

Kansas State University Offers Animal Disease Response Training

A Kansas State University center is offering training to help local and state emergency responders prepare for something they hope never happens: a serious animal disease outbreak.

The National Agricultural Biosecurity Center conducted six animal disease response training sessions in Nebraska in April and is offering two sessions in Kansas in May. The training will be offered in Manhattan on May 9 and in Ottawa on May 11. Registration is available at k-state.edu/nabc/nkrhsc.html. Each one-day session is an awareness-level course designed to cover many aspects of foreign animal disease response, including biosecurity, quarantine, cleaning and disinfection, depopulation and disposal, and proper use of personal protective equipment.

The training targets nontraditional agricultural first responders such as firefighters, public health officials, law enforcement and emergency medical technicians as well as veterinarians and others. Bringing many professions together helps individuals better understand their roles in the response to an animal disease outbreak, said Ken Burton, program director at the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center.

"A lot of the traditional human response personnel don't recognize their potential role in a high-consequence animal disease outbreak," Burton said. "They feel they wouldn't be involved, but the idea behind the class is to make people understand it doesn't matter what your role in the community — what your day job might be — the whole community is going to be involved in responding to and be affected by an animal disease outbreak."

Chelsea Kramer, emergency response coordinator for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, attended all six training sessions and said she would like to see more animal disease response training in Nebraska.

"The training gives nontraditional responders an opportunity to see the response as a whole so when they are asked to set up roadblocks or do traffic control or other pieces, they know why they are being asked — they know what the purpose is," Kramer said.

Kramer said robust response plans are important.

"In Nebraska, our state's economy is driven by agriculture," Kramer said. "To protect Nebraskans' way of life, we need to respond to emergencies in a timely and effective manner."

Animal disease response training is designed within the Incident Command System framework and is listed in the Federal Emergency Management Agency state and federal catalog. Emergency responders and veterinarians who complete the course will be eligible for continuing education credit.

The training includes presentations, and then concludes with a tabletop exercise during which individuals consider their responses to a scenario and then discuss how they would work together. Burton said responses to the training have been favorable.

"The scope, size and overall effect of an animal disease outbreak are eye-opening," he said. "Law enforcement realizes it's so much bigger than just a checkpoint. The comments are almost all positive."

The National Agricultural Biosecurity Center is working to schedule animal disease response training sessions in northwest and southwest Kansas later this year.

