

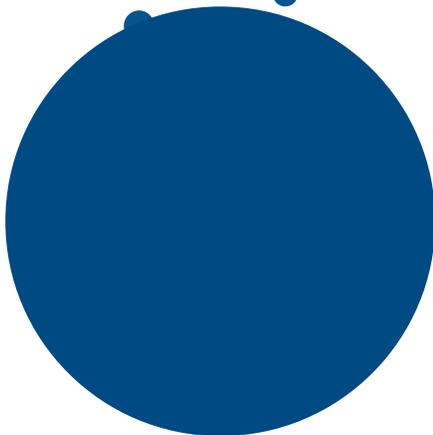


United States Department of Agriculture

# Annual Report | 2020

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**SUPPORT UNITS**





# Contents



**4**

**Who Are the Support Units?**

**5**

**Serving APHIS' Internal and External Customers**

**6**

**APHIS-Wide Initiatives**

**12**

**Animal Care**

**14**

**Biotechnology Regulatory Services**

**16**

**Plant Protection and Quarantine**

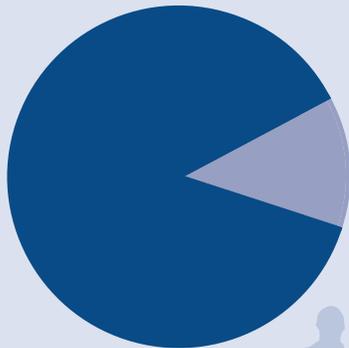
**18**

**Veterinary Services**

**22**

**Wildlife Services**

# Who Are the Support Units?



**13%**  
of agency's  
workforce



proudly supporting  
**100%**  
of APHIS



- media & outreach
- customer call center
- web & visual services
- FOIA/Privacy Act
- congressional relations
- executive communications
- state & stakeholder relations
- tribal liaison
- My.APHIS Portal
- internal communications



- budget
- regulatory development
- environmental analysis
- risk analysis
- policy analysis
- policy development
- program assessment
- decision support



- diversity
- inclusion
- outreach
- employee counseling
- conflict resolution
- equal employment
- civil rights compliance



- information technology
- emergency management
- safety & security
- human resources
- recruitment
- acquisitions & assets
- financial
- investigations
- enforcement services

# APHIS Support Units: Serving APHIS' Internal & External Customers



2020 was an unprecedented year, with the COVID-19 pandemic transforming the way APHIS employees live and work. Despite these challenges, the year also brought unprecedented opportunities for the Support Units to deliver top-quality customer service. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, APHIS' Support Units reached milestones, met and surpassed commitments, and entered into or continued fruitful partnerships, notwithstanding the multiple and varied ways the pandemic changed how we conduct business.

Employees in these four units—Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA), Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS), the Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion (OCRDI), and Policy and Program Development (PPD)—work tirelessly to support the APHIS programs in advancing the Agency's mission and goals. We focus on areas including analysis, budget, finance, communications, regulation, planning, training, recruitment and talent management, civil rights, and health and safety, among many others. By mobilizing skills in these areas, we free up program resources so that your staff can focus on delivering their expertise, and our Agency can more nimbly achieve its mission to keep American agriculture safe.

This report presents a brief summary of our FY 2020 achievements. The first section highlights our contributions to the Agency as a whole, and each of the remaining sections features a specific APHIS program area: Animal Care (AC), Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), Veterinary Services (VS), and Wildlife Services (WS). Our major accomplishments are itemized within these sections organized by the work each Support Unit staff completed. For quick reference, we've also included a "Year in Review" summary in each section with the most significant, program-specific achievements from all four Support Units.

Above all, we strive to make the most of APHIS' resources while serving the individual programs and keeping a focus on the big picture across the entire Agency and the Department. We do that by enhancing and expanding customer service, coordinating important Agency announcements, making sure all communications speak in a consistent voice, managing cross-program initiatives, seeing that funds reach the right destination, and performing other vital Agencywide functions.

Like all of us at APHIS, the Support Units are committed to carrying out public service in a way that is effective and efficient. The unprecedented events of 2020—and our ability to adapt procedures and processes as needed—brought this value into even clearer focus. We know how crucial APHIS programs are to our country and we take great pride in supporting you and our Agency's many stakeholders and customers.

We are pleased to share with you our FY 2020 accomplishments.

