

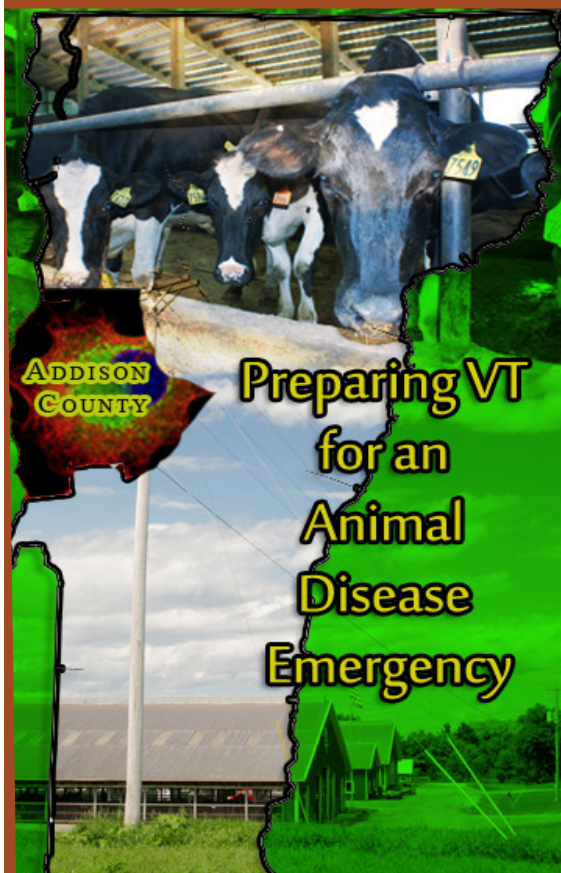


UNIVERSITY OF
VERMONT

EXTENSION

CULTIVATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Summer 2010 Update



UVM extension Dr. Julie Smith with VPR host Jane Lindholm on *Vermont Edition* on May 25, 2010

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FOOD

AFRI BIOSECURITY PROJECT

Costs and Challenges Associated with Developing and Implementing a Community-Wide Biosecurity Plan



JULY 14 MEETING RECAP

A subset of the project advisory group and representatives of 3 of the 4 case farms met on July 14 at the Henry Sheldon Museum in Middlebury to discuss project progress and upcoming activities.

Dr. Julie Smith, Project Leader Dr. Julie Smith led off the meeting by putting the biosecurity project in the context of current events. The recent oil drilling rig disaster is a good illustration of the concept of fantasy planning. While it is true that our government has plans and these plans direct those within their jurisdiction according to the Incident Command System (ICS); these plans do not control disasters themselves, nor do they guarantee the cooperation of individuals or private businesses.

The BP-associated disaster should also lead us to recognize the danger in focusing preparedness activities based on probabilities while ignoring possibilities. If Vermonters only prepare for the probable fire, ice storm, severe weather, and flooding events with which we are quite familiar, we may be caught unprepared by possible, but far more consequential, disasters such as what we are preparing for through this project.

MEDIA OUTREACH

UVM Extension Outreach Professional Louis Bedor III gave a summary of the venues he has arranged to promote the project so far. Julie has been interviewed on VPR's *Vermont Edition*, the WVMT AM 620 Morning Show, and WCAX and UVM Extension's *Across the Fence*. Lou also established and maintains Julie's new blog site: <http://drjuliesmithdairyblog.wordpress.com>. The blog is meant to foster thought and discussion. Advisors and others curious about the project or the subject of agricultural emergency preparedness are encouraged to visit the blog and add your comments.



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<http://drjuliesmithdairyblog.wordpress.com>.

Preparing Vermont to Survive an Animal Emergency



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Lou will be producing project updates (like this one), not to mention podcasts, streaming video feeds, and other material to have ready for “the day ‘if’ becomes ‘when’.”

Julie’s recent appearance on *Across the Fence*, where she was joined by Tim Bouton, Addison County Regional Planning Commission Senior Planner and project advisor, was shown during the meeting. In this segment they discussed why and how to exercise emergency plans. After the video, Julie explained that the basis for the exercises supporting this project is the National Preparedness Framework (NPF) and that the exercises will follow the HSEEP (Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program) process. Exercises are best planned in series.

Julie laid out the proposed series to support the objectives of the current project. The discussion raised some important questions. Who should a farmer listen to in an event? And who would a farmer actually trust in such an event? Am I exposing my farm to unnecessary risk by having visitors from foreign countries or allowing other farmers to use my truck scales? Maybe the dairy industry needs to identify and deal with some systemic biosecurity threats that would be the Achilles heel of the industry if foot-and-mouth disease were introduced anywhere in the US.

CONTACT RECALL CHALLENGE

Susan Hauck, project advisor and research assistant, updated the group on the contact recall challenge. This piece of the project involves 4-Hers interviewing dairy farmers in Addison County about farm visitors, how they keep track of visitors, then setting them up with a record form to use for a month. After a month the 4-Hers will collect additional information and feedback from participating farmers; the project team will follow up with the same farms again later in the project. Everything is on track for this to begin in August. The long-term goal is to leverage what is learned from this interactive process to raise awareness and motivate farms - across Vermont and beyond - to adopt a method of farm contact record keeping.

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COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Ellen Rowe, UVM Extension Family & Youth Development Specialist and project co-leader, presented her approach to studying community perception to a foot-and-mouth disease scenario. This piece of the project will begin in early fall. As it proceeds, the information gathered about what farms would do to protect the health of their herds and that of other herds will be shared with community officials to start the process of building community support for farm-level biosecurity plans.

UPDATE ON VERMONT DAIRY BIOSECURITY SURVEY AND SECURE MILK SUPPLY PROJECT

Julie mailed out a survey on animal movements and farm-to-farm contacts to 494 dairy farms in the spring. Over 50% of farms that received a survey returned it. Based on zipcode, the responses were geographically representative of dairy farms in the state. Data is now being entered and will be analyzed and used in developing simulation models in the future.

The Secure Milk Supply project is one of several projects going on across the country to address continuity of business issues in a foot-and-mouth disease event. The Secure Milk Supply project being led by a group at Iowa State University is developing guidelines for farms, milk haulers, and receiving plants to follow to prevent the spread of virus through contaminated vehicles or milk. Marie Audet of Blue Spruce Farms was on the first working group call and stated that her farm would do whatever it takes to ship milk. Julie said she would like every farmer in Vermont to say that when this project is complete.

CONCLUSION

This project fills an important gap in preparedness because the planning scenario is focused on being in the “unknown” zone. In a fast-moving disease event like foot-and-mouth disease, control zones likely won’t be accurately determined for some time into an event. That makes continuity of business under uncertainty the operational context for most farms. Everyone in the community needs to understand why farms would be implementing strict biosecurity and how to support those efforts in such an event. Getting that message across is the goal of this project.

After taking into account feedback from the meeting, the exercise series (still under development) for the coming year is as follows:

- 1) Planning workshop with each farm to develop “plans” to achieve key capabilities needed to survive foot-and-mouth disease.
- 2) Drills with some or all of the case farms to demonstrate a key capability and show local town officers what is involved.
- 3) Planning workshop with local emergency management directors/town officials to identify resources.
- 4) Seminar to go over state and local level plans relevant to animal disease emergency response. Understand what our baseline plans look like and the scope of authority of responding agencies and entities (including private).
- 5) Workshop to identify gaps in state/local plans regarding capabilities that would be needed in a highly contagious disease event.
- 6) Tabletop to exercise specific capabilities. Incorporate video footage from drills to inform wider audience of farm plans.
- 7) Workshop to develop a comprehensive agricultural communication plan.