

# Crisis Communications Update: Messages and Channels

## NIAA FMD Symposium

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# Who is the FMD Cross-Species Team?



# FMD Working Group Goals

- Protect animal health & minimize disease spread
- Ensure consumer confidence in meat & milk safety
- Prevent supply disruption to customers

# FMD Cross-Species Team: Activities and Outcomes

- Create unified FMD crisis response plan
- Share FMD messaging
- Form government partnerships for coordinated response



# 2012 Research Overview



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# Research Objectives

- For crisis preparation, need to better understand:
  - Current awareness and knowledge levels regarding FMD
  - Consumers' understanding and acceptance of various FMD messages (last assessed in 2007)

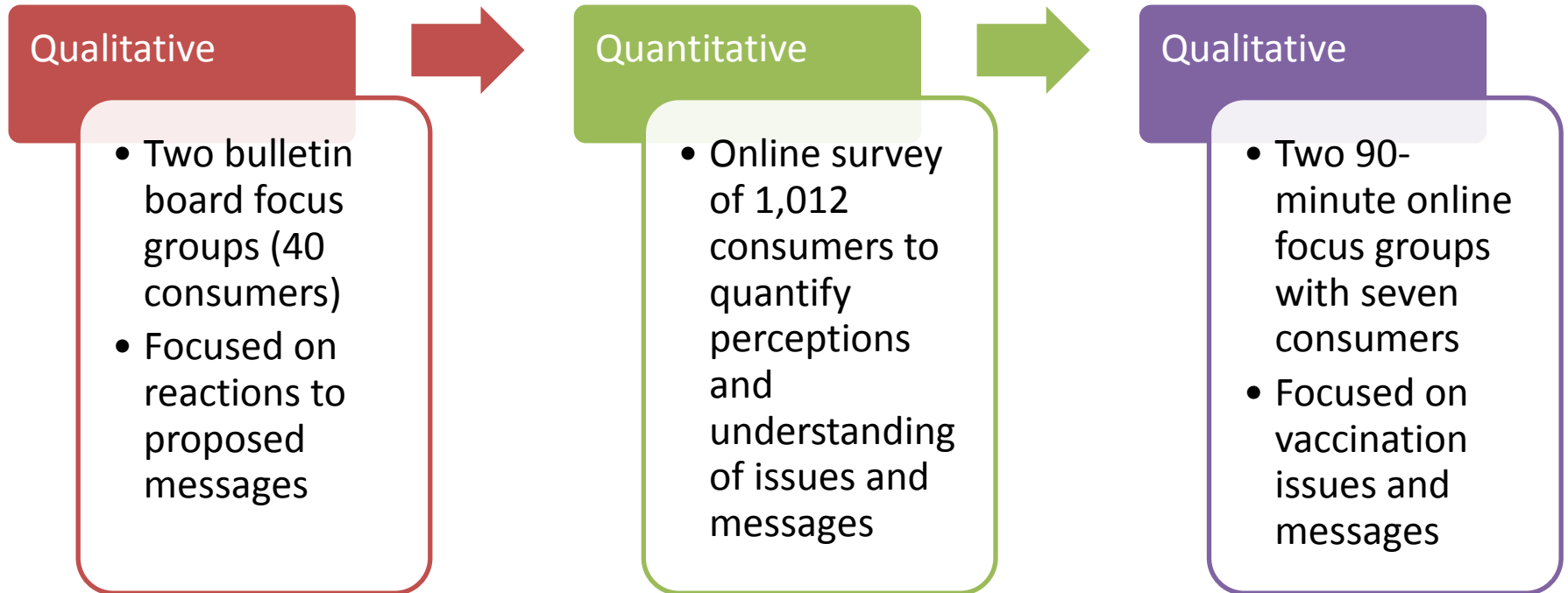


# Research Objectives

- Specific areas the research addressed:
  - Awareness of vaccinations of livestock
  - Awareness and knowledge of FMD
  - Top-of-mind concerns if there were an FMD outbreak
  - New messaging receptivity in five categories:
    - 1) Food Safety
    - 2) Disease Impact and Management
    - 3) FMD Containment
    - 4) FMD Control
    - 5) Vaccinations



# Research Process



All participants ate meat or dairy products at least two times each month.  
Mix of ages, sex, employment, education, ethnicity, income and geographic location.



