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Remarks

**Remarks as Prepared for Administrator Kevin Shea
14th APHIS International Transboundary Animal Disease Course
Plum Island Animal Disease Center**

Orient Point, NY, Sept. 26, 2013—Good morning, everyone.

It's a pleasure to be here with you at the 14th APHIS International Transboundary Animal Disease Course.

Although I've been with APHIS for many years, I'm here at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center for the very first time—like you and like Deputy Administrator Beverly Simmons, who greeted you on your first day.

I understand we have veterinarians here representing 11 countries, from Armenia to Vietnam. Thank you all for traveling so far and so long to be here.

I hope you're enjoying your stay on Long Island and finding this course valuable.

I'd like to acknowledge two special guests.

Dr. Jean Richards is from the Department of Defense's Cooperative Biological Engagement Program—which with great generosity and foresight has funded this course.

Dr. Bouna Diop is the East Africa Regional Manager of the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases, at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. Thank you for being here.

I'm glad to be meeting with Larry Barrett, director of this facility, and Dr. Fernando Torres-Velez, director of APHIS' Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. Thanks to them for hosting me and for all their good works.

And I appreciate the time and effort that your course leaders have put into this program.

Dr. Alfonso Torres, who once served as Deputy Administrator for our Veterinary Services program as well as Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), also headed the Animal Disease Center at one point.

Dr. Peter Fernandez is our International Services program's Regional Manager for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The partnership between our Agency's VS and IS programs on this course has yielded great results, year after year.

It's a fine example of the collaboration and information exchange on animal diseases that we want to promote through this course.

Finding ways to combat serious transboundary and emerging animal diseases is a crucial part of my Agency's mission: protecting the health of U.S. agriculture.

Our APHIS scientists here at Plum Island—and their colleagues with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and USDA's Agricultural Research Service—play a critical role in helping us carry out that mission.

But they can't do it alone.

To safeguard the health of our country's valuable agricultural animals, we must help safeguard the health of yours.

And the only real way to do that—to deal with significant animal disease threats swiftly and effectively, wherever they appear—is by pooling our expertise.

Only by exchanging our knowledge and working together can we build a strong global network to protect agriculture—and, crucially, our ever-expanding international trade in animals and animal products.

Let me go further. By maintaining healthy and profitable agriculture in your countries and in ours, we can feed and clothe a hungry and cold world—and provide a base that allows all of our economies to thrive.

Working together, we can do collectively what no one of us can do entirely for ourselves.

Some of you already have relationships with staff here. For instance, I understand that some of you from Georgia have worked before with Plum Island scientists on issues in your country such as African swine fever.

We want to reinforce these kind of relationships while developing new ones.

And we hope you will share the insights you've acquired here with your colleagues at home, long after you've taken the last ferry from this island.

To help you do that, we're compiling all the information from the course onto thumb drives that will be distributed to you.

For those of you who are getting to know us for the first time, think of them as the keys to the international network of animal disease expertise we are building through these trainings.

That network includes the more than 300 veterinarians who have taken this course before you, and the many other animal disease specialists who have trained here.

It's a distinguished group of alumni.

It includes the CVOs of Guatemala, Nigeria, and Uruguay.

It includes individuals who went on to become the CVOs of Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay—and again, Uruguay.

It includes the current head of the Russian National Veterinary Laboratory System.

It includes Dr. Tracy McNamara, the first person to correctly identify West Nile virus in the United States—thanks in great part, she says, to her training here on Plum Island.

And now, it includes you.

Looking at your schedule for today, I can see that you have a lot of ground left to cover—including a tour of the island—so I'll close now.

Let me say again how pleased I am to see you here, and how much I have appreciated this opportunity to talk with you.

I look forward to seeing you again later today and tomorrow.

Thank you.

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