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— Mike Apley

with amending rules governing imports of beef from Brazil.

Also approved was a resolution in response to fears that implementation of third-party feedlot audits, if required by beef processors, may result in a hodge-podge of audit protocols. The resolution recommended the current Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) feedlot assessment

as the guiding example for third-party audits.

Committee members heard a presentation from Kansas State University veterinarian Mike Apley, who offered a “regulatory heads-up” regarding antimicrobial use in meat-animal production. As a result of political pressure, livestock producers can look for tighter regulation of antimicrobials and particularly those administered through feed. Apley worries that Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) rule-making may not be driven by only science-based information. He said he fears that overregulation may eventually supersede use of veterinary-prescribed antimicrobial products.

“The question is whether veterinarians will retain relevancy to antimicrobial use decisions, or will political pressure drive regulation,” stated Apley.

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## Working group discusses herd security

*Group explores strategies for maintaining herd health security, with particular attention to bovine viral diarrhea (BVD).*

Scheduled during the 2014 Cattle Industry Convention were meetings of “working groups,” which function as subcommittees of National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) policy committees. The Beef Cattle Herd Security/BVD Working Group’s charge is to explore strategies for maintaining herd health security, with particular attention to bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), and report the NCBA’s Cattle Health & Well-being Committee.

Speakers at the meeting included Eileen Thacker, a research veterinarian with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. Thacker spoke about ongoing BVD research, including studies of various strains of the disease virus found in the field, which are being compared with strains currently included in vaccines. Thacker said the objective is to determine if vaccine composition needs to change, based on prevalence of problematic strains of the BVD virus. Thacker also discussed research of the HoBi virus, which, due to its similarity to the BVD virus, could confuse test results.

Mississippi State University veterinarian David Smith spoke about risk analysis for herd security decision-making, outlining steps including risk assessment, risk mitigation and documentation of the process. Smith said risk analysis may reveal that, contrary to popular opinion, routine vaccination is not always justified economically. Factors influencing the decision include herd size, the level of risk presented by a specific disease, and the cost of vaccination compared with potential costs of a disease outbreak.

“There are situations where it may not be economically advantageous to vaccinate,” stated Smith. “The decision is unique to each operation. For some, a decision not to vaccinate may be logical.”

Also on the agenda was University of Hawaii veterinarian Ashley Stokes, who explained protocols associated with preparation and transport of weaned calves from Hawaii to feedlots on the mainland. Protocols address health, sanitation and nutrition, along with other management associated with nine-day shipment by sea.

University of Nebraska veterinarian and Working Group Chairman Dale Groteleuschen praised the Hawaii program as a good example of preconditioning, attention to animal well-being and biosecurity measures, which involves planning and execution of protocols before, during and after shipment.

Also announced during the meeting were plans for future BVD symposia to be convened in College Station, Texas, and Kansas City, Mo.

— Troy Smith, field editor

# Health Issues



► Ashley Stokes, extension and research veterinarian for the University of Hawaii, explained that this project is being proactive on cattle welfare during transport, and she aims to protect and improve the shipping process.

as were temperature and humidity of the cowtainers during the trip. The cowtainers have feeders, waterers, ventilated windows, and ample space for the cattle to move and lie down, though not enough for them to get hurt when the cowtainer is moved. The cowtainers also had a camera to monitor behavior.

The study showed that the combination of temperature and humidity is key, and

neither reached the danger zone within the cowtainer. Body temperatures spiked during moments of stress, like loading and unloading, and when the cowtainer was moved. The stress of animals was monitored by substance P, white blood cell values and genetic evaluation with a micro ray. She said stress also showed small spikes during loading, unloading and moving the cowtainer, but the results showed that cattle overcame the stress quickly.

The design of the cowtainer, developed by cattlemen, really increases the welfare of the cattle, Stokes asserted. The cattle do not leave the cowtainer for the nine-day journey, but she said this actually increased their well-being. Constant access to feed and water, good ventilation, adequate space and daily cleaning kept the cattle comfortable, and reduced the potential for added stress and injury if they were unloaded again in O’ahu.

Future research will look at how preconditioning affects transportation, she concluded.

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**Editor’s Note:** This article contains information compiled from the Angus Journal’s online coverage of the 2014 Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Trade Show, which is available online at [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com).