Welcome to this addition of the NY Division of Animal Industry newsletter and best wishes for the New Year. I appreciate the opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of the veterinary practitioners, producers and allied industry groups that have contributed so much to the success of animal health programs and preparedness over the past year.

This issue includes articles that serve as examples of the need to continue the commitment to animal health and the consequences of ignoring principles of disease control. It is too easy to look at our current state of animal health and dismiss or minimize the importance of practices that have generated improvements in the health of animal populations. The resurgence of bovine tuberculosis in the national herd is a case study of the importance of conducting appropriate surveillance for animal diseases, maintaining practices that reinforce sound disease control basics, and compartmentalizing high risk populations of animals. As always, the vigilance and commitment of the accredited veterinarian is the cornerstone of this process. Renewed emphasis on the fundamentals of disease control will serve us well as we strive to meet the challenges of an evolving animal production environment.

Thank you again for your continued service to the animal industry in New York. I look forward to another year of progress in animal health and animal care.

Best Regards for 2009,

John P. Huntley

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) in Early Stages
by Dr. David Smith, DAI

Mandatory country of origin labeling (COOL) went into effect for meats starting Sept. 30, 2008. While the labeling requirement is directed at retailers, it will also affect growers of beef, pork, lamb and poultry because of the need to verify the origin country of the animals providing the meat.

Livestock dealers and auction markets may be asking producers to verify the origin of the animals they consign for sale. This verification may be a signed statement on the bill of sale or a separate affidavit. Examples of such affidavits or statements are available at the Livestock Marketing Association’s website: www.lmaweb.com/alerts/.

An alternative to filling out affidavits and signing statements is for livestock producers to use USDA-approved 840 cartags. These uniquely numbered tags are available to farms registered in USDA’s National Animal Identification System. Since these cartags are only issued to registered farms and are only to be applied to US-born animals, 840 tags will be accepted as proof of US origin. Anyone interested in registering their farm or obtaining 840 tags can call Ms. Sarah Blood at the Department at 518-457-3502.

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service runs the COOL program and more information about it can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/cool.
As part of New York’s contract with the Food and Drug Administration, NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets’ veterinarians visit producers who have been identified with a first time drug residue violation in an animal they have sold for human consumption. The intent of these meetings is to help the producer avoid future violations by identifying deficient animal drug handling and administration practices.

Along with procaine penicillin, flunixin meglumine (FM) continues to climb the ladder of illegal drug residues found in meat destined for human consumption. A factor that may be contributing to this trend appears to be extra label use of FM. Meat withdrawal time for FM is based on intravenous (IV) administration; some producers administer FM intramuscularly (IM) and assume that the same withdrawal period that applies to IV administration also applies to IM administration. This does not appear to be the case.

Producers are encouraged to work with their herd vet to establish proper drug handling and administration practices including an understanding of extra label drug usage.

If you have any questions about tissue residues, please call Dr. Dwight Bruno at 518-588-1967.

All test kits that are used for testing of horses for infection by equine infectious anemia (EIA) virus must be approved by the USDA’s Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB). In the licensing process, a manufacturer must submit test performance data to CVB as part of the approval process. Data that is submitted includes the types of samples that were used to achieve the level of test performance reported. This information defines how the test can be used. For example, the test kit information will specify whether for a serological test one can use serum or plasma. If the test kit specifies “serum”, then under QA standards, the test in not valid if plasma is used. The definition of what is an “acceptable” sample is a key component of the test kit as approved.

For EIA testing, an example of acceptable specimen as defined by several kits is: “Specimens may be stored at 2-7C for up to 5 days. If longer storage is desired, store at –20C (-4F).” The simple interpretation of this statement is that the specimen must be tested within 5 days of sampling if it is maintained at 2-7C during this period. This doesn’t mean that samples can be shipped on Day 5 and meet the kit requirements. In the past, many labs have ignored this type of restriction on the acceptability of the specimens. However, all labs certified by the USDA to perform EIA testing, public and private, are required to follow kit manufacturer’s instructions and the issue of the age of the specimen for EIA testing can no longer be ignored. Labs are responsible for enforcing the sample requirements and the failure to adhere to the kit instructions can be the basis for losing their USDA license for performing EIA tests.

