CU's Torres to Senate: Mandatory animal identification system needed

By Roger Segelken

WASHINGTON, D.C. — If all cattle in the United States carried identification, tracking of herds exposed to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or "mad cow" disease) or other animal diseases would be easier and faster, according to a Cornell animal-disease and public-policy expert.

Alfonso Torres, executive director of the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine, made the suggestion during his testimony Jan. 27 on BSE before the U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.

Torres

Torres recommended "... that Congress in collaboration with the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] needs to make this national animal ID system a mandatory program." He also described two other measures to help relieve the trade embargoes imposed on the United States because of mad cow disease: a more equivalent and proportional trade policy, based on the degree of BSE risks with trade partners; and stepped-up enforcement of bans on the use of certain high-risk materials (such as brains, spinal cords and intestines) from non-ambulatory cattle or any cattle over 30 months of age. He noted that the BSE agent (the misfolded proteins, called prions) is known to accumulate in those tissues of infected cattle. "These materials should not enter the human food chain or the animal feed chain," Torres stated.

At Cornell, Torres also serves as the associate dean of veterinary public policy. He is a former chief veterinary officer of the USDA and former director of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center. Torres said during the Senate committee hearing: "While I recognize and appreciate the many efforts of the USDA and the animal industries in developing and implementing a national animal ID system, the weakness is that such a system is a voluntary effort at this time."

The hearing to discuss food safety, livestock marketing and international trade was called as a result of the discovery last December of a BSE-infected dairy cow in Washington state. If a universal identification system had been in place last year, Torres suggested, American and Canadian officials could more readily have traced the diseased animal and others in its herd.

Torres commended the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration for what he called effective actions following the BSE finding in December, adding: "These actions have maintained consumer confidence in our beef products. While the trade embargoes were to be expected in a situation like this, I hope that, with the implementation of further actions as suggested, we would continue to enhance the defense of our nation against BSE and sustain domestic and international confidence in our animal industries and the safety of our food and feed supply."

The full text of the Torres testimony is at the veterinary college Web site: <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/publicresources/prtorresTestimony.htm>.

Also testifying at the Senate hearing, which was chaired by Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), were USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman and U.S. Food and Drug Administration Deputy Commissioner Lester M. Crawford.

WSKG-TV broadcasts performance Feb. 11 of CU theater's *Antigone*

By Franklin Crawford

Antigone goes prime time: WSKG-TV will broadcast a full-length performance of the Cornell Department of Theatre, Film and Dance's fall 2003 production of Sophocles' *Antigone* Wednesday, Feb. 11, at 9 p.m., locally on Time Warner Cable Channel 6.

The video, soon to be available on DVD as well as VHS, was produced, taped and edited by Education Television Center staff at Cornell Information Technologies, under the direction of Daniel Booth, television services manager. The entire project, including the DVD and VHS, received support from the Cornell Provost's Office, the Department of Classics, the Society for the Humanities at Cornell, the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines and the dean's office in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Antigone, one of the three plays written by Sophocles about the ill-fated family of Oedipus, was required reading for Cornell's New Student Reading Project in 2003. The Cornell production is an adaptation written and directed by David Feldshuh, professor of theatre, film and dance and artistic director of the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts. Feldshuh, who studied 11 translations prior to writing this adaptation, consulted on the Greek with Jeffrey Rusten, Cornell professor of classics. WSKG-TV's Feb. 11 broadcast also features a 10-minute segment of "the making of *Antigone*" – a work-in-progress (soon to be a separate program included with the DVD and VHS) that documents Cornell's *Antigone* production through interviews and footage from rehearsals.

"What's exciting about this presentation is that the resources invested allowed Dan not simply to film a stage play, but rather to create a presentation that captures the excitement and spontaneity of the original production in a completely different medium," Feldshuh said. "Dan has created a whole new animal with its own visual vocabulary. It is my hope that the theatrical excitement of the production and the fact that the text is poetic and, at the same time, dramatic and easy to speak and understand will allow a wide audience to appreciate this extraordinary play, a play that is profoundly resonant today."

