

**Policy Resolution**  
**on**  
***Agriculture Security***  
**August 2004**

- WHEREAS,** the United States has over a million farms that cover over 1 billion acres of land contributing to our country's \$230 billion agriculture industry; and
- WHEREAS,** America's agriculture and food system is an extensive, open, interconnected, diverse and complex structure providing targets for terrorist acts; and
- WHEREAS,** the United States agriculture and food systems are vulnerable to disease, pest or poisonous agents that occur naturally, are unintentionally introduced or are intentionally delivered by acts of terrorism; and
- WHEREAS,** in the Midwest alone, agriculture employs 15 percent of the workforce and accounts for more than \$10 billion to the region's economy. An agroterrorism attack could generate catastrophic losses of life and economic activity; and
- WHEREAS,** depending on the agent, an act of agroterrorism or other agricultural emergency would have a widespread ripple effect throughout the nation's economy, affecting not only farmers and those dependent on the farm community but also our transportation network, international trade and food supply industries; and
- WHEREAS,** some experts have noted that agroterrorism or attacks against farm crops, livestock, produce or packaged foods maybe more easily accomplished than an attack against high profile infrastructure targets such as skyscrapers, bridges or nuclear power plants; and
- WHEREAS,** the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) considers the agriculture and food sectors to be Critical Infrastructure Sectors requiring heightened attention and protection from threats, whether intentionally introduced or naturally occurring; and
- WHEREAS,** food safety is the joint responsibility of federal, state and local governments and the private sector with each playing an integral role in detecting, deterring and responding to threats to agriculture; and
- WHEREAS,** an agroterrorism attack would require the coordination of departments and agencies in all levels of government. An appropriate response requires that

all governments involved are adequately trained, have established protocols and have the needed equipment; and

**WHEREAS,** state and local agencies are usually the first responders to any emergency and the first responders in the case of an animal emergency are usually state veterinarians; and

**WHEREAS,** rapid response to any food safety or animal disease outbreak is critical, and an essential tool in this early response is the ability to trace the food or animal to its source, and to trace the dispersal of these items throughout the country; and

**WHEREAS,** the state and local First Responder grant programs anticipate the need to guard and protect physical structures and events that will be limited to a small geographic area. Changes are needed in the structure and breadth of these federal programs to adequately address the kind of multi-state, cooperative response protocols that will be required to combat an emergency in our agriculture community; and

**WHEREAS,** an all-hazards approach to preparedness funding would ensure that the prevention of an agroterrorism attack would be an integral component of a comprehensive homeland security plan; and

**WHEREAS,** many of the hundreds of potential diseases animals could contract are not well understood, but many are thought to be able to “jump” from animals to humans, making the coordination of the agriculture and public health response protocols vitally important to saving lives and reassuring the public; and

**WHEREAS,** federal and state agencies often have difficulty raising awareness among producers about these potential threats and persuading them that defensive strategies are worth the time and expense; and

**WHEREAS,** lab personnel and equipment are in short supply and underfunded. A major outbreak requiring hundreds of tests to determine the breadth of an attack could not be quickly handled in-state or even within the region. Lab facilities can typically process only 300 samples per day. Poor and antiquated communication methods present additional risks and concern; now therefore be it

**RESOLVED,** that the federal government should recognize state veterinarians as first responders and incorporate them fully in all planning and resource allocation decisions; and be it

**RESOLVED,** that the federal government, with the input of states, should lead the development of an electronic communication mechanism for sharing information quickly and seamlessly across all levels of government and the food and agriculture industries; and be it



**RESOLVED,** that the Federal government should provide adequate funding to develop and rapidly implement a nationwide, multi-species animal identification system that is compatible with existing public health systems, to secure and protect the integrity and safety of meat produced in the United States. Such a system must allow for immediate, unfettered access to, and control of, the information by state and federal governments; and be it

**RESOLVED,** that the federal government should closely partner with states to develop an effective, seamless agricultural preparedness and food safety system, and support interstate agreements by which states will collaborate on preparation, prevention, response, and recovery as they relate to safety in agriculture. Further, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) must coordinate with DHS to provide federal financial and technical support to assist states in establishing and implementing plans for interstate cooperation and joint preparedness.