

Purpose

This Crisis Communications Plan is designed to give overall structure to the activities of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) relating to internal and external public communications during a time of urgency, emergency or crisis. As in any crisis management plan, this plan provides guidance but is not controlling. The actual activities will be defined by the circumstances of the issue or event.

Two categories of communications will be covered in this plan: communications that are the responsibility of MDARD, and communications where MDARD is part of the Joint Information Center (JIC).

There are many scenarios and situations that will require urgent and immediate communication - potentially in multiple formats. Key audiences include:

- The general public
- The food and agriculture industry
- MDARD staff
- Other regulatory and public health partners at all levels of government
- University and Extension (ex. Michigan State University – Extension)

The creation and release of this information is the primary responsibility of MDARD's Public Information Officer (PIO) and MDARD's internal subject matter experts.

This plan is established to provide a framework to satisfy the needs and specify the duties and working relationships of the parties involved.

Definitions

- *PIO* - MDARD Public Information Officer
- *Alternate PIO* - Person appointed to temporarily fulfill the responsibilities of the PIO in a specific situation or event. PIO will designate the Alternate PIO.
- *JIC* - Joint Information Center
- *JIC Representative* - Person assigned to represent MDARD at the JIC, usually the PIO or their designee.
- *Internal communications* - means of communications designed to provide information to MDARD staff.
- *External communications* - means of communication designed to provide information to the public and other entities outside of MDARD.

- *MEMP* - Michigan Emergency Management Plan
- *COSDA* - Communication Officers of the State Departments of Agriculture

Concept of Operations

There are three general levels of communication from MDARD:

1. Normal/routine: Communication pieces related to normal circumstances are important to the public relations of the department, but in most cases do not have urgent or fixed deadlines. This includes but is not limited to fact sheets, background documents, and proactive media stories.

2. Urgent matters requiring immediate attention:

- Responses to reporters on tight deadlines help inform the public about important matters and are critical to ensuring MDARD's position is included and accurately explained.
- Rapid response to high volumes of inquiries at the MDARD Customer Service Center is important and requires timely communication between Customer Center leadership and the MDARD PIO.
- Rapid response to social media inquiries is imperative and helps disseminate accurate information and prevent misinformation from being widely spread.
- Quickly reacting when a matter is of great interest or concern to the public can ease concern and reduce the potential scope of the issue.
 - These types of issues may originate from an action taken by MDARD across any program such as discovery of an animal disease or plant pest, a foodborne illness investigation, or a grant being issued.
 - They may also arise from actions being taken by outside individuals or groups, actions occurring in other states, or allegations made publicly about the food and agriculture sector or the Department.
 - Finally, these types of responses may be required even if the Department plays no role in the situation or if the claims are completely untrue or baseless.

In all of these instances, timeliness and accuracy are critical to an effective response.

3. Emergencies: When the MDARD Crisis Management Team is activated, the State Emergency Operations Center is activated, or when the Director otherwise determines the Department must respond to an issue immediately, the response takes precedent over other communication needs.

At this response level, there is a high degree of likelihood that MDARD will be using the principles of the Incident Command System (ICS). The MDARD PIO will serve in that role as part of the Incident Management Team (IMT) Command Staff, unless the duties are delegated.

The PIO is responsible for both internal and external communication activities during any of these circumstances. This plan addresses response levels #2 and #3.

General Communication Policies for all levels of response:

- Keep MDARD leadership and staff informed of current situation.
- Detailed, honest, accurate and timely situation updates will be provided to the public. The public will be informed about what is and is not known, within the bounds of the law and/or policy.
- Messages will be coordinated with other related government, public and private agencies, particularly the Governor's Office, to the fullest extent possible.
- Messages will be disseminated through multiple redundant mediums (print, broadcast, and internet) to ensure receipt of a consistent message by members of the public.
- Messages will be reviewed to ensure understanding by persons with special needs including, but not limited to those that are deaf or hearing impaired, blind or sight impaired, people with limited English proficiency, etc.
- Specific public protective actions will be provided whenever necessary.
- All communication will be targeted to achieve an informed, aware and calm public.
- Sensitive information pertaining to the investigation of a terrorism or suspected terrorism event will be protected to safeguard any potential prosecution that may result.
- Confidentiality and sensitivity of some pieces of information may be required by law or necessary to protect the integrity of the response and will be assessed on an as needed basis.

Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities – Level #2

In a Level #2 response, MDARD's PIO serves as the communications lead for the Department.

