



APHIS News for States

October 2008

Message from the APHIS Administrator

I recently attended the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) meeting in Bismarck, ND where I had the pleasure of meeting individually with a number of NASDA members on a variety of issues. This was the first time that we at APHIS set up an "open house" for Commissioners to talk one-on-one about issues of importance to their States. I found the meetings extremely beneficial and look forward to organizing similar forums at future State meetings. Our discussions covered a whole range of issues from citrus greening and emerald ash borer to bovine tuberculosis and cooperative agreements. We will be following up on any outstanding issues over the next several weeks.

Kevin Shea, APHIS' Associate Administrator, will be at the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) meeting in Greensboro, NC later this month and he will also be available for one-on-one meetings with any interested State Veterinarians and Livestock Commissioners in attendance. If you would like to meet with Kevin during USAHA, please contact Hallie Zimmers and she will coordinate a time that fits your schedule.

As you know, Hallie has been serving as APHIS' Interim State Liaison since that position was established back in February. Since that time, she has impressed me—as well as many of you—with her dedicated efforts as our interim liaison. She has concentrated on building relationships with our State partners and has worked hard to get feedback from you and your offices and facilitate communication on issues of importance. At NASDA, I announced that Hallie has been named to that position permanently, and I want to share this good news with all of our State partners.

During the selection process for the National State Liaison position, I interviewed another candidate, Jake Hegeman, whose experiences and skills impressed me. Jake's undergraduate degree is in natural resources and public policy from Cornell University, and he has a law degree from Tulane, where he specialized in environmental law. For the last several years, he has managed state regulatory issues for Stateside Associates, a consulting firm outside Washington, D.C. that specializes in State regulatory and legislative issues. Jake has much experience and a keen interest, in particular, in building consensus between State and Federal agencies around natural resource and environmental policy. We've worked quickly to create a second State Liaison position and bring him on board in APHIS. It's clear that we have no shortage of projects we can engage with our State partners on, and the areas of consensus building and public engagement are ones I am eager for APHIS to move into.

Jake will start with APHIS at the end of this month. In total, Jake and Hallie bring a set of strong, diverse skills to their roles as APHIS' National State Liaisons. We'll be working to outline their division of labor and will share this information with you. Together, Jake and Hallie will enable us to work with you on a wider range of critical areas.

Sincerely,

Cindy Smith
APHIS Administrator



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located in Riverdale,
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APHIS Establishes The Parcel Exam Surveillance Team

APHIS' Smuggling, Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) unit is joining forces with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control to establish a new Parcel Exam Surveillance Team. Known as PEST, the multi-Agency group will conduct monitoring and analysis operations at international and mail courier facilities in New York and New Jersey.

This is a new initiative started by SITC to gather information about the types of illegal commodities that are being mailed from certain countries at specific times of the year, such as holidays. By identifying these pathways, the team can then work to close them down and prevent future shipments.

The first joint operation will take place in New York in late October, and the effort will be aided by the use of FWS' x-ray van and CBP's K-9 unit. The team will open any packages that are identified as suspicious through the use of the x-ray machine or the canine teams. They'll also open any packages that are leaking or smell like they may contain agricultural items. Any prohibited material will be removed and destroyed and a notice to the recipient will be inserted in the package indicating that items were seized and why. Opened parcels that don't contain prohibited materials will be resealed and sent on their way.

It is anticipated that PEST will undertake several projects throughout the year in New York and New Jersey in order to develop a pool of statistical data and to identify potential compliance issues. If PEST efforts in these States are successful, then SITC plans to establish teams in other States as well.

APHIS Launches New Emergency Preparedness and Response Web Site

In September, APHIS launched a new Emergency Preparedness and Response Web site to supply stakeholders, including State partners, with critical information about the wide range of services the Agency provides when planning for and during emergencies. Whether you're dealing with an all hazards situation, such as a hurricane or tornado, or dealing with a pest or disease outbreak, the Web site provides important resources and contact information.

While some of this information was previously available on the APHIS Web site, it was spread across different program areas. The new site brings all emergency-related information together in one place in a well-organized, easy-to-navigate forum. Whether you're looking for information on Emergency Support Function (ESF) #11, pet sheltering, or pest and diseases responses, you can find it all by going to http://www.aphis.usda.gov/emergency_response/

Most importantly, the new site has a link for APHIS emergency contact information. Just click on the State where you work, and you'll immediately get contact information for the State Veterinarian, State Plant Regulatory Official, the ESF #11 coordinator, the Animal Care representative and the Biotechnology representative. The site also has an "I Want To" navigation column on the right-hand side of the page that provides links to frequently requested information, such as test exercises, foreign animal disease training and Federal emergency response manuals.

