



Summary

Strategic Planning Meeting

American Association of Extension Veterinarians

Kansas City, Missouri

May 19-20, 2008

Background:

Members of the American Association of Extension Veterinarians and representatives from allied organizations met May 19 and 20, 2008, for the purposes of strategic planning and goal-setting for the AAEV organization. The session was facilitated by Gary LaBranche, CAE. In addition to specific goals for the AAEV, participants discussed needs and goals for the discipline of extension veterinary medicine in general. As a result of the session, short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals were identified for the AAEV organization, along with a revised list of objectives of the organization.

This report summarizes the results (goals and objectives). Following that section are lists of specific responses by individual participants to questions that were raised about the organization. These responses were then used to help formulate the specific goals and objectives.

Participants:

Stanley Robertson, Mississippi State University, AAEV President
Ernest Hovingh, Pennsylvania State University, AAEV President-elect
Russ Daly, South Dakota State University, AAEV Secretary
Bob Wills, Mississippi State University, AAEV Treasurer
Bill Epperson, Mississippi State University
Dee Griffin, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Don Klingborg, University of California-Davis
Dale Moore, Washington State University
David Smith, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
David Thain, University of Nevada
Doug Meckes, Department of Homeland Security
Ben Richey, United States Animal Health Association
Patrick Webb, National Pork Board.

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Short-Term Goals (<1 year):

1. Conduct member needs assessment survey
 - Gather demographic information (titles, split of research-extension-teaching appointment, time in position, species or area of emphasis, tenure vs. non-tenure track, etc.)
 - Gather information regarding faculty evaluation of extension veterinarians
 - Record opinions on importance of previously stated AAEV objectives
 - Should there be other objectives of the organization?
 - What member services do you want the AAEV to provide you?
 - Identification of additional members to survey
 - Outcome and goal – summarize and present to CSREES at next AAEV annual meeting
2. Meet with CSREES leadership to discuss how AAEV can play a leadership role in meeting needs of the veterinary extension community
3. Increase communication and services to members

Medium-Term Goal (2-3 years):

1. Better market AAEV to organizations that provide funding to veterinary extension and veterinary-extension related issues (USDA, Dept. of Homeland Security, industry, etc.)

Long-Term Goal (3+ years):

1. Position AAEV as the premier organization regarding animal, public, and environmental health and well-being issues.

Revised Objectives for the organization:

1. Provide tools and knowledge to help extension veterinarians do their job better.
2. Position extension veterinarians as important resources for and partners with organizations involved with animal and public health
3. Engage CSREES to promote the animal, public, and environmental health and well-being objectives of that agency
4. Provide collaborative and networking opportunities between extension veterinarians
5. In order to develop appreciation of scholarly contributions of veterinary extension, establish objective evaluation standards for extension veterinarians by administrative units.

Background information

- Organization started in 1965
- Strategic plan developed in 1997, stemmed from AAEV leadership writing a grant to accomplish this. Over 40 veterinarians were in attendance, representing most universities with extension veterinarians.
- Strategic plan was re-released in 1999, with somewhat different organization to the document.
- Results/outcomes of strategic plan?
 - Report was sent to universities with goal of communicating to administrators what veterinary extension was.
 - Served to “formalize” the role of an extension veterinarian
 - Used as a potential tool for communication when seeking funding by individual extension veterinarians for veterinary extension activities
- Did it work? It may have been useful in guiding individual extension veterinarians’ activities, questionable effectiveness to administrators
 - Comments received by extension veterinarians not able to attend the meeting (lack of travel funds, increasing time demands for extension- and non-extension-related activities) may indirectly indicate that it was not particularly effective.
- Previous generation of extension veterinarians existed in a different reality; extension veterinarians now are faced with increased expectations, fewer educators/agents in the counties, etc. These trends are expected to continue.
- At previous planning meeting, CSREES representative was present, but not at this meeting.
- General consensus that 1997 document was of very high quality, but impact was more on an individual basis than on an organizational basis.
- There was no monitoring or “tweaking” of 1997 plan once it was released.
- What has happened within the organization since last strategic plan?
 - Changed meeting site to USAHA/AAVLD
 - USAHA has provided time slot for AAEV Applied Research symposium
 - USAHA organization served as a better fit for the outreach mission of extension veterinarians than previous meeting site of AVMA meeting.
 - CSREES program leader has changed several times since.
 - Fewer extension veterinarians now, less disposable money to spend on travel and meetings, fewer individuals see themselves as “extension veterinarians.”
 - More split appointments now; even those with 100% extension appointments are being pulled in many different directions.
- 1997 document reflected the interests of the people present at that planning meeting
- Paid AAEV membership now is 39; could be up to about 50 with more aggressive dues collection. We are working off a list of 97 that were at one time involved in veterinary extension.
- The 40 members present at the last strategic planning meeting was felt to represent about 70% of the organization (10 members present at this meeting).

