Leadership

Last Modified:

Kelly Moore, Administrator



Kelly Moore was named Administrator on June 17, 2026, after serving as Acting Administrator since February 2026. In this role, she leads the agency's mission to protect the health and value of American agriculture; mitigate the impact of human-wildlife conflict to protect agriculture, the environment, and human health and safety; ensure the safe and timely availability of new genetically engineered technologies; and administer the Animal Welfare and Horse Protection Acts. Ms. Moore is committed to ensuring APHIS policies and actions are grounded in science, strengthened through robust stakeholder engagement, and focused on delivering solutions and essential services that safeguard U.S. agriculture and support stakeholders nationwide.

Ms. Moore previously served as Acting Chief Operating Officer for USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area and Acting Deputy Administrator of Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services. She brings extensive operational leadership experience and a strong foundation of discipline from her prior service in the U.S. Marine Corps. Highly adept at guiding organizations through change, her previous experience has given her a broad view of APHIS policy and operations, preparing her to lead the agency into a new era of efficiency, innovation, and service.

Since joining USDA in 2007, Ms. Moore has held senior roles including Deputy Chief Operating Officer, USDA Head of Contracting Activity, and Deputy for Procurement Operations, overseeing enterprise acquisitions and representing USDA on Federal acquisition initiatives. Her career began with over a decade of active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps in supply, logistics, and contracting roles.

Ms. Moore holds dual master's degrees in Management Information Systems and Business Administration from Bellevue University and a bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management from the University of Maryland University College. She is a graduate of USDA's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program and an ACT-IAC Partners Leadership Program Fellow.

RDML Michael Schmoyer, Ph.D., Associate Administrator



RDML Michael Schmoyer serves as the Associate Administrator for APHIS and Director of the New World Screwworm Directorate. In this role, RDML Schmoyer leads national efforts to protect U.S. agriculture, the economy, and public health

from the threat of New World screwworm. He is a career officer in the U.S. Public Health Service and has spent decades working at the intersection of public health and national security. Before joining USDA, RDML Schmoyer held several senior leadership positions across the Federal Government. He served as a Presidential Scholar and Chair at the National Intelligence University, where he focused on counterintelligence, biotechnology, and biological threats. He also served as Chief of Staff in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for U.S. Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), leading work related to biosecurity, counterterrorism, and emerging biological threats.

Earlier in his career, RDML Schmoyer helped establish the first Workforce Protection Program at the Executive Office of the President that combined a variety of national security-related capabilities to provide for enhanced national security responses. He also supported the HHS Secretary as the Department's Senior Intelligence Official and completed a detail to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where he helped guide national strategies on health security.

His global health experience includes overseeing U.S. Government coordination during the 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak, including deployments to Liberia, and serving at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in leadership roles in Central America, Panama, and Central Asia. He also served as the first Senior Advisor to U.S. Southern Command on global health security and interagency coordination.

RDML Schmoyer brings a long track record of leadership, interagency collaboration, and innovative approaches to protecting national health and security.

Sarah Helming, Associate Administrator



Sarah Helming was appointed Associate Administrator in July 2025. In this role, she works in partnership with Acting Administrator Kelly Moore and fellow Associate Administrator RDML Michael Schmoyer to carry out the agency's day-to-day operations, represent APHIS on department-level and cross-agency working groups, and oversee the activities of every APHIS program area and support unit on behalf of employees and stakeholders.

Before this appointment, Ms. Helming served as Deputy Administrator of Animal Care since August 2024. In this role, she led Animal Care's many employees in protecting and ensuring the welfare of millions of animals nationwide that are covered under the Animal Welfare Act and Horse Protection Act.

Prior to her time in Animal Care, Ms. Helming served as Deputy Administrator for Emergency and Regulatory Compliance Services (ERCS) since October 2023, where she oversaw APHIS' select agents and toxins, investigative and enforcement, biodefense, and emergency management, safety and security programs. While there, she implemented significant reforms, initiating an evaluation and assessment of current, long-standing investigative and enforcement processes and procedures, changes that have realized major efficiencies and improvements.

In addition, from April to July 2024, Ms. Helming was asked to co-lead the USDA and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' joint response to the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in cattle, standing up a unified coordinating group and identifying needed working groups across all government sectors to achieve a shared vision to managing this One Health event.

Ms. Helming joined APHIS in 2014 and has held various positions throughout the agency, including Associate Deputy Administrator for ERCS and Chief of Staff for the Office of the Administrator. She also served in roles in APHIS International Services, Veterinary Services, and Legislative and Public Affairs. In 2021, Ms. Helming served as USDA's Supply Chain Coordinator, overseeing the $4 billion USDA received from the American Rescue Plan Act to transform the U.S. food system.

Before joining APHIS, Ms. Helming worked for various government entities, including as a congressional staffer in the U.S. Congress, counsel in the Nevada Legislature, and in Nebraska Health and Human Services, focusing on bioterrorism and public health emergency law. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Indiana University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Nebraska. She is an Indiana native and currently resides in Alexandria, VA.

