



PRESS RELEASE  
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***A global approach required to prevent and manage zoonotic diseases***

OAK BROOK, IL August 25, 2010: In today's highly mobile world, nations are more dependent on one another than ever before in addressing the challenges of preventing and managing outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. "We have national boundaries, which are largely political boundaries. Pathogens, however, don't carry passports," explains Dr. Kevin Walker of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University. "The overall health of one country is increasingly tied to the attention disease and sanitary infrastructure is given in another country."

Walker will be the keynote speaker at the Sept. 23-24 symposium, *Zoonoses: Understanding the Animal Agriculture and Human Health Connection*, which will take place at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, D.C. The symposium is targeted to the broad cross-section of disciplines affected by zoonotic diseases, including public health officials, epidemiologists, virologists, veterinarians, agriculture producer groups, public policy makers and media representatives. The program is designed to build understanding of the relationships between zoonoses, animal production systems and human health, and strengthen the role of each profession in the prevention and management of zoonotic diseases.

Walker defines zoonoses as transmissible diseases shared between animals and humans. Of the 1,400 species of human pathogens, around 60% are considered to be zoonotic, he explains.

“Zoonoses have always threatened health to some degree, but what is different today is our interdependence across countries and connectedness with each other,” he says. “In the past we could operate with an out-of-sight, out-of-mind frame of reference. We knew the world was changing but it didn’t affect us personally. Today it does.”

Today’s highly mobile global economy and population means disease can spread worldwide in a matter of hours. This mobility means some of the constructs or basis on which disease prevention and control are built, are becoming increasingly vulnerable, says Walker. “We live in a world where a farmer who lives thousands of miles away may unknowingly ship to market sick birds with the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1. That can start a chain of events with impacts that may be global, including heightened risk to industry and public health.”

A major challenge, says Walker, is how to maintain common priorities for disease prevention and control across global regions, nations and cultures. “Often times, sanitary infrastructure—veterinary or public health—does not rank high on overall priorities. When it is not a top priority on which sustained attention is focused, public health and potential economic growth can all be compromised.”

The issue extends beyond simply providing financial resources. In some countries governments, industry and citizens have recognized that the lack of disease provides public benefits. Working with animal and human health professionals, they commit to building an infrastructure to support disease prevention and control measures, Walker explains. This, in turn, generates opportunities to export product to other countries, and gives assurance to people entering the country that they will not face specific disease threats. “In some countries, however, that basic orientation and awareness is not there,” he continues. “That means they don’t enjoy the same level of sanitary infrastructure or health. With the movement of people, a continued increase in the density of populations and movement of product in the world, there is an increasing risk for things to happen. Disease can now navigate the globe in 24 hours.”

The Sept. 23-24 symposium is 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 National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense; American Farm Bureau Federation; Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Cargill; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; 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.

The full conference program, as well as on-line registration is available at the Farm Foundation Web site, [www.farmfoundation.org](http://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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