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The National Association of Federal Veterinarians

# NEWSLETTER

March- April 2024 / Vol 82

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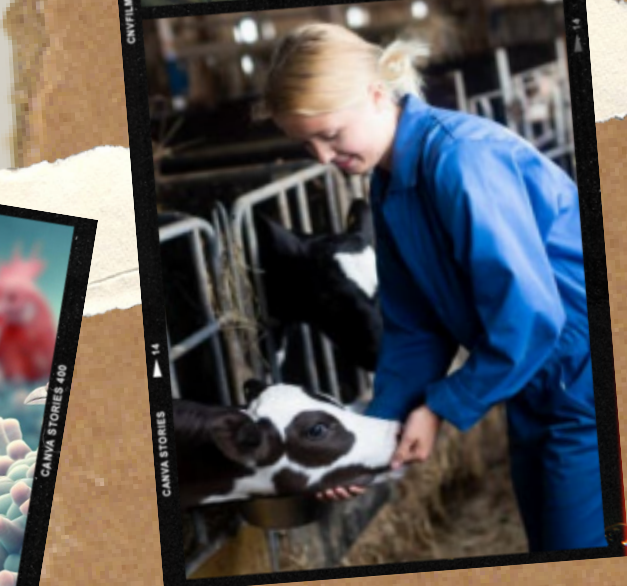
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Any veterinarian employed full-time by the federal government may become an active member. Dues are \$260.00 annually, payable annually, semiannually, via PayPal (annually or monthly), or by federal pay- roll deductions (eligibility for payroll deduction 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.

# RURAL VETERINARY SHORTAGE AFFECTS LOCAL PRACTICES



Owner and veterinarian Joanne Ruisi (right) continue to make large animal medicine an integral part of her life.

Dr. Ruisi, owner and vet at Hassayampa Veterinary Services said, "We are all experiencing the 'shortage.' Whether it is the long hours, physical labor, emergency calls, the higher-than-normal risk of injury or lower than average compensation, collectively the newer generation of veterinarians just doesn't seem interested. It's tough to find the passion that drives those of us that continue to fight on." Similarly, the American Veterinary Medicine Association (AVMA) website states, "There are veterinarians who want to work in rural areas of America but are unable to do so—for financial reasons. The great news is that legislation pending in Congress would make it more feasible for them."

Lytle, who is a long-time Wickenburg resident and a board member of the Arizona Cowpunchers Scholarship Fund (newly renamed the Bill Owen, Cowboy Artist, Memorial Scholarship Fund (BOCA), has started a fund to help support students who want to pursue large animal medicine for ranching and the food animal industry but are experiencing financial restraints.

A rural large animal veterinary shortage is in full swing around the country and is affecting many large animal owners and veterinarians in rural communities including Wickenburg.

Two Wickenburg veterinarians, Dr. Jim Lytle and Dr. Joanne Ruisi, speak to how this shortage is affecting rural communities like Wickenburg, as well as the practice of large animal veterinary medicine, and some possible solutions.

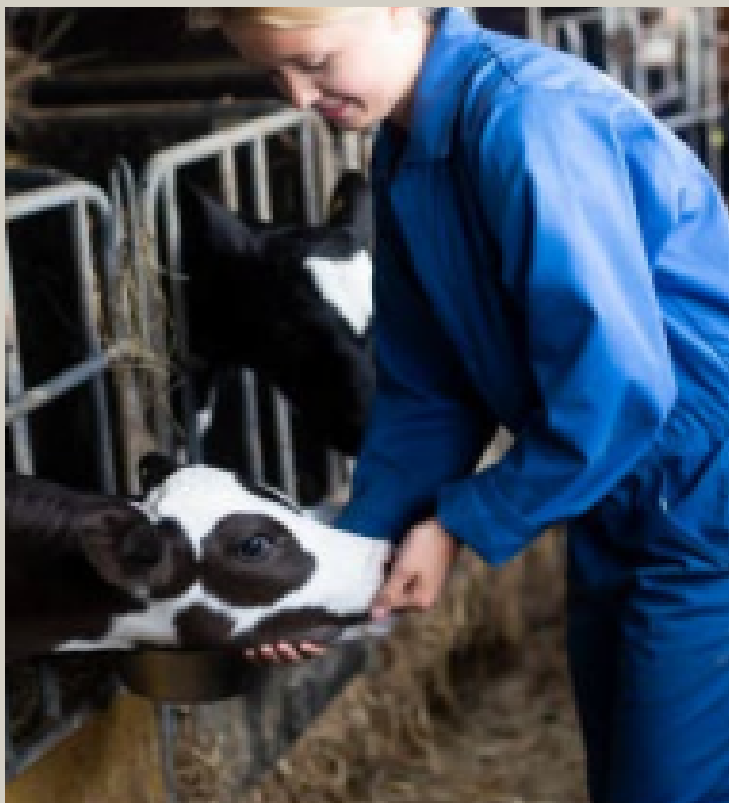
Dr. Lytle, a practicing large animal vet since 1974 said, "At this time, over 2/3 of those of us that do ranch and food animal work are over 50 years old, with the majority being 70 years old or above. Looking at this statistic, ranchers in Arizona are facing a major problem in the near future." This fact, posted on Facebook by the Cattleman's Weekend organization, has garnered over 4,700 shares in the past few weeks.



