



# REMARKS

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## Remarks as Prepared for Administrator Dr. Gregory Parham Meeting of Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health

(WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 1, 2011) Good morning and thank you. I would like to start by recognizing the tremendous amount of time and effort each and every one of you has contributed toward USDA's animal health programs.

The work you are doing is vastly important to USDA and I assure you that the Secretary is acutely aware of your progress.

One of the Secretary's highest priorities is to improve the way USDA conducts the business of regulation. The regulatory process must be transparent, inclusive, and—above all—effective.

The Secretary is extremely proud of the work that you are doing – because of the end result, but also because you represent an important conduit between regulators and the people affected by animal health regulations.

### *Animal Health*

As you know, with your valued assistance, APHIS published a proposed rule on animal disease traceability on August 9, 2011.

Recently, based on your suggestions, the comment period for the proposed rule on animal disease traceability was extended an additional 30 days.

As the closing date of the original public comment period nears, constructive comments continue to be received. I am sure the 30-day time extension will prove to be a wise decision.

I hope you will continue to provide your significant insight as the process toward a final rule continues.

I know you're working on a number of animal health issues outside of traceability. Among those issues are the supply challenges associated with FMD vaccinations and the framework on TB and brucellosis. These are important animal health concerns on which we will continue to seek your input.

## *Budget*

The last time I spoke with you we all knew budgetary reductions were coming, although the extent was unknown.

We now have some estimates and a plan for prioritizing those reductions.

Current APHIS budget forecasts call for unprecedented declines—potentially \$80 million or more next year, and even greater cutbacks are probable after that.

Our commitment to meeting and overcoming challenges, along with our flexibility and capacity for innovation will serve us well as we operate in the current fiscal climate.

Obviously, our budgets are shrinking significantly, and yet our core mission areas and responsibilities are not.

So, APHIS must change the way we do business. And, as Secretary Vilsack has indicated, this change will be occurring throughout the Department.

Rather than ignore the inevitability of change, the Secretary is committed to seeing our upcoming budgetary challenge as an opportunity to build a stronger Department that better serves the American people.

As part of this effort, USDA and APHIS will be refocusing and concentrating on our core mission areas; redesigning and streamlining processes to find efficiencies; and evaluating restructuring our organization.

While we don't yet know what these changes will look like—at the Department or in APHIS—it is our shared responsibility to ensure change does not manage us.

We intend to move forward collaboratively, creatively and with transparency toward the goal of creating a leaner, more efficient organization that is able to maximize every dollar while refocusing on its core mission.

Some of our decisions or future changes will impact our stakeholders, but we will do our best to reduce the overall impact caused by the expected decreases.

As we go forward we will strive to keep you all informed of actions we are considering to address our budgetary challenges while maintaining our animal health programs.

## *Closing*

Unfortunately, I have a prior engagement and must leave shortly, but I will be speaking later with our other officials in attendance to discuss the comments and progress made today.

As always, I would encourage you to document your deliberations and recommendations.

I know the Secretary will be interested in today's discussions, and he looks forward to reading the minutes of the meeting.

Again, I cannot state often enough how much we appreciate your work.

Thank you.

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