



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Team of Experts Named to Examine NADC Procedures

AMES, Iowa – The City of Ames, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has completed selection of the team of experts charged with conducting an independent evaluation of the protocols used at the National Animal Disease Center (NADC) for disposing of animal waste. The 11-member team's mission will be outlined by Tom Neumann, Ames Water & Pollution Control Director, and Steve Shafer, Midwest Area Director with the Agricultural Research Service, USDA. The team will include a City of Ames staff representative, as well as an Ames citizen observer.

While the schedules for the team members are still being coordinated, a kick-off meeting is expected to take place in Ames in June. It is anticipated that most participants will be able to arrange their schedules to participate in many, if not all, team activities. The purpose of the panel is to evaluate the allegations of improper prion-contaminated waste disposal practices at the NADC. In early May, two NADC employees brought forward allegations that the NADC was using improper procedures to deactivate prions before the waste was released into the City of Ames sanitary sewer system.

Prions are natural proteins that when folded abnormally are believed to cause lethal diseases such as Scrapie in sheep, Chronic Wasting Disease in deer and elk, and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (commonly referred to as Mad Cow Disease) in cattle. Effectively destroying abnormal prions before they enter the sanitary sewer system is critical because the Ames Water Pollution Control Plant is not designed to remove prions.

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The USDA and NADC, along with the City of Ames, are committed to the success of this team. Senior officials with the USDA have pledged that the expert panel will have complete access to NADC facilities, records, and employees at all levels during the evaluation process. In addition, the USDA has agreed to cover all expenses related to the panel's activities. The target date for the panel's final report is August 31.

For the latest news and updates about the panel of experts, a Web page has been placed on the City of Ames Web site. Go to www.cityofames.org and click on "Water & Pollution Control" under the "Departments" drop-down menu or go directly to www.city.ames.ia.us/waterweb/NADC/NADC.htm.

Team members for the City of Ames/NADC Waste Disposal Evaluation:

Dr. Ermias Belay, M.D.

Medical Epidemiologist

Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Belay is a leading expert in the epidemiology of prion diseases, and he coordinates the Centers for Disease Control's prion disease surveillance and research activities. He has authored numerous articles on prion diseases, such as "The Public Health Impact of Prion Diseases" and "Chronic Wasting Disease and Potential Transmission to Humans."

Dr. Pierluigi Gambetti, M.D.

Professor and Director

Division of Neuropathology, Case Western Reserve University

Gambetti's research focuses on prion diseases. He is the Director of the National Prion Disease Pathology Surveillance Center. He has co-authored publications such as "Inherited Prion Diseases" and "From Microbes to Prions: The Final Proof of the Prion Hypothesis."

Dr. Linda Detwiler, D.V.M.

Adjunct Professor

Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine.

Detwiler has served as a consultant for multiple TSE-related animal health issues. She has also served as Senior Staff Veterinarian, Emergency Programs Staff for the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), and as Veterinarian in Charge, APHIS's Veterinary Services.

Dr. Katherine (Trina) McMahon

Assistant Professor

Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Wisconsin

McMahon is currently conducting research into the ability of prions to withstand the processes used to treat wastewater. Research goals are to determine what percentage of prions would be degraded versus released back into the environment, and to determine if prions would remain infectious following conventional wastewater treatment.

Dr. Alwynelle S. Ahl, Ph.D., D.V.M

Former Director, Office of Risk Assessment (Retired)

United States Department of Agriculture

Ahl's expertise is in the areas of risk assessment and risk communication, and she has experience in providing regulatory oversight in the areas of animal health and food safety. Ahl is a Fellow of the Society for Risk Analysis.

Dr. Robert P. Ellis, Ph.D.

Professor

Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology, Colorado State University

Ellis is a certified Biological Safety Professional. In addition to his professorial duties, he also serves as the Biosafety Officer for CSU, where his responsibilities include oversight and training to ensure all research involving infectious agents is conducted according to university and national standards and guidelines. He is the Executive Director of the Conference of Research Workers in Animal Diseases, an international research organization.

Dr. Robert Rohwer, Ph.D

Director

Molecular Neurovirology Laboratory, VA Medical Center 151, Baltimore

Rohwer brings expertise in the elimination of TSE infectivity and the mechanisms for inactivating prions. His research has been funded by various agencies including National Institutes for Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Veterans Administration.

Dr. Robert Somerville

Institute for Animal Health

United Kingdom

Somerville is a research team leader for the Institute for Animal Health, where he is currently investigating topics such as the inactivation of prions and the environmental persistence of TSE infection

Dr. Fran Kremer, Ph.D.

Senior Science Advisor

National Risk Management Research Laboratory

Office of Research and Development

US Environmental Protection Agency

Cincinnati, Ohio

Dr. Kremer has conducted research on prion fate and transport in the environment, and has authored papers such as "Presentation and Discussion of BSE and SRM disposal and processing research and issues."

John R. Dunn, P.E.

Assistant Director – City of Ames representative
Ames Water and Pollution Control Department

Dunn has a B.S. in Chemical Engineering and a master's degree in business administration. He has worked in the water and wastewater field for 17 years and has experience in analytical chemistry, environmental engineering, and utility management. He is a licensed professional engineer in the field of environmental engineering.

Dr. Jim Colbert, Ph.D.

Associate Professor – Ames citizen observer
Iowa State University

Colbert is currently the chair of the Squaw Creek Watershed Coalition, a volunteer citizen organization whose mission is to provide leadership in protecting and improving the environmental health of Squaw Creek Watershed. He is also the 'Admiral' of the Skunk River Navy, a volunteer group made up of Iowa State University students, faculty, and staff members, community members, and Iowa State alumni. This group was the recipient of the 2005 Governor's Iowa Environmental Excellence Award in recognition of its work in improving the water quality in the State of Iowa. Colbert is an associate professor of ecology, evolution and organismal biology at Iowa State University.

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