



## The Game's Afoot for Detective Stephen Gardner

By Greg Rosenthal



SITC Officers regularly visit markets like this in the Los Angeles area.

When Stephen Gardner prowls the commercial produce markets of Los Angeles, he passes the same stalls, vendors, and products he's inspected countless times before. After nearly 5 years as an officer in APHIS' Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) group, he stays vigilant by constantly looking for changes—any small differences that could uncover a threat to American agriculture.

"You see so many boxes day in and day out, you notice any change, a spot, a mark, or a word," he says. And then he starts digging for illegal products—because he knows the stakes involved in his job.

A case in point: fruit flies. Certain exotic fruit

flies riding on smuggled fruit could threaten \$7.2 billion worth of U.S. agricultural commodities. Gardner's home state, California, grows \$5.1 billion of these products. The flies can attack more than 400 kinds of host plants, spoiling or destroying the fruit. In addition to lost production, an infestation could trigger other devastating costs, including control and eradication measures, increased pesticide use, and loss of export markets.

Gardner and his fellow SITC officers patrol the front lines of agricultural trade to help prevent exotic fruit flies—and a myriad of other animal and plant pests and diseases—from entering the United States.

Although Gardner looks for all restricted or prohibited products, he focuses on the greatest threats to American agriculture. These include—among many others—fruit fly host material and poultry products from countries affected by the H5N1 strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

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## Employee New Year Resolutions



### W. Ron DeHaven Administrator

"For APHIS, my resolution is for enhanced professionalism. For APHIS as a whole and for each of us individually, it is important that we act

like professionals in how we interact with each other and our stakeholders. Treating others with respect is a given, but we also need to be responsive to requests and honor the commitments that we make to each other and to our constituents. We need to bring our best to the job every day—to constantly hone our skills and show our professional best in our actions and our appearance. It is on our professionalism that others will form an opinion of us as individuals and as an agency."

For me personally, my resolution is to continue to try and live a balanced life. Secretary

Johanns has talked about the need for balance—especially with the professional, physical, spiritual, and personal aspects of our lives. This is difficult, and it's a significant challenge for me personally. To do our best at work, we need this balance. Spirituality has always provided me with a broader perspective on the importance of what we do as well as why and how I accomplish my goals.

And, while exercise and losing weight are common resolutions, I find exercise is a necessary part of balance in my life. It contributes to both physical and mental fitness. Also, I feel strongly that we can't allow stress at work to compromise our relationships with family and friends. At times, situations at work may interrupt our balance, but ultimately family must come first. I can relate to this very well right now with a new and special family member—just in case anyone hasn't yet heard about my 1-year-old grandson, Landon! (By the way, I have pictures!)"

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# Stephen Gardner

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”But, even with a target in mind, we must be on the lookout for anything, anytime, anywhere,” Gardner notes.

## A Vast Universe to Inspect

In SITC’s line of work, the most difficult question could well be: Where to begin?

”We look at all kinds of markets—Asian, Mexican, grocery stores, Costco, Sam’s Club, and craft stores,” Gardner says. In craft stores,

potpourri could carry beetles from India and Christmas decorations could contain prohibited wood and pinecones.

At food markets, Gardner searches for suspicious differences. When he notices discrepancies in price, quality, or appearance for the same type of

heat-treated, licorice melon seeds have been fumigated or cooked, herbs have been certified for any required treatment, and broom bristles contain no seeds. These items just scratch the surface.

At markets and warehouses, inspecting huge freezers packed with boxes can pose special challenges. If SITC officers suspect a problem, they typically ask the facility employees to move boxes before starting a comprehensive search. The effort can pay off, though, as it did when Gardner’s group found a frozen grapefruit product from Bangladesh that tested positive for citrus canker.

”You never know what you’re going to find, or where you’re going to find it,” Gardner says. In their search for illegal imports and smuggled prohibited products, the nine officers in SITC’s Los Angeles work unit cover 10 counties in Southern California.

## Always a Good Cop, Never a Bad Cop

Gardner seeks to build close relationships with all importers and foreign market merchants—even those who violate the regulations. He understands that information gathering is key to smuggling interdiction.

”Our primary goal is to quarantine the product,” Gardner says. ”Our second goal is to turn violators into sources for more information. It doesn’t end with this one violator—as soon as one is caught, another’s doing it.”

He notes that, once caught, violators are eager to have their competitors treated the same way. Valuable information begins to flow. ”Usually tips from other importers are pretty accurate,” he says. ”They say it’s in a container at this warehouse and at this time, and they’re right on.” Gardner adds that domestic producers are also happy to feed tips to SITC to stop imported illegal products from undercutting their businesses.

Still, after he seizes their products, Gardner gives violators the personal touch in his low-key, soft-spoken way. ”We give them step-by-step instruction and guide them to get their permit,” he says. ”We help them get started,

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With this card, SITC officers can translate ingredient listings on imported products.

commodity, he wants to know whether the products all came from the same country under the same certificate. And if any warehouses have changed their configurations, Gardner dives in to see why.

The list of items to check can seem endless. Any of the following animal products could require certification: cooked beef, pork, and chicken; canned and dehydrated soups; noodle bowls; bouillon; medicinal products with animal ingredients; and frozen meat. Some importers have labeled frozen boneless duck and chicken feet as jellyfish, so Gardner checks these packages closely.

Importers have also been known to cover a package’s foreign-language ingredient list with a sticker listing the ingredients in English—and the two don’t always agree. To check the products for prohibited meat, SITC officers carry a card listing the words for meat products—such as beef, pork, and chicken—in a variety of languages, including Chinese and Vietnamese. With the card, officers can remove the sticker and verify it against the package.

On the plant product side, Gardner ensures that Szechuan peppers (a citrus fruit) have been

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and—when needed—we also help them overcome the language barrier. We treat them with respect, answer their questions, and let them know that a human always answers when they call the number on our card.”

After SITC officers officially record violations and seize products, they refer the matter to APHIS’ Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES), which determines whether a fine is warranted. If IES investigators also conclude that criminal activity was involved, they refer the case to USDA’s Office of Inspector General. Separating the inspectors from those who penalize and prosecute helps SITC officers on the beat to remain the good cops.

