



APHIS News for States

December 2008



APHIS Headquarters located in Riverdale, Maryland

APHIS News for States

(Click on headline to view article or scroll down.)

- [Plum Pox Eradication Program on the Road to Success](#)
- [APHIS Releases Bilingual 2009 Backyard Biosecurity: Keeping Your Birds Healthy Calendar](#)
- [New APHIS Web Site for Special Needs Requests](#)
- [APHIS Finalizes List of Participants for the Biotechnology Quality Management System Pilot Project](#)
- [All-Hazards Food and Agriculture Emergency Response Workgroup for States](#)
- [APHIS Feature: Wildlife Services Work to Prevent Wildlife Strikes at Airports](#)
- [Vacancies in APHIS](#)

Contact Information

Hallie Zimmers
 State Liaison, APHIS
 Legislative and Public Affairs
 202-720-0378 (ph)
 202-720-3982 (fax)
hallie.zimmers@aphis.usda.gov

Jacob Hegeman
 State Liaison, APHIS
 Legislative and Public Affairs
 202-720-6794
 202-720-3982
jacob.hegeman@aphis.usda.gov

Plum Pox Eradication Program on the Road to Success

If eradication efforts continue as planned, Michigan and Pennsylvania should be declared plum pox free at the end of 2009. Both States are well on their way to eradication of the viral disease, which significantly affects the production of stone fruit including peaches, apricots, plums, nectarines, almonds and cherries. Scientific protocols require three consecutive years of negative survey for a regulated area to be eligible for deregulation. Both Michigan and Pennsylvania have two years free and only one more to go before they are considered completely free of the virus.

"We're looking forward to another negative year in both States," said Don Albright, the National Plum Pox Virus Operations Director.

Pennsylvania has been dealing with plum pox since 1999, but the disease was only detected in Michigan in 2006. While the infestation in Pennsylvania was significant, only a single infected tree was ever identified in Michigan. To eradicate the disease, APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine program removed all infected trees and established a 500-meter buffer zone around the infected areas. During fiscal year (FY) 2008, survey crews collected and processed more than 230,000 samples in Pennsylvania with no positive results. Only 49-square miles in Pennsylvania remain regulated. This is down from a peak of 350-square miles in 2003.



Ring patterns on peaches caused by plum pox

"Pennsylvania is the big star on the wall right now because we had a high number of trees infected and we knocked it down to nothing," Albright said.

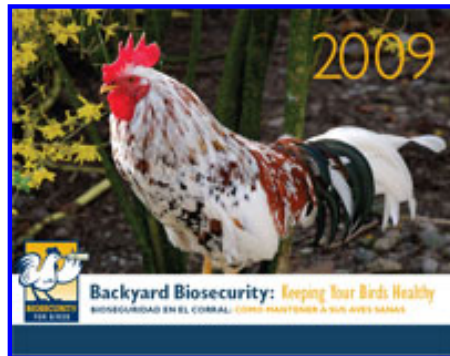
The only other State in the nation with plum pox is New York. Eradication efforts are underway there as well, and more than 110,000 samples were processed during FY 2008. The number of confirmed positive plants is down 50 percent from FY 2007, but the new finds are located 60 miles east of the closest known infected

areas. This indicates that the infestation in New York may be larger than delimiting surveys have previously indicated. The infected area in New York starts at the Canadian border where Canada has a serious outbreak of plum pox. APHIS is continuing to work with producers in New York and Canadian officials to harmonize eradication efforts. Eradication is still the goal in New York, but due to the possibility of re-infection from Canada, the buffer zone around infected trees is only 50 meters. While this is good for producers, it may take longer to eradicate the disease. For more information on plum pox, visit: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/plum_pox/index.shtml



Highly symptomatic plum tree

APHIS Releases Bilingual 2009 Backyard Biosecurity: Keeping Your Birds Healthy Calendar



With color photos of a variety of pet birds and game birds, this free calendar is an excellent way to raise awareness about avian diseases such as avian influenza (AI) and exotic Newcastle disease (END). The easy-to-read information about biosecurity helps to educate backyard bird owners about proper biosecurity. APHIS believes that continuing to reach out to backyard producers is extremely important, and the calendar helps to do that. Previous years calendars have been extremely well-received. In fact last year nearly 100,000 calendars were distributed. If you wish to distribute copies of the calendar they can be ordered using the online order form on the Biosecurity For Birds Web site at <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>

Note: Please click "Yes" on any security warnings that may appear on the screen. This will not cause any harm to your computer. Feel free to link to this site on your State's Web site. The Biosecurity for Birds outreach and education campaign is aimed at non-commercial poultry and bird owners. It seeks to educate backyard poultry owners and bird enthusiasts about the steps they can take to prevent infectious poultry diseases such as AI and END.

