




**Best Practices in
Risk Communication**
Will Hueston, DVM, PhD
University of Minnesota




Please Note:

- This presentation was designed both as a stand alone presentation and a video/powerpoint presentation to be shown together.




Dr. William Hueston

- College of Veterinary Medicine
- School of Public Health
- Director, Center for Animal Health and Food Safety
- Team Leader – Risk Management and Communications Core, National Center for Food Protection and Defense
- University of Minnesota



Producer and Technical Content Coordinator

- John Shutske, University of Minnesota



Planning and Preparedness in Risk Communication

- Foodborne Disease
- Animal Disease Outbreaks
- Intentional and Unintentional




Consumer Expectations for Food Supply

- Abundant
- Safe
- Affordable

- Based on excellent history


- We consume food and food ingredients from 20-30 countries daily

- Food safety/food defense often taken for granted



Complex, Efficient System

- Protecting system
- Needs wide range:
 - Consumers
 - Producers
 - Public and private partnership
- Active engagement reduces likelihood of “crisis”
 - Before
 - During
 - After



Risk Communication

- “After event” only?
- Crisis communications only one part of risk communications
- Engage affected audiences BEFORE events become a crisis



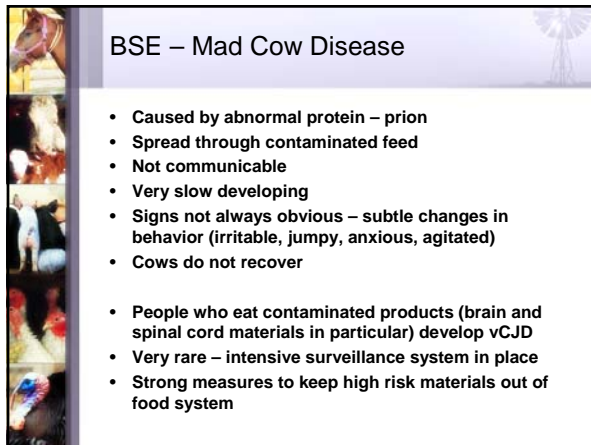
Risk Communication Best Practices

- Applications:
 - Hoof and Mouth Disease or FMD (Foot and Mouth) in Great Britain
 - BSE – Mad Cow Disease (from Washington State in 2003)
- BSE is Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy



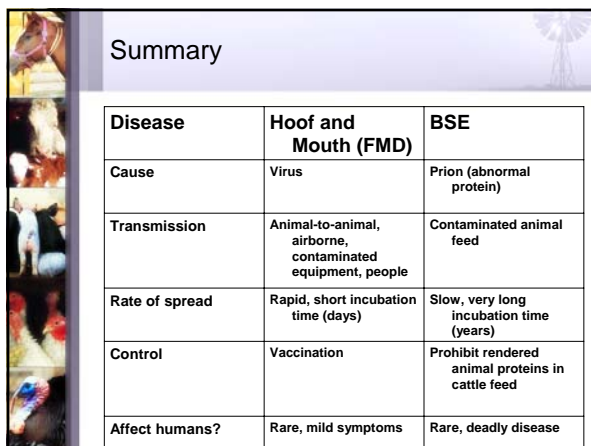
FMD – Foot (Hoof) and Mouth Disease

- Virus
- Spreads easily animal to animal
 - Direct contact
 - Contaminated fomites (clothing, vehicles, etc.)
- Can spread through herd **RAPIDLY**
- Symptoms
 - Blisters, feet, mouths, painful
 - Drool
 - Trouble feeding
- Vaccine controllable
- Little or no threat to human health



BSE – Mad Cow Disease

- **Caused by abnormal protein – prion**
- **Spread through contaminated feed**
- **Not communicable**
- **Very slow developing**
- **Signs not always obvious – subtle changes in behavior (irritable, jumpy, anxious, agitated)**
- **Cows do not recover**
- **People who eat contaminated products (brain and spinal cord materials in particular) develop vCJD**
- **Very rare – intensive surveillance system in place**
- **Strong measures to keep high risk materials out of food system**



