Colorado State University Cooperative Extension programs are helping Coloradans
• increase awareness about and understanding of emerging animal health threats;
• learn techniques to reduce livestock health risks and care for animals;
• develop animal disease control and management plans.

Addressing Animal Health Issues

There are 30,000 farms and ranches in Colorado on 31.3 million acres of land. Colorado agriculture production from that land amounts to $4.5 billion of which 73% is attributed to livestock. Because profitability in the livestock industry has a direct correlation to animal health, major beef producers, feedlot managers and dairy operators are extremely keen and knowledgeable about animal health and well-being. The majority of small-acreage producers are also interested in the health and well-being of their animals but many lack the experience and knowledge necessary to provide healthy, comfortable environments for the animals under their care. In addition, the growing demand by the public for food safety and quality assurance of the animal products they consume, and the emerging threats to animal health by foreign animal diseases, add to the increasing need for education about zoonotic diseases. Because of the global exchange of commodities and world travel, the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans no longer provide barriers to foreign animal diseases. With Colorado's continuing population growth encouraging the migration of humans to rural environments, more human-animal exposure occurs along with possibility of disease transmission. Constant vigil by state and local veterinarians monitors the potential for diseases in Colorado's livestock population. The first line of defense is educating the producer who sees the animals on a constant basis, and who can report unusual behavior or problems. Although many producers are aware of this correlation, many need help with livestock health programs. Cooperative Extension places a priority on providing up-to-date educational information on animal health issues to producers, land managers, small acreage owners and citizens.
There are 30,000 farms and ranches in Colorado on 31.3 million acres of land; agriculture production from that land amounts to $4.5 billion, 73% which is attributed to livestock—that’s 3.05 million head of cattle & calves worth $2.10 billion, 370,000 head of sheep & lambs worth $31.45 million, 780,000 head of hogs & pigs worth $76.44 million, and 4.21 million chickens worth $8.0 million. Colorado ranks as the 4th largest cattle feeder in the country with more than 2 million head of cattle fed annually, and 3rd in the number of market sheep and lambs and is the nation’s largest producer of lamb. In addition, statewide, there are approximately 10,000 small-acreage owners each maintaining livestock and other animals on 5 to 40 acres. (Colorado Agricultural Statistics, 2002)

The Payoff...

- Colorado State University Cooperative Extension animal scientists and veterinary medicine faculty work closely with the livestock industry to assure a safe consumer product. Much education has been done to increase awareness among producers about preventing antibiotic residues or other adulterants from entering the food chain. Extension education, such as the Meat Quality Assurance Program, targets 4-H youth, family producers, small-acreage owners and others who raise livestock for sale, with information on how to produce wholesome and safe animal products.

- The Colorado Center for Animal Health and Well-Being, a collaboration between the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Cooperative Extension, the Colorado State Diagnostic Laboratory, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Colorado State’s Integrated Livestock Management program, was organized to monitor animal health, provide public health information and address animal emergencies—from wildfires to disease.

- The U. S. Department of Agriculture, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension, and large animal veterinarians actively monitor U.S. livestock for foot and mouth disease and have plans in place to take immediate action if the disease is suspected in the animal population. Extension foot and mouth disease crisis-planning efforts included “train-the-trainer” modules for Extension faculty; follow-up seminars for producers, wildlife managers & others; and a statewide informational and media campaign.

- Cooperative Extension offices are serving as drop-off sites for birds to be tested for Exotic Newcastle Disease as part of the Colorado Department of Agriculture’s surveillance efforts to stop spread of the contagious and fatal virus that affects all species of birds.

Putting Knowledge to Work

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