

3/31/2017

On Monday, March 27, I was present during the select agent inspection at the Corwin Springs facility where the USDA Gonacon research is being conducted. The Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) was present for the inspection to demonstrate our support for the research and to answer any potential questions that the inspector may have had for MDOL.

Present during the inspection were Becky Frey, Ryan Clarke, the inspector, Victoria Guilfoil, and myself.

The following account of statements made during the inspection are to the best of my knowledge and recollection of the inspection:

At the onset of the inspection Dr. Guilfoil indicated to us that the reason for the inspection was that no one was aware that this research was occurring. Becky indicated that there had been an EA on the project that had been published in the federal register. Dr. Guilfoil then alluded that the "Secretary of the Interior called the Acting Secretary of Agriculture to ask about the program". When the Acting Ag Secretary contacted Jack Shere, he was not aware of the research. Jack Shere then reached out to the head of the select agent group, who also did not know about this research.

Dr. Guilfoil then suggested that "when you let your boss get embarrassed, it is a bad thing, and someone needs to have their hand slapped." She then went on to suggest that a "certain individual in Colorado hadn't crossed their T's and dotted their I's." While she expressed this sentiment or something similar multiple times during the interview, at one point she pointedly referred to Jack Ryan in Colorado being at fault for this. She also indicated that Becky and Ryan weren't the ones at fault, the inspection was a fact finding mission.

Dr. Guilfoil explained in what circumstances research is subject to select agent rules and then alluded that Dr. Ryan maybe just "didn't include" or "failed to mention" that there would be seronegative animals involved. This statement felt suggestive that there was underhand methods at work in the implementation of this program.

When MDOL was made aware of the impending inspection and not fully knowing the intent or reason for the inspection, our agency felt it was important to express our support for the research conducted. As a state heavily impacted by the presence of brucellosis in wildlife any research that shows promise in population control or transmission mitigation is of significant value. Dr. Marty Zaluski our state veterinarian was not able to be present for the inspection. To ensure that our support was acknowledged, a signed letter from Dr. Zaluski was presented to Dr. Guilfoil during the investigation. Her response to our letter was laughter and the dismissive statement that it was not important. We would like the record to reflect that we in fact think it is of the utmost importance.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my account of the inspection. I am happy to answer any questions or provide any clarification I am able to.

Tahnee Szymanski  
Assistant State Veterinarian, Montana Department of Livestock