### **Casting a Wide Interagency Net**

Gardner knows firsthand the value of close collaboration with other agencies at all levels of government. In 2004, he served in the Multi-Agency Smuggled Citrus Budwood Group, which intercepted nearly 4,000 smuggled citrus plants in a major citrus-producing area of California. That bust could be a case study in interagency cooperation.

It began when U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors intercepted three mail shipments from Japan labeled as candy and

chocolate. The boxes, however, contained citrus budwood—some of which tested positive for citrus canker. CBP officials passed the information to SITC, and Gardner and his fellow SITC officers in Los Angeles jumped on the case because the budwood was destined for Ventura County.

Together, CBP, APHIS, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner’s office traced the budwood shipments. Working closely, the agencies linked the destination addresses—all residential homes—to a local nursery, which they connected to three orchards owned by the Japanese budwood exporter. SITC issued Emergency Action Notifications resulting in the burning of all the grafted budwood in the orchards as well as citrus trees from two of the residences.

APHIS’ management, recognizing the importance of the operation, presented Outstanding Achievement Awards to Gardner and 24 members of the budwood group. Reflecting on the case, Gardner notes, “It’s good to know that, even though a lot of things you do are dead ends, they’re not always a dead end. They’re huge to American agriculture.”

That’s why SITC officers relentlessly patrol their beats. And in Los Angeles, Stephen Gardner is always on the prowl. ♦

## Wildlife Services MOU

*In October, Richard Turner, of the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO), joined William Clay, Deputy Administrator of Wildlife Services, in signing a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In the MOU, NASAO recognizes the national leadership and professional expertise of Wildlife Services in resolving wildlife-human conflicts and encourages State aviation offices to seek Wildlife Services assistance with wildlife hazards at airports.*

*Wildlife strikes at airports cause more than \$500 million in losses annually to U.S. civil aviation. In 2005, Wildlife Services assisted 667 U.S. and 7 foreign airports to address wildlife hazards.*



## New Year Resolutions

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**Donna West**  
Senior Import Specialist,  
PPQ, President, PPQ  
Managers



“This will be my 28th year with PPQ. And, I have both grown up and moved up within its ranks. With retirement near, I think about how I can give back to this wonderful agency.

My resolutions are: to increase my network of colleagues working in agriculture around the world; to mentor employees who want to make a difference in the agency and to help them fulfill their potential; and, to help managers make succession planning a daily goal, especially as us baby boomers move toward retirement. I will keep working as a shepherd of the regulatory process that brings exotic fruits to U.S. consumers. Lastly, I will keep smiling ‘cause I love this agency so much, and I’m lucky to be a part of it!”

**Michael Wach**  
Supervisory Policy Analyst,  
BRS



“My cubicle looks as if it were ransacked by thieves—thieves who didn’t find what they were looking for. So, I’d like to work on ways of managing my clutter, to get rid of old books and papers I’ll never read, to retire stress-relieving squeeze toys I no longer squeeze, to actually have some blank desk space. I just heard on NPR today that former Secretary of State James Baker maintained a completely bare desktop. That’s a goal I’d like to work toward.”

**Vanessa Schreier**  
Plant Health Safeguarding  
Specialist, PPQ



“Graduating from APHIS’ Advancing Leader Program in 2006 was the highlight of my year. It didn’t come out of a specific resolution on my part. But, by focusing on and questioning what I thought I wanted to learn and who I thought I wanted to be, I became involved in projects more interesting than I could have imagined. Some projects I even

initiated on my own! For the New Year, I simply want to see them flourish, but that is no small task. The best I can do is to resolve each day to dedicate my attention to understanding the people and to contributing to the programs that make our agency an exciting place to work.”

**Pamela Simpson-Diedrick**  
Senior Staff Veterinarian, VS



“Each year I make a resolution that is eventually broken or forgotten. But this year is different. I’m making promises that are easy to keep.

I promise to do one good thing for someone every day. This will be done without expectation or return of favor. Mentoring and tutoring are important. So, I’ll participate again in the Partnership in Education program, help with a science fair, and encourage APHIS employees to join a mentoring program.

I also promise to write down every day at least one positive thing that has happened to me. And, I promise to write down every day at least one thing that I could have done differently or improved upon.

Have a Happy New Year! And, as Dr. Martin Luther King said, remember to “Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.”

**Seth Swafford, Staff  
Officer for Wildlife  
Diseases, WS**



“My New Year’s resolution—quitting old habits automatically come to mind. But, being proactive instead seems a better choice to ensure change. So, as I ride in an airplane, sitting behind the computer, and eating my in-flight snack—I realize being physically healthier would be a perfect proactive New Year’s resolution. Sure this sounds traditional, and it will likely not last very long, but an honest effort of walking upstairs instead of the using the elevator and walking to the metro in lieu of taking the shuttle bus seem to be easily achievable steps to better health. My improved physical health will likely lead to increased mental health, which is always beneficial when starting a new year.”

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## New Year Resolutions

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### Denise Sofranko, Field Specialist for Elephants, AC

“Like most, I find it hard to slow down and think about New Year’s resolutions, especially when there

is so much going on. This year we have a big challenge ahead. We’ll be reviewing and responding to the comments received on a recent petition about changing the AWA regulations concerning elephants. As you can imagine, there are many perspectives on this issue.

My goal is to keep good focus and help develop the discussions in a way that is respectful, open, and constructive. I care deeply about these animals and want to help find the solutions that will most benefit them. At APHIS, we often find ourselves at these busy intersections where many views come together.

For my personal goals, I also want to keep growing my technical knowledge and grow in other ways like through the APHIS Track II Advancing Leader program that I’m part of. And like many of us, I need to get back on that exercise wagon that I fell off of earlier this year. ;-)” ♦

## APHIS Manager Profile



### Phil Garcia

Director, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Western Region

#### What is your background?

I was born and raised in southern Colorado and studied biology and chemistry at the University of Southern Colorado.

#### How long have you been with APHIS?

I’ve been with APHIS for 27 years. Prior to that, I spent a few years with the National Park Service and U.S. Customs.

#### Most memorable APHIS experiences?

Living and working in some wonderful places! Having grown up in Colorado and grouching about Texas tourists invading my Colorado home “state,” I ended up spending nearly 20 years working in the Lone Star State for Plant Protection and Quarantine. It turns out all those Texans really did offer genuine hospitality and friendship. I worked along the U.S./Mexican border for many of those years and experienced an incredible blend of people, culture, agriculture, and community.

