



REMARKS

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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Remarks as Prepared for Administrator Dr. Gregory Parham Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) Emergency Preparedness Meeting

(RIVERDALE, MD, Nov. 3, 2011) Good morning. Thank you, Dr. Diez, for your opening remarks.

And thanks to all of you for being here today. It's good to be in the company of stakeholders who share our Agency's commitment to animal health emergency preparedness and response.

I never thought I would hear myself say this, but: we've had an earthquake and a hurricane since we last got together in Riverdale.

We were very lucky here in this area, but I know some of you have traveled from areas that were hit much harder by natural disasters this summer. So perhaps that puts today's discussion of emergency preparedness in a different, and perhaps more immediate, context for many of us.

Whatever the emergency may be, planning is the essential component of preparedness. That's what my predecessor, Cindy Smith, had in mind when she initiated these emergency management response planning dialogues last year.

Each of you here today attests to the diversity of American agriculture, and the number of different authorities—Federal, State, Tribal, and local—that come to bear in an animal disease scenario.

Time is of the essence in any foreign animal disease (FAD) response effort. And make no mistake—communications will be a critical part of any successful FAD response effort.

The diversity of U.S. agricultural industries, and the complexity of animal and animal commodity movement authorities, are just a few of the things that demand dialogues such as the one in which we're engaging today and tomorrow.

We have the opportunity right now—in advance of a potential emergency—to engage in dialogue that will allow us to identify potential obstacles, explore options, and hopefully—if we speak frankly—have a “takeaway” that spurs improvements. Such improvements will pay off if and when an emergency FAD response is required.

We've counted on your candor in the last two meetings, and I think it's safe to say we've gotten it. Your feedback brings us to the current focus on movement control and continuity of business in a foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak.

In the event of an FAD incursion, especially one as potentially devastating as FMD, APHIS' primary goal is to stop the spread of the disease and work toward eradication as quickly as possible while minimizing, to the extent we can, the impact on producers and others whose livelihoods depend on potentially affected livestock and commodities.

Our best shot at meeting this goal is to leverage all available resources and expertise. This includes getting input from industry stakeholders and State officials who might be better acquainted with some of the challenges involved in establishing and managing a commodity movement control and compliance system.

Safeguarding the health of U.S. agriculture is APHIS' mission, and it will remain our priority in any animal disease outbreak.

However, in the event of an outbreak, APHIS has to consider all that we and our stakeholders face in terms of obstacles and all that we collectively bring to the table in terms of resources and relevant authorities. In that way, we can most effectively apply Federal resources and employ Federal authorities.

One of the most important things we can do now to ensure preparedness is communicate, anticipate, and "take stock," if you will.

At this meeting, we will talk about Federal and State authorities, potential commodity movement permitting in various scenarios, and we'll share some "lessons learned" about movement control during FMD outbreaks in other countries. We'll also talk about gaps identified by domestic exercises focused on commodity movement control and compliance. We trust that you, our partners, will share your own wisdom and lessons learned based on your own experiences.

As you listen to speakers and engage in discussions today and tomorrow, here are some questions I'd like you to consider with regard to a potential FMD outbreak in the United States:

- What are your continuity-of-business priorities?
- What networks or communications mechanisms, if any, are in place within your industry or State?
- What are the animal commodity movement laws in your State, Tribe, or locality—or in States, Tribes, and localities that are particularly significant to specific industries?
- What capabilities and communications resources do you have—or perhaps more importantly, *could* you have—in the event of an animal disease emergency?
- And always keep in mind the question, what is the takeaway from this dialogue?

That question is especially important because we can have the most impressive capabilities, in terms of advanced technologies, resources, human networks, and even sheer willpower. But if we have not thought ahead enough, and if the mechanisms are not in place to take advantage of them, such resources can remain untapped in times when we need them most.

I am confident that the talks we conduct here today and tomorrow will help prevent that unwelcome scenario from occurring.

On that note, I want to thank you again for joining us today. The fact that you're here speaks to the importance you place on emergency animal disease planning, the work that you'll contribute to today's discussions, and the resolve to take away information that will help us all move forward.

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