Key activities include:

- Ensuring the Director and key staff are aware of the situation

- Working with subject matter experts to draft talking points and other response documents
- Writing, or if delegated, reviewing and editing internal and external communications pieces
- Ensuring the MDARD Customer Service Center and staff responsible for the MDA-Info@michigan.gov email address and the MDARD social media accounts are given the appropriate tools to track inquiries, trends, content, and instructions to respond accordingly
- Responding on a timely basis with accurate information to the media
- Facilitating media inquiries to the Director and MDARD staff, and providing briefing materials and talking points as necessary

The MDARD Customer Service Center and staff responsible for the MDA-Info@michigan.gov email address and the MDARD social media accounts will immediately notify the PIO when:

- Contacted by a reporter or someone claiming to be with the media
- Receiving more than five inquiries from the public on the same topic within a four-hour period
- Receiving notification that a form of social media is becoming active with allegations against the department

Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities – Level #3

In a Level #3 response, the Department's Emergency Plan or the MEMP will provide guidance. When the JIC is activated, as outlined in the MEMP, the PIO will very likely be needed to participate in JIC operations. This will necessitate implementation of numerous elements of this Crisis Communications Plan, and the responsibilities will be delegated to other staff members.

During a Level #3 response, if the SEOC and JIC are operational, all external communications, including with stakeholders and partners, will be coordinated through the JIC. The approval process used for Levels #1 and #2 will not be used.

Some key responsibilities when a JIC is active:

Office of the Governor

- Authorizes and controls the release of public information and may delegate final approval of media releases

- May provide Governor's Press Secretary to serve as the primary spokesperson, the State Public Information Officer (SPIO)
- Appoints media liaison to SEOC or Joint Information Center (JIC)

Michigan State Police (MSP)

- Coordinates activities through the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP / EMHSD)
- Activates Emergency Support Function 5 and the Michigan Emergency Public Information Plan (MEPIP) as necessary
- Establishes Joint Information Center (JIC) on-site or in proximity to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)
- Assesses situation, identifies information resources, develops press releases, and releases approved messages to media and public

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

- Takes lead role on food and agriculture issues, including issuance of advisories and protective action recommendations
- Coordinates with MDARD representatives in the SEOC and the AgECC to coordinate all food and agricultural response and recovery efforts, including the communications functions
- Provides Spokespersons and/or Subject Matter Experts on food and agricultural issues to the SEOC and/or JIC when requested by SPIO or MSP / EMHSD

Joint Information Center

The JIC Representative will perform other duties as required by the JIC Manager as part of the JIC team.

Some of these duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Answering phones
- Writing and editing news releases not related to the food and agriculture sector
- Assisting in arranging and conducting JIC press conferences
- Researching and answering media questions
- Staffing the rumor control center
- Any other duty required to make the JIC functional

Potential Additional Needs for Staffing

In some Level #2 and Level #3 responses, the communications function may be so extensive that additional resources are needed because of the volume of work is beyond what can be addressed with current staffing levels of the Communications Office. In this event, the PIO will inform the Director, the Chief Deputy Director, or if an IMT is operational, the Incident Commander of the need for additional assistance. Resources may be requested from the Divisions, or potentially from other state agencies or partner organizations.

Task List

In any response, these roles are necessary and may be performed by one or more individuals. When enhanced communications is needed, consideration will be given to assigning MDARD staff the following communications roles:

- Public Information Officer: Coordinates and leads all activities
- Deputy/Alternate Public Information Officer: Assists and provides backup, including relief staffing for potential alternate shifts during 24/7 responses
- Department Spokesperson: PIO, Executive Office staff, divisional leadership and MDARD subject matter expert(s)
- Technical Experts: Provide advice, review documents, answer technical questions
- Joint Information Center Representative: Usually the Department PIO; serves as the representative on food and agriculture issues at the JIC
- Call Center Coordinator: Manages the Call Center and/or established hotlines and ensures call takers have talking points and blank forms for recording information
- Media Tracker: Tracks all media inquiries to ensure responses have been completed
- Social Media Coordinator: Follows/tracks social media content, alerts PIO to emerging issues, and drafts posts for responses and, when approved, posts
- Video/Technology Coordinator: Assists with development of video pieces, provides technical assistance on the use of conference calls, virtual meetings, etc.
- Events: Prepares for press conferences/media availability events, including packets and background materials and logistics for those events (including tours)
- Message Monitor: Follows social and traditional media to keep abreast of current information, trends, commentary, releases, etc

- Writer: Drafts press releases, talking points, and speeches as needed
- Distributor: Ensures, electronically or physically, that messages are distributed and that draft documents are reviewed by required staff
- Logistics: Assists as needed with calls, scheduling, copying, and procuring food and related logistical issues
- Webmaster: Coordinates to ensure finalized press releases, statements, etc. are posted on the MDARD internet site and internal messages are on the intranet
- Internal Communications Coordinator: Assures that MDARD staff are provided with timely and accurate information

Job Aid – Message Maps

Message maps are a useful tool for communicating important information to a variety of audiences. The Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture has developed a wide range of fact sheets as well as message maps for animal diseases and plant pests, and other emergency situations, stored here: S:\Emergency_Mgmt\Risk Communication Material. An example of a message map is attached; the complete list is available on the S Drive.