National Meeting on Pet Sheltering Sandwiched between Hurricanes Gustav and Ike

In the wake of Hurricane Gustav and just before Hurricane Ike made landfall in Texas, APHIS and the National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs (NASAAEP) co-sponsored the first national meeting on pet sheltering Sept. 10-11, in Maryland. The National Summit on Companion Animal Emergency Management provided a forum to educate State emergency responders about the Federal and non-governmental resources that are available to assist with pet sheltering in the event of a mass evacuation. State responders with experience managing pet sheltering during natural disasters also shared best practices and lessons learned.

Just before the national meeting, APHIS' Animal Care program sent 6 employees to Louisiana to assist with pet sheltering activities in response to Hurricane Gustav. Approximately 1,200 animals were sheltered in Louisiana, and Animal Care helped to assess sheltering facilities, provide recommendations on animal husbandry and help State officials find additional resources to support their efforts. Earlier in the summer, Animal Care held a joint test exercise with Louisiana State officials and the knowledge they gained regarding the use of refrigerated trucks was put to practical use transporting animals during Hurricane Gustav. Animal Care also provided assistance in Texas in response to Hurricane Ike. A total of 10 Animal Care employees were on the ground, working as liaisons to State operations, providing subject matter expertise to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, conducting needs assessments in the field, and assisting regulated facilities.

In both States the number of animals brought to shelter locations was lower than anticipated, but Animal Care learned that it was difficult to obtain accurate counts of animals being sheltered State wide. Shelter volunteers had many responsibilities and providing daily counts was challenging, especially given that animals were arriving and being picked up on a regular basis, which meant the numbers were constantly changing. Animal Care will be working with States to look at ways to streamline this process in the future.

While some States have already benefitted from Animal Care's assistance first hand, the national summit was a critical opportunity for Animal Care to share its expertise with States as well as offer its support and assistance with response planning, especially in hurricane-vulnerable States. All States need to do is ask for help.

More Countries Using Irradiation to Mitigate Pest Risks

The first shipments of irradiated Indian mangoes arrived in the United States in May 2007, marking the first time that fruit irradiated at an overseas facility was approved for importation into the United States. A month later in June 2007, APHIS approved the importation of irradiated shipments of litchi, longan, mango, mangosteen, pineapple and rambutan from Thailand. While these were the first countries to get approval by APHIS to use irradiation, they won't be the last. The use of irradiation is becoming an increasingly popular tool for effectively managing a variety of pests.

APHIS is currently working with Vietnam and Mexico to establish irradiation programs. In September 2008, APHIS' Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST) certified an irradiation facility in Vietnam to treat dragon fruit for importation to the United States. The first shipment is expected to arrive later this month. Mexico is also interested in exporting several varieties of irradiated fruits to the United States. In late September, CPHST certified an irradiation facility outside Mexico City, but work plans must still be approved before any individual commodities can be shipped to the United States.

Irradiation first became an approved treatment in 2002 on 12 high-risk pests for fruits and vegetables entering the United States. The use of irradiation, however, was made more feasible in January 2006 when APHIS recognized a generic dose for treatment of a wider range of commodities and for all insect pests. Although irradiation can sometimes be an expensive form of treatment, it provides an alternative to other pest control methods, such as fumigation, and cold and heat treatments. In certain cases, irradiation is the only effective treatment option. Irradiation can also help preserve the shelf-life of certain types of commodities with little or no affect on the quality of the treated food.

APHIS is tentatively planning a workshop focusing on irradiation in the United States for U.S. industry and interested parties in spring 2009. More details will be forthcoming but the purpose of the workshop will be to explore policies and possibilities for the implementation of irradiation as a phytosanitary treatment for the import and export of fresh fruits, vegetables, cut flowers and other perishable commodities that meet U.S. standards for entry. For more information on irradiation, go to <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/> and click on "Hot Issues".

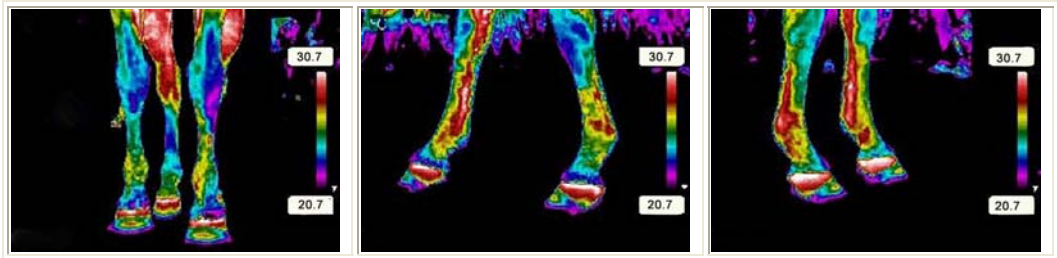
Animal Care Uses Thermal Imaging Technology to Identify Horse Soring

APHIS' Animal Care inspectors are stepping up to some new technology to enforce the Horse Protection Act (HPA) and combat the illegal practice of horse soring. Animal Care's veterinary medical officers (VMOs) are incorporating thermography into their HPA inspections in preparation for using thermal—also called infrared—cameras to detect signs of soring.