Bethany Jones, Deputy Administrator  
Legislative and Public Affairs

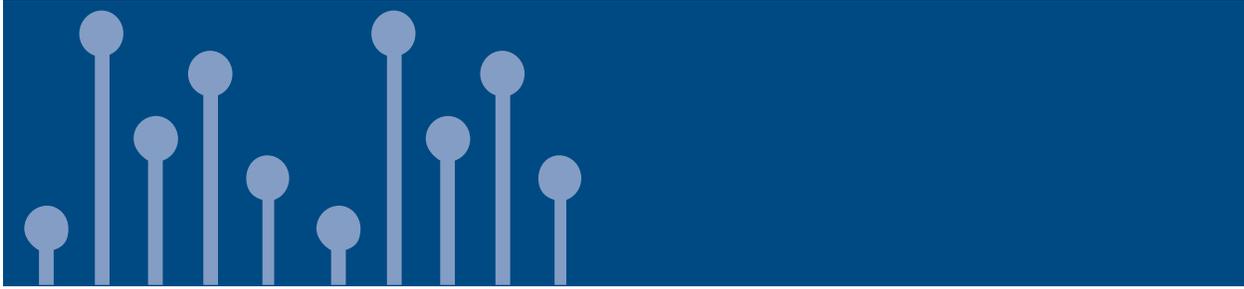
Christine Zakarka, Deputy Administrator  
Policy and Program Development

Rachel Cezar-Martinez, Acting Director  
Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion

Rob Huttenlocker, Deputy Administrator  
Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services

# APHIS-Wide Initiatives

- Closed 1,847 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and 44 FOIA appeals, reviewing more than 566,000 pages to provide customers with important Agency information
- Fixed every broken link on the APHIS website, ensuring that customers can quickly and easily access important Agency information
- Responded to more than 19,200 calls and emails through the APHIS Customer Service Call Center
- Provided extensive support during the COVID-19 pandemic by responding to employee questions, hosting 59 virtual Town Halls, and clarifying and redefining administrative policies and procedures
- Dispatched 259 emergency responders to 28 events and led coordination efforts for 13 all-hazards incidents
- Provided in-person and virtual training to approximately 1,700 APHIS employees on a variety of security topics
- Developed strategies to better manage APHIS' fleet of 4,394 vehicles
- Refined guidance on managing unliquidated obligations, resulting in a cost savings of \$5.6 million
- Reimaged computers for more than 12,600 workstations and over 11,000 users
- Helped 22 APHIS employees obtain the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers
- Delivered the AgDiscovery program at 20 schools nationwide, with more than 196 students participating
- Completed onsite civil rights compliance reviews of 3 APHIS programs in 3 States across the country, with about 520 APHIS employees participating
- Completed 14 analytical projects, including 9 program reviews and 5 economic analyses
- Produced 12 final rules resulting in the reduction of more than \$40M in regulatory burden annually, nearly doubling the amount of regulatory burden relieved last year
- Provided project management services related to eFile, leading to the launch of an AC module, soft launch of the BRS module, and a path forward for permitting systems in VS and PPQ
- Coordinated a Future Operations initiative that made 105 recommendations to improve mission delivery



A primary role of APHIS' Support Units is to advance the mission and goals of the Agency as a whole. Each year, the Support Units carry out a range of work that benefits the APHIS programs collectively, in areas such as communications, budget management, business services, recruitment and hiring, and strategic planning, to name a few.

Below is a summary of these efforts in FY 2020. Key accomplishments are listed by individual staffs (LPA, MRPBS, OCRDI, and PPD), with the "Year in Review" column at left offering a brief look at the year's most notable APHIS-wide achievements by all four Support Units.

## Legislative and Public Affairs

### Carrying APHIS' Mission to the Hill

In FY 2020, LPA continually promoted APHIS and its programs on Capitol Hill. LPA answered over 300 Congressional queries, arranged for more than 30 briefings with Members of Congress or their staff, developed materials for 4 Congressional hearings and roundtables, and arranged 4 site visits for Members of Congress and their staff to see APHIS field activities. LPA also provided legislative technical assistance on a variety of bills that would impact APHIS programs—coordinating with program experts, drafting alternative language, and identifying weaknesses or problems in proposed legislation so that the final language reflected APHIS' priorities.

### Leading Communications

LPA developed and carried out 77 communications plans this year, delivering APHIS' messages to targeted audiences nationwide. Many of these plans were controversial or complex, with simultaneous communications tasks requiring timed, effective coordination with the Secretary's and Under Secretary's offices, USDA's

Offices of Communications and Congressional Relations, other Federal agencies and departments, and State officials. This year, LPA also responded to 1,497 media inquiries, helping to increase the public's understanding of APHIS' regulations, initiatives, and activities.

### Shaping One APHIS Voice

LPA serves as the voice of APHIS—creating speeches, presentations, talking points, briefings, and sets of Q&As for Agency leaders to address stakeholders, industry groups, and members of the public. In FY 2020, LPA prepared 126 such products. In addition, LPA drafted responses to correspondence addressed to the Secretary and other key USDA and Agency officials, responding to priority Secretarial correspondence within an average of 4 business days—40 percent faster than the goal. Following successful marketing efforts, LPA's pilot Writing Lab and Resource Center responded to 46 requests for assistance from Agency employees, providing 322 hours of services—including coaching, editing, communications consultation, and 2 training classes—to improve the quality and consistency of Agency communications. In other efforts this year, LPA edited, proofread, coordinated clearance and production, or consulted on 140 publications.