New APHIS Web Site for Special Needs Requests

APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine program has established a new Web site to provide States with additional information about how to apply for special needs requests in order to impose additional restrictions on the interstate movement of items beyond those imposed by APHIS' Federal domestic pest quarantines. APHIS published a final rule in the *Federal Register* on October 23rd, which established a formal process for States or their political subdivisions to ask APHIS for permission to impose restrictions beyond what is required by the Agency.

States can also collaborate with other States to submit multi-State special needs requests. This rule became effective on Nov. 24. State officials can get further guidance on the process to apply for special needs requests by going to http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/index.shtml and clicking on "I want to learn about the special needs request rule" on the right hand side of the page.

Once APHIS has received a request from a State, the Agency will publish a notice in the *Federal Register* and the public will have 60 days to comment. Then, APHIS will revise any comments and publish another notice announcing its decision to either approve or deny the request. All special needs exemptions will be applicable for two years at which point the State will have to submit a renewal request.

APHIS Finalizes List of Participants for the Biotechnology Quality Management System Pilot Project

Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) is the APHIS program responsible for implementing regulations for certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms that may pose a risk to plant health. Among BRS' core responsibilities is regulation of the introduction (importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment) of regulated GE organisms. In fulfilling this responsibility, BRS continually looks to new tools to promote compliance with regulatory

requirements for field trials and movement of regulated GE organisms.

To this end, in fall 2007 BRS announced it was developing a voluntary compliance assistance program to help universities, small businesses, and large companies develop management practices to enhance compliance with APHIS GE regulatory requirements. This program, called the Biotechnology Quality Management System (BQMS), is now entering the pilot phase. BQMS is intended to supplement existing BRS regulatory and inspection requirements by helping entities such as universities, producers, and companies who introduce regulated GE organisms to analyze their operations, identify control points where problems could occur, and apply mitigation measures to address those vulnerabilities.

BQMS is an audit-based compliance program that seeks to implement best management practices. Pilot participants will develop, implement and maintain a BQMS within their organization that is designed to be compatible with existing quality management guidelines, such as ISO 9001, used by the agricultural, biotechnology, and seed industries. Participants will need to achieve the following:

- Work to identify vulnerabilities in their processes and to identify potential risk control points for any GE introduction;
- Identify and develop quality control measures to minimize the risk or occurrence of unauthorized releases;
- Develop or revise standard operating procedures that address vulnerabilities to noncompliance;
- Ensure all personnel are properly trained on the standard operating procedures for working with GE organisms; and
- Monitor BQMS procedures for the introduction of GE organisms

Bayer Crop Science, BASF Plant Science, J.R. Simplot Plant Science, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln have been named as pilot participants and are expected to begin work with the BQMS pilot project in January of 2009. More information on the BQMS program is available at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/news_bqms.shtml

All-Hazards Food and Agriculture Emergency Response Workgroup for States

Several years ago, Fresno and Stanislaus Counties in California received funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop an all-hazards food and agriculture emergency response template. The template was based on lessons learned during exotic Newcastle disease eradication efforts and a number of emergency response test exercises. That template, which was completed in 2007, is now available throughout California and has been adopted state-wide by the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA). The developers of the plan want to make it available to other States as well.

To support communication across States, the template creators are hosting a workgroup through www.foodshield.org, a DHS funded program. The goal of the workgroup is to serve as a forum for State and local emergency responders interested in planning, training, and exercising preparedness for all-hazards food and agriculture emergency response and recovery. Anyone who joins the workgroup will have access to California's template, but emergency responders are also welcome to share their own templates, lessons learned and expertise.

The California template addresses planning, preparedness, response and recovery for food contamination incidents as well as plant and animal pest and disease outbreaks. The plan is broken into multiple sections and interested States can borrow the template in its entirety or pick and choose which parts best meet their needs as long as they give the sources proper credit. Although the workgroup is being hosted through the FoodSHIELD Web site, Carla Thomas, the Project Coordinator, plans to utilize conference calls, webinars, survey tools and other FoodSHIELD technology to engage members and establish a dialogue.

"One of the goals we'll kick off in the new year is to start having regular communications," said Thomas, who is the National Exercise Coordinator for the National Plant Diagnostic Network, University of California, Davis.

For more information on the template and the workgroup, contact Carla Thomas at 530-304-0689 or send her an email at cthomas@ucdavis.edu.

