



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SIGNS AGREEMENTS WITH MEDGENE TO DEVELOP PLATFORM VACCINES FOR FOREIGN ANIMAL DISEASES

Two specific foreign animal diseases with zoonotic (animal-to-human transmission) potential are being targeted

(Brookings, SD) — Important cooperative agreements were recently signed between the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) and Medgene, an animal health company that produces highly-targeted platform vaccines. The agreements are designed to apply Medgene's proprietary platform vaccine technologies against two well-known foreign animal diseases: Nipah Virus and Rift Valley Fever.

In the case of Nipah Virus, a highly fatal disease currently affecting swine in Southeast Asia, the agreement is to test Medgene's platform vaccines developed on its proprietary baculovirus protein expression system. The Rift Valley Fever agreement is to develop an assay to measure the antibody activity of Medgene's platform vaccines in order to differentiate an infected animal from a vaccinated animal. This assay is especially important to international trade as it helps ensure that diseased animals are not being released into unaffected populations. Rift Valley Fever is also a highly fatal disease that originated in Africa and affects livestock.

Dr. Alan Young, immunologist and Chief Technology Officer of Medgene, explained the significance of these agreements. "Foreign animal diseases are monitored very closely for many reasons. As important as American agriculture is to the world, we must be prepared to address these and other diseases now. These projects with USDA-ARS will be a solid step forward in protecting against foreign animal disease outbreaks in the U.S."

These projects are part of the Biologics Development Module (BDM) at USDA's National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), which aims to create collaborations that will enhance and expedite the transition of research to veterinary-medical products.

"The mission of NBAF is to protect the United States food supply and agricultural economy from threats presented by emerging, transboundary and zoonotic animal diseases," BDM Director Mr. Steven Witte said. "Collaborations like the current ones with Medgene allow us to carry out our mission while we complete the stand up of our laboratory facilities at NBAF. Medgene is an important partner in our fight against transboundary animal diseases."

The ultimate goal of the collaboration between USDA-ARS and Medgene is to develop and maintain preparedness for foreign animal disease outbreaks within the U.S.

Mark Luecke, Chief Executive Officer of Medgene, added, "We are pleased that the USDA has recognized the importance of our platform vaccine technologies in protecting U.S. livestock producers and our human population from potentially zoonotic foreign animals diseases. Given the significant number of recent incidents of coronaviruses and influenza viruses, we must collaborate to continue to improve our preparedness. Medgene's USDA-approved platform vaccine technologies and USDA-NBAF's testing capabilities represent a world-class collaboration for these and other disease threats.

Work has begun on both agreements with an expectation of completion in 2024.

For information on Rift Valley Fever: <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/rvf/about.html>

For information on the Nipah Virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/nipah/about/index.html>

For information on Medgene: <https://www.MedgeneLabs.com>