### Engaging With Stakeholders and Tribal Youth

In 2020, LPA planned, held, and moderated 15 stakeholder feedback sessions with representatives from the following sectors: apple, aquaculture, berry, cattle, cervid, citrus, cotton, equine, forest products, grape, nursery, potato, poultry, sheep and goat, and swine. In addition, LPA partnered with six Tribal Colleges and Universities and Native American Serving Institutions to establish Safeguarding Natural Heritage summer youth programs. Two of these institutions were able to successfully host virtual camps despite unforeseen circumstances related to COVID-19.

### **Providing Exceptional Customer Service**

LPA continued to provide exceptional service to its external customers, responding to more than 19,200 calls and emails received through the APHIS Customer Service Call Center and developing and maintaining more than 200 answers to frequently asked questions for the AskUSDA customer contact center. In addition, LPA assisted customers seeking Agency information through the FOIA process, closing 1,847 FOIA requests and 44 FOIA appeals, which required reviewing more than 566,00 pages of documents. Further, LPA enhanced APHIS' external web presence to ensure that customers can quickly access information about Agency regulations and initiatives. This work included developing Agency-wide governance policies and procedures; fixing every broken link on the APHIS website, including 931 links in web pages and 7,170 in PDFs; and removing 1,000 orphaned web pages and more than 6,000 orphaned PDFs.

### **Leading Internal Communications**

LPA kept APHIS employees apprised of Agency activities and priorities by providing timely and vital information. Highlights this year include: developing content that drove employees to My.APHIS for information, generating nearly 69,000 page views for the site; creating a dedicated site area to provide employees with timely information related to COVID-19; developing and distributing 98 Agency-wide messages or blogs from the Administrator and APHIS Management Team members; continuing a weekly employee email newsletter; overseeing and championing APHIS' Employee Engagement Committee; and coordinating a record 59 virtual Town Halls with the Administrator, which—combined—garnered more than 64,880 total call-ins from employees.

## **Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services**

### **Leading APHIS Emergency Preparedness and Response**

MRPBS led coordination efforts for 13 all-hazards incidents, including a typhoon, an earthquake, a derecho, a tropical depression, 2 major fires, 2 tropical storms, 4 hurricanes, and the COVID-19 global pandemic response. In addition, MRPBS dispatched 259 emergency responders to 28 incidents or events, delivered 30 National Incident Management System courses to 262 APHIS employees, and provided 18 webinars to 552 supervisors on the Emergency Qualification System. MRPBS also delivered Volunteer Emergency Ready Response Corps training and guidance. As a result, APHIS has fully trained responders and response teams and an enhanced ability to mobilize for agriculture and all-hazards response.

### **Supporting APHIS Through the COVID-19 Pandemic**

MRPBS offered extensive support to APHIS' programs and employees throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes: leading the Incident Management Team, establishing a process for tracking and responding to questions submitted via the COVID-19 mailbox, and coordinating daily reporting to meet the information needs of Agency and Department leaders. MRPBS also reinterpreted and redefined administrative policies and operational procedures related to mandatory telework for eligible employees; developed new methods for virtual onboarding; developed flexibilities, revised policies, and provided information related to the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act, leave restoration, reasonable accommodations, and dependent care; and responded to increased demand and support requests for collaboration tools (Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom, etc.) to ensure business continuity and mission delivery.



In addition, MRPBS secured Departmental approval and processed financial recognition for APHIS frontline employees who work in high-risk areas where it is difficult to abide by the recommended COVID-19 safety protocols, providing \$6.5 million in spot awards to more than 3,000 employees.

### **Keeping APHIS Employees Safe**

MRPBS supported employee health and safety by providing in-person and virtual training to approximately 1,700 APHIS employees on security topics such as situational awareness, active shooter response, basic self-defense, security coordinator training, and verbal judo; deploying 34 fit testing kits to protect employee respiratory health, conducting 1,480 fit tests on Agency employees, and training 38 employees to perform fit testing; managing APHIS' hazardous and universal waste disposal contracts; and providing guidance on the use of disinfectants and hand sanitizers. MRPBS also finalized Departmental Regulation 4400-007, USDA Biorisk Management Policy, and issued more than 16 messages on safety and health topics through the Designated Safety and Health Official.

### **Leading APHIS' Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention**

MRPBS was instrumental in leading APHIS' recruitment, hiring, and retention initiatives in 2020, including holding virtual job fairs; recruiting targeted groups (returning Peace Corps employees, veterans, and graduating students); expanding APHIS' use of USA Hire to announce 29 positions; and executing 228 direct hiring actions. MRPBS also got approval to directly fill critical vacancies at two grade levels for Veterinary Medical Officers and Wildlife Biologists, expanding the applicant pools for these positions that have been historically hard to fill. MRPBS' extensive recruitment and hiring efforts resulted in a 98% fill rate for APHIS vacancies. In addition, MRPBS led the Talent

Management Board (TMB) in its completion of three strategic projects focused on recruitment and hiring, retention and satisfaction, and the APHIS leadership pipeline. Through these projects, the TMB enhanced the APHIS careers website with updated messaging; identified the drivers of employee satisfaction; benchmarked employee engagement practices at the agencies deemed the "Best Places to Work" by the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey; identified the factors that cause employees to become disengaged; conducted an attrition and retirement analysis; analyzed perceptions of discrepancies across grade level and series; reviewed exit survey processes; and developed activities to better prepare employees for senior leadership positions.