#### Priorities for the coming months?

I want to continue to help build a strong APHIS leadership team in the regional hubs and build up our emergency response capabilities in APHIS. Within PPQ, I hope to contribute to the strengthening of our plant pest detection programs.

#### Accomplishment most proud of?

I’m proud of being selected as Regional Director to lead an outstanding group of employees in PPQ’s Western Region.

#### Last book read?

*Neither Wolf nor Dog - On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder*, by Kent Nerburn.

#### Guilty pleasure?

No guilt here; I love spending time around our house in the country with my wife Debbie. Star gazing on a cold, clear winter night is awesome!

#### Favorite meal?

A really good steak.

#### Favorite movies?

Les Miserables; Milagro Beanfield War and the Lord of the Rings.

#### Hobbies?

Fly fishing, skiing and snowboarding, bicycling, rock climbing and fly fishing (oops, I already mentioned that..)

## CFC Success! The Stars Come out at APHIS

By John Scott



*CFC paparazzi, Jim Rogers, interviews Michael Gregoire on the red carpet at the Riverdale CFC kick-off event.*

Throughout the country's numerous Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) areas, APHIS employees have embraced local CFC themes for giving and actively contributed to their respective campaigns. At headquarters, APHIS is close once again to meeting its CFC National Capital Area (CFCNCA) goals. Together, employees have so far raised more than \$171,000 toward the agency's 2006 goal of \$184,602. With the agency's mounting contributions, USDA is making its way ever closer to its CFCNCA contribution goal of \$1.8 million.

In response to the CFCNCA theme "Be a Star in Someone's Life," many of APHIS' brightest stars came out to make individual donations and to take part in organized fundraising events.

"It has been a very successful and busy campaign year for

APHIS," said Michael Gregoire, the agency's CFC National Capital Area Campaign Manager. "I have to give a big thanks to everyone who contributed and also to those who pitched in everywhere and held fundraisers."

Among others, this year's events at headquarters included CFC bay auctions, bake sales, a chili cook off, an all-day donut sale, and an "Everything Chocolate" market. Both the Veterinary Services (VS) and Plant Protection and Quarantine programs even held karaoke events where agency employees braved the stage for the cause.

"We had a really good time with the karaoke. It was hilarious and all for a good cause," said Tami Smith, CFC Team Captain for VS in Riverdale.

### Still Time to Give

Although many CFC activities nationwide are now winding down, it's not too late to do your part for the CFCNCA and in other area campaigns as well. In Riverdale, the CFCNCA was scheduled to close on December 15 but has been extended through January 31. For more information concerning deadlines and contribution options, contact your local program CFC keyworkers. ♦

## Snapshot from the Field: Public Servants Going Public

By John Scott

Even though we're all public servants, many of us haven't experienced what it means to go "public" and represent the agency at large meetings or events. For some of us, the prospect is hard to imagine. But, agency employees are asked to step into the public spotlight quite often. Here are some of their stories, along with the challenges and surprises they found.

### Keeping it Positive

Adam Grow, a Center Director with Veterinary Services, recently attended a Farm Bureau meeting of about 500 producers in Arkansas to talk about the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). As it neared time for his presentation, Grow said the local Bureau representative advised him, "This group's not real high on the NAIS right now and, by the way, there's a newspaper reporter here that wants to talk to you."

From there, the immediate challenges didn't get any easier. The program began with local politicians presenting their views on NAIS. None were supportive, and some were quite vocal in

stating their opposition. Just before Grow took the stage, one of the local candidates wore a "No NAIS" jacket as she addressed the crowd.

Despite what many would consider a thorny situation, Grow was able to give his talk and speak to the benefits of NAIS. Although he didn't know it at the time, his presentation was to be followed by a group vote about whether to support the program. And, because the group represents a particularly intensive cattle-producing area of the State, the vote was important to the organization's State-level support for the program.

"I got to see then and there whether I did my job or not," said Grow with a laugh. As it turns out, the audience had warmed to his message, and they unanimously passed a resolution in support of the program.

As a speaker, Grow focuses on a couple key practices when talking to an audience. He credits them for the outcome that day. "First, I make sure I know my subject, and I always try to keep everything on a positive note," Grow said. When

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## Snapshot from the Field:

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presenting or handling questions, he aims for an even tone and gives concrete examples of the genuine benefits to his audience about the agency activities that he's discussing.

Grow also credits the importance of trying to know his audience and to finding common ground. He listens closely to questions, and he also asks questions of his audience to better understand their situations. When that happens, the result is often that the speaker and audience become more human to one another and communicate better.

### Listening Counts

As Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) for New England and senior AVIC in the country, Bill Smith has participated in many public meetings and made countless presentations.

"I've spoken at public meetings, industry conferences, and in classrooms to all ages, from grade school to vet school," said Smith. His advice echoes that of others: know your stuff and know your audience. And to this, he adds another important tip. Be willing to admit when you don't have the answers.

"If you don't know the answer, just tell them you don't. Then ask for their name and if you can get back to them. If you take a chance and talk about things you don't know about, it only comes back to bite you."

The majority of Smith's speaking experiences have been positive, but he knows that events can get emotionally charged or personal. "In some cases, it helps to step in and at other times it's best to let people vent. It's part of knowing your audience," said Smith.

At a pseudorabies meeting, Smith recalled one producer who wanted to use the event to air personal grievances about a particular agency veterinary medical officer in the State. "His comments were way off-topic," Smith said. "In that case, I had to step in and say, 'This is not the best time or place for this discussion. Can I talk with you after the meeting about your concerns?'"

At other times, tension is best defused by lending a listening ear. This advice is perhaps best illustrated by his recent experience at an early

December meeting in Maine about NAIS. The meeting was the first gathering since a March meeting, at which some attendees surprised speakers by hurling cow manure at Maine's State Veterinarian.

"I wasn't at the previous meeting, but it went a lot better this time," Smith said. Sometimes it's just better if the message is simply 'I'm not here to preach. I'm here to listen.'

### Surprises: The Good Kind

As Fred Bourgeois, a field Veterinary Medical Officer in Louisiana, found out, surprises at public events can sometimes be good things.

