Fish health professionals gather for sixth international symposium

TAMPA, FL – Over 300 fish health professionals from around the world traveled here to participate in the Sixth International Symposium on Aquatic Animal Health, which was held at the Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel Sept. 5-9.

The symposium was hosted by the American Fisheries Society's (AFS) Fish Health Section, which every four years expands the scope of its annual meeting to bring in colleagues from nations far and wide.

This year, representatives from 24 countries participated in the event. They shared knowledge and expertise in everything from aquaculture husbandry and nutrition to new diagnostic techniques for a number of diseases. Concurrent sessions covered subjects ranging from vaccine studies, ornamental and aquarium medicine, and antimicrobial use in aquaculture to environmental stressors, bacteriology, and fish health surveys.

Whole sessions were devoted to advances in surveillance efforts for problematic diseases such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) and infectious hematopoietic necrosis virus (IHN). Parasitology and immunology issues overall were covered in depth.

In addition to the AFS Fish Health Section, sponsoring organizations included: the Asian Fisheries Society Fish Health Section; the European Association of Fish Pathologists; the International Association of Aquaculture Medicine and Nutrition; and the North American Association of Aquatic Medicine.

Attendees of the Sixth International Symposium on Aquatic Animal Health in Tampa, FL gather for a group photo before saying goodbye.
for Aquatic Animal Medicine; the Japanese Society for Fish Pathology; and the National Shellfisheries Association.

Symposium co-organizers Andy Kane, director of the Aquatic Pathobiology Laboratory at the University of Florida, and Sarah Poynton of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine took pains to thank the extended AFS Fish Health Section family and others for providing “invaluable support” to the symposium, which was a challenging event to put together.

“We are especially grateful to our wonderful team of volunteers and support associates who have willingly and ably contributed thousands of hours of energy and creativity to make this sixth international symposium a success,” said Kane and Poynton in their welcoming wishes to attendees.

“Your energy and input have allowed all of us to collectively benefit from this cooperative symposium.”/ffn/

Below, Sarah Poynton of the John Hopkins University School of Medicine and Andy Kane of the University of Florida’s Aquatic Pathology Laboratory organized the Sixth International Symposium on Aquatic Animal Health.

Merixell (Xell) Diez-Padrísa of the Institute of Aquaculture at the University of Stirling in the United Kingdom presents a challenging diagnostic case involving hepatocellular changes in a cichlid.

Diane Elliott of the US Geological Survey’s Western Fisheries Research Center chats with Ron Thune of Louisiana State University’s School of Veterinary Medicine. Elliott is the new president of the American Fisheries Society’s Fish Health Section, replacing Patricia Barbash of the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Ruth Francis-Floyd of the University of Florida and Paul Anderson of The Florida Aquarium share a few moments during a session break.

Representatives from several fish health organizations discussed international priorities and perspectives during the symposium’s opening session. Among the panelists were Trish Barbash, left, representing the American Fisheries Society’s Fish Health Section, Mamoru Yoshimizu for the Japanese Society for Fish Pathology, and Roxanna Smolowitz for the National Shellfisheries Association.
Fish health folks visit FL ornamental farms

TAMPA, FL – Ornamental aquatic species – aquarium fish and plants – represent one of the largest segments of the US aquaculture industry, and 95% of the production comes from Florida, particularly the Tampa Bay region, which is home to the heaviest concentration of ornamental species farms in the state.

In early September, two dozen fish health professionals had the opportunity to tour a couple of the region’s prominent farm operations – Urban Tropical Inc. in Lakeland and Segrest Farms Inc. in Gibsonton – as well as the University of Florida’s (UF) Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory.

The site visits were organized by the UF-Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory as an extension of the Sixth International Symposium on Aquatic Animal Health, which was held in Tampa Sept. 5-9.

Site visit participants, who included private-industry fish disease specialists, fish veterinary extension agents, state and federal aquatic animal specialists, and others, spent a day on the road and first stopped at Urban Tropical’s facility.

Farm owner Ray Quillen graciously hosted the tour of his family-owned hatchery, which has been in business since 2002. The company raises 10 varieties of angelfish, six varieties of barbs, eight varieties of plecos, and 18 varieties of tetras, in addition to other items.

The 20-acre farm includes more than 80 outdoor ponds and a number of greenhouses.

Tour participants next traveled to Segrest Farms, which got its start in the fish farming business in 1961 with 16 aquariums. Today, the business is one of the world’s largest distributors of ornamental fish, supplying over 1,000 pet shops, public aquariums, and research institutions each week. Wholesale products include freshwater tropical and coldwater aquarium fish, GLOFISH®, saltwater fish and invertebrates, marine corals and live rock, aquatic plants, amphibians, reptiles, small animals, and live food.

Segrest Farm’s home base in Gibsonton was the focus of the site visit, which was hosted by the University of Florida’s Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory.

Continued on next page
Urban Tropical's Ray Quillen pulls up palm fronds that serve as spawning substrate for Farlowella catfish, a popular species in the aquarium trade. Among those looking on are Jeffrey Go of the University of Sydney, Australia (left), Eric Schott (salmon-colored shirt), Eric Evans of the US Food and Drug Administration (rear, khaki shirt), and Tom Waltzek of the University of California, Davis (right, green shirt).

Eric Schott of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science in Baltimore gets a close-up shot of the tank's contents.

Goldfish abound at Segrest Farms in Gibsonton, FL.