A rapid education process must be instituted to inform all practitioners of these specimen requirements. Failure to adhere to the specimen requirements will result in test delays as “expired” samples will not be tested. To insure that testing is not delayed, the best procedure is to remove the serum from the clot tube and freeze the serum. There is no time limit on testing of frozen serum. Frozen serum should be shipped on ice packs overnight so that the sample arrives frozen. A statement attesting to the proper handling of the samples signed by the submitting veterinarian would also be advisable. Otherwise the lab has no way of knowing if the sample was handled properly when the sampling date exceeds the 5 day limit.

If there are questions as to the acceptability of a specimen, please contact your testing lab before submitting the specimen. Unacceptable specimens can not be returned to the submitter. In addition, EIA test paperwork for all New York horses tested at any lab will be reviewed to determine the time elapsed between when the sample was taken and when it was tested.
The recent finding of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in one fallow deer in a Columbia County captive deer herd reminds us of the necessity of continued vigilance for serious livestock diseases. This finding was the result of routine tuberculosis tests conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Markets in captive deer herds. In response, the Department tested neighboring livestock herds, and Department of Environmental Conservation biologists examined and collected samples from approximately 200 road-killed and hunter-harvested deer to see if bTB has spread to NY’s wild deer population. To date, bTB has not been found in any animal beyond the infected captive deer herd. The Columbia County and NY State Departments of Health also continue to monitor this situation. Workers at the farm have tested negative for TB. The exposed herd remains under quarantine and the Department has ordered that the remaining exposed red and fallow deer be depopulated and that further testing be conducted. By eliminating these exposed animals, the State aims to prevent the spread of this disease.

Sporadic outbreaks of bTB have occurred in NY since it was eradicated with the last case in cattle detected in 1992 and the last case in captive deer detected in 1995. Genotyping of bTB organisms isolated from the infected Columbia County deer indicates they are similar to strains cultured from captive deer outbreaks in the early 1990s.

This raises the importance of carefully following proper TB testing procedures. The tuberculin used in TB testing must be properly stored and handled. Any accredited vet with questions about TB testing should call the Department at 518-457-3502. The Department can arrange for one of its field vets to review TB testing procedures with anyone having questions.

It may be prudent to remind your deer-hunting clients to take basic precautions such as wearing rubber gloves when field dressing deer and minimizing exposure to blood and other bodily fluids. When field dressing deer, hunters should be alert for abscesses in the thorax and abdomen. Anyone seeing these signs of disease or other unusual lesions in deer should contact DEC at 518-402-8965.

The campaign to eradicate bTB is one of the great success stories of veterinary medicine. Farmers, accredited vets, and government all have invested a great deal of time, money and effort in this endeavor. Economists have estimated the benefits arising from eradication have exceeded the costs by a factor of about 10. Agriculture and veterinary medicine must work together to protect this accomplishment.

Due to the limitations of current TB tests in deer, depopulation of animals in infected herds is the best long term (continued on p. 4)
Canada’s Revision of USA Horse Import Requirements
by Dr. Adis Dijab, USDA

Canada has revised their import requirements for horses from USA due to cases of piroplasmosis in Florida. Canada is requiring that APHIS, Veterinary Services provide the following, additional certification statement for equines from states other than Florida, for all certificates issued after Sept. 15, 2008:

“During the previous 21 days, the animal(s) in this shipment has/have not been in the State of Florida.”

There are 2 other statements that need to be added to the certificate:

“The animal(s) was/were to the best of the knowledge and belief of the issuing veterinarian, not exposed to any communicable disease within 60 days preceding the date of inspection.”

“The animals are certified to be fit to be transported with out undue suffering by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or other cause during the expected journey.”

It is the USDA Accredited Veterinarian’s responsibility to add these statements to the US Origin Health Certificate for the Export of Horses from the United States to Canada, VS Form 17-145.

For additional information, including new requirements for horses from Florida, please visit USDA, APHIS, VS web based resource at: