

National Aquaculture Association Policy on National Aquatic Animal Health Management Program

Background

Global trade and the possibility of transporting exotic aquatic animal pathogens highlight the need for an effective national aquatic animal health management program. The European Union (EU) is already instituting restrictive programs that will limit the opportunity for aquatic animal pathogen spread. A “competent authority” must be identified in the US if aquaculture animal producers are to participate in EU trade. State jurisdiction over fish pathogens and the interstate transport of live aquatic animals and aquatic animal products complicates commerce. Conflicting certification requirements and discordant application between public and private aquaculturists may impede commerce. There is a need for greater uniformity.

The development of a national aquatic animal health management program requires participation of commercial, public, and regulatory interests. Food fish, bait fish, and ornamental fishes should be included in program development. Because pathogen inspection programs are expensive, a focus should be placed on user friendly, cost-effective alternatives. A careful risk-analysis for each aquatic animal pathogen should be considered in designing the management program.

National aquatic animal health management programs should encompass all aquaculture interests and take into consideration the developmental stage of respective programs as well as the fact that transfer of pathogens across species is possible. Since all aquatic interests are to be considered for inclusion in this management program, representatives from such groups should be invited to participate in the development process, and in program implementation.

Policy

It is the policy of the NAA:

1. To encourage development of a cost-effective, scientifically-sound National Aquatic Animal Health Management Program.
2. To encourage broad and early participation by all interest groups in development of a national plan.
3. To foster a program that prevents introduction or spread of adverse pathogens.
4. To encourage a national program which utilizes a risk-based inspection process.
5. To encourage APHIS to serve as the lead agency for certification permits and other import/export requirements for aquacultured fish or products.
6. To encourage harmonization of interstate and international transport health certification requirements.