In late September, Bourgeois was invited to an event in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, commemorating the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Rita. The event was well attended and featured numerous politicians, including the governor, lieutenant governor, and Senators Vitter and Landrieu. U.S. Army Lieutenant General Russel Honore, a notable figure in response efforts to the hurricane, and Freddie Richard, the Director of Emergency Services for Cameron Parish, also were there to mark the occasion.

At the very end of the event, Richard surprised Bourgeois by calling him on stage for special recognition. He said that when Bourgeois took on the task of running the cattle rescue effort, he lifted a huge burden from Richard's shoulders and enabled him to focus attention on restoring critical services to the community. On stage, General Honore hugged and thanked him. The politicians all shook Bourgeois' hand, saying that they were happy to meet the man that the General had been speaking of so highly all day long.

"It was overwhelming to be suddenly pulled into the spotlight," said Bourgeois, who credits the work of many others in Veterinary Services and also USDA for supporting hurricane relief efforts. "It was great to get this kind of feedback from the people we helped. We left a real positive impression on folks with the work we did." ♦

## Winter Tip



## The Scoop on Shoveling Snow



For some of us, winter means enjoying outdoor, seasonal fun like skiing, hiking, or skating. For others, winter is more of an indoor time that is best spent near a woodstove or under a blanket reading a good book.

Whether you're an indoor or outdoor winter person, you'll likely find yourself at some point this winter clearing snow from your sidewalk or digging out your car.

To stay healthy and safe, the National Safety Council offers this advice on shoveling snow.

- Individuals over the age of 40, or those who are relatively inactive, should be especially careful. If you have a history of heart trouble, check with you doctor before shoveling.
- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow! Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically, so pace yourself. Stretch out and warm up before taking on the task.
- For your back, don't pick up too much at once. Use a small shovel. Also, push the

snow as you shovel. It's easier on your back than lifting.

- Shovel only fresh snow. Freshly fallen, powdery snow is easier to shovel.
- Lift with your legs bent, not your back. Keep your back straight. By bending and "sitting" into the movement, you'll keep your spine upright and less stressed.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion. If you run out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately.
- Dress warmly. Remember that your nose, ears, hands and feet, need extra attention during winter's cold.

For more tips, visit the National Safety Council

Web site at

[www.nsc.org/library/facts/snowshov.htm](http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/snowshov.htm) ◆



## USDA and Chinese Scientists Partner on Avian Influenza Study

By Gail Keirn

In April 2005, scientists first saw the potential effects of the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza on wild birds. More than 6,000 wild migratory birds died from the virus at Qinghai Lake nature reserve in central China. This event was highly unusual and likely unprecedented. Prior to the event, wild bird deaths from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus were extremely rare.

To obtain a better understanding of how the virus entered the Qinghai Lake ecosystem and resulted in the death of so many birds, scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Zoology and APHIS' Wildlife Services program are studying wild and domestic animals in the vicinity of Qinghai Lake. Broadly, the goal is to study the role of wildlife as carriers of avian influenza. Specifically, the study's objectives include: identifying reservoirs of avian influenza through surveillance of wild and domestic species; developing a risk assessment of avian influenza to people, poultry and wild animals in Qinghai and Xinjiang Provinces; and, making recommendations for biosecurity and conservation on farming in northwestern China.

The 2-year study is part of a cooperative agreement funded through APHIS and implemented collaboratively through the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service/International Cooperation and Development.

"It's important that we develop a better understanding of the role wildlife species may serve as vectors or reservoirs for highly pathogenic H5N1 and the risk these species pose to domestic or farm animals. Working with the Chinese near Qinghai Lake is an excellent opportunity to further our current understanding," said Dr. Dale Nolte, program manager for Wildlife Services' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) and project lead for the collaborative avian influenza work in China.

### Putting the Plan to Work

Initial trips to China by Wildlife Services' representatives in December 2005 and June 2006 helped determine the study's objectives and finalize an official cooperative agreement between the USDA and Chinese Academy of Sciences. During August 2006, three wildlife biologists from Wildlife Services spent 3 weeks surveying the

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wildlife and habitats in and around Qinghai Lake. Together with their Chinese counterparts, they captured and sampled approximately 200 birds for avian influenza research.

The team also collected more than 1,000 environmental samples from water, soil and feces. The samples will be diagnosed in China, then the international team will cooperatively analyze the data to develop risk assessments and make recommendations.

“In addition to waterfowl, the Chinese government is interested in the potential impact avian influenza may have on other wildlife species, such as mammals and other birds,” says Dr. Jeff Root, research wildlife biologist at Wildlife Services’ NWRC. “While in China, we collected blood and tissue samples from several species in order to determine whether they were exposed to the virus and to begin to assess if they might serve as possible vectors or reservoirs of the virus.”

Wildlife Services has invited Chinese scientists to the United States later this year to observe avian influenza surveillance activities and other wildlife management techniques. They also plan to revisit Qinghai Lake in 2007 to conduct additional sampling.

“This project is one part of the United States’ commitment to assist countries to control and eradicate highly pathogenic H5N1,” said Dr. Thomas DeLiberto, APHIS’ National Wildlife Disease Coordinator responsible for managing APHIS’ national and international avian influenza surveillance efforts in wild birds. APHIS is also assisting countries in Asia, Europe and South America, as well as Mexico, to monitor and control avian influenza in wild birds.

Michael Marlow, who traveled to China with fellow Wildlife Services wildlife disease biologist Carl Betsill, summed up their experiences this way, “Working with scientists in China provided us with new perspectives on wildlife management and disease issues in other countries. We value the new relationships and partnerships we made while working overseas.” ♦



*Chinese and U.S. scientists prepare traps in hopes of capturing animals around Qinghai Lake. Left to right: Michael Marlow (Wildlife Services), Mr. Yin Zouhua, and Dr. Guo Junging (Chinese Academy of Sciences). (Photo by Jeff Root, USDA)*



*Qinghai Lake is the largest inland saltwater lake in China. At 10,500 feet above sea level, the lake spans 1,789 square miles and attracts large flocks of migratory birds, including geese, gulls, sandpipers, and cormorants. (Photo by Alan Franklin, USDA)*

## APHIS Among the Best

By John Scott



*APHIS employees dress sharp and celebrate the agency's recognition at the GCN Gala Award ceremony. From left to right: Deitra Phillips, PPQ; Neil Hoffman and Lee Handley, BRS; Mike Firko, PPQ; Karen James-Preston, VS.*

APHIS recently earned recognition for its innovative use of technology to better serve agency customers and improve the agency's permitting activities. In early October, APHIS' ePermits System was announced by Government Computer News as one of the publication's 2006 Gala Award winners. The publication hosts the annual awards and gala event to honor distinguished

project teams and programs in the field of government information technology. APHIS was 1 of only 10 organizations chosen from among 150 award candidates.

