

Foreign Animal Disease Outbreaks

Recent experience in Holland has shown that the rate of spread of a transboundary disease is phenomenal. In the 24 hours between the diagnosis and the implementation of quarantine, many farmers in the surrounding areas had moved pigs from their herds into other herds. Many of the herds that eventually became infected had received animals from herds in the initial quarantine area. The effect was that control measures were initially ineffective, the cost of intervention escalated, and many more pigs were slaughtered. Clearly the extent of the outbreak was attributable to the farmers themselves. Such a spread of disease can be prevented only by appropriately targeted education that helps farmers recognize the importance to the entire industry of not spreading disease.

The effectiveness of response programs also depends on whether key issues have been addressed beforehand, such as who will pay for replacement of euthanized animals and lost production brought on by quarantine and trade restrictions.

Although the issues arising from transboundary diseases differ somewhat from those in other natural and technologic disasters, an all-hazards approach addresses issues common to major types of disasters. Examples include programs that address animal deaths (intentional killing to control the spread of disease), security of site (confinement, keeping onlookers out), carcass disposal (with or without the commercial use of byproducts), and feed supplies.