



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

MAR 31 2006

C. Mack Sewell, Dr.P.H.
State Epidemiologist, New Mexico
Director, Epidemiology and Response Division
President, Council of State and Territorial
Epidemiologists
2872 Woodcock Boulevard, Suite 303
Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4015

Dear Dr. Sewell:

Thank you for your letter requesting that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) convene a meeting to address animal import and exotic animal trade issues. Please excuse the delay of this response. As the federal agency tasked with preventing the introduction of diseases that pose a human health threat, CDC strongly shares your concerns about the infectious disease risks associated with exotic animal importation.

Our past responses to human health disease threats posed by animal importation include our current regulations restricting the importation of nonhuman primates and African rodents and orders prohibiting the introduction of civets and birds from countries with highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1. However, CDC recognizes that emerging infectious disease threats related to exotic animal importation may require a broader, more comprehensive policy addressing exotic animal importation. CDC believes that a number of approaches could be taken to further limit the introduction of zoonotic diseases into the United States. We have engaged our federal partners in this process, and on January 17, 2006, we hosted a coordinated discussion with federal partners including the Food and Drug Administration, the United States Department of Agriculture, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Defense, and others. On February 1, 2006, we also discussed our activities with the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) as well as your organization, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), via conference call, and plan to provide updates to your groups at upcoming meetings in 2006.

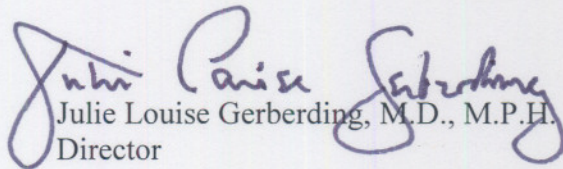
The 2003 and 2005 Position Statements from CSTE and NASPHV, as well as your most recent letter, requested that CDC organize a broad federal effort to address exotic trade issues. As you know, no single federal agency has complete regulatory authority over the exotic animal trade. Although CDC has been engaged in efforts to revise our animal importation regulations, other agencies will need to be similarly involved to address their regulatory capabilities. As we discussed during the February 1, 2006, conference call, the Federal Advisory Committee Act strictly regulates CDC's ability to establish a consensus working group with nonfederal

RECEIVED APR 04 2006

stakeholders where the intent is to provide consensus advice to CDC on matters of policy. We would, however, be happy to work with you to arrange a meeting in Atlanta this Spring where we receive information and opinions from individual stakeholders. Please have representatives from your group contact Dr. Jennifer McQuiston, Division of Global Migration and Quarantine, by phone at (404) 639-0041 or by e-mail at fzh7@cdc.gov. Dr. McQuiston will serve as CDC's primary point of contact for the organization of this meeting.

Please be assured that CDC is committed to the development of comprehensive national control measures to reduce the risk of importing zoonotic pathogens via animals and animal products that pose a threat to human health, while maintaining the ability to respond to novel threats as they occur in humans. We look forward to working with you to achieve this goal. I also will provide this response to Dr. Gail Hansen, State Epidemiologist, Kansas, and President, NASPHV, who cosigned your letter.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director