and farmers said the government tally is likely an undercount because farmers are fearful of the economic hardship brought by a positive test including being restricted from

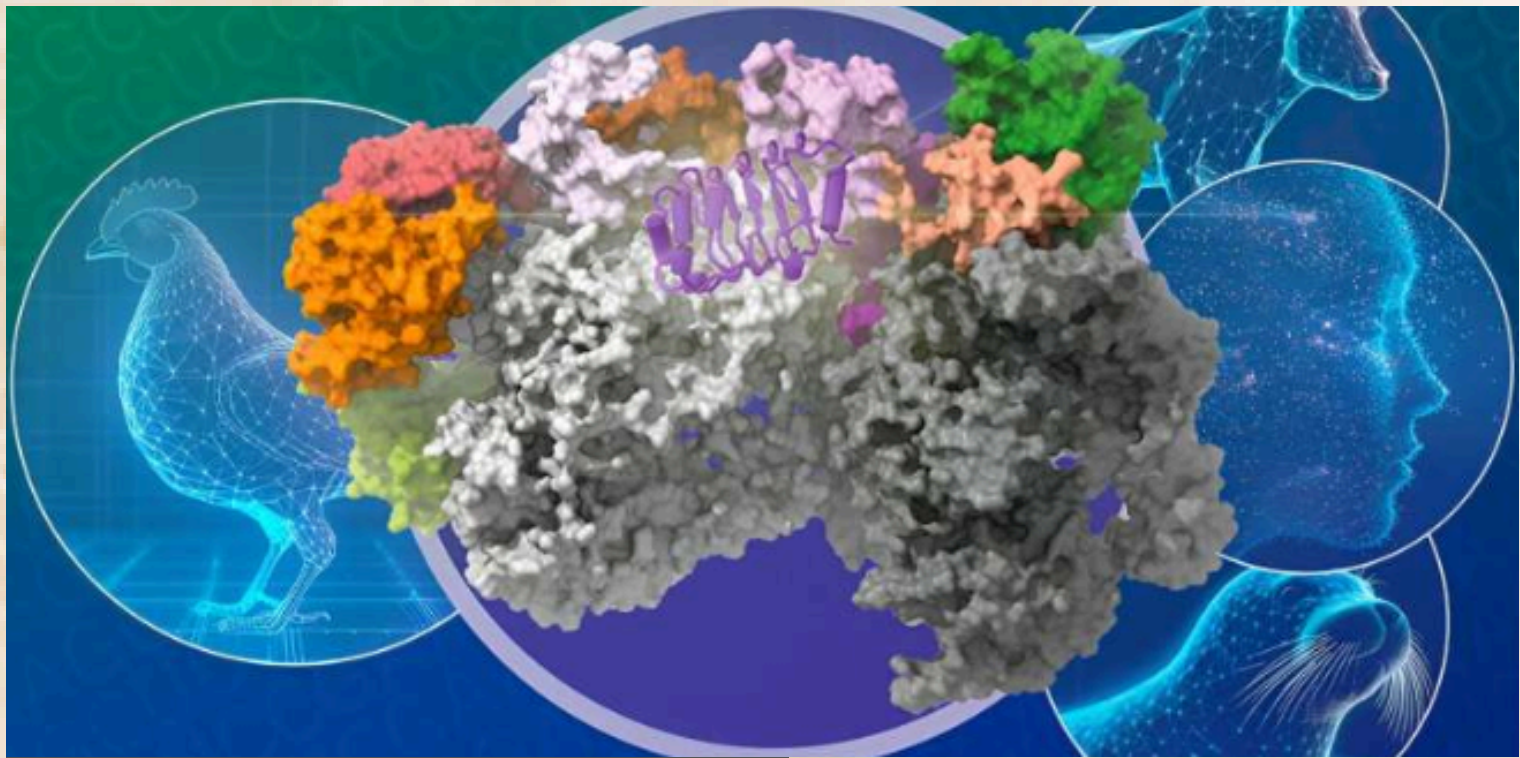
selling their milk or cattle for weeks. The virus reduces milk production in cattle. The U.S., the world's second-largest cheese producer after the European Union, is the only country with known infections in cows." While we have nine official positives, there are many, many, many more farms that are impacted or infected that are just not testing," said Joe Armstrong, a veterinarian and cattle expert at the University of Minnesota, who has spoken with farmers across the state. A more accurate cattle case count for Minnesota would be three to five times higher, Armstrong said.

A USDA spokesperson said the agency has encouraged testing by requiring negative tests for cows being shipped over state lines since April and offering a voluntary program for testing farmers' milk supplies weekly. Twenty-four dairy herds are participating in that program, of roughly 24,000 farms nationally that sell milk, according to agency data. The Food and Drug Administration has separately tested commercial milk supplies and says pasteurization kills the virus, so milk is safe to drink.