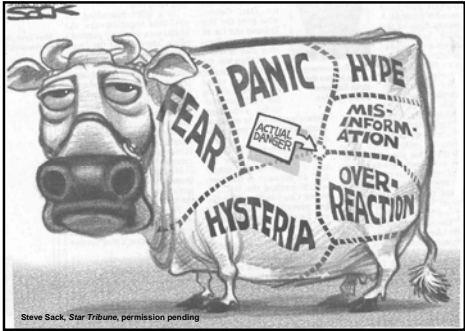
Summary

Disease	Hoof and Mouth (FMD)	BSE
Cause	Virus	Prion (abnormal protein)
Transmission	Animal-to-animal, airborne, contaminated equipment, people	Contaminated animal feed
Rate of spread	Rapid, short incubation time (days)	Slow, very long incubation time (years)
Control	Vaccination	Prohibit rendered animal proteins in cattle feed
Affect humans?	Rare, mild symptoms	Rare, deadly disease

Best Practices for all Risks

- EVERYTHING we do has risk
- We interpret hazards in light of experiences
- We are always comparing risks and benefits


Scientific Risk vs. Perception and Reactions



Steve Sack, Star Tribune, permission pending


Risk = Danger + Fear

- Scientists focus on likelihood
- The less we know, the more we focus on fear
- Fear often drives public opinion
- Need to deal with risk in a constructive way




Best Practices

- What we need to do now
- Goals in starting now
- Being prepared if something occurs




Pre-Event Planning

- What are the messages we may need to get out?
- How do we get them to the right people?
- We had great plans in place prior to December 2003 for BSE
- We learned by watching Canadians (and Europeans)
- Accept uncertainty and ambiguity
 - do not over-reassure ourselves or the public



Collaborate and Coordinate With Credible Sources

- In U.S. – Who are experts?
- How do we connect with them?
- In Minnesota
 - Animal issues: Board of Animal Health
 - Agricultural: Minnesota Department of Agriculture
 - Food/restaurants: Minnesota Department of Health
- Universities (access through Extension Service)
- Minnesota has rich experience in responding




Accept Uncertainty and Ambiguity

- We never have all of the answers
- Cannot predict the future
- Accept uncertainty and acknowledge
- There WILL be events in the future
- Do not over-reassure ourselves or the public
- Hurts your credibility (learned from Europeans with Mad Cow Disease in 1990's)




Forming Partnerships With the Public

- With professionals, consumers, businesses, ag producers
- Be seen as partners, not adversaries
- We're consumers too
- Give opportunities to participate
 - Workshops, town hall meetings, tabletop exercises, etc.




Listen to The Public's Concern

- Seek to understand
- Realize that all questions are valid
- Be prepared to respond to a RANGE of questions



Be Honest, Frank and Open

- Admit when we simply don't know
- Talk about what we are doing to address those things we don't know
- With BSE – USDA admitted that it did not know if there would be additional cases of BSE, but talked about uncertainty
- Candor builds trust



Meet The Needs of The Media and Remain Accessible

- The media has a story to tell
- It's their job
- The media WILL write a story, and WILL seek out a source
- Be proactive – make sure the source is credible, someone who knows and can talk about what we know and don't know
- Daily updates




Communicate With Compassion, Concern and Empathy

- Food concerns are serious business
- Public health
- Economic
- Stress

- Start by sharing empathy and compassion


- Increases credibility – sets stage for listening and understanding



Provide Opportunities for Self Efficacy


- Give people something to do
- We all share in solving the problem

- Eg. Wash hands, cook foods, give information numbers
- Allow people to participate in an organized




Key Summary Points

- Don't wait until crisis occurs
- Plan now
- Build relationships
- Listen to the public
- Practice response
- Think about and develop key messages
- Speak with empathy and compassion
- Be open and honest in your communications



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Coordinator

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