



Fish Health Section - American Fisheries Society

Dear Fellow AFS-FHS Colleagues and Friends,

I hope your spring is off to a wonderful start and that you all are safe and well despite some continuing challenges. There is much activity ongoing within our section, and so wanted to take a few moments to send several updates and reminders.

In no particular order, if you have yet to cast your vote in our annual AFS-FHS elections, please don't forget to do so before May 7th (voting can be done at the following link, where bio-sketches for the candidates are also available <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SYFJQ6P>). Thanks for being sure to support this important endeavor!

The Recruitment and Student Involvement Committee has been working very hard to bring you the upcoming AFS-FHS Summer Seminar Series, which is set to kick off with a Keynote Seminar by Drew Mitchell (retired Fish Health Extraordinaire, USDA-ARS) on **May 7, 2021**. Please check out his seminar details at the AFS-FHS Summer Seminar Series [website](#), along with the lineup for the rest of the series. Of note and new for this year's seminar series are: a) five Keynote seminars from Regional Aquatic Animal Health Experts; b) sponsorships for all seminars that are providing funds for AFS-FHS student members to attend future in-person AFS-FHS meetings (thank you sponsors!); and c) Best Student Presentation Awards (thanks to the AFS-FHS Awards Committee for making this possible!). If you'd like any further information about the Summer Seminar Series, please feel free to reach out to the AFS-FHS Recruitment and Student Involvement Committee members (Drs. Nick Phelps, Matt Griffin, and Megan Shavaliar). I for one can't wait for this series to kick off!

Planning for the 9th International Symposium of Aquatic Animal Health is continuing in earnest, and our Colleagues in South America are quite excited to host the meeting in Santiago, Chile, from September 2-8, 2022. More details on this will be forthcoming! Also in the context of meetings and because the 2021 Annual AFS-FHS meeting was postponed due to the pandemic, I am currently working with the EXCOM to schedule virtual AFS-FHS EXCOM and Business meetings. We are currently targeting mid-July, and I will be sending the specific dates and times in the next President's message so they can be added to your calendars.

The AFS-FHS Blue book (BB) Revision Project Managers, Drs. Jan Lovy and Ken Cain, have been working diligently on this effort, and have provided the following update: "The FHS BB revision and update effort is underway. Two BB Revision Steering Committee meetings have been held to discuss the Blue Book, how it is being used by various entities including government and industry, and the best way to move forward with revisions. The Steering Committee is represented by personnel from the USFWS, state resource agencies, tribes, the aquaculture industry, NOAA, USDA-APHIS, USGS, and academia. Two working groups are also being developed (e.g., an Industry Work Group and a Natural Resource Agency Work Group). Each will work alongside the project managers and the Steering Committee to ensure that diverse views from these groups are considered during the revision. A Diagnostic Work Group is also being assembled, which will develop criteria for the development and use of diagnostic assays, focusing on their advantages and disadvantages in aquatic animal health. The goal of this work group will be to develop scientific criteria to help guide the efforts to further include reliable diagnostic assays in the BB. The revision efforts underway will address gaps in host species and pathogens in the BB by including more robust sections on marine aquatic species, including shellfish, crustaceans, and marine finfish. Subject matter expert panels (SMEPs) are being assembled to help identify host species and pathogens of concern for those three host groups. These SMEPs will help to drive the incorporation of inspection and diagnostic guidance for pathogens of concern in these species. Similarly, SMEPs are being formed to evaluate and include better guidance for freshwater finfish species, particularly warm-water and cool-water species, that are not currently well represented in the Blue Book. This effort will also address needed revisions in the current chapters on salmonids to ensure information is up to date." Thanks to the many hands and minds that are making this possible!

In addition to the aforementioned efforts, I wanted to highlight some selected progress being made on various initiatives, as summarized from communications I've had with some of our AFS-FHS Committee Chairs:

- **Section Communications Committee:** Towards accomplishing a larger social media presence, an AFS-FHS Twitter account has been established (check it out, @AFSFishHealth), and FHS materials continue to be shared on the AFS-FHS Facebook page. This Committee has also been very active in crafting and sharing AFS-FHS newsletters, helping establish an online application for Tier 1 QA/QC programs, and is currently working on establishing a website for the 2022 ISAAH meeting in Santiago, Chile, among other activities.
- **Nominating and Balloting Committee:** In addition to the ongoing AFS-FHS election, an "election how to" document is being updated for ease of transition between the N&B committee members each year.
- **Handbook Revision and Oversight Committee:** In concert with the Blue Book revision efforts, the HROC has solicited written requests for changes to Section 2 (i.e., the inspection section) of the AFS-FHS BB. All requests to be considered as part of this special solicitation must be made by no later than **May 14, 2021**, and should be sent to bluebookrevisions2021@gmail.com. For any questions on this, please contact the HROC Co-Chairs, Drs. Kathleen Hartman (Kathleen.H.Hartman@usda.gov) and Devin Chappell (Devin_Chappell@fws.gov).
- **Professional Standards Committee:** The AFS-FHS Certified Aquatic Animal Health Inspector and Certified Fish Pathologist application forms have been updated.
- **Policy/Position Development Committee:** The PPDC has reviewed two US FDA documents (e.g., draft Guidance For Industry (GFI) #61 and FDA's Potential Approach for Defining Durations of Use for Certain Medically Important Antimicrobial Drugs for Food Animals) and provided feedback to the AFS-FHS EXCOM on both. Likewise, the PPDC is working to incorporate an inclusivity statement and PPDC continuity statement into the AFS-FHS Procedural Manual, as well as providing valuable expertise to the parent society.
- **QA/QC Committee:** The QA/QC Committee continues to actively review applications for Tier I status, with a total of 15 facilities now having completed the Tier 1 process. They are also reviewing their first-Tier II application and anticipate assigning final approval to that laboratory soon. QA/QC Committee Chair, Wade Cavender, also provided the following exciting update: "We recently divided the QA/QC committee into three working groups so we can distribute responsibilities and focus on Tier I, Tier II and Tier III programs. Tier I and Tier II working groups will process and provide preliminary review of future applications, provide suggestions for revising/upgrading the application process and develop a current database of all Tier I laboratories. These groups will also work to recruit new laboratories into the Tier I and II programs. The Tier III working group will coordinate with USDA and the NAHLN program to formulate a definitive plan for creation of the Tier III program and work with the whole committee in developing this application. They will also be in contact with the Fish Health Section and key players of the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan to coordinate this process, as well as providing any recommended revisions to Chapter three of the Bluebook."

Many thanks to our Committee members and Chairs for their hard work and dedication (!), and please plan to attend the virtual AFS-FHS Business meeting to hear more about these and other Committee updates. Until then, I wish you all the very best, and as always, please contact me with any questions or feedback you may have.

Most Sincerely,



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