



PRESS RELEASE

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Local prevention may have crucial role in global zoonoses control

OAK BROOK, IL August 20, 2010: Creating community environments in which zoonoses have difficulty surviving is a critical yet often overlooked factor in controlling these transmissible diseases shared between animals and humans. “Resources are often focused on studying specific disease threats. Yet there are social conditions, which, if left unaddressed, can greatly impact animal and human health,” explains Dr. Bonnie Buntain, a professor of public health at the University of Calgary.

Buntain is among the international experts from multiple disciplines who will examine the interrelationships of zoonoses, animal agriculture and human health at the Sept. 23-24 symposium *Zoonoses: Understanding the Animal Agriculture and Human Health Connection*. The symposium will be at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, D.C.

The symposium is a program organized by Farm Foundation, NFP with support provided by USDA’s Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service and Economic Research Service; Hormel Foods; Texas A&M University’s Foreign Animal Zoonotic Disease Center; American Farm Bureau Federation; Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Cargill; Progressive Farmer; Kansas State University Center of Excellence for Emerging and Zoonotic Animal Diseases; the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials; the U.S. Animal Health Association; and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

While it is important to address specific disease threats, Buntain places equal importance on the need to prevent opportunities for zoonotic diseases to thrive. “We must work together to understand the social roots of ill health in certain populations and their animals. There are social conditions that result in the inability of certain populations to have access to adequate animal or human health care. These conditions exist even locally, in our own backyards, with needy or disadvantage people,” Buntain explains. “If the health needs of these populations are not addressed, the impacts on animal and human health are often higher rates of disease and death. We have a social responsibility to address these issues.”

Buntain describes the term “syndemics” as the connection of social conditions or living situations where multiple diseases can spread rapidly. Every nation has populations with limited access to health care systems and disease prevention measures. “Unless we look at the health care of populations in

need, we will not be able to solve the problem of disease migration,” Buntain says. “Instead of just focusing on the disease itself, we need to focus on the conditions and environment in which multiple diseases might co-exist and have the potential to take hold fast.” Equitable access to animal and human health care systems and taking a socially responsible approach to improving health for all are among the actions needed, Buntain adds.

Public health officials, as well as global experts in human health issues, disease control, veterinary medicine, representatives of agricultural producer groups and media representatives are among the disciplines expected to participate in the Sept. 23-24 symposium. The program is designed to clarify specific issues in the relationships between animal agriculture and human health, broaden understanding of the relationship between diverse production systems and practices and zoonotic diseases, and identify questions that need more research or attention.

The full conference program, as well as on-line registration is available at the Farm Foundation Web site, www.farmfoundation.org. Conference registration is \$300 if paid by Sept. 1, 2010, after which the fee will be \$350. A special student registration rate of \$175 is also available if paid by Sept.1, after which it will be \$200.

A block of sleeping rooms has been reserved at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, 1000 H Street NW, Washington, D.C. Hotel reservations can be made by calling (202) 582-1234 or 800-233-1234. The symposium room rate of \$209 per night, single or double occupancy, is available for reservations made by Aug. 25, 2010.

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