Veterinary Services (4c)

The objectives of the Veterinary Services Branch in 2002/2003 were: to provide the necessary resources for diagnosis of livestock diseases while promoting animal health; to encourage the use of veterinary services and laboratory diagnosis by livestock producers; to administer public animal hospitals; to provide extension services to livestock producers; to conduct disease surveillance; and to administer the Humane Inspection Program in the province.

In 2002/2003, the Branch administered *The Veterinary Services Act, The Veterinary Science Scholarship Fund Act,* the recently amended *Animal Diseases Act,* and *The Animal Care Act*. The *Animal Care Act* includes provisions on animal abuse and neglect. Staff investigated 218 complaints on inhumane treatment of animals, and of these, 76 were deemed unjustified and 104 required corrective measures. Charges were laid in three cases and animals were seized in 16 cases. During the winter of 2002/2003, the number of complaints increased due to inadequate feeding of cattle and horses. Many of these complaints were justified, and several seizures occurred and charges were laid.

Financial assistance was provided through the Veterinary Science Scholarship Fund to 32 Manitoba students enrolled at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. In addition, through the Summer Student Employment Program, 20 students were provided with practical experience, while being encouraged to practice in Manitoba's rural areas upon graduation.

The Branch provides technical and specialist services to rural and urban veterinarians through the province's veterinary diagnostic laboratory. The laboratory received 17,815 cases and conducted 489,335 tests in 2002/2003. Increased activity in the farm sector was associated with a rise in the number of shipments of specimens from swine and beef sectors. Producers maximized their economic returns through the laboratory's high-priority commitment to the rapid reporting of laboratory results. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing for diseases of cattle, hogs, and poultry provided a quick turn-around of results and greater utilization of service by producers. Whole herds are tested for certain diseases such as Bovine Virus Diarrhea in cattle and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome in hogs. New research in surveillance methods for diseases such as Johne's disease, Neosporosis in cattle, and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in elk and deer, has contributed to an increase in cases and the number of tests performed.

The laboratory conducted West Nile Virus (WNV) surveillance in conjunction with Manitoba Health, Manitoba Conservation, the City of Winnipeg, and rural veterinarians. Surveillance for WNV included the processing, sampling, and testing of 880 corvid samples, horse brains, and sera from 370 horses. Over 800 deer and elk brains were processed, of which approximately 650 were sent for CWD testing through a joint surveillance project with Manitoba Conservation and Parks Canada.

Branch staff presented pathology demonstrations to Red River College (RRC) students and assisted the instructors of the Animal Health Technology course at RRC. Assistance was also provided to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for some of the courses in which laboratory staff participated.

Field Services staff participated in approximately 45 extension seminars for beef, dairy, elk, bison, sheep, and horse producers. The main purpose of these seminars was to provide awareness and education to producers on issues such as: Bovine Tuberculosis (TB), WNV, biosecurity, CWD, and general herd health management. Staff also attended over 75 producer meetings and delivered course lectures at the University of Manitoba and RRC concerning animal health management issues.

Field staff conducted several disease investigations throughout the year in response to requests from Branch pathologists, private veterinarians, and affected livestock producers. As a result, the first recorded North American outbreak of WNV in domestic geese was investigated and documented.

Field and laboratory staff were extensively involved in several disease surveillance programs including WNV, TB in wildlife, and CWD in farmed elk as well as wild deer and elk. WNV surveillance involved branch staff providing the infrastructure for collection of corvid samples from which brain and kidney samples were extracted for further analysis. The laboratory recorded information on these samples directly into a national database that is maintained by the Canadian Co-operative Wildlife Health Centre in Saskatoon. Surveillance for WNV in horses was supported by subsidizing the testing in sick animals, as well as by collecting approximately 2,000 serum samples from horses with normal appearances all across Manitoba. Through these programs the first occurrence of WNV in Manitoba was detected, and its spread throughout the southern half of Manitoba in the summer of 2002 was tracked and reported. WNV was confirmed to have caused illness in approximately 270 horses and death in 65, and it is estimated that approximately four times that number were affected, but not submitted. CWD surveillance in wildlife and mandatory CWD testing in farmed elk continued to support the belief that Manitoba does not have the disease as negative testing occurred in approximately 800 wild deer and elk as well as 70 farmed elk. No cases of TB were found in the approximately 447 elk, 740 white-tailed deer, 22 moose, and 61 other species tested for the disease in the hunt season.