### **Managing APHIS' Buildings, Vehicles, and Operations to Reduce Waste**

MRPBS continued its responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars by efficiently managing a wide range of APHIS assets and continually assessing opportunities to reduce waste. Highlights include: forming a Fleet Management Advisory Board that developed strategies to better manage APHIS' fleet of 4,394 vehicles; piloting a telematics tool that obtained data on vehicle usage and made recommendations on right sizing APHIS' fleet, preventing accidents, and reducing costs; participating in the Capital Asset Workgroup and developing standards for the design, construction, and operation of APHIS laboratories to address increasing costs; and providing training and refined guidance to financial, budget, and contract leads on managing unliquidated obligations, which resulted in a 27 percent reduction of these obligations at a cost savings of \$5.6 million.

### **Modernizing Information Technology**

In FY 2020, MRPBS led the transition of the Client Experience Center (CEC) to the Office of the Chief



Information Officer, which will provide extended helpdesk services to employees. During the transition, MRPBS reimaged computers for more than 12,600 workstations and over 11,000 users and facilitated the movement of 123 MRPBS positions to CEC.

### **Certifying Program and Project Managers**

MRPBS identified 22 APHIS employees managing major projects and provided them with the information and training needed to obtain the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers. This effort builds program management skills within the Agency, aligns with the Program Management Improvement Accountability Act, and will be used as a framework for other project managers across the Department.

### **Enhancing Investigative and Enforcement Efforts**

MRPBS' Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) continued to provide investigative, enforcement, and regulatory support services to APHIS' programs. Highlights include: holding more than 130 training and outreach sessions; opening 1,129 new cases; closing 1,795 enforcement actions; issuing 473 official warnings; negotiating 549 pre-litigation settlements with \$1.7 million in penalties; and obtaining administrative orders assessing \$554,000 in civil penalties.

## **Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion**

### **Increasing Equal Employment Opportunity Awareness at APHIS**

In FY 2020, OCRDI expanded equal employment opportunity (EEO) awareness among Agency employees by providing training and support at a variety of program meetings. EEO specialists provided webinars on EEO in the workplace, the EEO complaints process,

and EEO observer training that reached a combined 172 employees. In addition, OCRDI continued its partnership with the Center for Training and Organization Development by participating in the "Fundamentals of Human Resource Management," providing training to 133 new supervisors and managers from APHIS, AMS, and USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service through 5 interactive sessions at various Agency facilities. OCRDI employees also served as subject matter experts in the "Experienced Supervisors Applied Workshop," an interactive training presented to 48 participants at Agency facilities throughout the country.

### **Promoting a Discrimination-Free Workplace**

Through trainings and numerous other measures, OCRDI continued its proactive approach to raising EEO awareness and supporting a diverse and inclusive work environment. Thanks in part to these efforts, there was no increase in formal EEO complaints in 2020.

### **Investing in the Future of American Agriculture With AgDiscovery**

OCRDI partnered with APHIS programs and 20 universities and colleges nationwide to deliver the 2020 AgDiscovery program in a new, virtual format, with 196 students attending. Now in its 18th year, this summer outreach initiative introduces youth to careers in plant and animal science, veterinary medicine, wildlife management, agribusiness, biotechnology, entomology, food science, and several other agriculture-related fields.

### **Managing Scholarship and Intern Programs**

In 2020, APHIS hosted eight third-party summer interns, which included students from several programs: the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership. In addition, 13 APHIS 1890 National Scholar interns



attended numerous schools nationwide: (Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University, Alcorn State University, South Carolina State University, Fort Valley State University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, North Carolina A&T, and Prairie View A&M University).

### **Reviewing Civil Rights Compliance for APHIS**

OCRDI completed civil rights compliance reviews of three APHIS programs in three States across the country. Approximately 520 APHIS employees participated, each completing a survey and participating in interviews with OCRDI staff. Also this year, OCRDI completed 12 civil rights impact analyses covering Agency regulations, office closures, and reorganizations. Several APHIS offices and programs received briefings on compliance issues frequently found during reviews. In addition, OCRDI's compliance team represented APHIS in the Department's compliance review process and on Marketing and Regulatory Programs' (MRP) IT Customer Service Board.

## **Policy and Program Development**

### **Analyzing and Improving Processes**

PPD supported evidence-based decisionmaking throughout the Agency by analyzing APHIS' exit interview process; hiring, retention, and attrition; and workforce disparities that may affect Senior Executive Service (SES) promotion. PPD also analyzed the payment of relocation expenses, drafted the Office of Tribal Liaison strategic plan, piloted a SES succession planning initiative, and recommended changes to APHIS web governance. PPD continued its commitment to facilitating business process improvements by working with teams throughout the Agency to improve the MRP IT project intake process, VS customer service related to the import and export of animals and animal products, VS personnel security clearances, international passport and visa processing, and announced AWA inspections.