APHIS Feature: Wildlife Services Work to Prevent Wildlife Strikes at Airports

Aviation safety is probably not the most common APHIS issue area people think of, but for APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) program, it is a major priority. Through the Airport Wildlife Hazards Program and applied research conducted by the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), WS works to lower the incidence of bird and other wildlife strikes at airports nationwide. Often unreported in the media, wildlife-aircraft strikes (in particular bird strikes) are a serious threat to both private and commercial aircraft. Domestically, wildlife strikes cost the industry approximately \$625 million per year and result in nearly 600,000 hours of aircraft downtime. In January-June 2008 alone, more than 3,000 bird strikes were reported in the United States and Canada. While many of these were minor, some have the potential for catastrophe. Some examples of strikes in 2008 include:

- **September 23:** A Northwest Airlines flight from Little Rock was forced to make an emergency landing after hitting 139 starlings on takeoff.
- **September 21:** A Delta Airlines 767 made an emergency landing in Orlando after striking several wood storks on takeoff.
- **October 27:** A Delta Airlines MD-90 aborted takeoff after ingesting a large bird into the right engine in Salt Lake City.
- **June 20:** A 747 bound for China was forced to dump \$100,000 worth of fuel in order to make an emergency landing in Chicago after ingesting a red-tailed hawk on takeoff.



Damage caused by bird strike.

A key part of WS' work is to analyze and produce an annual report of all wildlife strikes to aircraft in the United States. This data is used by the aviation industry and government to increase safety by introducing best management practices and government policy to mitigate wildlife issues at airports. Approximately, 82,000 wildlife-aircraft strikes have been documented since 1990. WS also provides on-the-ground assistance to airports. WS biologists offer technical and direct operational assistance to airport and airbase personnel and are available to conduct onsite evaluations of wildlife problems at all airports throughout the nation. In fiscal year 2007, WS personnel worked at more than 60 percent of the airports that provide commercial air service and assisted 714 airports and airbases in the United States.

WS biologists recommend the use of noise-making devices, such as pyrotechnics, propane cannons, and bird-distress tapes. They also provide guidance on the appropriate use of depredation permits to remove wildlife that may impact aviation safety. In addition, WS provides guidance on how to modify habitats to make airports unattractive to wildlife.

These recommendations include reducing water and garbage sources at the airport; installing wildlife-resistant fences; modifying or removing vegetation, trees, and roosting sites; and trapping and relocating wildlife. In order to limit the occurrence of wildlife-aircraft incidents, WS also conducts research into new technologies at its NWRC facility in Sandusky, Ohio. Recent developments there include the validation of avian radar to detect and track birds; an assessment of potential risks that osprey pose for bird-aircraft strikes, and the movement of resident Canada geese in New York City. Researchers also study habitat types around airports to help identify better means of designing airport features to discourage bird visits as well as to develop technologies to dissipate birds when they do congregate at or near runways. For more information on the WS wildlife deterrence program please see:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nwrc/research/aviation/index.shtml

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/protecting_health_safety.shtml

Vacancies in APHIS

All Agency vacancies are posted on the APHIS Web site. To view the entire list of APHIS vacancies go to www.aphis.usda.gov. Under Related Topics click on Find a Job in APHIS. The positions highlighted below are for relevant positions that are at the GS-13 level and above.

Position: [Veterinary Medical Officer/Microbiologist/Biologist](#)

Location: 2 Vacancies in Riverdale, MD

Pay Plan: GS-0403,0401,0701-13/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec. 5, 2008

Position: [Biologist](#) (Asst Coord – National Wildlife Health Programs)

Location: Fort Collins, CO

Pay Plan: GS-0401-14/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec. 8, 2008

Position: [Supervisory VMO](#) (Associate Regional Director)

Location: Raleigh, NC

Pay Plan: GS-0701-14/15

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec. 8, 2008

Position: [Project Manager](#)

Location: 2 Vacancies in Riverdale, MD

Pay Plan: GS-0301-12/13

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec. 12, 2008

Position: [PPO Officer](#) (CSI Florida Program Manager)

Location: GS-0401-13/13

Pay Plan: Kendall, FL

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec. 15, 2008

Position: [Veterinary Medical Officer](#) (Assistant. AVIC)

Location: Frankfort, KY

Pay Plan: GS-0701-12/13

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec 22, 2008

Position: [Supervisory Biologist](#) (Wildlife Research Program Manager)

Location: Fort Collins, CO

Pay Plan: GS-0401-13/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Dec. 29, 2008