Soring is the abusive practice of accentuating a horse's step or gait for competitions. Some owners and trainers sore their horses by irritating an animal's foreleg with chemical applications and injections or through mechanical irritants such as straps and chains. With thermal imaging technology, Animal Care VMOs can see and record surface temperature variations on a horse's foreleg. Cool temperatures appear as cool colors like blue and purple while warmer temperatures appear as yellows, oranges, reds and white. These "hot spots" may indicate inflammation and could one day provide additional evidence of soring.

Currently, thermal images are not being used to initiate regulatory action or penalties; however, inspectors are collecting images to establish a baseline of how a healthy animal should appear in a thermal image. At the end of August, this technology was used at the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration in Tennessee to help train Animal Care VMOs in how to use the cameras and for image collection purposes. The Celebration is the largest competition in the nation for Tennessee Walking Horses.

In early 2009, AC plans to review the images collected during 2008 and determine next steps for incorporating thermography into HPA inspections and enforcement activities. Thermography won't replace traditional inspection methods but it will assist and support them by providing objective and recordable scientific data.



Reminder: eAuthentication Support for States

The September issue of *APHIS News for States* included information about a new APHIS support team being created to provide assistance with eAuthentication password problems. That team is now available to serve you, and State employees who are having problems accessing their eAuthentication accounts can call 1-866-794-2827 for assistance.

APHIS support includes:

- Assistance with forgotten user IDs
- Password resets
- Re-enabling accounts that have been locked out
- Re-enabling expired accounts
- Preliminary trouble shooting
- Assistance with how to create an eAuthentication account

The hope is that this additional support will make it easier and faster for State partners to access APHIS systems. Users experiencing eAuthentication problems that involve more than password and user ID issues must still work through USDA's Help Desk. That number is 1-800-457-3642. For more information on eAuthentication, please visit <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/index.html>.

APHIS Feature: Center for Veterinary Biologics

that diagnose, prevent or treat animal diseases. Under the 1913 Virus Serum-Toxin Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has responsibility for ensuring that animal vaccines, bacterins and diagnostics are pure, safe, potent and efficacious. CVB carries out this mission by evaluating all veterinary biologics prior to their experimental use and commercial production to ensure that the products meet their label claims. While licensing new products is one of CVB's primary responsibilities, the Center also performs a number of other laboratory functions, including testing and reagent production.

As part of its review process, CVB reviews documentation and conducts testing to ensure that biologics are free of disease producing agents, especially foreign animal diseases. The program also develops appropriate standards and procedures for product usage. Only those biologics that meet CVB's rigorous review process are licensed and approved for commercial use. CVB also oversees field tests of biologics, conducts facility and product inspections for quality assurance, and performs compliance activities. In addition, CVB manages a hotline (800-752-6255) that the public, producers and veterinarians can call to report any adverse events that occur after using a licensed product.

In fiscal year 2007, CVB licensed 63 new products that are critical for protecting American agriculture, facilitating trade, and enhancing economic agriculture opportunities, and conducted more than 3,000 tests on vaccines and diagnostic test kits used in the surveillance and eradication of program diseases. Currently, there are 2,070 active licensed or permitted products for the control of 213 different animal diseases.

One of the areas where CVB plays a key role is licensing products to address new and emerging diseases. Whenever possible, CVB works to streamline processes to ensure that animal health needs are addressed as quickly as possible. For example, CVB approved licensed equine and swine influenza vaccines for commercial use, but recognizing the virus strains can vary, the Center allows expedited approval for inclusion of new strains of the virus to existing products as long as the production methods aren't changed. For more information on CVB go to:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/vet_biologics/vb_about.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](#) (Area Epidemiology Officer)

Location: Albuquerque, NM

Pay Plan: GS-0701-12/13

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Oct. 6, 2008

Position: [Supervisor SITC Officer](#) (Area Manager)

Location: Boise, ID

Pay Plan: GS-0401-12/13

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Oct. 14, 2008

Position: [Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer](#) (AVIC)

Location: Helena, MT

Pay Plan: GS-0701-13/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Oct. 20, 2008

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

Location: Jackson, MS

Pay Plan: GS-0701-12/13

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Oct. 20, 2008

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

Location: Frankfort, KY

Pay Plan: GS-0701-12/13

Who May Apply: All U.S. citizens

Position Closes: Oct. 20, 2008