### **Supporting Emergency Preparedness and Future Operations**

This year, PPD facilitated the Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC). Key efforts include improving the Volunteer Emergency Ready Response Corps, managing communications equipment, approving the APHIS Emergency Mobilization Framework, and validating 95% of APHIS employees in the emergency qualifications system. The EPC also served as the COVID-19 Incident Management Team. In addition, PPD coordinated a Future Operations initiative that assessed the effect of the pandemic and recommended 105 permanent improvements for mission delivery.

### **Collaborating With the University of Maryland (UMD)**

PPD strengthened its relationship with UMD students and faculty, engaging more than 450 students through workshops and other events, leading to the hiring of 9 people under special programs. Student teams completed several APHIS-related projects including a GIS map of bird strikes, a story map highlighting APHIS' work with endangered shorebirds, and a social media analysis of non-commercial poultry and egg sales in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. In addition, UMD faculty are supporting PPQ by researching agricultural quarantine inspection (AQI) fee structures.

### **Implementing eFiling and Data Sharing**

PPD continued project management services to implement electronic permits for all APHIS customers using eFile, leading to the launch of an AC module, soft launch of the BRS module, and a path forward for permitting systems in VS and PPQ. Additionally, PPD helped establish a Mission Area Tableau Governance Board and connected APHIS administrative dashboards to the Department's data sources, reducing administrative burden.

# Animal Care

**2020**

Year in Review

Initiated 30 investigations into alleged Animal Welfare Act (AWA) violations, issued 4 pre-litigation settlements, and obtained 24 administrative orders

Conducted 535 AWA pre-license security threat assessments

Provided security support at 13 horse shows and 10 AWA-licensed facilities

Published a final rule amending AWA licensing requirements and strengthening the veterinary care and watering standards for dogs

APHIS' Support Units conduct a wide variety of projects, initiatives, and other efforts each year to benefit AC and advance the program's mission of ensuring the humane care and treatment of animals. Below is a summary of this work for FY 2020.

## Legislative and Public Affairs

### Advising on Listening Sessions for New Bird Rule

LPA assisted AC in several large stakeholder communications efforts in FY 2020, including advising AC on listening sessions for the development of AWA standards for birds. This included providing extensive planning and coordination, identifying relevant stakeholders, helping AC staff prepare website materials, advising AC on strategies for holding the listening sessions, and ensuring all relevant stakeholders felt listened to and included in the process. 260 participants attended the first listening session, setting the stage for 2 additional listening sessions held in FY 2021.

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services

### Supporting AWA and HPA Enforcement

MRPBS initiated 30 investigations into alleged AWA violations, issued 4 pre-litigation settlements resulting in the collection of \$115,500 in penalties, obtained 24 administrative orders assessing \$509,375 in civil penalties, and negotiated several pre-litigation settlement agreements, including one that resulted in a \$74,000 civil penalty. For alleged violations of the Horse Protection Act (HPA), MRPBS obtained 11 administrative orders, assessing \$11,800 in civil penalties and disqualifying 10 individuals from participating in HPA-regulated activities for a total of 7 years.

### Advancing APHIS eFile

This year MRPBS launched the AC Live Dogs Annual Reports enhancement. As of October 2020, 384 research facilities were able to submit their annual reports online through eFile. In addition, MRPBS deployed the AC Inspections, Licensing and Registration production release, replacing the legacy Animal Care Information System and the Public Search Tool. During the 1 month the system was live in FY 2020, it delivered more than 650 inspection reports to the public and was used to issue 65 registrations and 153 licenses.



### **Securing Offsite Locations for Frontline Workers**

MRPBS conducted 535 AWA pre-license security threat assessments and provided security support to AC staff for inspections conducted at 13 horse shows and 10 AWA-licensed facilities.

## **Policy and Program Development**

### **Providing Regulatory Services**

PPD published a final rule amending the AWA licensing requirements and strengthening the veterinary care and watering standards for dogs. In addition, PPD published a proposed rule to remove duplicative and unnecessary information requirements for research facilities. PPD also publicized virtual listening sessions on the development of AWA regulations for birds not bred for use in research; published two notices to modify an existing AC system of records notice; and prepared three record of categorical exclusion documents related to the revision of AC regulations, proposed microchipping rule, and bird standards meeting notice.

# Biotechnology Regulatory Services

2020

Year in Review

Published the SECURE rule and eight notices

Led communications efforts related to the SECURE Rule

Drafted and issued an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) on the development of regulations for the movement of GE animals

Amended regulations for the movement of certain GE organisms, saving the private sector an estimated \$8.3 million in perpetuity

Prepared three draft environmental assessments (EAs), one final EA, one final environmental impact statement (EIS), three categorical exclusion documents, and an Endangered Species Act analysis

APHIS' Support Units conduct a wide variety of projects, initiatives, and other efforts each year to benefit BRS and advance the program's mission in regulating genetically engineered (GE) organisms and addressing the latest biotechnology issues and challenges. Below is a summary of this work for FY 2020.

