



APHIS News for States

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The June issue of *APHIS News for States* now comes to you in multiple formats! Last month I heard feedback from a number of people who received the newsletter but couldn't read it because the text was so large. Hopefully, we've resolved that technical issue, but it did point out that readers need more than one way to view the newsletter. I'll continue to distribute *APHIS News for States* via email each month, but at the top of the page, you'll see a Web link as well as a PDF attachment. You can click on either of these to view the newsletter or you can read it in its original form simply by scrolling down the page. Please continue to share your feedback about the newsletter. Your comments are very much appreciated. As I mentioned in the first edition, this newsletter will continue to evolve in order to best meet your needs.

Hallie Zimmers
APHIS' Interim State Liaison

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Wildlife Services Works With Russia and Greenland to Sample Geese for Avian Influenza

This summer APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) program is reaching beyond the borders of the United States to conduct sampling for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in wild birds. WS' biologists have targeted two locations—Wrangel Island in Russia and the Thule region in northwest Greenland—where birds from multiple flyways cross paths during the breeding season. If the virus is detected, it could serve as an early warning system and lead to additional monitoring of wild birds in targeted areas of the United States.

Sampling on Wrangel Island, which is located off the coast of Far Eastern Russia, began this month. WS is supplying equipment to Russian scientists who will be collecting approximately 300 to 500 samples from Lesser Snow Geese that travel from North America to breed on the island. Wrangel Island is also a breeding ground for approximately 60 other bird species that migrate to Southeast Asia in the winter.

Because HPAI H5N1 is already present in Asia, Wrangel Island is an important location to sample for the virus. The island, however, is very isolated and researchers must be prepared to spend several months on the island before being picked up by helicopter. As a result, Russian ornithologists that spend every summer on the island are conducting the sampling for WS in conjunction with other research activities. The remote location will also make getting the samples off the island a challenge. Weather permitting, a helicopter is scheduled to visit the site later this summer to bring the samples back to laboratories in Russia for analysis. The results will then be shared with WS.

It will be much easier to conduct sampling in Greenland. WS' biologists are scheduled to begin sampling Greater Snow Geese there in July. The goal is to collect approximately 300 samples that will then be brought back to the United States for analysis. Little is known about bird populations in the area, but migratory pathways and scattered reports suggest that different species of geese from North America and Eurasia may intermingle in the area. Because HPAI H5N1 has also been detected in Europe, the area has been selected as an important location for sampling.

This is the first time that WS has conducted sampling in either of these locations, but the hope is that the resulting data will provide valuable information about the health of wild birds at these sites and how they interact with one another.

Investigative and Enforcement Services' Data Shows Increasing Case Load

APHIS' Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) is responsible for investigating alleged violations of the Agency's regulations and related Federal laws. This is a growing responsibility based on recent data. In fiscal year (FY) 2004, IES initiated 3,451 cases collecting more than \$1.6 million in stipulations and more than \$550,000 in civil penalties. By FY 2007 the number of cases initiated had nearly doubled to 6,648 with IES collecting nearly \$2 million in stipulations and more than \$671,000 in civil penalties. The first half of FY 2008 shows the number of cases holding steady with 3,118 opened from Oct. 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008. During that same time frame, IES collected more than \$1.1 million in stipulations and over \$950,000 in civil penalties.

One of the biggest reasons for the increase in cases is due to the growing number of alleged violations of agricultural import requirements. The Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) oversees quarantine and inspection activities at ports of entry across the nation, and they identify potential violations based on APHIS' regulations and authorities. As a result, any follow up actions are handled by IES. In FY 2004, IES initiated 1,146 cases involving port of entry issues. By FY 2007, that number had jumped to 5,006. A significant portion of these CBP referrals are non-investigated cases, such as passenger baggage violations or garbage violations, for which IES issues warning letters, stipulations, etc. In the first half of FY 2008, IES opened 2,205 CBP-referred cases.

Potential violations of APHIS' Veterinary Services regulations resulted in the initiation of 594 investigations in FY 2007 and 263 in the first half of FY 2008. Similarly, IES initiated 554 investigations in FY 2007 in response to potential violations of APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) regulations with another 440 investigations initiated in the first half of FY 2008. In FY 2007, APHIS' Animal Care program generated 486 investigations with another 208 in the first 6 months of FY 2008. APHIS' smallest program, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, requested 7 investigations in FY 2007 and 2 in the first half of FY 2008.