Dr. Jim Lytle has created a scholarship fund to help future veterinarians practice large animal medicine in rural areas.

"The Veterinary Loan Repayment Program is helpful but has its drawbacks - i.e. you are taxed as income for money received through it as well as limitations and restrictions on practice-type limits," said Lytle.

# THE VETERINARY MEDICINE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY 2010–2022



In addition, the report summarizes the amount of debt undertaken by VMLRP awardees and the evidence of the increase in student loan debt among awardees documented over the program period. Since 2010 NIFA's VMLRP has served the needs of food animal veterinarians and stakeholders in animal agriculture across the nation by supporting veterinary educational debt repayment in return for veterinarians' services in designated, high priority, shortage situations. In this time, the VMLRP has made nearly 800 awards to food animal veterinarians for loan repayment assistance.



Food animal veterinarians are critical to maintaining a healthy, secure, and safe food supply and for safeguarding the health and well-being of food animals. Today, there is a growing shortage of food animal veterinarians in both private and public practice, particularly in rural communities in the United States and Insular Areas. The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) supports mitigating food animal veterinary workforce shortages states and insular areas of the United States. As one part of our programmatic support for VMLRP stakeholders, the program has produced a summary of its activities, accomplishments and the challenges facing the profession in the [VMLRP Program Summary 2010-2022](#).

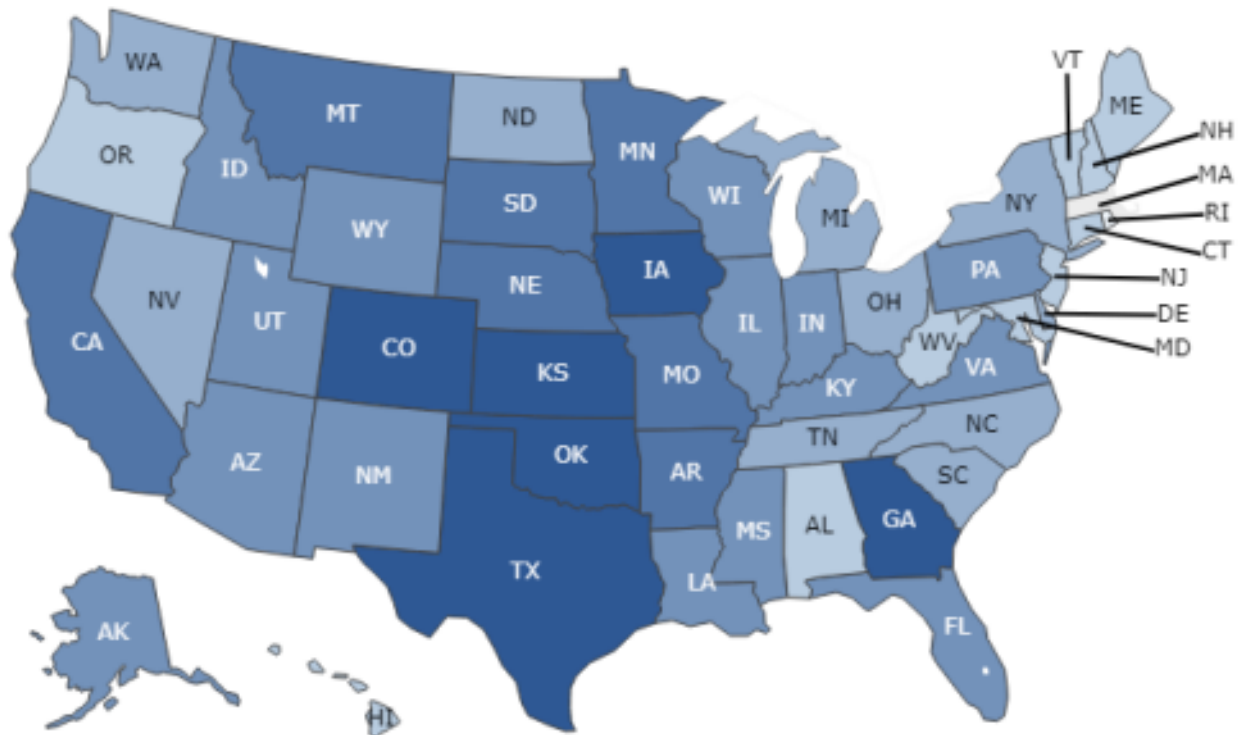
This report provides an overview of the VMLRP and summarizes trends and activities of the program to respond to the needs of animal health officials, food animal veterinarians, food and fiber animal producers, and interested stakeholders, and includes program highlights and accomplishments.