## Legislative and Public Affairs

### Leading Communications for the SECURE Rule

LPA led communications efforts related to the update of USDA's biotechnology regulations, known as the SECURE Rule, including drafting the rollout plan for the announcement; working with partners, stakeholders, Congress, and the media to inform them of the rule; ensuring the web content was up to date and accurate; and redesigning BRS' web pages on the rule. In addition, LPA arranged briefings with the Agriculture Committees to address their questions and concerns and earn their support for the rule.

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services

### Supporting Biotechnology

To support biotechnology, MRPBS resolved a case related to the possible detection of GE wheat in Washington State. This case, which was initiated during FY 2019, was part of an internal collaborative effort to further the protection and safeguarding of plant health throughout the United States.

## Policy and Program Development

### Providing Regulatory Services

This year, PPD published the SECURE rule and eight notices on behalf of BRS. The final rule saves the private sector an estimated \$8.3 million in perpetuity. PPD also helped draft and issue an ANPR soliciting public comment on the development of regulations for the movement of GE animals. The ANPR, which was jointly issued with the Food Safety and Inspection Service, is a priority for the Secretary's office.



### **Supporting Environmental Compliance**

PPD prepared three draft EAs of petitions for the determination of nonregulated status for phytase-enhanced corn, GE petunia, and GE insect-resistant cotton; a final EA for a petition for GE enhanced-yield and resistant corn; a final EIS for a large scale permit for citrus tristeza virus (CTV) to control citrus greening; Record of Decision documents for CFR part 340 regulatory amendments and for the CTV permit; three categorical exclusion documents for extensions of nonregulated status for GE potato, canola, and corn; and an Endangered Species Act analyses in support of proposed decisions for nonregulated status. PPD also initiated an EIS for chestnut and EAs for GE non-browning apples and insect-protected corn varieties.

# Plant Protection and Quarantine



**2020**

Year in Review

Shared information on Asian giant hornet that was picked up by 198 news outlets in 16 countries, reaching a potential audience of 524 million people

Shared information on unsolicited seeds from China that was picked up by 188 news outlets in 10 countries, reaching a potential audience of 518 million

Supported AQI activities by securing \$55 million in supplemental appropriations

Initiated 63 cases, issued 51 warning letters, and negotiated 29 prelitigation settlement agreements

Published 39 Federal Register notices

APHIS' Support Units conduct a wide variety of projects, initiatives, and other efforts each year to benefit PPQ and advance the program's mission of safeguarding our country's agricultural and natural resources against plant pests and diseases. Below is a summary of this work for FY 2020.

## Legislative and Public Affairs

### Managing Pests and Seeds in the Media

When the media dubbed an invasive pest found in Washington State the "murder hornet," LPA worked with State partners to dispel myths and redirect public attention to scientific research and field work to eradicate the Asian giant hornet. Additionally, when people began receiving unsolicited seeds from overseas, LPA shared information to explain what recipients should do with the seeds to prevent plant health risks. LPA continued managing two national outreach campaigns for PPQ—the Hungry Pests and Asian longhorned beetle campaigns. In FY 2020, the Hungry Pests campaign reached a potential audience of more than 293 million people nationwide, and the Asian longhorned beetle campaign reached a potential audience of more than 64 million people in 4 States.

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services

### Supporting AQI Activities

MRPBS performed critical work in support of the AQI program in FY 2020, including responding to a decrease in AQI collections as a result of COVID-19. MRPBS worked with PPQ and PPD to examine a variety of strategic funding options and, as a result, APHIS was able to sustain full program operations and end the year with a carry-forward balance of \$68 million. In addition, MRPBS further supported AQI operations by initiating 907 new cases, issuing 316 warning letters, issuing 488 pre-litigation settlement agreements with \$1,393,424 in stipulated penalties, and obtaining one administrative order that assessed \$18,750 in civil penalties.

### Enforcing Laws Protecting Plant Health

To support U.S. plant health in 2020, MRPBS initiated 63 cases, issued 51 warning letters, and negotiated 29 pre-litigation settlement agreements, collecting \$143,728 in stipulated penalties.



### **Filling Critical Positions**

MRPBS ensured that critical PPQ vacancies at headquarters and in the field were filled efficiently by preparing standardized recruitment materials for 6 different critical positions, which resulted in a 50-percent decrease in the time it takes to hire. MRPBS also prepared standardized materials for four PPQ Field Operations position descriptions and worked with the University of Maryland on a plan to hire PPQ laboratory technicians through the Pathways Intern program and the new Junior Fellows program.

### **Providing Emergency Response Support**

MRPBS dispatched 232 PPQ emergency responders to 9 plant pest incidents, including European cherry fruit fly in New York, Mexican fruit fly in Texas, citrus greening in Alabama, and spotted lanternfly in several States.

## **Policy and Program Development**

### **Providing Regulatory Services**

PPD published 39 Federal Register notices on behalf of PPQ, including 12 that proposed to grant new market access to plants or plant products or to revise existing requirements to relieve restrictions on the importation of such products and 3 that grant market access to guava from Taiwan, sand pears from Japan, and carrots from South Korea. PPD also published a final interpretive rule clarifying PPQ's statutory authority to collect a reserve fund in support of AQI activities.

