RECENT ADVANCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GONACON™ IMMUNOCONTRACEPTIVE VACCINE

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GonaCon™ Immunocontraceptive Vaccine was registered through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2009 for controlling fertility in wild white-tailed deer and for use in wild and feral horses in 2013. Research conducted during the development of GonaCon has shown that it is effective in most mammals and could be applied to manage a wide variety of wild or feral species. A species of particular interest is the feral or stray dog. GonaCon has been shown to be effective in producing vaccine titers in laboratory (pen) trials with dogs, so it could provide a highly desirable alternative to surgical sterilization. When combined with a disease vaccination program (such as for rabies management), it has the potential for mitigating the impacts of the disease through population management. In pursuit of this goal, APHIS has secured confirmation from the EPA that for wild, feral or loosely owned dogs, EPA would be the regulating agency for the product. If GonaCon proves effective in field trials with dogs, an approved use for feral or loosely owned dogs might be a reality far sooner under EPA's oversight than if it were regulated as a veterinary vaccine. To advance this registration, scientists at the NWRC and collaborators are working to begin field trials with dogs in Nepal, South Africa, Mexico, Italy, and on Tribal lands in the US to test the field effectiveness of the vaccine. This presentation will provide an update of recent GonaCon efforts in terms of regulatory needs and field trial efforts.