The VMLRP is pleased to provide our stakeholders with the VMLRP Program Summary 2010-2022, based on data collected by the program on veterinary shortage situations, applications, and awards. This report includes an overview of the VMLRP and summarizes trends and activities of the program.

**[VMLRP Program Summary, 2010-2022](#)**

## VMLRP Shortage Nominations by State



Number of Shortage Nominations	States*
1-10	AS, MRI, PR, RI, RM, RP
11-25	AL, CT, HI, MD, ME, NH, NJ, OR, VT, WV
26-50	DE, MI, NC, ND, NV, NY, OH, SC, TN, WA
51-75	AK, AZ, FL, ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, MS, NM, PA, UT, VA, WI, WY
76-90	AR, CA, MN, MO, MT, NE, SD
91+	CO, GA, IA, KS, OK, TX

### Geographic Distribution

For those states or entities that nominated shortage areas, the total number of nominations for the 13-year period ranged from one in some insular areas to 104 by both Texas and Colorado (Figure 3 and Appendix Table A2). Any nomination that is not filled within a state or other entity is allowed to be carried over or renominated in the next year. VMLRP also allows states to nominate areas jointly for contiguous regions that cross state boundaries. Two states, Arizona and California, have nominated joint shortage areas (Appendix Table A2). Overall, the largest numbers of nominations over the 13-year period have been received from midwestern and western states and Georgia (Figure 3). As noted above, an important component of the number of allowed nominations is NIFA's allocation process.

\*States represent U.S. states, insular areas and territories. States are listed alphabetically in each row.

Rep. David Rouzer, R-North Carolina, expressed worries to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack that a study concerning poultry plant line speeds appears to be biased against the poultry industry.

The exchange between the two federal officials took place during a recent House Agriculture Committee hearing. The hearing can be viewed on [YouTube](#). Rouzer told the secretary he thought it had been proven that poultry plant evisceration lines could safely operate at speeds of up to 175 birds per minute, so he questioned why the matter is being studied.

“Chicken plants across the country have been operating at higher speeds for more than 25 years through the FSIS line speed waivers, as you well know. Under President (Bill) Clinton, a study allowed 20 poultry plants to operate eviscerations lines up to 175 birds a minute. Plants invested, therefore, millions in technology through their partner farms to supply the poultry needed and maintain worker safety and inspection standards all the same. Now, these positive pilot results led to the new poultry inspection system. Today, 47 plants operate under the system. Farms all across North Carolina have built operations to support increased capacity and plants have designed staffing and facility needs around these speeds,” Rouzer said.

Rouzer also pointed out that data from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) showed that even with higher line speeds, illnesses and injuries among plant workers were down 91%, which Rouzer said was “evidence that faster line speeds don’t compromise worker safety.”

