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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

9 CFR Part 52

[Docket No. 98-123-4]

RIN 0579-AB10

Pseudorabies in Swine; Extension of Indemnity Program

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of extension of indemnity program.

SUMMARY: In an interim rule published in the **Federal Register** on January 15, 1999, and effective as of January 12, 1999, we established animal health regulations to provide for the payment of indemnity by the United States Department of Agriculture for the voluntary depopulation of herds of swine known to be infected with pseudorabies. In that interim rule, we announced that the indemnity program would end no later than 6 months after publication of the interim rule. We are giving notice that we are extending the indemnity program to continue until further notice.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Arnold Taft, Senior Staff Veterinarian, VS, APHIS, USDA, 4700 River Road Unit 43, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 734-7708.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's regulations in 9 CFR part 52 govern the payment of indemnity to owners of herds of swine that are slaughtered because they are

infected with pseudorabies. Pseudorabies is a contagious, infectious, and communicable disease of livestock, primarily swine. The disease, also known as Aujeszky's disease, mad itch, and infectious bulbar paralysis, is caused by a herpes virus and is known to cause reproductive problems, including abortion and stillborn death in neonatal pigs, and, occasionally, death in breeding and finishing hogs.

A Federal eradication program for pseudorabies was implemented in the United States in 1989. The program is cooperative in nature and involves Federal, State, and industry participation. Industry/State/Federal pseudorabies eradication efforts have been markedly successful. In 1992, for instance, approximately 8,000 herds of swine nationwide were known to be infected with the disease. At the end of 1998, approximately 1,000 herds were known to be infected. This represented slightly less than 1 percent of the herds of swine in the United States. The goal of the cooperative pseudorabies eradication program is the elimination of pseudorabies in the United States in the year 2000.

However, in the past year, market conditions in the swine industry jeopardized the progress of the pseudorabies eradication program. Depressed market conditions caused some producers to eliminate the costs they had been incurring to participate in the eradication program. Continued cessation of eradication efforts, particularly the elimination of herd vaccination, would likely have resulted in an increase in the number of herds infected with pseudorabies. This growth in pseudorabies-infected herds would likely have extended the amount of time necessary to eradicate pseudorabies, and would ultimately have cost both the industry and the Federal and State governments additional time and monies in eradication efforts.

In response to this threat to the progress of the pseudorabies eradication program, we published an interim rule in the **Federal Register** (64 FR 2545-2550, Docket No. 98-123-2) on January 15, 1999 to establish an accelerated pseudorabies eradication program. In order to carry out the accelerated pseudorabies eradication program, the

Secretary of Agriculture authorized the transfer of \$80 million in funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Under the accelerated program, we began payment of fair market value to owners who depopulated infected herds. In addition to indemnity for the value of the animals, we have been providing funding for trucking costs to disposal, for euthanasia and disposal costs, and for cleaning and disinfection of conveyances used for transporting the swine to disposal.

In our January 15, 1999, interim rule, we stated that the indemnity program would extend 6 months from the date of publication of the interim rule (until July 15, 1999), or until funds allocated for the program were depleted, whichever came first. Based on the time we estimated to be necessary to depopulate all known infected herds should all owners take part, we projected that 6 months would be long enough to complete the program, but short enough to encourage rapid depopulation of infected herds.

To date, the accelerated pseudorabies eradication program has significantly reduced the number of known infected herds in the United States. (As of late-June of this year, 424 infected herds had been depopulated.) All States have eliminated or virtually eliminated their pseudorabies-infected herds, except for Indiana, Iowa, and Minnesota, which are still in the midst of substantial eradication programs. Because some States are still conducting their eradication programs, we consider it important to the pseudorabies eradication effort in the United States to continue our accelerated pseudorabies eradication program beyond July 15, 1999. Therefore, we will continue the accelerated eradication program until further notice.

Authority: 21 U.S.C. 111-113, 114, 114a, 114a-1, 120, 121, 125, and 134b; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.2(d).

Done in Washington, DC, this 6th day of July 1999.

Craig A. Reed,
Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.
[FR Doc. 99-17612 Filed 7-9-99; 8:45 am]

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