Bovine TB continued to be a problem in Manitoba in 2002. In August of 2002 the USA downgraded Manitoba's TB status to "modified TB accredited advanced", making it necessary to test all breeding potential cattle and bison going to the USA. In January 2003 Manitoba was split into two different TB status areas by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). In the area around Riding Mountain National Park, the Riding Mountain TB Eradication Area (RMEA), and game hunting areas 23 and 23A, were given an "accredited advanced TB" status. The remainder of Manitoba was designated "TB free". TB testing of cattle and bison herds is required at least once every three years in the RMEA. Permits from CFIA, which indicates the animals that are not at risk for spreading TB, are required in order to move cattle or bison out of the RMEA. The Veterinary Services Branch, along with Manitoba Conservation, Parks Canada, and the CFIA, in co-operation with the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, is involved in a TB Task Group that has an annual implementation plan. The goal of the group is to eradicate TB in both wildlife and in livestock. Manitoba Agriculture and Food (MAF) supports the plan by providing approximately $98,500 per year, as well as veterinary and laboratory staff time and materials.

Veterinary Services Branch continued to work with CFIA, Emergency Measures Organization, and producer groups to ensure that contingency plans are adequate and in place for Manitoba and Canada in preparedness for foreign animal disease outbreaks in Canada or the USA. Outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the United Kingdom in 2001 and Newcastle Disease in the USA in 2002 indicate how costly these incursions can be.

Under *The Veterinary Services Act*, the Branch provided provincial grants to 28 veterinary districts. This funding helped support a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service through 55 veterinarians and their staff. During the year, meetings were held with Veterinary Services District Boards and with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. The Branch assisted the Veterinary Services Commission with the administration and distribution of a $300,000 special grant for capital equipment and infrastructure for the Veterinary Services District Program.

The Branch assisted in supporting livestock disease control research by providing $15,200 to the Veterinary Infectious Diseases Organization. The Branch administered the Rabies Indemnity Program, a federal-provincial initiative to monitor the incidence of rabies. Payments within this program area totalled $3,400.

Sustainable Development

In 2002/2003, the Veterinary Services Branch participated in a number of sustainable development activities, taking into consideration the Principles and Guidelines of Sustainable Development.

To meet the intent of Principle #2, Stewardship, the Branch participated in the following activities:

- **Branch staff assisted in the review of the PMU Code of Practice.**
- **Branch staff were on the committee that developed the code of practice for care and handling of farm animals: Pigs Addendum early weaned pigs.**

To meet the intent of Principle #3, Shared Responsibility and Understanding, the Branch participated in the following activities:

- **Branch staff monitored diseases of economic, public health, and international trade significance. The Branch assisted producers in monitoring and controlling disease outbreaks through surveillance testing of West Nile Virus and Chronic Wasting Disease.**
- **Staff worked with the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association to evaluate the prevalence of four production limiting diseases in cattle, Bovine Viral Diarrhea - (BVD), Johne's Disease, Neospora, and Enzootic Bovine Leukosis.**
- **Branch staff worked with veterinary practitioners to publish two peer-reviewed articles in the *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. The articles focussed on the overcrowding of Manitoba swine barns in the event of restriction on animal movement and the minimum space allowance for transportation of swine by the road.**

To meet the intent of Principle #4, Prevention, the Branch participated in the following activities:

- **The Branch provided extension support. Through the Animal Care Act, the Branch also provided enforcement in support of good animal care, and prevention of animal disease by working with the public, police, and animal control officers.**

4 (c) Veterinary Services

Expenditures by Sub-Appropriation	Actual 2002/2003 $(000's)	Estimate 2002/2003 FTEs	Estimate 2002/2003 $(000's)	Variance Over / (Under)	Expl. No.
(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits	2,062.9	37.79	2,007.0	55.9	
(2) Other Expenditures	937.6		876.2	61.4	
(3) Grant Assistance - Operating					
-Grants/Transfer Payments	470.7		471.0	(0.3)	
(4) Grant Assistance - Capital					
-Grants/Transfer Payments	300.0		300.0	-	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	3,771.2	37.79	3,654.2	117.0	