



# REMARKS

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## Remarks as Prepared for Administrator Dr. Gregory Parham Association of Veterinary Biologics (AVBC) 2011 Fall Meeting

(AMES, IA, Sept. 28, 2011) Thank you and good morning. It's a pleasure to be here. I'd like to take a few minutes to briefly introduce myself to those of you who don't know me already and give you a general update at the Agency level before I address issues more specific to this meeting.

As many of you know, I took over the reins of leadership from Cindy Smith in April when she went on to a new role as APHIS' Chief Advisor for Government, Academia, and Industry Partnership.

Though I was new to the role of Administrator when I started, I was not new to APHIS. My father dedicated his working life to APHIS as I have for the last 5 years, and to USDA for almost 30 years. You might even say government service and agriculture runs in my blood.

There are three words I think describe the work done by APHIS; noble, mobile, and global. Protecting the health of our nation's agriculture and environment is a noble endeavor. Our ability to deploy new technologies and an experienced, world-class workforce, enabling us to be more responsive allows APHIS to be a mobile force. The actions we take and the decisions we make have a widespread effect and are global in nature.

### ***Budget and APHIS Modernization Plan***

You all know that the current economic climate is serious and Federal agencies, including APHIS, are feeling the impact. While we have always been mindful of our responsibility to the American taxpayers, it is imperative that we work harder to account for every dollar spent, eliminate services that aren't needed, and ensure that the services we do provide are effective. Our ultimate goal: to work more efficiently, allowing us to do better with less.

Current budget forecasts call for a potential reduction of \$80 million or more next year, an unheard of reduction for APHIS. And it's likely we will continue to see greater budget reductions continue in the future.

So, what does that mean for APHIS, and ultimately what does that mean for you? APHIS needs to change the way it does business. Secretary Vilsack has said change will occur throughout USDA and he is committed to seeing these budgetary challenges as a way

to build a stronger and more efficient Department. Rather than ignoring the inevitable change, we are embracing it, allowing us to better serve the American people.

Both in APHIS and at the Departmental level, we will be focusing on our core mission. Within that framework, we need to redesign and streamline our processes, while also allowing for Agency restructuring as needed.

While I can't tell you what changes will occur, or ultimately how APHIS or the Department will look after the refinements, I can tell you that we are committed to moving forward, to creating a leaner, more efficient Agency while maximizing every dollar and focusing on our core missions, collaboratively, creatively, and transparently.

### *AVBC Issues*

How does all of this apply to you?

We know how important the Center for Veterinary Biologics is to your industry. Beyond that, the work that CVB does is essential to the health and success of animal agriculture, companion animals, and—ultimately—human health.

Notwithstanding the current economic challenges, we are committed to utilizing the resources available to APHIS to provide you with the broadest and most efficient services possible to enable you to accomplish your respective missions.

I'm pleased that CVB has made progress in several areas, such as changes to regulatory procedures to streamline them or enhance product availability.

For instance, CVB has proposed changes in the labeling process to make more efficient use of CVB and industry resources. This, inherently, make the licensing process more efficient.

We have also reduced the backlog of pending statistics reports. Not only has the number of pending reports reached its lowest level in 4 years, but there are currently no reports that have been pending for over 6 months. Our new goal is to decrease that to a maximum of 4 months.

While improvements have been made, I am very aware that AVBC has some ongoing concerns about services provided by CVB. On September 9th, I met with John Thomas and the AVBC delegation to discuss some of the issues AVBC members have.

I appreciate the opportunity to hear your concerns in more detail, and I want you to know that I have heard and understood these issues, and that we are currently working to address them.

For instance, we know that the turnaround on statistical reviews is currently a problem for our stakeholders, and I think we can do better. Associate Administrator Kevin

Shea is working with CVB on a management initiative called the “Lean Six Sigma” to speed up turnaround time, with the goal of significantly reducing the average processing time.

Dr. John Clifford, Deputy Administrator of Veterinary Services is interested in identifying other efficiencies that might be made in CVB operations, such whether there is a need to adjust the manpower applied to reviewing blueprint changes, or a need for master seed testing for diagnostic products.

We have also discussed the idea of additional processes within our training program to ensure better reviewer consistency.

Those are just a few examples. Looking at the agenda for today, I know these issues will be covered in greater depth, and I don’t want to take away from those speakers. However, I do want to express my appreciation for the dialog that APHIS shares with you, and I want to assure you that we are listening and looking into issues that we’ve identified or that have been brought to our attention.

### ***Conclusion***

Before I pass the microphone off to Byron Rippke of CVB, I just want to reiterate that while the budget issues may make things more difficult and times a little leaner than we are used to, we have to keep our goal in sight. That goal is the health and safety of United States agriculture.

As Henry Ford once said “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

Transparency, flexibility, and cooperation both on our part and on the part of our Stakeholders are an important part of successfully meeting the goal.

Working together there is little we can’t accomplish. Though there are difficult choices to be made and challenges on the road ahead, as long as the lines of communication remain open, we can ensure the safety of U.S. Agriculture while also utilizing a transparent and efficient system.

Thank you for your support and for inviting me to speak at your meeting. I look forward to meeting these challenges head on with you.

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