## REP. ROUZER, VILSACK SPAR OVER POULTRY LINE SPEED STUDY



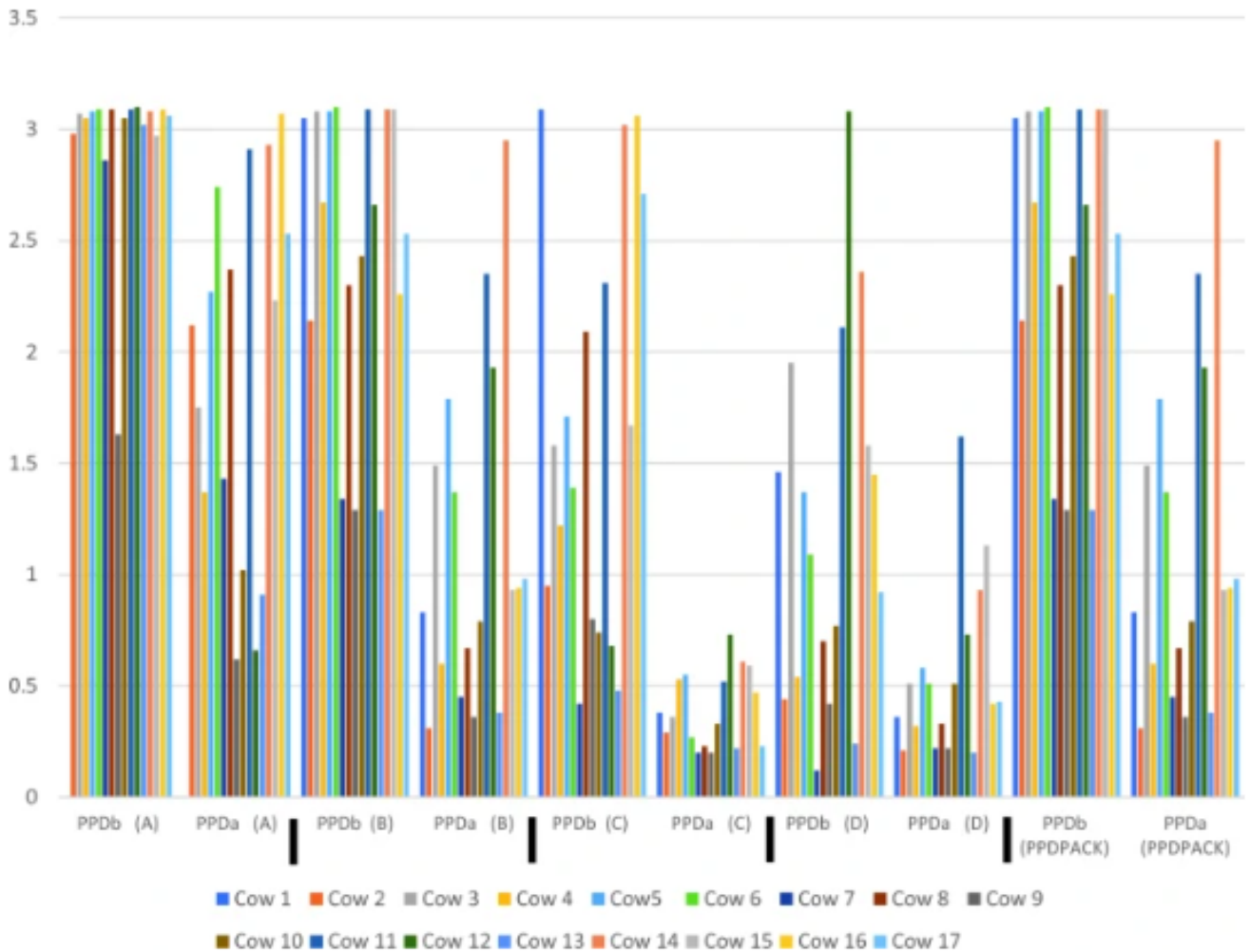
Rouzer told Vilsack that in 2020, a proposed rule incentivized more poultry plants to “adopt these improved processes and new technologies while increasing speeds. That rule was proposed during a Republican administration and Sonny Perdue’s tenure as agriculture secretary. But the present administration repealed that rule, Rouzer said.