"We are extremely appreciative and honored to

receive the 2006 Gala Award," said Administrator Ron DeHaven.

Even before the 2006 Gala Award announcement, feedback on the new system was decidedly positive. Users from both inside and outside of the agency recognized the system as a "winner," especially from a customer service perspective.

Senior Plant Pathologist Eileen Sutker sees firsthand many e-mail responses from satisfied ePermits System users. "Folks who try it, love it," said Sutker.

One ePermits System user wrote, "Thank you so much! That is the most amazingly fast and efficient service that anyone could dream of."

Another e-mail said, "Thanks. My last permit took 7 months. This time it was done very, very efficiently."

Customer feedback on the veterinary side has also been positive. "...The user interface is very clear and easy to use, and both the application and renewal processes are more streamlined....The ePermits system is a welcome improvement to the previous system," wrote one user.

Released in multiple phases, the ePermits System is a Web-based tool that allows agency customers to apply for, track, receive, and pay for agency permits. The system, which became available to the public on April 3, 2006, offers both security and improved processing speed.

For some types of permits, turnaround time was reduced from 4 days to 1 day.

Because the ePermits System is an agency-wide initiative, it benefits the full range of APHIS customers. People who apply for a permit through Biotechnology Regulatory Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, or Veterinary Services can use the system. All of the agency's permits are now available through e-Permits.

### Making it a Success

The system's development required close cooperation between the participating programs and beyond. "It took a real team effort to make this system a success," said Alison Young, who has managed the ePermits project. With the help of Science Applications International Corporation, SAIC, an outside contractor, and many people throughout the agency, system developers had to navigate many complicated logistics concerning funding, security, and technology.

In the true spirit of e-Gov initiatives, the e-Permits System incorporates existing outside electronic systems as well. It uses the USDA eAuthentication system to register users and the U.S. Treasury Department's Pay.Gov System to process payments.

### Good News for Agency Employees

As Young points out, it's not just APHIS customers who benefit from the ePermits System—agency programs and employees reap rewards as well. The programs gain much improved oversight and reporting options. For example, information is now uniformly managed, tracked, and stored; program staff can now more easily and accurately verify the number of permits and workload trends. In short, better information is leading to better management of agency time and resources.

With the e-Permits System, agency staff who process permit have reduced the time that they spend on paper hunts. As the number of registered users continues to grow, so will the time-savings for the agency's permit.

Both inside and outside the agency, appreciation for the new system is strong. Young said, "I actually had someone I never met before come up to me in the café. Right out of the blue, she said, 'Thank you for bringing ePermits to our agency.'" ♦

## Work Tip:

# Clean Up and Back Up Your E-mail Inbox

By John Scott

Throwing things out can be one of the hardest things to do. E-mail is a great example of something we're good at saving. Sometimes for good reasons, but—as many employees freely admit—often not. For many, the result is an overcrowded inbox that buries the things you need under the things you don't. And, as any computer specialist in the Agency will tell you, our Agency's mail servers are straining under the e-mail clutter.

So, in the spirit of the New Year, here's how to drop a few of those unwanted pounds from your e-mail inbox. There are two things that you can do: clean out what you don't need and back up what you want to save.

### Quick and Dirty Tips for Cleaning the Clutter

First, take a critical look at your inbox. If you take a minute and truly assess the mess, you may be surprised at how easy the pickings are for deleting. How many stray e-mails do you still have about lost cell phones or notary requests?

After cleaning out what first catches your eye, there's more that can be done with ease to get rid of deeply buried e-mails. Instead of scrolling through your inbox line by line to delete single e-mails, use Lotus Notes' "sort" options and searches to identify and delete groups of e-mails. It takes less time and can make a big dent in cleaning out your inbox. Try these tips:

- Click on the "Who" column at the top of your e-mail view. This re-orders your e-mails alphabetically by sender (and secondarily by date). Then, scroll through your e-mail list. Using this view, it's easier to identify e-mails from specific senders that you know you don't need to save. It's also a powerful reminder of just how old some of your e-mails are.
- You can also re-order your e-mails by clicking on "size." Using this view helps find large announcements and event flyers that take up a lot of server space.

- Use the Find/Replace function under the Lotus Notes Edit pull-down menu. Search for words that will help find common e-mails that you can delete. Search for words like: lights, notary, cell phone, etc.
- For an e-mail that you're saving solely because of its attached file, consider detaching and saving the file to your hard drive. You can then either delete the original e-mail or, using the edit options in Lotus Notes, you can keep it and insert a note in the original e-mail to remind you where you have saved the detached file.

Remember, too, that some e-mails may be considered a record under the Federal Records Act. Before you delete any e-mail, be sure to review the Agency guidance available at <http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/records/e-mailhome.htm>.

With these basic tips and a little practice, you can quickly get your inbox back into shape. To keep the excess down, spend just a few minutes each day deleting what you don't need. Your inbox and the Agency's mail servers will thank you.

### Saving Server Space with an E-mail Backup

For e-mails you truly need to save, consider making a personal backup copy of your e-mails and saving it to CD, DVD, or some other storage media, like a flash drive. Broadly, this is a three-step project: naming the backup file; copying the backup file; and moving the backup file to CD, DVD, or other storage. Armed with a backup copy, you may find it easier—possibly even enjoyable—to delete e-mails from your inbox.

To view step-by-step instructions on making a personal backup copy, select and open the file, *Backup\_stepbystep.pdf* attached to this file. ♦

# From Kuwait to Minnesota and to Iraq: A Map for Developing Veterinary Infrastructure

By *Teresa Howes*

As an international team of veterinary officials have found, the road to progress sometimes takes unusual turns: from Kuwait to Minnesota and then to Iraq. Along the way they also found that, in the company of dedicated people, together they can clear large obstacles in their path.

