



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Washington, DC
20250

Dear APHIS Colleagues:

While the reduction in APHIS' fiscal year (FY) 2012 appropriation year was not as drastic as the \$80 million originally proposed by the House of Representatives, the final decrease in our budget of \$47 million is still extremely significant. Going forward into FY 2013, the President's budget request for APHIS is about 6.6 percent less than our current appropriation. Facing these additional cuts means that we as an Agency must continue to be diligent in our cost saving efforts both in the short and long term.

In order to provide APHIS with some flexibility to continue managing the reductions in funding, we will be offering an additional Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP, also known as "buyout") opportunity and Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (also known as "early out") this year on a first come, first served basis for up to 300 employees. Eligible employees in all occupational series and grade levels not included in the VSIP offered earlier this fiscal year--excluding most animal health technicians (AHTs), most veterinary medical officers (VMOs), all information technology security specialists, and all student trainee occupations--will have the opportunity to apply. (Note: Although most AHTs and VMOs are excluded from this VSIP opportunity due to the limitations on backfilling positions and the VMO government-wide occupational shortage, those impacted by the closure of Veterinary Services area offices in AZ, LA, MD, and OR will be eligible to apply.)

The buyout authority APHIS received from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) allows employees in the covered positions to apply for a separation incentive payment of up to \$25,000 between March 19, 2012 and April 13, 2012. Employees who accept an offer will then be required to separate no later than April 30, 2012. It is important to note that the \$25,000 maximum incentive payment is set by law. APHIS does not have the authority to provide higher payments.

APHIS does not anticipate offering any additional VSIP or VERA opportunities this fiscal year.

Employees in the eligible positions will be receiving information from the Human Resources Division (HRD) by email within the next week. The email will include a letter detailing general VSIP/VERA eligibility requirements, frequently asked questions, and an HRD contact list should you have additional questions. HRD will be posting this information on their VERA/VSIP web site in the near future. Please check the following address for updates:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/vera_vsip.shtml

I continue to make it my goal to minimize the effects these fiscal uncertainties have on APHIS' employees as much as possible. Thank you for continuing to dedicate yourselves to protecting America's agriculture.

Gregory L. Parham
Administrator



Safeguarding American Agriculture

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