“Instead, your agency informed companies with line speed waivers that (in order to) keep them, they were required to ‘opt in’ to a study on worker safety being conducted outside of the agency. Rouzer told Vilsack he was not only concerned about whether the study was necessary, but also whether it was unbiased. According to Rouzer, the people to conduct a study were not chosen through a bidding process, but instead it was a “sole source contract.” Prior to when Vilsack made those comments, Rouzer asked him if he would be willing to submit in writing a summary of how much money was being spent on the study, the source of the funding, how the team members were selected, and why all study participants were associated with the University of California system.

**Source: WattPoultry**

# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF VARIOUS TUBERCULIN PPD BRANDS ON BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS DIAGNOSIS

Figure 1



Although several brands of tuberculin purified protein derivatives (PPDs) are available for diagnosing bovine tuberculosis (bTB), comparative studies to determine their diagnostic accuracy are infrequent. In Ecuador we compared two different PPD brands for bTB diagnosis using skin testing and measuring skin thickness increase. Additionally, we evaluated four PPD brands, including those used for skin testing, in the Bovine Tuberculosis Interferon Gamma Test (IFN- $\gamma$  test) measuring IFN- $\gamma$  induction in whole blood. The study included 17 naturally tuberculosis-infected PPD and IFN- $\gamma$  test positive bovines. Both the field and laboratory results showed significant differences in classifying the 17 bovines as bTB positive or negative. We hypothesize that several factors, such as the genetic background of the cows, sensitization to environmental mycobacteria, *M. bovis* strains involved in the bTB infection, and the manufacturing procedures of the PPDs, could have influenced the immune reaction toward the different tuberculin PPD brands. Our study emphasizes the necessity for comparative studies aimed at determining the diagnostic accuracy of PPD brands for bTB diagnosis as well as the development of standardized methods for PPD production and potency determination.



# NEW WHO GUIDANCE FOR EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITIES ON TACKLING FOODBORNE AMR



The World Health Organization (WHO) has published a new guidance for food safety authorities in Europe about the prevention and control of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the food supply chain, from a One Health perspective. The document provides an overview of foodborne AMR in Europe and explores the role of food safety authorities in reducing AMR, offering practical advice and examples of successful interventions. According to WHO, more than 33,000 people die each year in the EU/European Economic Area (EEA) due to infection by antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The use of antibiotics in food animals for treatment and growth promotion has contributed to the global rise of AMR, although efforts have been made to combat the issue in recent years, through initiatives by international organizations and national governments to mitigate and surveil AMR.

Countries that have decreased their consumption of antibiotics in both animals and humans have seen a reduction in antibiotic-resistant bacteria, according to a joint report published by the European