Key Relationships

1. Universities

- Outreach now is being done by a variety of individuals in colleges of veterinary medicine, state agriculture departments, others). Many of these organizations have better resources than university-based extension programs. Some of this outreach is self-serving.
- University extension programs are confronted with increasing urban populations--which are not traditional extension audiences--and the challenge of engaging those people.
- General feeling that extension veterinarians are greatly valued externally, but perhaps not internally (by the university itself).
 - A portion of extension veterinarians' workload is spent communicating their activities and roles to university administration.
- A disconnect is noted between the value that the public at large places on veterinary extension and the value that funding agencies place on it.
- Politics within the university are becoming increasingly important. There still is a great need for administration and legislators to know what extension veterinarians do.

2. Producer Organizations

- Have direct relationships with extension veterinarians and with veterinarians, a primary audience of veterinary extension.
- Can be great allies or can represent great hurdles to overcome.
- Represent political opportunities for extension veterinarians as they build alliances with these producer organizations.
- These organizations do not depend at all on AAEEV; rather AAEEV can play a role in setting a national agenda into which extension veterinarians can be a part of.

3. USDA/CSREES

- Has never requested information, background, opinions, etc. from AAEEV
- A positive change would be a single national leader that is an advocate for veterinary extension.

Key Issues

1. Safety of the food supply
2. Zoonoses and public health
3. Animal welfare
4. Capacity of AAEEV organization to “do things.”
5. Funding of AAEEV
 - Previous calendar year = \$ 1167 income, \$ 585 meeting expenses
 - \$ 8,677 total net worth
6. Organization status: incorporation, tax filing status
 - Currently, there are questions about AAEEV’s IRS status
 - AAEEV has been tax exempt, and not required to file tax forms since it is below the income thresholds for filing.
 - Treasurer has obtained a new EIN number for AAEEV as of one month ago.
 - At one time was incorporated in state of Illinois, but there currently is no record of files of incorporation there.
 - Short-term goal needs to be clarifying these positions, becoming incorporated in a state.
7. General funding of Veterinary Extension
 - There currently is not a national program for direct funding
 - Integrated grant programs include extension and outreach along with the research component.
 - \$ 150 million currently allocated for USDA CSREES for all extension activities
 - Other sources:
 - State funds
 - Dept. of Homeland Security
 - Internal university granting mechanisms
 - Some commodity groups
 - Other government agencies such as CDC, NIH, NSF, others
 - Challenges were noted in finding funds to “do the public’s work.” Grants are awarded specifically to carry out the purpose of the individual grant only.
 - Core funding has decreased, but this may be offset somewhat by an increased ability to access competitive funds. Efforts were made in the recent farm bill to increase competitive funding.
 - Seems logical that funding will decrease with time.
 - USDA budget has historically been “plant-focused,” with roughly 10% of funds devoted to animal issues.
 - Trend toward “issues-based” funding (e.g. agroterrorism) instead of “commodity-based” funding.
 - In the future, there may be more need to place the focus on consumers and the general public in order to secure funding opportunities.

Strengths of the AAEV

1. Good people
2. Good mechanisms in place for networking
3. Provides a chance for individuals working in different regions to come together: there are incentives for multi-state programs
4. Years of experience with animal and societal issues
5. Members have always placed emphasis on providing science-based information rather than acting as advocates for a certain commodity or position.
6. Members are involved with a service profession.
7. Extension veterinarians have unparalleled access to, and credibility with, veterinary practitioners, producers, and extension personnel.
8. AAEV is an allied group of the AVMA.
9. Has at one time been effective in lobbying USDA, etc. The personal relationships fostered through the organization have brought access to CSREES.