# The Research: Awareness

- Foot and Mouth Disease
  - The vast majority (85%) believe they have heard of FMD
  - Almost half (49%) believe small children can contract the disease
  - Consumers are confused about the difference between FMD and HFMD

*“I have heard of that disease. I cannot think of anything specifically I know about the disease except that it is much dreaded by the farmer.”*



# The Research: An Outbreak

- Consumers want to know:
  - The location of the outbreak; type of livestock involved
  - Actions taken to contain the outbreak
  - The extent to which an FMD vaccine is tested and approved
  - What has been successful in other countries
  - What happens to infected animals after being euthanized

*“I would want to know more about what steps were being taken to keep it under control. I would very closely monitor for more information, and I would be sure to know my meat and dairy source before buying.”*

# Shift in Consumer Behavior

- Today's consumers are information seekers
  - They turn to the Internet first
- There's a delicate balance between just enough information and overload
  - It is important to provide enough accurate information, but too much can frighten consumers



# Messages: Containment

- Containment messages tested to be the most reassuring and most likely to instill confidence
- Participants noted that “is not a public health threat” was most important and liked that “they showed collaboration”



# Key Findings: Containment

Messages	What Works	What Doesn't Work
<p><b>Even though FMD is not a public health threat, we must contain the disease to protect the economic viability of the beef, pork and dairy industries and our country's ability to provide consumers worldwide with an affordable and steady supply of milk and meat.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant and believable</li> <li>• "Is not a public health threat" is important</li> <li>• Shows concern for the economic impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can it be contained and how will they contain it?</li> <li>• Underlying interest in livestock community's loss of revenue</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working together, we can contain FMD as quickly as possible.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The livestock community has employed a coordinated communications plan to ensure a streamlined flow of information among state and federal agencies, producers, processors, retailers and consumers.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Relevant and compelling, talks to the consumer, shows collaboration, gives websites for more information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will communications plan be effective?</li> <li>• Message a bit long</li> </ul>

# Vaccinations: Awareness

- Routine vaccinations are not top-of-mind to consumers; once they are prompted to think about it, most assume it happens
- A majority (55%) believe this makes products safer to consume or has no impact on safety
- Some expressed concern about the potential for it to be passed to humans through consumption

*“I don’t know if animals are currently being vaccinated. It would be fine with me if they do this, as long as they test the vaccine and make sure that it would not be harmful for humans.”*

# Vaccinations: Acceptance

- Vaccines for FMD:
  - Some consumers would likely avoid consuming milk and meat until they knew outbreak was under control
  - Consumers support vaccinations in the event of an FMD outbreak
- Consumers are reassured by the messages that were tested