Review and Revision Responsibility and Schedule: The PIO and the EM Coordinator are responsible for the review and revision of this procedure. This procedure shall be reviewed on an annual basis and revised as needed by October 1.

Distribution of Plan

Paper copies of the MDARD Emergency Plan and this plan component are located:

- MDARD EM Coordinator's Office
- MDARD Training, Exercise, and Planning Coordinator's Office
- MDARD EM Assistant's Office
- Director's Office
- Chief Deputy Director's Office
- Deputy Director's Office
- Public Information Officer's Office
- AgECC (White Room, in the Black Cabinet)
- State Emergency Operations Center Agriculture Desk
- Geagley Laboratory
- Heffron Laboratory

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
Emergency Plan Manual
Crisis Communications Plan

Electronic copies of the MDARD Emergency Plan and this plan component are located:



- MDARD Shared Drive
- MDARD SharePoint
- SEOC Agriculture Desk Computer
- DTMB Shared State of Michigan server

MESSAGE MAP

AGENT: AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF)

STAKEHOLDER: PUBLIC / MEDIA

QUESTION: WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT AFRICAN SWINE FEVER?



KEY MESSAGE 1 	KEY MESSAGE 2 	KEY MESSAGE 3
ASF is a viral disease of swine.	ASF would have severe economic impacts if introduced in the U.S.	If ASF is found in the U.S., authorities have measures in place to respond.
↓	↓	↓
Support Point 1.1	Support Point 2.1	Support Point 3.1
The virus has existed in Africa for many years and has only affected swine.	Swine in the U.S. have no natural immunity to the disease.	Disease monitoring is ongoing in the US.
Support Point 1.2	Support Point 2.2	Support Point 3.2
ASF does not affect humans.	The disease can cause 100 percent death in swine.	Swine operations with ASF will be quarantined to prevent spread.
Support Point 1.3	Support Point 2.3	Support Point 3.3
The virus is rapidly spread between pigs.	ASF in the U.S. would impact swine exports.	Producers will implement strict biosecurity measures.

MESSAGE MAP

AGENT: AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF)

STAKEHOLDER: FARMERS / PRODUCERS / PUBLIC

QUESTION: HOW CAN I PROTECT MY OPERATION FROM AFRICAN SWINE FEVER?

