Abstract: Organic producers and Iowa veterinarians were questioned about the existing veterinary systems and care available to organic livestock producers. Most producers were satisfied with the availability of veterinary services and reported a large degree of independence in dealing with herd health challenges. In contrast, the veterinarians pointed out a variety of health concerns possible on organic farms and stressed the importance of veterinary involvement in those systems. They also indicated overwhelmingly that suitable information was either unavailable or difficult to access.

What was done and why?
The project was intended to assess the framework of education and information delivery related to veterinary care for organic livestock in Iowa. The investigators collected data that accurately represented the needs and experiences of Iowa’s organic livestock producers and Iowa’s production animal veterinarians. The objectives were to:

- determine whether those involved with organic livestock production (on both sides) had access to the information necessary to deal successfully with challenges to livestock health, and
- provide suggestions for improvement based on the experiences of major stakeholders.

What did we learn?

1. Iowa organic producers are satisfied with the veterinary services available to them. They prefer to handle most routine health treatment without consulting outside help and report lack of herd health challenges as the primary reason for this preference.

2. In contrast to producer perceptions, veterinarians point to a variety of health challenges on organic farms and stress the need for veterinary involvement in these systems.

3. Veterinarians expressed confusion about how to best serve organic producers and where to acquire reliable information. The panel agreed that increased availability of information would benefit organic livestock production in general, despite the level of producer satisfaction demonstrated by the survey results.

Despite the confidence expressed by the producers, the veterinarians surveyed saw weaknesses in management and herd health care protocol in organic systems and noted that producers should seek veterinary care advice more frequently than they do. Several expressed concerns regarding animal welfare as well. Most said veterinary professionals should be active in the development of organic agriculture through traditional on-farm involvement, stressing the importance of preventive management.