Saturday 20 May 2006

DWHC POST-ACADEMIC COURSE

"ADVANCES IN WILDLIFE HEALTH"

Introduction

The objective of this annual course is to present subjects that (1) have undergone substantial advances in recent years and (2) are important for wildlife health. Experts in their field will not only present advances at the international level, but also discuss how these advances are relevant for the Dutch situation. The intention is to provide information both on diagnosis and research.

Details of this year's course

This year we have chosen for three main subjects: West Nile virus, rabbit haemorrhagic disease, and avian influenza. In the first presentation on WNV, **Bob McLean** will present state-of-the-art techniques for WNV diagnosis and present an overview of the ongoing research on WNV in North American wildlife. McLean is past director of the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin, and was closely involved with research on the emergence of West Nile virus in the USA in 1999, and its subsequent spread across North America, with devastating consequences for wildlife, domestic animals, and humans. To place this virus in the Dutch perspective, the next speaker, **Byron Martina**, will present ongoing research on this virus in the Netherlands, with an emphasis on surveillance in wild birds. Martina obtained his Ph.D. on research of phocine herpes virus in free-living seals at the Erasmus MC in Rotterdam, and now has directed his attention to WNV and other exotic viruses. Besides WNV, **Bob McLean** has performed wildlife studies on a multitude of arthropod-borne viruses and bacteria, including St Louis encephalitis virus, Colorado tick fever virus, and Borrelia burgdorferi in wildlife for over 30 years. Based on this experience, he will give an update on other vector-borne diseases that are important for wildlife.

The second main subject is rabbit haemorrhagic disease. Although this disease has been suspected to be present in free-living rabbits in the Netherlands since about 1990, structured research has not been performed. Recently, **Marijke Drees** has been instrumental in bringing the importance of RHD in free-living rabbits to the attention of a larger public in the Netherlands, and stimulating research in this area. Drees has a long-time interest in the ecology of rabbits, starting with her Ph.D. "Rabbits in the dunes" in 1988, and currently within her activities at Groningen University. She will present an overview of the decline of the Dutch rabbit population in recent decades. Rabbit haemorrhagic disease is also a problem in other European countries, but its impact is poorly known for most areas. **Rafael Villafuerte**, from IREC, Ciudad Real, Spain, will present what these studies have taught about the impact of RHD, as well as of myxomatosis, on wild rabbit populations in Spain. Villafuerte was involved in the investigation of the first outbreaks of RHD in wild rabbits in Spain, and subsequently became involved in long-term studies of RHD as a mortality factor in

rabbit populations. Back to the Netherlands, **Marco van de Bildt** will present recently diagnosed cases of RHD in wild rabbits in the Netherlands. This work is an extension of Marco's broad experience in diagnosis of viral infections in wildlife at Erasmus MC. He not only identified the virus in rabbits found dead in the field, but also in prey remains obtained from raptor nests through cooperation with bird banders.

The final subject of the course is avian influenza. **Ron Fouchier** will provide an overview of the long-term influenza surveillance studies in wild birds that he started up more than five years ago at the Erasmus MC, in collaboration with ornithologists both in the Netherlands and abroad. Now that migratory birds appear to be a vector of the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus of the subtype H5N1 that is currently spreading across Europe, this type of research is in great demand. **Thijs Kuiken** will show that this virus not only affects birds, but also causes fatal infection in several species of wild carnivores that were previously considered to be resistant to disease from influenza virus infection. This knowledge comes both from diagnostic studies of H5N1 virus outbreaks in zoos and in the wild and from infection experiments. H5N1 virus is unusual not only because it has such a wide host spectrum, but also because it results in infection and disease beyond the respiratory tract in multiple species.

Location, registration and costs

The course will be held on the **Saturday 20 May 2006** at the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), Antonie van Leeuwenhoeklaan 1, Bilthoven, The Netherlands. This is the same location as the DSWH conference on the previous day (www.dutchwildlife.nl).

Please register by sending an e-mail to info@dwhc.nl. It is important to register by 15 May 2006 at the latest, so that you will be allowed into the RIVM building.

Students	0 Euro
DSWH members	30 Euro
Non-DSWH members	50 Euro

Payment on site. Costs include lunch, beverages, and documentation of the presented subjects.

PROGRAMME

DWHC POST-ACADEMIC COURSE

"ADVANCES IN WILDLIFE HEALTH"

DATE: SATURDAY 20 MAY 2006

LOCATION: RIVM, BILTHOVEN

Time	Speaker	Subject
10.00-10.30		Reception and coffee
	WNV and other vector-borne diseases Moderator: Joke van der Giessen	
10.30-11.15	Bob McLean	Diagnosis and research on West Nile virus in wildlife
11.15-11.45	Byron Martina	WNV research in the Netherlands
11.45-12.30	Bob McLean	Update on other vector-borne diseases in wildlife
12.30-14.00		Lunch
	Rabbit haemorrhagic disease and myxomatosis Moderator: Andrea Gröne	
14.00-14.30	Marijke Drees	Population trends in wild rabbits in the Netherlands
14.30-15.15	Rafael Villafuerte	Impact of rabbit haemorrhagic disease and myxomatosis on wild rabbit populations
15.15-15.30	Marco van de Bildt	Recent cases of rabbit haemorrhagic disease in wild rabbits in the Netherlands
15.30-16.00		Coffee/tea
	Avian influenza Moderator: Ab Osterhaus	
16.00-16.45	Ron Fouchier	Influenza in wild birds
16.45-17.30	Thijs Kuiken	Influenza in wild carnivores
17.30-17.40	Ab Osterhaus	Closing remarks
17.40-18.30		Drinks and snacks