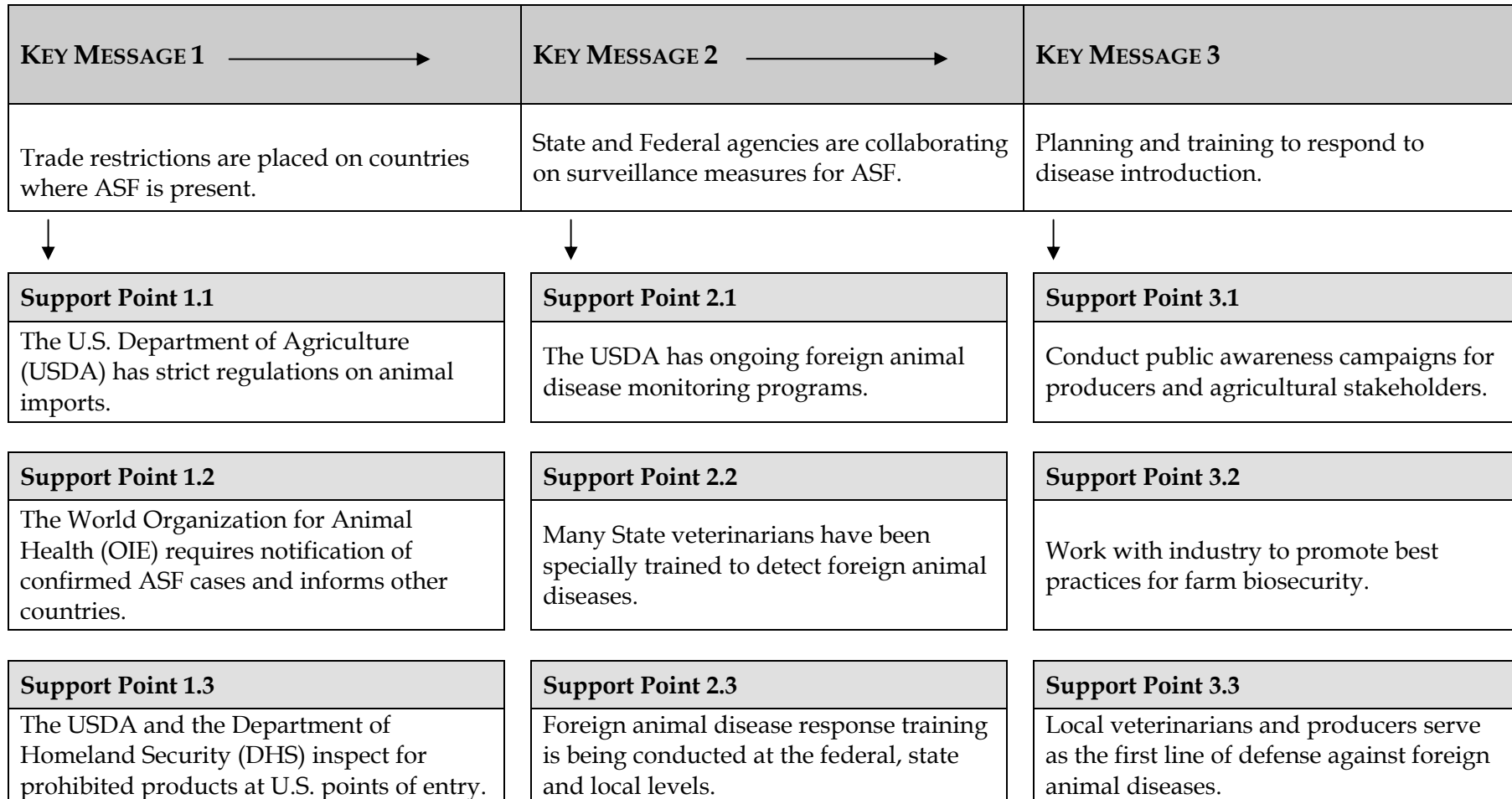
KEY MESSAGE 1 	KEY MESSAGE 2 	KEY MESSAGE 3
Use strict biosecurity measures on your farm.	Prevent disease introduction into your herd.	Monitor swine regularly and contact your veterinarian if you suspect illness.
↓	↓	↓
Support Point 1.1 Isolate any swine showing signs of illness.	Support Point 2.1 Isolate newly purchased pigs for at least 21 days.	Support Point 3.1 Check swine herds regularly for signs of ASF.
Support Point 1.2 Monitor and record any movement of people, vehicles or animals on or off your farm.	Support Point 2.2 Wash and disinfect shoes and clothing after traveling abroad.	Support Point 3.2 Signs of ASF include fever, reddened blotchy skin, reduced appetite and death.
Support Point 1.3 Wash and disinfect items going on or off your farm, such as boots, vehicles and equipment.	Support Point 2.3 Do not bring foreign meat products into the U.S.	Support Point 3.3 Notify your veterinarian if swine show signs of illness.

MESSAGE MAP

AGENT: AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF)

STAKEHOLDER: PUBLIC / MEDIA

QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT AFRICAN SWINE FEVER?

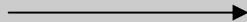



MESSAGE MAP

AGENT: AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF)

STAKEHOLDER: PUBLIC / MEDIA

QUESTION: WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD I HAVE ABOUT AFRICAN SWINE FEVER?

KEY MESSAGE 1 	KEY MESSAGE 2 	KEY MESSAGE 3
ASF is a highly contagious viral disease that infects swine.	Signs seen in infected pigs may include:	At this time, there is no known treatment for ASF.
↓	↓	↓
Support Point 1.1 ASF can spread by direct contact with infected pigs;	Support Point 2.1 Fever	Support Point 3.1 There is no vaccine.
Support Point 1.2 Contaminated objects, such as clothing, vehicles, supplies or equipment;	Support Point 2.2 Reduced appetite and depression	Support Point 3.2 Infected animals must be quickly identified and put to sleep.
Support Point 1.3 The bite of certain soft tick species.	Support Point 2.3 Reddened, blotchy skin, especially on the ears, tail or legs.	Support Point 3.3 Disposal must be quick to prevent the disease from spreading.

Crisis Communications Plan: Record of Major Revisions

Plan Section	Revisions
Crisis Communications Plan	October 2018: No major revisions May 2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added reference to call volume surge at MDARD Customer Service Center• Updated references of MDARD Deputy Director to Chief Deputy Director• Added Distribution of Plan / Plan Component
Communications Plan Message Map	October 2018: No major revisions May 2019: No major revisions