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**From:** Tracey McNamara[tmcNamara@westernu.edu]  
**Sent:** Mon 5/25/2020 3:22:43 PM (UTC-04:00)  
**Subject:** Reaching out to Red Dawn team members

Hello All – On this Memorial Day, I am reaching out to you to see if any of you have ideas about how we can close the gaps in biosurveillance in the USA to make the nation safer. The Federal government has a responsibility for protecting the American public from chem/bio threats but those species in *closest proximity to people that can and have provided early warning of PH threats are left out*. Yes, urban animals do not fall under the jurisdiction of any federal agency but this chronic issue of gaps in surveillance is not about any specific species – it is about signal recognition of potential public health or national security threats.

DHS invested \$1.6 billion dollars into the Biowatch program, the goal of which was early detection and recognition of public health threats. But no health dept ever acted on BARs because when they asked what was going on in local animal populations, Mike Walters' answer was, "We have no idea". The system failed to provide health officials with the "situational awareness" or context they needed to feel comfortable acting on the alerts. (GAO—16-413T). That was a huge investment of tax dollars and it did not work. To my knowledge, we have not come up with a replacement as of this time.

Dogs and cats are susceptible to all the known threat agents with the exception of smallpox. Flamingoes are the only reason the diagnosis changed from SLE to WNV in 1999. Tigers in Thailand were the first to die of H1N1 in 2004. And now cats, dogs and zoo species have SARS-CoV-2. These species may pose a threat to public health directly or may become asymptomatic reservoirs of this viral threat only to have it pop up later (that recent Chinese model suggests there are 44 species that could be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2).

So, when asked why the federal govt and taxpaying public should look beyond agricultural species, the answer is – where else are we going to get this information? Shall we just carry on as in the past and continue to miss early warning of the next WNV, monkeypox, cat or dog flu? What's the plan? Early warning does not necessarily have to come out of a box with an air filter – *it may come from something with four legs fur and a wet nose. And, in the absence of having another reliable system up and running, animals can stand in as proxy until we develop something better.*

I am not expecting the govt to do this work. Federal mandates are not going to change. The govt has enough on its hands right now to even think about creating a new agency to address these gaps. I understand the resistance to support a program to detect sporadic and unpredictable events. That is why I believe the only way forward is through a public-private partnership.

What could the Feds do?

1. Share the technology that tax dollars already paid for (ie. The Biosurveillance Ecosystem at DTRA) I'm sure you recall reaching out to them in 2017 and them saying working with the private sector was "outside their mission space" – hold on; taxpayers paid for the creation of the system. Taxpayers are at risk. And you are saying we cannot leverage it to address biosurveillance gaps in the USA? Yes Mam). *Give the private sector the technology it needs to create real-time epidemiological surveillance of these species without having to reinvent the wheel.* We need analytical and visualization capabilities, NLP for free text in a variety of databases, AI, etc. The very things that have been developed for use by federal agencies.
  
2. If such surveillance is established and paid for by the private sector, DHS or HHS could agree to pay an annual subscription fee to support long term sustainability of the system. Doing so would ensure the information you need to rule in/rule out an incident of concern *will be there when you need it*. There is a precedent for it. DHS paid a subscription for Health Map. Think of it as a "pandemic insurance" plan. It would certainly be less expensive than creating an agency.
  
3. This approach would be fiscally responsible in that:
  - a. The private sector would do all the work
  - b. By leveraging the inherent interest the private sector has in these species, you can count on the system being in place in perpetuity. It will chug along on a day to day basis doing good for vet med. *But when a spike is detected, we will share that with PH/DHS/Security sector.* That is more than can be said of the 5/19 agencies to ever share data with NBIC. (GAO—16-413T).
  - c. Data collected by the private sector on animals of non-economic/agricultural importance can be seen across state lines real-time. That is not true of human data where there is a built in delay.

The Federal govt has spent over \$1 billion dollars in support of the Global Health Security Agenda to help developing nations create the capacity to detect/report/respond to pandemic threats. An additional \$200 million was spent on the PREDICT project via USAID looking for emerging viruses in bats, rats and monkeys overseas. And now the Global Virome Project wants \$1.5 billion dollars to run around the world hunting down every virus on the face of the earth. They will probably get funding. But none of these programs have made taxpayers safer *right here at home*.

There is a way forward if we collectively think outside of the box. If anyone has any ideas about how best to proceed, please call me at \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ I am on Pacific time.

Many thanks,  
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