

# **Looking Toward Your Future With APHIS**

## **Personal Development and Career Advancement**

APHIS' career employees enjoy opportunities for individual development. The agency provides some tuition assistance so employees can pursue advanced education or participate in a variety of programs that promote self-improvement, training, and career advancement. The ever-present need for strong, proficient leaders and managers drives the need to develop and promote APHIS professional and technical employees.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

APHIS is determined to recruit and advance qualified employees from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Human relations and sensitivity training helps our people work smoothly with peers from different backgrounds. Employees are considered for appointment, promotion, and other worklife opportunities based on their own merits without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

## **Paid Vacation and Holidays**

New APHIS employees earn over 2 weeks of paid vacation time each year. They can take time off as they earn it or carry it over from one year to another. Vacation leave increases after 3 years of employment and again after 15 years' total employment. In addition, APHIS employees get time off on all 10 Federal holidays. They also accrue sick leave, which can be used for illnesses and for time away from work due to medical examinations or treatment. There is no limit on the amount of unused sick leave employees can carry over from year to year.

## **Health Care Coverage and Life Insurance**

APHIS employees can select from among several health insurance plans. New employees can obtain coverage without a physical examination and cannot be denied coverage because of preexisting conditions. In addition, APHIS employees can obtain group life insurance that offers various levels of coverage at modest cost. A substantial portion of the cost of health insurance and life insurance is paid by the Government.

## **Retirement Plan**

Federal retirement benefits feature a portable, Social Security based annuity program supported by Government and worker contributions. Employees may supplement their future retirement income by participating in the Thrift Savings Plan, which offers the advantages of an individual retirement account. The Government contributes proportionately to Thrift Savings accounts based on how much money the worker has contributed. Under the Plan's supervision, these accounts can be invested in one of several types of mutual funds.

### **Flexible Work Schedules**

When the work of the agency is conducted outside an office setting, employees' schedules respond to unique job requirements and are designed to meet job demands and their personal needs. Workers stationed in offices or laboratories can usually vary their daily work hours, work four 10-hour days per week, take variable days off, or choose other flexible schedules with supervisory approval.

### **Variable Workplaces**

APHIS employees work in many locations- from Government buildings to busy international airports, foreign countries, sophisticated laboratories, or livestock markets. They may even use their home as their base of operations if they work in a remote field assignment. Some employees whose jobs are portable link up with the agency's computer network via phone lines and work some days of the week from their homes.

### **Quality of Worklife**

The combination of generous benefits and progressive personnel policies give APHIS employees an unusually high quality of worklife. The agency strives to develop strategies that anticipate employee needs and contribute to their well-being. For example, APHIS provides:

- Free, confidential counseling services to employees with personal, family, or financial problems;
- A leave donation program so employees can help coworkers who are stricken with major illnesses or personal emergencies; and
- Opportunities for employees to participate actively in policymaking through task groups and team-building experiences.