With growing responsibilities, IES is taking a serious look at how it can continue to meet the needs of its customers, share information with State partners, and bring investigations to a timely conclusion. Since APHIS' State partners are often the first to identify a potential violation, IES and PPQ have created a pilot investigatory training program for State plant regulatory officials. The first course will be held in Iowa in July followed by another course in West Virginia. The goal of the training is educate State officials about steps they can take, such as documenting the incident and preserving evidence, to assist in what could become a Federal investigation.

APHIS' Concept of Operations in Support of ESF #11

Last month, *APHIS News for States* included a story about how the Agency recently established 10 field positions to support its role as the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #11 (Agriculture and Natural Resources) Coordinator under the Department of Homeland Security's National Response Framework. This month, APHIS is rolling out its Concept of Operations, which details how the Agency plans to manage that coordination role. While the document is primarily intended for APHIS employees, it's also a resource for States that may be interested in how the Agency is organized internally to carry out its ESF #11 emergency response role when activated by DHS' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In response to the recent flooding in the Midwest, ESF #11 is currently activated in FEMA regions V and VII, and APHIS is providing assistance.

The 10-page Concept of Operations document details APHIS' ESF #11 infrastructure as well as roles and responsibilities. It also distinguishes between ESF #11 activations and APHIS emergency program activations that occur in response to a plant or animal disease detection. Because ESF #11 involves APHIS' partner agencies (the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Food and Nutrition Service and the Department of the Interior), the operations guide defines communications processes for sharing information and working with FEMA as well as States. In addition, the document contains a chart that identifies all of the ESF #11 positions in the Agency and where they're located. The Concept of Operations is a living document and will be updated as necessary. To read the document in its entirety, please [click here](#).

Incident Command System Training Courses Offered by APHIS

APHIS is continuing to expand its Incident Command System (ICS) training curriculum by offering new classes, many of which are open to States. All of the training is free, so travel expenses are the only associated cost. While APHIS employees receive priority placement, the courses often have extra slots available and State participation is welcome. The week of July 20th, APHIS is offering I-420 in Fort Collins, CO and space is available. The course trains incident command teams by taking them through simulated exercises to improve their overall coordination and response. If your State has an incident management team that is interested in participating, please contact Kim Ogle at 301-734-8861 or send her an email at kim.d.ogle@aphis.usda.gov.

In addition to I-420, APHIS regularly holds ICS 300 and 400 courses. While these are geared toward first responders in general, APHIS is also beginning

to offer ICS position-specific courses. For example, this week APHIS is holding a course especially for incident commanders, and recently the Agency sponsored a course for operations and planning section chiefs. APHIS is also working with an outside contractor to develop position-specific courses for public information officers, logistics chiefs, and finance section chiefs. The training curriculum already exists, but the outside contractor is making adjustments to give the courses an agricultural focus, making them more realistic for APHIS employees. For more information about how you or members of your staff can participate in these upcoming courses, please contact Rick Kaushal at 301-734-5917 or send him an email at rakesh.r.kaushal@aphis.usda.gov.

Emergency Contact Number for Foreign Animal Disease Investigations and Incidents

APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) National Center for Animal Health Emergency Management (NCAHEM) has established a 24-hour emergency answering service for State Animal Health Officials or VS Area Offices to report foreign animal disease investigations to VS National Headquarters. That number is 800-940-6524 and can be used after hours, on weekends and holidays. The answering service will immediately contact someone from NCAHEM and you will receive a prompt response. The toll-free number is intended to support, but not replace or bypass existing State and VS Area Office foreign animal disease investigation procedures.

Christine Zakarka Named Deputy Administrator of APHIS' Policy and Program Development Unit

Earlier this month, Christine Zakarka was named Deputy Administrator of APHIS' Policy and Program Development (PPD) Unit. In her new role, Zakarka is responsible for the overall planning and direction of policies, programs and activities at APHIS. She will also oversee the Agency's budget, regulation development and compliance programs.