By Leah Douglas and Tom Polansek

# New Insights on How Bird Flu Crosses the Species Barrier



In recent years, public health measures, surveillance, and vaccination have helped bring about significant progress in reducing the impact of seasonal flu epidemics, caused by human influenza viruses A and B. However, a possible outbreak of avian influenza A (commonly known as 'bird flu') in mammals, including humans, poses a significant threat to public health. The Cusack group at EMBL Grenoble studies the replication process of influenza viruses. A new study from this group sheds light on the different mutations that the avian influenza virus can undergo to be able to replicate in mammalian cells. Some avian influenza strains can cause severe disease and mortality. Fortunately, significant biological differences between birds and mammals normally prevent avian influenza from spreading from birds to other species.

To infect mammals, the avian influenza virus must mutate to overcome two main barriers: the ability to enter the cell and to replicate within that cell. To cause an epidemic or pandemic, it must also acquire the ability to be transmitted between humans. However, sporadic contamination of wild and domestic mammals by bird flu is becoming increasingly common. Of particular concern is the recent unexpected infection of dairy cows in the U.S. by an avian H5N1 strain, which risks becoming endemic in cattle. This might facilitate

adaptation to humans, and indeed, a few cases of transmission to humans have been reported, so far resulting in only mild symptoms.

At the heart of this process is the polymerase, an enzyme that orchestrates the virus's replication inside host cells. This flexible protein can rearrange itself according to the different functions it performs during infection. These include transcription—copying the viral RNA into messenger RNA to make viral proteins—and replication—making copies of the viral RNA to package into new viruses. Viral replication is a complex process to study because it involves two viral polymerases and a host cell protein—ANP32.



By European Molecular Biology Laboratory

# Federal Veterinarians

## Are You Prepared?

Federal Veterinarians are critical in ensuring the nation's food safety and animal/livestock health in accordance with food safety initiatives, administering FSIS, APHIS, DHS, CDC, and FDA guidelines, and various animal health programs. Many federal veterinarians also have the dual role of a manager, supervisor or officer within their respective agency. This leaves you extremely susceptible to allegations, complaints, or potential lawsuits – just for doing your job. Are you emotionally, financially and legally prepared to become the subject of an adverse administrative action, disciplinary proceeding, or civil lawsuit?



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# Obituary

**DR. Pedro P. ALMAZAN**  
**VAYA CON DIOS MI AMIGO**

Pedro died at the age of 92. He was long retired from FSIS/USDA. He lived in Bartow, Florida, and spent his career in Florida. He was an expert in pathology, particularly of red meat, and was utilized by FSIS as a troubleshooter and a trainer. He had died November 14, 2022.

He had been very active in NAFV, having served as two-term president, southeastern regional representative for a number of years, and chapter president. Pedro had a wonderful sense of humor and was always a pleasure to work with, and to socialize with, wherever he happened to be. Yet he was a firm food safety regulator and a good leader and representative of NAFV.

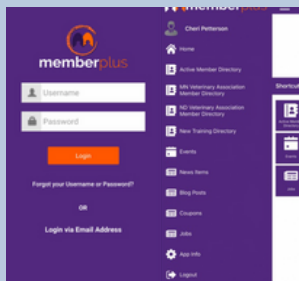
Pedro was one of the first political refugees escaping from communist Cuba in 1962 after the takeover by Fidel Castro. He was active with other Cuban exiles, who expected Castro to be overthrown. They waited in vain. They had even set up a "shadow government" waiting to return. Pedro would have been secretary of agriculture. Pedro became a loyal citizen of the United States.

The family's obituary can be found online.

- Bill Hughes

# NEW MEMBERS:

- Rebecka Celinder
- Clarissa Ramsel
- Alexandra Apgar- Arpin
- Todd Collins
- Alanna Kirby
- Jennifer Calogero
- Katey Durbin
- Heather Ostrander
- Jennifer Way
- Jane Lewis
- Marta Zlotnick



## >>> NEW MEMBERS

Works to develop approaches to increase membership and enhance the membership experience. Be active and join our committees!

## RETIRED MEMBERS >>>

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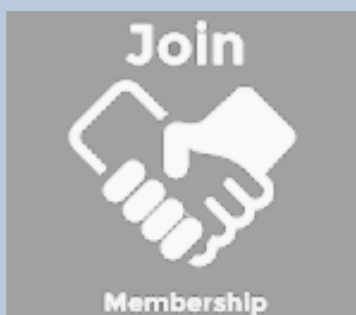


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