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United States Animal Health Association

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA), established in 1897 to deal with the adverse impact of Texas fever (bovine babesiosis) on the cattle industry, continues to serve as the nation's animal health forum. It is a science-based, dues-supported, voluntary national organization whose membership includes 65 state, federal and international animal and public health agencies, 31 allied animal agriculture industry and professional organizations, and 1,200 individual members representing academia, animal owners and animal health professionals including practicing veterinarians.

USAHA serves as a forum for communication and coordination on animal related issues. Those issues have changed and expanded over the last century beyond animal health and disease control to include animal welfare, food safety, public health and, more recently, homeland security and international health standards. By serving as a clearing house for new information and methods, it acts to develop solutions to animal health and food safety related issues based on science, new information and methods, public policy, risk/benefit analysis and the ability to develop consensus for changing law, regulations, policies and programs.

USAHA is overseen by a 102 member Board of Directors. In addition to the chief animal health officials from all fifty states and the chief veterinary officers of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, the Board of Directors also includes representation from the American Veterinary Medical Association, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians and International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the national associations representing bovine, swine, zoo and wildlife veterinarians, and avian pathologists. Finally, 20 national livestock and poultry industry associations are also represented on the Board. The Board meets during the Association's Annual Meeting held each fall. An Executive Committee, composed of the elected officers, acts on behalf of the Board when it is not in session. A list of Board membership and elected officers can be accessed at the USAHA website: www.usaha.org.

To accomplish its mission, USAHA conducts a number of activities throughout the year, including holding an annual meeting in conjunction with the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians. During this annual meeting, 32 science-based species- and subject-specific committees meet to hear new scientific information and deliberate on animal-related issues with the goal of reaching a science-based consensus resolution to the problems. In addition to the committee meetings, scientific plenary sessions are held where the latest research is presented to members of both organizations.

The animal-related issues confronting this nation have expanded tremendously over the last few decades. Where previously the control and elimination of livestock disease was the primary focus of USAHA, that subject area has expanded to include animal disease impacts on public health and at the interface of wildlife and livestock, as well as the protection of the security of the nation from threats of agro- and bio-terrorism.

In addition to these recent enhancements to the USAHA mission, two new USAHA Committees address issues that relate to integration of animal agriculture markets. The Committee on International Standards, one of USAHA's newest committees, is a joint committee with the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD). That Committee's purpose statement includes adding value to both the USAHA and AAVLD by educating and creating an awareness among the membership of both organizations on key global, animal health and trade issues, proactively identifying critical issues in the international arena, enhancing the organization's understanding, response, and decision-making ability in these areas, and enabling

both organizations to more effectively use this information to improve their strategies, operation and, ultimately, improve global animal health and security. Another new committee, the Committee on Diagnostic Laboratories and Workforce Development, met for the first time at the 2004 USAHA Annual Meeting. This Committee is addressing, among other things, the enhancement of the United States' National Animal Health Laboratory Network and expansion of it to support North American needs for animal disease diagnostic and research laboratories. Regional integration of laboratory infrastructure will support the integration of animal markets in North America.