PPD is a support program within APHIS designed to help Agency leadership continually improve their programs by making and implementing decisions and creating strategic plans that are based on sound science and rigorous analysis of data while remaining consistent with the Agency's environmental stewardship goals, legal authorities, and overall policies.

Prior to accepting this new role, Zakarka served since 2001 as Chief of PPD's Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring staff. In that role, she was responsible for developing the Agency's strategic and operational plans, evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of APHIS programs and analyzing and improving business processes. Zakarka's staff conducted the recent review

and analysis of collaboration between APHIS and the States and issued a February 2008 report detailing their findings and recommendations for improvement.

Zakarka has held other positions in APHIS as a Manager of Information Technology Planning and as an Employee Development Specialist. She has also served on several temporary managerial details including Acting Director for the Agency's Conflict Prevention and Management program, Acting Director of the National Veterinary Services Laboratories and most recently, Acting Assistant Director of Human Resources.

Emerald Ash Borer Interim Guidelines Shared with States

At the beginning of June, APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program distributed a regulatory guidance document to assist States in preparing for possible emerald ash borer (EAB) detections as a result of intensified survey efforts. The document discusses a wide range of routine regulatory functions, with particular emphasis placed on activities governing firewood production, distribution and movement. The guidelines also provide direction on operational activities, such as what types of facilities States should consider regulating and how to enforce those regulations. The guidelines were shared with States as an interim measure to support planning activities while PPQ reviews the comments that were received on the Draft EAB Pest Response Guidelines. That comprehensive document should be finalized and shared with States by the end of the year.

PPQ is actively engaged in enhancing communication efforts related to EAB. These documents were shared in recognition of the fact that States are interested in EAB information. As part of this effort, PPQ recently updated and reorganized its EAB Web site creating an easy to remember link: www.purpleeabsurvey.info. For more information about EAB activities or to share any feedback, please contact Paul Chaloux, the Acting National Program Coordinator for EAB at 301-734-0917 or by email at paul.chaloux@aphis.usda.gov.

APHIS Receives International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Certification in their Biotechnology Regulatory Services Program

On June 5, APHIS' Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program achieved International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2000 Certification for its coordination and administration of the review and issuance of notifications, permits, and information related to genetically engineered organisms. ISO certification is recognized worldwide and requires an outside audit of an organization's business practices. In order to

achieve ISO certification, a program must demonstrate that it has implemented best management practices that maximize efficiency and effectiveness and that standard business processes are strictly followed.

This formal recognition highlights the efforts BRS has made over the last several years to identify, implement, and leverage best processes to improve program effectiveness and efficiency. The scope of the audit encompassed not only the administrative review and processes of the permit staff but also the review process conducted by the program's biotechnologists. This includes the exchange of information that occurs between BRS and a State when facilitating that States review and comment of a BRS permit application. Achieving ISO certification is a significant strategic milestone for BRS and emphasizes the program's continued commitment to improving the quality of its service and reviews.

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. We also have a feature position this month for a GS-9/11 Plant Protection and Quarantine Instructor.

Position: [Management Analyst](#) (Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security)

Location: Riverdale, MD

Pay Plan: GS-0343-14/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: June 25, 2008

Position: [Lead Information Technology Specialist](#) (Security)

Location: Riverdale, MD

Pay Plan: GS-2210-14/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: June 26, 2008

Featured Position: [Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer](#) (Instructor)

Location: Frederick, MD

Pay Plan: GS-0401-9/11 (4 vacancies)

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: June 30, 2008

Position: [Supervisory Biologist Scientist](#)

Location: Riverdale, MD

Pay Plan: GS-0401-13/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens
Position Closes: July 4, 2008

Position: [Assistant Director](#) (National Wildlife Research Center)
Location: Fort Collins, CO
Pay Plan: GS-0401-14/15
Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens
Position Closes: July 7, 2008

Position: [VMO](#) (Epid.) Poultry Health Specialist
Location: Sutton, MA
Pay Plan: GS-0701-12/13
Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens
Position Closes: July 7, 2008

Position: [Veterinary Medical Officer](#)
Location: Ames, IA
Pay Plan: GS-0701-12/13
Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens
Position Closes: July 14, 2008

Position: [Veterinary Medical Officer](#)
Location: Ames, IA
Pay Plan: GS-0701-11/13
Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens
Position Closes: July 14, 2008