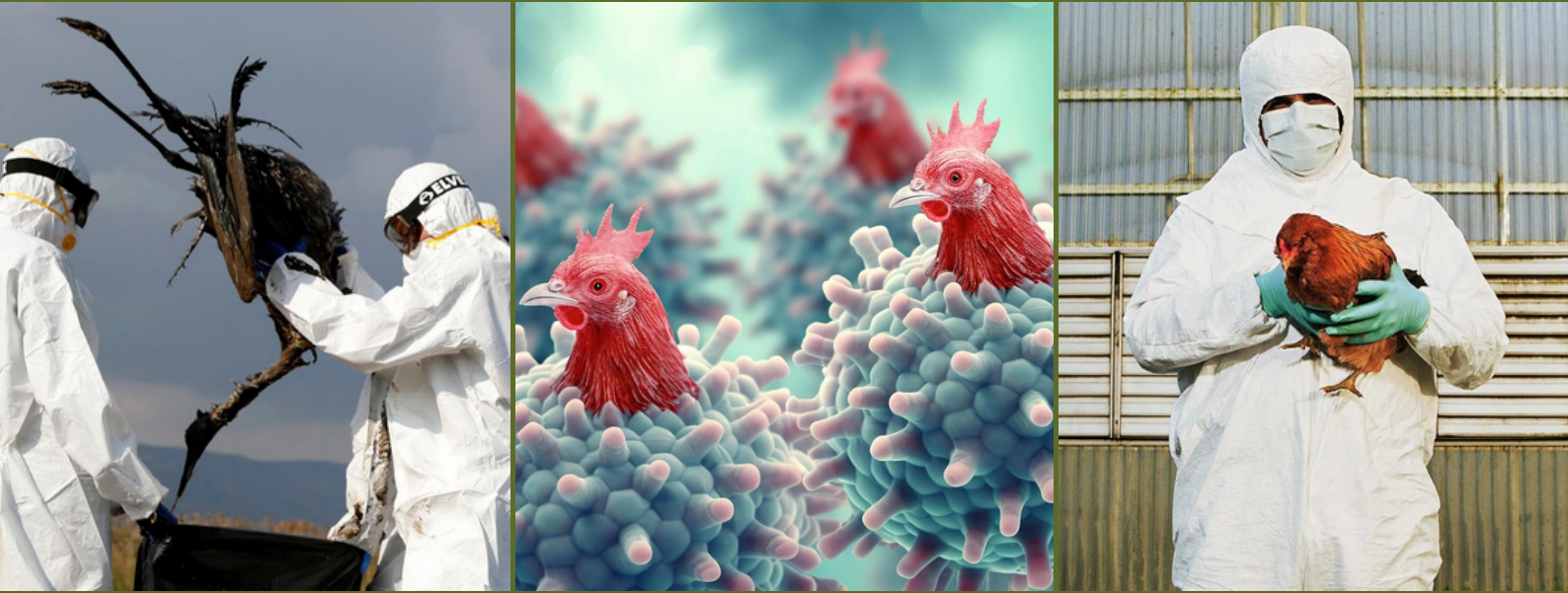
Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The fourth annual multiagency report, the publication centers on the integrated analysis of the consumption of antimicrobial agents and occurrence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in bacteria from humans and food-producing animals.

The importance of microbial food safety for RTE products like fresh-cut salads and fruits is crucial, given that these foods do not undergo heat treatment before consumption.



**Source: Food Safety Magazine**

# ANTARCTICA WAS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES WITHOUT BIRD FLU. NOT ANYMORE.



A deadly bird flu strain reached mainland Antarctica for the first time, leading scientists to worry about the fate of its penguins and other species. A deadly strain of bird flu has been found on mainland Antarctica for the first time, according to scientists, raising concerns over the risk of mass mortality of the continent's huge colonies of penguins and other animals found nowhere else on Earth. Researchers on Feb. 24 confirmed the presence of the H5 subtype of avian influenza in two dead seabirds, called skuas, near an Argentine base and scientific research station located on the Antarctic Peninsula, according to the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). "This discovery demonstrates for the first time that the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus has reached Antarctica, despite the distance and natural barriers that separate it from other continents," officials said Sunday.

Over the past several years, the highly infectious disease has devastated both wild and domestic animal populations, making its way around the globe on the migratory routes of birds. Now the arrival of avian influenza on the southernmost continent threatens its unique wildlife, including its iconic penguins.



# PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

## *Fact Sheet: Guidance on Scheduling Work and Granting Time Off to Permit Federal Employees to Participate in Volunteer Activities*



To review the extent to which AWS programs have already been applied, departments and agencies should review their internal AWS policies and practices and collective bargaining agreements. To determine how additional AWS flexibilities may be implemented, departments and agencies may also consult subchapter II of chapter 61 of title 5, United States Code; regulations in 5 CFR part 610, subpart D, Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules; and the Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules (</oca/aws/index.htm>) and OPM's Labor-Management Relations Guidance Bulletin: Negotiating Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules.

Credit hours are those hours within a flexible work schedule that an employee elects to work in excess of his or her basic work requirement (e.g., 80 hours in a pay period for a full-time employee) so as to vary the length of a workweek or workday. Employees may use credit hours to fulfill their basic work requirement, thereby gaining time off from work to pursue volunteer activities and for other purposes. If a department or agency authorizes credit hours under its flexible work schedules program, the maximum amount of credit hours that may be carried over from one pay period to another is 24 hours. [Read More](#)

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has prepared the following guidance to support the efforts of departments and agencies to encourage employee participation in volunteer activities. Departments and agencies should also review any applicable regulations or policies and collective bargaining agreements before making determinations on these matters.