Threats, Problems, and Weaknesses (AAEV)

1. Poor job of communicating with members or potential members
 - The member benefit of having a list-serv is not well-utilized
2. Hot-button issues of the day (e.g. agroterrorism, FAD's) are disconnected from grass-roots producer issues.
3. Challenges of getting those new to extension engaged with the organization
4. Fewer new extension veterinarians getting hired in the first place.
5. Defining "extension veterinarian": many faculty members have outreach duties, but do not consider their job veterinary extension.
6. Core group is smaller; there may not be a critical mass of interested/involved members.
7. Changing leadership at CSREES.
8. Issue of relevance of the organization to extension veterinarians. Historically, more value was placed on networking within the profession.
9. Generational issues; younger people less apt to become involved with the organization.
10. How would new hires find out about the AAEV? Lack of a website presence.

Opportunities (AAEV)

1. Ability to leverage people and abilities to gain access to funding.

Opportunities (AAEV), continued:

2. Collaboration among members
3. Ability to provide role models for extension veterinarians
4. Establish guidelines for evaluative procedures for extension veterinarians. Providing this to university administration would help extension veterinarians, by providing a third party to affirm good evaluative practices.

Strengths of veterinary extension in general

1. Collective experiences
2. Connectedness to producers, veterinarians, extension personnel, industry, and government
3. Are practitioners of applied research, when much basic research is being emphasized.

Threats to veterinary extension in general

1. Lack of “thinking outside the box.”
2. Competing priorities of extension along with teaching, research, and service.
3. Lack of funding; this may be “the price of being unbiased”
4. Gaps in empirical evidence on which to base science-based recommendations on animal health, public health, and environmental health issues.

Opportunities for veterinary extension in general

1. Citizens need us now more than ever due to a general lack of understanding of science.
2. Independence and credibility of extension veterinarians can be leveraged.
3. Extension veterinarians are generalists and have unique capacity to analyze “big picture” items.

Most important external and internal influences

External Influences:

1. USDA/CSREES
2. Universities
3. Food Security and safety
4. State politics
5. Energy costs
6. “What’s in it for me?” – as relates to external stakeholders

Internal Influences:

1. Ability to communicate with membership
2. Lack of connection of AAEV to membership; lack of connection among members
3. Critical mass to perform functions of the organization
4. AAEV Executive Board
5. Relevance to membership: “What’s in it for me?”
6. Understanding of the capabilities of the organization

Assumptions about the future (5-10 years from now—participant responses):

- It will become harder to find members willing to take on leadership positions within the organization
- Food animal production will be governed increasingly by socio-political pressures
- Public will demand animal welfare and production standards.
- A significant foreign animal disease will occur
- Energy and food costs will politicize food production
- Approval of animal drugs will become politicized to the point where the US adopts the EU model
- There may not be enough producers left to justify our jobs.
- There will be a greater emphasis on food animal veterinary practice, but it will be practiced in ways much different than now.
- The veterinary extension audience will become increasingly comprised of individuals interested in “sustainable” and “back to nature” agricultural practices.
- There will be no national, governmental support for veterinary extension
- “Strike teams” of multi-discipline experts (combination of outreach and bench research) will form in response to issue-specific grants relating to animal, public, and environmental health.

**What things, if done, will make the most difference to the organization?
(Participant responses):**

- Increase membership by 25%; identify the means by which to do this.
- Collaborate with other organizations to increase the pool of people interested in the activities of veterinary extension
- Improve communication between members and constituents
- Position AAEEV as the “go to” organization for CSREES applied research and education direction by 2013
 - By September, have AAEEV leadership meet with CSREES to explore how AAEEV can meet their goals
- Develop a membership information technology and communication training exercise for members
 - Include program development and evaluation for extension veterinarians and possibly other extension professionals
- Better market AAEEV to the governmental agencies with control of funding: DHS, USDA
- Develop mechanism for AAEEV to serve as a clearinghouse on veterinary extension issues
- Establish an annual award for extension veterinarians
- Research and report expectations for advancement and evaluation of extension veterinarians
- Identify our membership and potential membership
- Resolve incorporation issues
- Study hiring professional staff for AAEEV