

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release November 8, 1978

(FWS) Inez Connor 202/343-5634  
(APHIS) David Goodman 202/477-6315

## AGENCIES SIGN AGREEMENT TO HELP PREVENT HARMFUL ANIMAL AND BIRD DISEASES

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that formalizes their past cooperation in controlling diseases that are spread among wild mammals and birds under FWS jurisdiction and domestic livestock and poultry.

The agreement provides for close coordination and collaboration in the early detection and prevention of these harmful diseases. Should disease outbreaks occur among wild migratory birds APHIS will provide confirmatory testing, expedite permits for shipment of disease specimens, and exchange advice on control measures with FWS employees combating the outbreak. Such cooperation will be important in reducing wildlife losses and especially critical if endangered species are involved in the disease outbreak.

Foreign diseases that can affect wildlife are of particular concern to both agencies. Foot-and-mouth disease, for instance, which is not normally found in this country, can affect both domestic and wild animals. Under this agreement, if foot-and-mouth disease should be found on FWS lands, the two agencies will cooperate with State officials in taking samples from deer, cattle, and other hooved animals and in eradicating the disease.

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Another foreign disease--exotic Newcastles disease--spreads rapidly and affects most species of birds, including chickens. An outbreak in California in the early 1970's was attributed to a shipment of imported pet birds and resulted in losses of \$56 million and the unavoidable destruction of 12 million birds. Should such an outbreak occur again, the two agencies--in cooperation with State officials--would assess the extent of disease outbreak and cooperate in control activities deemed necessary by APHIS to remove the threat to either the livestock or poultry industries. Any such action would comply with Federal laws for wildlife conservation.

The Memorandum of Understanding also establishes procedures for reporting incidences of foreign diseases and for the proper shipment of dangerous pathogens, vectors, cultures, test materials, or other organisms from infected mammals and birds under the jurisdiction of the FWS. The agencies will also continue to cooperate with State officials, collaborate on special study programs, exchange data, and conduct joint training courses and workshops on the detection, control, and eradication of disease problems.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed on September 20. Copies and additional information may be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (WR), Washington, D.C. 20240; or Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (Veterinary Services), Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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