The Federal personnel system provides departments and agencies with considerable flexibility in scheduling hours of work and time off. Departments and agencies are encouraged to make appropriate use of this flexibility in responding to requests for changes in work schedules or time off to allow employees to engage in volunteer activities, while giving due consideration to the effect of the employees absence or change in duty schedule on work operations and productivity. Departments and agencies have the flexibility to approve a variety of work arrangements for employees seeking to engage in volunteer activities during normal work hours. Flexible or compressed work schedules may be established for employees who wish to engage in volunteer activities during normal working hours. Employees represented by an exclusively-recognized union may participate in a flexible or compressed work schedule only to the extent expressly provided under a collective bargaining agreement between the agency and the exclusive representative.



## Slaughterhouses as Sources of Data for Animal Epidemiology

Meat inspection at the slaughterhouse is recognized as a valuable tool for animal health surveillance and food safety. Several types of data are collected at slaughterhouses, including ante-mortem and post-mortem meat inspection findings, food chain information, and production data (such as carcass weights and quality), as well as drug residues, chemical contaminants, and pathogens. From the point of public health, the objective of collecting data in the slaughterhouse is to guarantee the safety of meat, and meat inspection represents an

essential tool to control animal diseases and guarantee public health. However, these data can also be used for other purposes such as animal health surveillance, animal welfare, production monitoring, and the

essential tool to control animal diseases and guarantee public health. However, these data can also be used for other purposes such as animal health surveillance, animal welfare, production monitoring, and the identification of drug-resistant organisms. The aim of this Special Issue is to bring together examples of how slaughterhouse data can be used to advance the field of animal epidemiology.

Source: [MPDI](#)

## European advisers green-light 2 H5N1 avian flu vaccines

At its meetings last week the European Medicines Agency human medicines committee recommended approval for two human H5N1 avian flu vaccines, one called Celldemic and the other Incellipan. Both are inactivated adjuvanted cell-based vaccines manufactured by Seqirus. Celldemic is intended for immunizing people during outbreaks coming from animals, including when public health officials anticipate a possible pandemic.

Incellipan is intended as a pandemic preparedness vaccine to be used only when a pandemic has been declared, which prompted the manufacturer to include the pandemic strain in the final version of its vaccine. The approval now, based on safety and efficacy trials, would speed the final authorization of a pandemic vaccine.



Source: [CIDRAP](#)

# 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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# NEW MEMBERS:

Angelina Williams

Madonna Higgins

Alicia Gehling

Juliana Lench

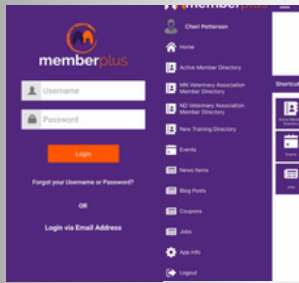
Jaclyn Melvin

Kayla Orso

Saba Zewdie

Kira Moore

Andrea Van Schoick

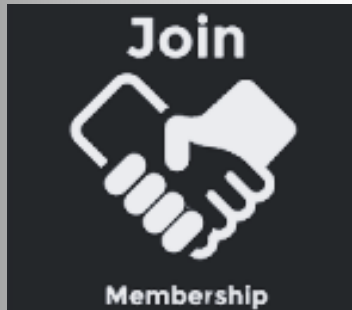


## NEW MEMBERS

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

## RETIRED MEMBERS >>>

Download the member-plus app. A free mobile app where you can check for the directory and latest updates about us. Always be updated!



## ACTIVE MEMBERS

As an NAFV Member you can now make a plan with GreenPath for your financial health. We hope you enjoy our site and can put it to good use in your everyday life.

## FINANCIAL SECTION >>>

Make sure to check the latest news and federal public veterinary jobs in our website.



Make the most out of your membership by checking our website: [www.nafv.org](http://www.nafv.org)

## BENEFITS

- Career Services
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- Online continuing education
- Professional publications
- Wellbeing
- Clinical policy resources
- Events and networking
- Financial resources
- Scholarships and grants



We encourage our members in becoming an AVMA member. AVMA membership supports you with benefits that enhance your opportunities for success in both your professional and personal life. Be sure to take advantage of the full array of benefits to get the most out of your AVMA membership.