# Key Findings: Vaccinations

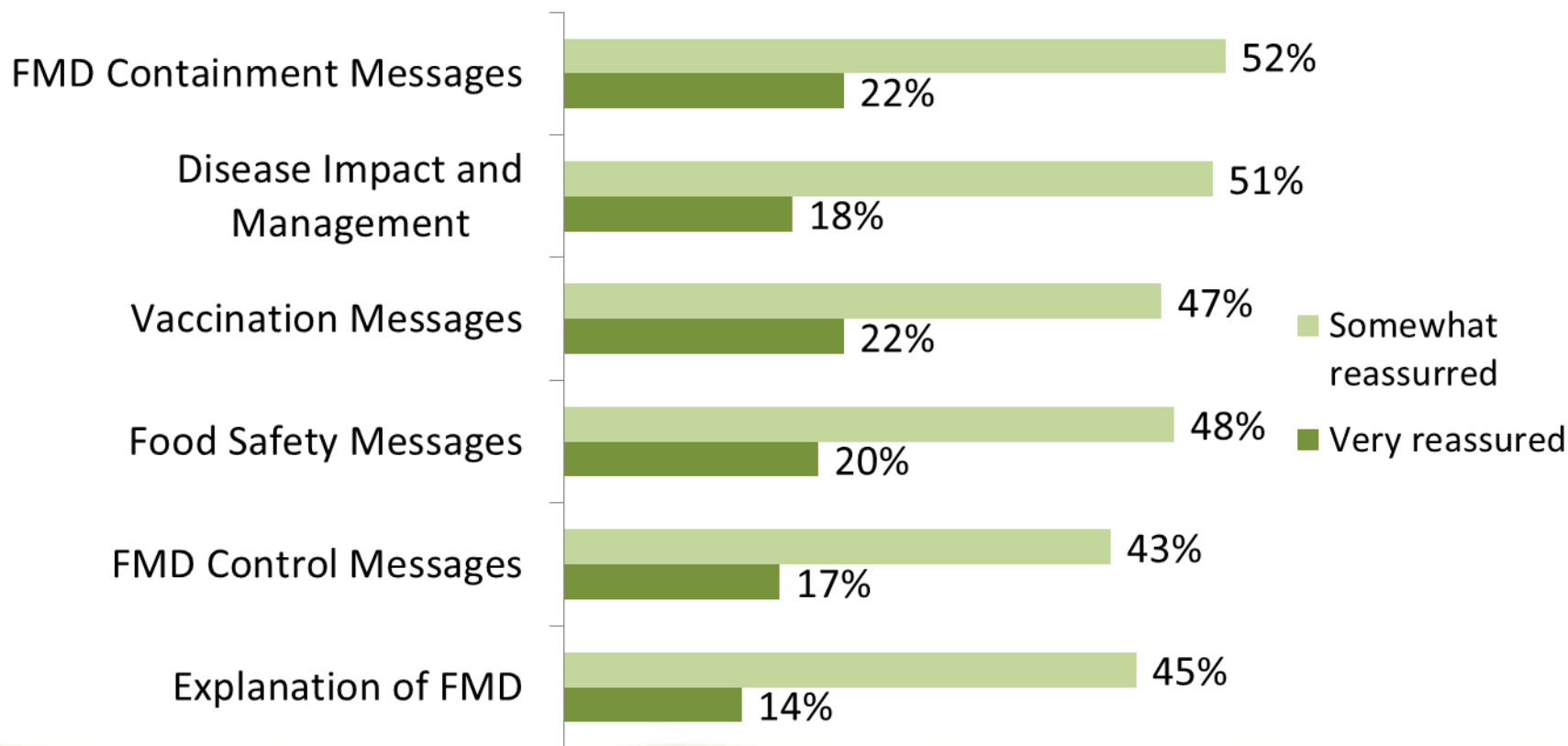
Messages	What Works	What Doesn't Work
<p><b>Countries where FMD is endemic routinely vaccinate their livestock and those animals are safely used for meat and milk. People around the world eat millions of tons of meat from animals that are vaccinated against FMD.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believable, because provides proof the vaccine is safe and that people have not gotten sick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information on countries using vaccine, the vaccine itself</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meat and milk from animals vaccinated for FMD are safe to consume.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compelling, it tells you it is safe to consume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Want research to support the claim</li> </ul>





# The Results: Messages

**Reassurance:** The majority feels reassured by the different categories of messages. The FMD containment messages are the most reassuring.



# The Bottom Line

- In the event of an FMD outbreak, our communications should:
  - Assure consumers of food safety and what is being done to contain the outbreak
  - Be coordinated behind-the-scenes so government, subject matter expert and industry messaging is consistent
  - Reference trusted and credible organizations and sources & provide links to additional information

# The Bottom Line

- Key components of messaging that resonates:
  - Use direct, easy to understand verbiage
  - Show proof for assertions - for example, scientific documentation that vaccine is safe for animals and consumers of meat and milk
  - Integrate a human element



# Questions?

[FootAndMouthDiseaseInfo.org](http://FootAndMouthDiseaseInfo.org)

