Canadian Swine Health Board: Initiatives in Biosecurity and Herd Health

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- Background and Introduction

As a response to the Circovirus disaster affecting the Canadian industry, in August 2007, the federal government announced the Initiative for the Control of Diseases in the Hog Industry, providing over $76 million to combat disease and enhance prosperity in the hog sector. This initiative was delivered in two phases – Phase 1 was the Circovirus Inoculation Program, which was launched in November 2007 and was completed in December 2008. Phase 2 provided up to $40 million to develop and manage activities related to biosecurity, emerging disease research and long term disease risk management. Phase 2 was announced in March, 2009 and ultimately became the Canadian Swine Health Board (CSHB). This initiative is therefore initially funded by the Government of Canada.

The CSHB is a national organization with the mission to “provide leadership and coordination in support of the management of the health of the Canadian swine herd”. The main focus of the CSHB for the next three years will be to support the development and implementation of the three elements that had been identified under the Initiative for the Control of Diseases in the Hog Industry, Phase 2: Biosecurity and Best Management Practices; Research in Circovirus and Emerging Diseases; and Long Term Disease Risk Management Strategies.

The CSHB has constituted a Board of Directors that represents a broad range of swine industry stakeholders. The Board includes representatives of the Canadian Pork Council, the Canadian Meat Council, Canadian Centre for Swine Improvement, Canadian Association of Swine Veterinarians, and the Veterinary Colleges of Canada. Board meetings also include liaison officers representing Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and the Canadian Council of Chief Veterinary Officers.
The CSHB is also a member of the Pork Value Chain Round Table (PVCRT), providing leadership within two key Strategic Framework Pillars; Value Chain Integrity and Innovation. As such, the CSHB provides input into the PVCRT on issues related to swine health and health research, and coordinates activities with other stakeholders in developing industry solutions identified by the PVCRT.

In order to establish the full range of partnerships that are necessary to the long term success of the organization, and also to provide relevant expertise, Advisory Committees were established for each important segment of the CSHB’s mandate. These Advisory Committees are comprised of appointees from national organizations, and include people in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. The Advisory Committees provide input into the strategic decisions about required achievements, as well as recommending actions that are reflected in operational work plans.

- **The CSHB’s Pillars of Success**

The CSHB has established four pillars, or main areas of activity:

- Biosecurity
- Research
- Long Term Disease Risk Management
- Sustainability

The first three pillars were identified by industry and government stakeholders as key components required to support the establishment of a structured disease risk management framework for the sector. The fourth pillar recognizes the need for the CSHB to provide value to the Canadian hog industry stakeholders on a long term basis and to create a self-sustaining model to support the services provided.

**Biosecurity**

The CSHB’s intents within the Biosecurity pillar are to optimize herd health status; enhance production stability; facilitate on-farm efficiencies, food safety and market access.

CSHB’s initial measurable achievements include the completion of a national biosecurity benchmarking study, the establishment of a national farm level biosecurity standard, and the development of an implementation plan to foster adoption of the voluntary Biosecurity standard.
Research

The CSHB’s intents within the Research pillar are to identify research gaps related to swine health; coordinate, consolidate and disseminate scientific knowledge to facilitate strategic decisions and avoid market vulnerabilities; and respond to emerging health issues.

CSHB’s initial measurable achievements include the completion of an inventory of Canadian swine health research capacity, a retrospective analysis of the Circovirus outbreak in Canada, implementing a research program to support research priorities, and increasing research capacity as evidenced by the creation of incentives for new researchers in priority fields.

Long Term Disease Risk Management

The CSHB’s intents within this pillar are to increase the capacity to identify health threats and respond to emerging diseases; clarify roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, including public health partners; and ensure alignment with the needs of value chain stakeholders.

The CSHB’s measurable achievements include developing a framework to identify health issue priorities related to production optimization and market access for the industry; the identification of an appropriate suite of tools required for disease mitigation; the identification of the requirements of an integrated national disease surveillance program, including integration of public health priorities and issues; and developing a strategy to address priority health issues related to market access.

Sustainability

The CSHB’s intents within the sustainability pillar are to be the long term industry voice for swine health in Canada; to communicate valuable information to decision makers; to build enduring partnerships with stakeholders; and to provide continuing value to all industry stakeholders.

CSHB’s measurable achievements include the definition of business model options; the identification of budget requirements to maintain the CSHB post-2013; and the implementation of a self-sustaining business model to continue to serve the needs of the industry.

It has also been determined that the CSHB should closely monitor developments related to zoonotic diseases, given their potential impact on the sector, and to work more closely with the public health sector in order to be better prepared in the face of a potential outbreak of a zoonotic disease. The CSHB is also working with public health professionals on disease modeling options and communications strategies.
Summary

All pig health activities of the CSHB require heavy veterinarian input and involvement. However, since this Breakout Session is “The Future of Swine Health Practice”, several key initiatives that highlight this involvement will be presented.

At the 2011 Banff Pork Seminar, participants will be brought up to date on these and other key initiatives. The Biosecurity Benchmarking Study will be of interest to attendees, as a study of this magnitude and level of detail is unprecedented in Canada for any species. The Canadian veterinary community played a critical role in the successful development and delivery of this benchmarking study. Findings are being used to ensure CSHB’s initiatives related to biosecurity are appropriately targeted.

The National Swine Farm-Level Biosecurity Standard will also be of interest to attendees. This voluntary standard, and its accompanying Producer User Guide, has been developed with the assistance of Canadian biosecurity veterinary experts, and further reviewed by international veterinary experts. Initiatives to foster adoption of the standard are being developed with the involvement of Canadian veterinarians.

Surveillance and feedback have been clearly identified as critical tools for pig health management, and opportunities to streamline these approaches are being developed. This work will also be highlighted, in conjunction with the development of tools with veterinarians for enhancing herd health and limiting disease spread.

Conclusion

We are collectively well positioned to address the many challenges facing the Canadian pork industry in the near future. The teamwork of our stakeholders that has characterized the industry so far is critical for continued success. Canadian veterinarians have been important partners in developing the Canadian industry, and this partnership is critical for ongoing success.