## Kuwait City, Kuwait 2004

It began 2 years ago, when a team of veterinary professionals from different cultures and countries first met in a city surrounded by desert sand, waters of the Persian Gulf, and tens of thousands of U.S. service members and coalition

partners. At 120 degrees Fahrenheit, in September, Kuwait City, Kuwait, is a place

where many would rather be enjoying the cool of an air conditioner as opposed to being outside, baking in the sun. Despite the extreme weather, the veterinary professionals met gladly with the goal of helping to develop a road map to rebuild the veterinary infrastructures in Afghanistan and Iraq.

According to Dr. Paula Cowen, Director of Veterinary Services' (VS) Professional Development Staff and a key member of the team, the workshop in Kuwait City was a starting point envisioned by Col. Cliff Walker, Veterinary Command, Commander at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

"Col. Walker's vision for the team was to assist both Afghanistan and Iraq in rebuilding their veterinary infrastructures so that they could control the diseases of both animal and human health significance and ultimately allow them to produce more food animals for their people," said Cowen.

It was clear to the team as it met in Kuwait City that Afghanistan and Iraq have many similarities, among them the presence of U.S. and coalition forces; however, they also have many differences. Afghanistan remains rooted in a tribal system and has throughout the years lost much of its talented workforce. Iraq on the other hand has maintained its educational system and a robust cadre of professionals. Iraq traditionally offered free education up to and including graduate school.

Yet, Iraqi scientists have been largely isolated for almost 30 years.

The first workshop held in Kuwait of 2004 happened as a result of the generosity of the Kuwaiti Humanitarian Operations Center and the Henry Jackson Foundation along with funding from APHIS' International Services program.

At the meeting, Afghan and Iraqi veterinarians met with officials from the U.S. Armed Forces and USDA, as well as representatives from the American Veterinary Medical Association and from U.S. veterinary universities—including

deans from the University of Georgia, University of California-Davis, and the University of Missouri.

"As a result of our first meeting in 2004, long- and short-term needs were

identified. It focused the efforts to help rebuild programs," Cowen said. To date, great progress has been made in Afghanistan with a number of technical experts holding workshops to assist in developing a National Animal Health Plan, as well as to start an Afghan Veterinary Association. The U.S. Agency for International Development has also contributed funding for a number of projects, including starting private veterinary practices.

## Minneapolis, Minnesota 2005

In July 2005 the team gathered for a second time. But, not in the desert. This time, in a cooler climate—Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the World Veterinary Congress. There, they had frank discussions about the prospect of holding workshops in Iraq.

"From the beginning, the Iraqi veterinarians wanted to host workshops in their own country. They did not feel that they were treated well in Kuwait, and they were tired of being shipped outside of their country for training," Cowen said.

In addition, it was difficult for them to secure VISAs and get approval from the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. As a result, the workshops typically could reach only a very few Iraqi veterinarians at a time.

To overcome this obstacle, Dr. Mo Salman, a key team member and graduate of the University of Baghdad over 30 years ago, began working

*"They literally risked their lives to attend this workshop."*

*-Dr. Paula Cowen*



Event poster for 2006 workshop held in Erbil, Iraq. The group photo has been blurred for the protection of workshop participants.

## From Kuwait to Minnesota

*Continued from page 12*

along with others on a dream that they hoped to soon realize. Salman, now a professor at Colorado State University, had the dream of bringing a large group of veterinarians together in the relatively stable Kurdish region in northern Iraq. That dream would happen in September 2006.

### **Erbil, Iraq 2006**

Once again the veterinary team traveled nearly 7,000 miles to the Middle East in the midst of intense heat and sand storms. In Erbil, Iraq, about 90 veterinarians, 8 of whom were women, gathered with representation from the central governments of Iraq and Kurdistan, veterinary schools and laboratories. The group also included private practice veterinarians from 16 of the 18 provinces/governorates. It was an unprecedented gathering.

“The ‘International Team’ in full was also represented by the U.S. service members assigned to the Iraqi theater of operations and APHIS officials, including Dr. Paula Cowen, and Dr. Linda Logan. In addition, representatives from three U.S. veterinary schools—including Dr. Prema Arasu (North Carolina State University), Dr. Craig Carter (University of Kentucky), and Dr. Salman—were present. Dr. Max Coats, who had recently retired as APHIS Texas Assistant State Veterinarian, also participated. Coats’ primary responsibility had been to track and control brucellosis in Texas. Iraqi veterinarians had identified brucellosis as one of their greatest disease concerns and had targeted it as an important workshop topic.

The purpose of the 2006 workshop was to develop a way to enhance Iraq’s national animal health efforts by integrating government, academic, and private sector veterinary capabilities. The workshop format required participants to brainstorm, collaborate, prioritize, and network with their colleagues from throughout Iraq.

“This was definitely something not encouraged under Saddam Hussein and in fact could have led to death. We were amazed at how enthusiastically they embraced the process,” said

Cowen. “The participants told us time and again how much they wanted a better life and to be proud of their profession and its contribution to the recovery of their people. They literally risked their lives to attend this workshop.”

Cowen noted that security of the participants was of highest priority and continues to be. “I would love to share with Inside APHIS readers the photos of the intense debates, the group reports, the voting for setting priorities, and the challenging of authority. But, for security purposes, we promised not to publish any photographs.”

Cowen recalled other observations as well. Though the women veterinarians in attendance were few in number, their contributions were significant. Rather than being deferential, they raised their hands to make comment and ask questions.

“One woman volunteered to be the spokesperson for a group report; another, from southern Iraq, apologized for her group that was dressed in black, but they were in mourning for the loss of family members, a stark reminder that this is a time of war,” Cowen explained.

At one point, another Iraqi woman confided to the team that, “...we women need to stick together and be strong,” said Cowen.

### **Workshop Outcomes**

For 4 days, workshop participants set aside giant obstacles such as security, lack of funding, and their geographic and religious differences. Instead, the group focused on the things they could accomplish together, and they found them to be many. On the last day, Iraq’s chief veterinary officer delivered a 5-year vision plan for a National Animal Health Program. The plan identifies numerous concrete steps to be taken.

