Leadership Change at UMN’s Center for Animal Health and Food Safety

Dr. Andres Perez is the new director of the Center for Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS), an interdisciplinary team at the University of Minnesota and coordinated by the College of Veterinary Medicine. Perez takes over for Dr. Scott Wells, who is stepping down after serving as director and co-director for the past six years.

Perez joined the College in 2014 and is a veterinary epidemiologist specializing in the prevention and control of food animal diseases. He also holds the Global Animal Health and Food Safety endowed chair.

“I’m looking forward to this opportunity,” Perez says. “These are exciting times for the College. With a number of new agriculture-related faculty positions expected to be filled this year, the College is preparing for an unprecedented expansion of its research and outreach capabilities. CAHFS has been an effective catalyst for lasting change in the animal health and food safety sectors, and I hope to continue that success by take advantage of these new opportunities. The goal is to increase CAHFS’ portfolio in areas such as policy, online education and outreach, quantitative data analysis, aquatic health, and antimicrobial resistance.”

CAHFS’ accomplishments under Dr. Wells’ leadership include expansion of the country’s largest degree granting program in veterinary medicine and public health, continued growth of the University’s Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency program, and expansion of real-world and experiential training programs including the Food System Leadership and the Farm to Table Study programs. During this time CAHFS also responded to several emergency animal diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza, and foot and mouth disease, and conducted other projects to control pathogens in the food supply. CAHFS also conducted the first World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) Veterinary Education Twinning Project in partnership with Chiang Mai University in Thailand.

Wells will continue as a College faculty member, and focus his efforts on key research, outreach and teaching initiatives, including animal health surveillance and food systems leadership training programs.

These activities build on the legacy of CAHFS as the English-speaking collaborating center for the OIE in the area of veterinary services capacity building. Closer to home, CAHFS was a key initiator for University programs such as the Food Protection and Defense Institute and the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center.
The University of Minnesota Center for Animal Health and Food Safety improves global animal health, food safety, and public health by building veterinary public health capacity, providing risk assessments and policy summaries, facilitating collaborative research, responding to emerging foreign animal diseases, and delivering relevant outreach. Faculty from three University of Minnesota colleges are engaged in the Center’s activities.