### **Assessing Environmental, Human Health, and Ecological Risks**

PPD prepared 1 draft EIS, 1 final EIS, 1 record of decision, 20 environmental assessments, and 29 Endangered Species Act consultations for PPQ. PPD also assisted with PPQ's environmental compliance related to new pest emergency response programs for Asian

giant hornet, Asian longhorned beetle, and spotted lanternfly. In addition, PPD finalized human health risk assessments and ecological risk assessments for four insecticides that control grasshoppers and Mormon crickets.

### **Securing the AQI Program**

PPD prepared economic forecasts and projections, collection scenarios, cash flow analyses, and codicils that resulted in \$55 million in supplemental appropriations for AQI activities following COVID-19 related disruptions. In addition, PPD conducted assessments on user fees forgone due to an exemption for small aircraft entering the United States and on the implementation of the new user fee for PPQ-led phytosanitary treatments.

### **Supporting Lacey Act Compliance**

PPD facilitated a strategic planning workshop to help PPQ meet Lacey Act program requirements that were outlined in a supplemental appropriation and published a final rule establishing an exception to the Lacey Act declaration requirement for products containing a minimal amount of plant materials. The exception outlined in the final rule could reduce compliance costs for the private sector by as much as \$745,900.

# Veterinary Services

2020

Year in Review

Developed a web page to track animals confirmed to have the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which received 57,485 views

Stood up a Livestock Coordination Center web page to assist producers affected by processing plant closures

Initiated 129 cases, issued 106 warning letters, and issued 28 pre-litigation settlements

Developed a long-term contract to acquire foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine antigen concentrate (VAC)

Published 39 Federal Register notices and 10 rules

Assessed the cattle fever tick (CFT) program and made recommendations for improvement

APHIS' Support Units conduct a wide variety of projects, initiatives, and other efforts each year to benefit VS and advance the program's mission of protecting and improving the health, quality, and marketability of our Nation's agricultural animals, animal products, and veterinary biologics. Below is a summary of this work for FY 2020.

## Legislative and Public Affairs

### Communicating on Behalf of VS

LPA developed and distributed information related to VS' efforts during COVID-19—including press releases, web content, Q&As, emails to stakeholders, and social media outreach—on topics such as SARS-CoV-2 animal testing, updated port procedures, and VS' support to producers impacted by processing plant closures/slowdowns. When COVID-19 impacted meat processing plants, LPA created a Livestock Coordination Center web page to help producers affected by the livestock processing plant slowdown. The page received a total of 689 visits between May and August 2020. LPA also stood up a web page to track animals confirmed to have the SARS-CoV-2 virus so citizens and stakeholders would have quick access to testing numbers. The page received 57,485 views between April and August 2020. In addition, LPA continued managing VS' Defend the Flock campaign, a national outreach campaign that provides resources producers need to keep their birds healthy and reduce disease risk.

### Facilitating African Swine Fever (ASF) Preparedness

LPA partnered with VS to launch an ASF Technical Working Group comprised of industry and State representatives to support the Agency's planning and preparedness efforts in the event of an outbreak. LPA also worked with a cross-program group made up of employees from VS and WS to communicate about feral swine and the risk of ASF and created an infographic on ASF and feral swine.

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services

### Enforcing Laws Protecting Animal Health

In 2020, MRPBS initiated 129 cases, issued 106 warning letters, issued 28 pre-litigation settlements with \$44,338 in stipulated penalties, and obtained



administrative orders assessing \$14,000 in civil penalties for violations of laws aimed at protecting animal health and American agriculture.

### **Helping VS Acquire FMD Vaccine**

MRPBS worked with VS to develop a long-term contract to acquire FMD VAC for the National Animal Veterinary Vaccine Countermeasures Bank. This effort yielded 2 successful proposals, one of which includes a 10-year VAC shelf life, meaning that VAC purchased in 2025 will be available for conversion to a vaccine through 2035. This resulted in a first-order savings of \$2.6 million and could potentially save millions more annually.

### **Supporting the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF)**

MRPBS provided extensive support for the creation of the new NBAF facility. Highlights include: providing a broad range of human resource guidance on issues such as staffing, transferring existing personnel, and relocation assistance; outlining a plan for NBAF management to begin staff background investigations, clearances, and issuing or updating LincPass credentials; and hiring all open positions included in the NBAF hiring plan. In addition, MRPBS was instrumental in completing IT systems and network installation at NBAF, leading two crucial initiatives: one focused on improving IT management by developing a 10-year budget projection and one focused on deploying multiple software and hardware platforms for both the Plum Island and NBAF facilities to ensure successful integration between locations. MRPBS also administered the NBAF Operational Planning & Technology Integration Contract (OPTIC), a \$42M contract transferred from the Department of Homeland Security. Through OPTIC, MRPBS awarded and administered more than \$75 million dollars in acquisitions.