With the plan and its detailed steps, the participants will make solid progress in building the Iraqi veterinary infrastructure. Cowen noted, “It will be through their relationships and the care they have developed for each other that this progress will happen.” ♦

## 2006 Senior Leaders Conference Mapping the APHIS Path

By John Scott

In October, APHIS senior leaders met and addressed the leadership challenges surrounding the development of science-based regulations and policies, the refinement of APHIS' strategic plan, and the alignment of individual operational plans with the agency's and USDA's strategic goals. In all, 50 of the agency's top leaders gathered, making the conference the largest agency leadership group ever assembled.

In addition to featured speakers Secretary Mike Johanns and Under Secretary Bruce Knight, the conference included a panel discussion led by USDA Chief of Staff Dale Moore, Administrator Ron DeHaven, and agency Chief Operating Officer Kevin Shea. The conference also hosted presenters from outside USDA ranks.

Dr. Neil Kerwin, interim president of American University and director of the university's Center for

the Study of Rulemaking, spoke about the ongoing key issue facing the agency—the challenging task of developing science-based regulations and policies. Much of the conference's first day was devoted to this topic.

Senior leaders invested significant time in reviewing APHIS' many operational plans currently in place for fiscal year 2007. Participants discussed in detail the 38 plans developed by the agency's programs and work units. In large part, the purpose was to highlight the importance of aligning individual operational plans with the agency's strategic plan and, in turn, with USDA's goals and objectives. Guest presenter, Chris Edgelow, president of Sundance Consulting, Inc., conducted group exercises to help sharpen how agency leaders lead and manage change brought about by current and new agency strategic direction and priorities.

The Administrator's Office and agency leaders were so pleased with the work accomplished at the meeting that another conference is in the works for April 2007. Building upon the recent meeting's discussions, APHIS leaders will use the April 2007 meeting to continue working on the scheduled revisions to the agency's strategic plan. ♦



## USDA Honor Award Winners

In October 2006, Secretary Johanns announced the winners of USDA's Honor Awards and hosted the 59th annual ceremony. The Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards presented by USDA, and APHIS was well represented in the ranks of those selected for the awards.

"The Honor Awards recognize truly outstanding service by USDA employees who have achieved great things through their dedication, leadership, and hard work," said Johanns.

Congratulations to all APHIS recipients listed below!

### *Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply*

*Asian Soybean Rust Team:* Coanne O'Hern (Group Leader), Matthew Royer, Claude Knighten, Glenn Fowler, Anwar Rizvi, Arnie Tschanz, Laurene Levey, Mary Palm, Osama El-Lissy, Russ Bulluck

*Foreign Agricultural Service Avian Influenza International Response Team:* Eric Hoffman.

Tracy Duvernoy, Dan Sheesley, Clifford Graham, John Hurley, Glenn Germaine, Ned Cardenas, Linda Logan, Peter Fernandez, Cheryl French, John Shaw, Lorrie Brundige, Gordon Cleveland, Joseph Anelli, Jennifer Grannis, Cheryl Hall

### *Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment*

*OIG Animal Welfare Act Investigation and Prosecution Team:* Robert Gibbens

### *Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights*

*USDA Human Capital Team:* Terry Zietlow

### *Employee Recognition and Remembrance Awards*

*The following APHIS employees were recognized for significant contribution to the recovery and relief efforts in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita:* Patricia Beetham, Steven Bennett, Randall Choate, Walter Cotton, Anthony Gruehl, Audrey Ingram, Dwight LeBlanc, Catherine Preston, Emily Pullins. ♦

## Civil Rights Award Ceremony

By Gary Roush

On October 26, 2006, APHIS employees gathered in Riverdale to celebrate the achievements of those receiving the *2006 Administrator's Civil Rights Award*. Founded 8 years ago, the award program highlights staff efforts that advance the cause of civil rights and equal employment opportunity and ensure the delivery of APHIS programs and services in an equitable manner.

Administrator Dr. Ron DeHaven was joined by Deputy Under Secretary Chuck Lambert in recognizing honorees in the following three categories: supervisor/manager, individual employee, and group effort. Honorees were chosen by a selection committee from nominations submitted throughout the agency.

### Supervisor/Manager Category Awards

In the supervisor/manager category, three individuals were recognized for their noteworthy efforts. Ms. Susan Jojola, a biologist with the National Wildlife Research Center, was honored for her mentoring of a Native American high school student. Jojola, a member of the Isleta Pueblo Tribe, is also involved in ongoing outreach work with other young Native Americans to encourage them to consider internships and careers in the government. In addition, she serves as a tribal liaison for the APHIS Native American Working Group to facilitate joint efforts and information exchanges with Native American Tribes and groups.

Dr. Michael Firko, Director of Permits, Registrations, Imports, and Manuals (PRIM) for Plant Health Programs, was honored for his commitment and active efforts in support of equal employment opportunity and a truly diversified staff. PRIM employs 50 minority employees in a variety of grades, including 7 individuals hired under the Disabilities Program. Firko also actively supports four of his employees who participate as Special Emphasis Program Managers for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) programs, and he has created internship opportunities for minority youths in the Washington, D.C. area.

As Director of Veterinary Services' (VS) Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), Dr. Rick Hill was honored for his strong support of the NVSL/CVB Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights Committee. Hill has encouraged the committee to

attend and participate in special trainings, conferences, and special emphasis presentations. With the backing of Hill and the managers at Ames, the group has focused on recruitment of underrepresented populations at the annual Iowa Diversity Conference and at career fairs across the country.

### Employee Category Awards

In the individual employee category, three individuals were recognized for their outstanding individual achievements. Dr. Terry Clark, Native American Program Coordinator for VS' National Center for Animal Health Programs, has worked diligently to expand awareness of and interest in APHIS animal health programs among Tribal Nations, many of which historically have been hesitant to involve the U.S. Government in Tribal affairs. As a result of Clark's work, 20 Tribes directly entered into agreements with APHIS for funding chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance, and one Tribal organization entered into a combined agreement to provide CWD sample collection and training to more than 20 additional Tribes. In addition, 16 Tribes entered into agreements to accept funding for National Animal Identification Program efforts, of which 2 were combined agreements to provide training, funding, and premises registration efforts for an additional 49 tribes.