The video is, in fact, a seamless blend of two separate performances of the play: One show was filmed before a live audience and the other was shot during a dress rehearsal, "where we would be less intrusive with the cameras," said Booth. A total of eight different camera posi-

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Frank DiMeo/University Photography

At the unveiling of the L-VIS (low-vision) workstation, Jan. 29, at Tompkins County Public Library, Ithacan Richard Farruggio, center, who is blind, works at the keyboard, while, from left, Jennifer Schlossberg, adult reference librarian; Rachel Davidson, Cornell assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering; James Ferwerda, research associate with the Cornell Program of Computer Graphics; and Sherry Thurston, a counselor at the Finger Lakes Independence Center, look on.

Thanks to CU project, L-VIS is in the library

L-VIS stands for "low vision," but everyone calls the new low-vision workstation at Tompkins County Public Library "Elvis." The result of a joint project between Cornell Engineers Without Frontiers, the Cornell Program of Computer Graphics, the Tompkins County Public Library and the Finger Lakes Independence Center, L-VIS enables people with visual disabilities to have better access to the range of library services, including print materials, electronic databases and the Internet.

The new workstation was unveiled at the county library in downtown Ithaca Jan. 29.

L-VIS can display text in enlarged form or read the text out loud. It can be used in conjunction with the World Wide Web or any other text that already is computer-readable, and it includes an OCR enabled scanner that allows users to read the pages of printed books.

A team of students in Cornell Assistant Professor Rachel Davidson's Engineers Without Frontiers course contributed to the project by researching the needs of potential users and selecting the hardware and software to be used. The team consisted of Catherine Cannon, Frank Fu, Marianne Herbst, Magdalena Preciado Lopez, Denise Yusuff, James Smithmeyer, Manuel Hernandez and Stephanie Kwan. James Ferwerda, research associate with the Cornell Program of Computer Graphics, worked as the project supervisor.

Students in Davidson's course work on community service projects through the national Engineers Without Frontiers organization, founded and based at Cornell. The students also have been studying the physical structure of the county library to find other ways of making it more accessible to all users, Davidson said, and have recommended changes in signage and the installation of a tactile map.

Two Cornell engineering professors receive prestigious Lockheed awards

By David Brand

Two professors in the College of Engineering have received prestigious $50,000 awards from the 2004 Lockheed Martin University Research Grants Program.

Apsel

Campbell

The two recipients are Alyssa B. Apsel, the Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Mark Campbell, assistant professor in the Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

According to Nader Mehravari, senior technical staff member in the Advanced Technology Department at Lockheed Martin Federal Systems facilities in Owego, N.Y.: "It is very unusual for the corporation to award more than one grant to a given university per year. Moreover, this is the third year in the row that a Cornell faculty member has received one of these grants from Lockheed Martin."

Thomas Avedisian, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, was an award recipient in 2003 and 2002.

Apsel is an expert on merging high-speed CMOS (complementary metal-oxide semiconductor) circuits with photonics. Her research focuses on building high-performance opto-electronic computational microsystems. She received a Lockheed Martin award for her project "Resonant Monolithic Photodetectors and On-Chip Waveguides for Integrated Optoelectronics."

Also, Apsel is the recipient of a $400,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) Early Career Award. The Faculty Early Career Development Program offers the NSF's most prestigious award for new faculty members. The program recognizes the early career development activities of those teacher-scholars who are considered most likely to become the academic leaders of the 21st century. Apsel received the NSF award for her project "Designing with Light – Comparative Analysis and Design of Optical Interconnects for Chip-to-Chip Communication."

Apsel earned her Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering at Johns Hopkins University in 2002.

Campbell is an expert in autonomy for complex aerospace systems, such as multiple satellites and autonomous aerial vehicles. He received his Lockheed Martin award for his project "Cooperative Information Seeking for Uninhabited Vehicles."

He earned his Ph.D. in control and estimation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1996.