### **Advancing Animal Disease Traceability (ADT)**

In support of the ADT program's move from metal ear tags to radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, MRPBS performed market research, established a Qualifications Requirement, and awarded three contracts for RFID tags. In addition, MRPBS awarded the new Animal Disease Traceability Information System (ADTIS) Modernization contract, which will replace the legacy ADTIS. The new ADTIS is a modern technology platform that will have improved mobility, better access to data, and integration with stakeholder systems.

### **Filling Gaps in Federal/State Data Sharing**

MRPBS led the Mobile Information Management (MIM) modernization project, which will modernize the legacy MIM System and fill in gaps in data sharing between State and Federal IT systems. The project includes designing and building a new mobile and web-based user interface for uploading and manually entered testing, vaccination, and movement information; generating the associated forms; and allowing electronic data capture from the web application into a new messaging service.

## **Policy and Program Development**

### **Improving the CFT Program**

PPD assessed the CFT program due to escalating outbreaks in Texas and the spread of ticks between agricultural premises. PPD also provided regulatory guidance to the program for their use of coumaphos and corresponded with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration about the use of a nematode product to control ticks.

### **Announcing New RFID Requirements**

PPD led efforts to publish new requirements for the use of RFID tags for cattle and bison moving interstate under VS' traceability regulations. This change supports VS' ongoing



efforts to increase animal disease traceability by more accurately and rapidly allowing animal health officials to know where affected and at-risk animals are located.

### **Providing Regulatory Services**

PPD published 39 Federal Register notices and 10 rules on behalf of VS, including a proposed and final rule to amend the National Poultry Improvement Plan regulations, a proposed rule to establish a National List of Reportable Animal Diseases, and an ANPR regarding Select Agent regulations.

### **Securing NBAF Resources**

PPD co-led the budget working group for NBAF. Working with its partners at the Agricultural Research Service, PPD guided budget development; developed justifications for hiring, workforce development, and IT and equipment needs; and drafted a report to Congressional subcommittees on the 10-year strategic plan for NBAF.

### **Guiding Disinfectant Use**

PPD provided Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act expertise to assist VS and the Food Safety and Inspection Service. Specifically, PPD identified approved and effective use of disinfectants against COVID-19 and provided guidance on disinfection in meat processing facilities. PPD also worked with VS and the dairy industry to ensure that disinfectants were registered for use against the virus that causes FMD.



# Wildlife Services

2020

Year in Review

Led a public outreach campaign and enhanced communications about feral swine

Reduced WS' old debt by \$1 million

Saved \$500,000 on WS' new chiller plant

Published three Federal Register notices

Prepared and submitted 70 applications to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the use of 30 registered products

APHIS' Support Units conduct a wide variety of projects, initiatives, and other efforts each year to benefit WS and advance the program's mission of providing Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife-related issues in a science-based manner. Below is a summary of this work for FY 2020.

## Legislative and Public Affairs

### Promoting the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program

In 2020, LPA continued to support the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program by partnering with WS to lead a public outreach campaign and enhance communication about this destructive invasive species. Along with these efforts, LPA worked with a cross-program group from WS and VS to communicate about feral swine and the risk of ASF and created an infographic on ASF and feral swine.

## Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services

### Reducing WS Debt

MRPBS analyzed and reconciled WS transactions, enabling WS to make 110 corrective accounting adjustments and reducing debt by \$1 million. Additionally, MRPBS collaborated with WS to revamp requirements for WS' over-the-counter sales orders. Through implementing these new guidelines, 91 accounting adjustments totaling \$2.3 million were made possible, and budget authority was corrected by \$631,000. MRPBS also reconciled 19 open sales orders where the period of performance was over 90 days, further correcting budget authority by \$778,000 and providing a more accurate financial operating budget overall.

### Replacing Aging WS Facility

MRPBS reviewed and evaluated the proposal to construct a new chiller plant for NWRC. As a result, the construction contract was awarded for \$500,000 below the initial proposal.



## **Policy and Program Development**

### **Providing Regulatory Services**

PPD published three Federal Register notices on behalf of WS, including one informing the public of WS' intent to prepare an EIS to analyze alternatives for predator damage management in Oregon and one to analyze alternatives for wildlife damage management in California. Finally, PPD published a notice regarding an oral rabies vaccination program in nine states.

### **Revising the Management Information System (MIS) Database**

PPD helped update the MIS database, which tracks the value of resources affected by WS work and the impact of efforts to address wildlife damage. PPD gathered State-level data to generate values for the Christmas tree industry and applied unit conversions from academic literature to determine hardwood and softwood values. PPD's ongoing work will focus on calculating additional resource valuations, including non-market values.

### **Supporting Product Registrations**

PPD prepared and submitted 70 applications to the EPA on behalf of WS for the use of 30 registered products, including 4 experimental use permits and 5 mandatory incident reports to allow the continued use of pesticides and animal drugs in managing wildlife conflicts. PPD also helped with pesticide product registrations in all 50 States. In addition, PPD submitted documentation to EPA that resulted in fee waivers valued at \$129,400 for all WS pesticide product registrations in 2020.

LPA

MRPBS

OCRDI

PPD

**Visit Us  
at My.APHIS**