Ms. Virginia Green, a budget analyst with Wildlife Services in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, was honored for her efforts in promoting cultural awareness and in the recruitment of minority candidates. Green contacted numerous 1890 Land-grant universities in an effort to reach recent graduates who might be eligible for wildlife technician and wildlife biologist positions. Green has also been Wildlife Service's Federal Women's Program Manager since 1994. In addition, she actively promotes awareness of Black history and distributes information about various special emphasis months.

Ms. Estela Diaz, Marketing and Regulatory Programs' (MRP) Small Business Coordinator, was honored for supporting the agency's civil rights efforts through her work with small business programs and the Javits Wagner O'Day program (JWOD), which provides employment opportunities in the manufacture and delivery

*Continued on page 16*

## Civil Rights Award Ceremony

Continued from page 15

### Did you know?

APHIS currently has nearly 8,300 employees, including 1,390 who were hired in 2006. Of these new hires, 40 percent are women and 28 percent are self-identified as being from minority groups.

of products and services to the Federal Government to people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Diaz helps businesses classified as small, small disadvantaged, women-owned, and service disabled veteran-owned to receive their equitable share of MRP contracts.

### Group Category Awards

Four groups of APHIS employees were honored for their achievements in furthering equal employment. In August 2005, VS' National Animal Health Policy and Programs established an Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Advisory Committee, which in a short time drafted a charter and work plans. In addition, the committee has distributed employment opportunity information at targeted job fairs, cultural events, and conferences, and developed brochures promoting Special Emphasis programs. The group also initiated a successful Multicultural Day, and representatives attend meetings with the VS Native American Working Group. Committee members honored were: Chris Bembenek, JoAnn Bentz-Blanco, Nathan Birnbaum, Cathy Chisley, Candy Clanton, Timothy Cordes, Cynthia Hough-Fauntleroy, Jill Rolland, Betsy Sillers, Debbie Sweitzer, and Athena Walters.

The second group award recognized the work of PPQ's National Civil Rights Strategic Plan Working Group, which developed a three-part civil rights strategic plan. The plan's main goals are: to create a PPQ workforce by 2009 that, at all levels, utilizes and reflects the diverse demographics of the general population; to develop strategies that result in a 20 percent reduction in certain categories of complaints; and to strengthen the role of special emphasis program managers in creating a diverse work force. The working group members honored for their group effort were: Jane Berkow, Thomas Chanelli, Sharon Church, Gabriel DeLaGarza, Phillip Garcia, Carolyn Gethers, Christina Jewett, Larry Law, Ruth Lewis, Michael Lidsky, Kristen Luurs, Nancy Matthews, Feridoon Mehdizadegan, Robert Miller, Francis

Murphy, Kiesett Newton, Michon Oubichon, John Payne, Mike Randall, Metwaly Sheta, Lillian Stewart, Nan Story, Pandy Tomko, Donna West, and Leeda Wood.

The third group award was presented to the VS Live Bird Marketing System's (LBMS) Low Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (LPAI) program, which seeks to unify State LPAI programs and assist States in meeting their goal to prevent and control LPAI in the LBMS. To accomplish these goals, the LBMS-LPIA program recently focused significant education and outreach efforts toward minority populations that have not traditionally participated in VS programs. These include: the Amish and the Hmong communities, as well as

those practicing Kosher, Halal, and Sante-ria methods of animal slaughter. To provide all of its customers with full access to LBMS services and materials, the program has worked to develop an awareness of the unique practices and

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*"Our commitment to civil rights makes APHIS a better agency and a better place to work..."*

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*-Dr. DeHaven*

needs of each of these groups and has developed popular educational materials in multiple languages. The awardees were: Molly Ault, Teresa Chase, George Chambless, Madelaine Fletcher, Fidelis Hegngi, Kristie Ludwig, Therese Mindemann, Patrice Klein, Michael Kornreich, Shannon Kozlowicz, Barbara Porter-Spalding, JoAnna Quinn, and Chrislyn Wood.

The fourth group award honored the work of VS' Pennsylvania Area Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities and Civil Rights, which was reactivated only a year ago and for the most part by new employees. The committee revived and completed efforts to draft an EEO/CR charter and action plan, planned an upcoming Multicultural Day, and has participated in minority recruitment activities at church events, colleges, and agricultural fairs. Committee members are now certified recruiters and focus on retention efforts, revising position descriptions, and outreach to minority populations. The committee members honored were: Murray Glickman, Bridget Griggs, Kristie Ludwig, Daisy Marrero, Kendra Stauffer, Chrislyn Wood, and David Zellner. ♦

## Collaboration Counts in 2006

By John Scott

Administrator W. Ron DeHaven recently created a new agency award called the “Collaboration Counts Award” to recognize employee cooperation across program and agency lines. Dr. DeHaven presented the awards for collaborative efforts in 2006 at the agency’s Holiday Awards Party in December.

Highlighting nine specific project areas, the awards honored the collaborative efforts of numerous employees who have worked not only

with fellow APHIS programs, but also with other Federal agencies in USDA and beyond. Congratulations to the many employees and agency partners who earned the first ever Collaboration Counts Awards. To view a complete list of award recipients by category, select and open the file, *Collab\_Counts.pdf* attached to this file. ♦

## APHIS Calendar

### January

“*Healthier Feds: Challenge 2007*” kicks off January 22 and runs through March 18. More info from the APHIS Work Life Wellness Program coming soon by e-mail.

### February

*February is National Black History Month*

Check your e-mail for upcoming events and speakers at headquarters and field offices.

*Central Plant Board Meeting*, February 5-8, Columbus, Ohio.

*PPQ Regulatory Change Working Group meeting* to plan revisions of pest permit regulations, February 6-7, in Riverdale, Maryland.

*APHIS’ Martin Luther King, Jr. & Black History Month Celebration*

February 7, 2007 at 10:30 a.m. in the Riverdale Conference Center

### March

*March is National Women’s History Month*

Organizers are preparing events now. Ask your unit manager about how you can get involved!

## Wanted: Your Feedback

*The best way we can make Inside APHIS a newsletter that serves you is to hear from you. So, take a minute and send us an e-mail. Let us know your thoughts about what you see here. Fill us in on your likes, dislikes, or pass along your suggestions and ideas for stories.*

*Feel free to brag about a coworker. Give us a work tip. Tell us what others may need to know to help build a better APHIS. Or, simply share a story about a rewarding experience or a meaningful thank-you received from the public we serve. Send your e-mails to: [inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov)*