Bernadette Juarez, Deputy Administrator, Animal Care



Bernadette Juarez returned to Animal Care (AC) as the Deputy Administrator in July 2025. In this role, Ms. Juarez leads AC's many employees in protecting and ensuring the welfare of millions of animals nationwide that are covered under the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act. She also oversees collaborative work to help pet owners and regulated facilities prepare for natural disasters and emergencies. Ms. Juarez previously held the same AC leadership role from 2016 to 2019.

Prior to her latest appointment, Ms. Juarez served as Deputy Administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services since 2019. In this role, she provided leadership and direction to ensure the safe development and introduction (importation, interstate movement, and field testing) of genetically engineered organisms.

Ms. Juarez joined APHIS in 2009, first as Investigative and Enforcement Services' Deputy Director for nearly 5 years and then as Director starting in 2013. As Director, Ms. Juarez was responsible for leading investigations of alleged violations involving APHIS-administered laws and pursuing enforcement actions where warranted. Before coming to APHIS, Ms. Juarez was a trial attorney in USDA's Office of the General Counsel from 2002 to 2009.

In 1999, Ms. Juarez completed her bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of New Mexico. She went on to earn her Juris Doctor from American University, Washington College of Law, in 2002.

Originally from New Mexico, Ms. Juarez currently resides in Silver Spring, MD, with her husband and two children.

Dr. Donna Lalli, Deputy Administrator, Biotechnology and Regulatory Services



Dr. Donna Lalli was appointed Deputy Administrator of Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) in July 2025. In this role, Dr. Lalli provides leadership and direction to ensure the safe development and introduction (importation, interstate movement, and field testing) of genetically engineered organisms.

Before this appointment, Dr. Lalli served as APHIS' Associate Administrator since 2023. In this role, she worked in partnership with former Administrator Mike Watson to carry out the agency's day-to-day operations, represent APHIS on department-level and cross-agency working groups, and oversee the activities of every APHIS program area and support unit on behalf of employees and stakeholders.

From January 2021 until joining the Office of the Administrator, Dr. Lalli served as the Associate Deputy Administrator for Wildlife Services, providing executive leadership to the agency's National Feral Swine Damage Management Program, the National Rabies Management Program, and the Airport Wildlife Hazards Program.

For 10 months, Dr. Lalli served on a temporary assignment as Senior Policy Advisor in the Executive Office of the President, Office of Science and Technology Policy, after serving as the APHIS Science Advisor from 2017 to 2020. Dr. Lalli started her APHIS career with BRS as a biotechnologist and then as the program's chief of staff. Before joining APHIS, Dr. Lalli worked for USDA's Agricultural Research Service as a postdoctoral researcher at the Appalachian Fruit Research Station in Kearneysville, WV. Dr. Lalli has a Ph.D. in Genetics and a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from Clemson University.

Hallie Zimmers, Deputy Administrator, Emergency and Regulatory Compliance Services



Hallie Zimmers was appointed Deputy Administrator of Emergency and Regulatory Compliance Services (ERCS) in December 2025. In this role, Ms. Zimmers oversees APHIS' select agents and toxins, investigative and enforcement, biodefense, and emergency management, safety and security programs. She also chairs the

agency’s Emergency Preparedness Committee and serves as APHIS’ Designated Safety and Health Official promoting employee safety and health best practices.

Ms. Zimmers joined APHIS in 1999 and has held various positions within the agency including Associate Deputy Administrator for ERCS and Deputy Director of the Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Division. She served as APHIS’ first Adviser for State and Stakeholder Relations where she fostered an agencywide approach to engagement and launched the APHIS Customer Service Call Center in 2015. Ms. Zimmers also spent time working in congressional and media relations before becoming the Assistant Director for Public Affairs.

Ms. Zimmers holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Northwestern University. In 2021, Ms. Zimmers graduated from American University’s School of Public Affairs KEY Executive Leadership Program. She grew up outside of Kansas City and currently resides in Arlington, VA, with her husband, two sons, and their dog, Maple.

Ibrahim Shaqir, Deputy Administrator, APHIS International Services



Ibrahim M. Shaqir was appointed Deputy Administrator of APHIS International Services in January 2025. Prior to this new role, he was the Director of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS) since June 2024. In that role, he led BARC’s mission-critical initiatives, overseeing a team of 600 employees and managing an annual budget of $110 million. Under his leadership, BARC advanced groundbreaking research in

agricultural productivity, pest management, food safety, environmental conservation, and innovative technologies to address the complex challenges facing global agriculture.

Mr. Shaqir also served as Associate Deputy Administrator for Trade in APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine program from 2020 to 2024, where he championed phytosanitary standards and facilitated international trade by resolving complex agricultural trade barriers. He was instrumental in fostering global market access for U.S. agricultural products through science-based regulatory solutions.

From 2016 to 2020, Mr. Shaqir was Associate Deputy Administrator for APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services, where he spearheaded the modernization of USDA's biotechnology regulations through the SECURE Rule, the most significant policy revision in 30 years. His leadership established a science- and risk-based regulatory framework, enabling the United States to remain at the forefront of agricultural innovation while harmonizing global biotechnology standards.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Shaqir spent 15 years with ARS holding various leadership positions, including Director of the Office of International Research Programs (2009–2016) and an International Affairs Specialist for the Middle East and North Africa, promoting science diplomacy and multilateral research initiatives.

Notable highlights of Mr. Shaqir's career include a 2012 detail to the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), where he co-led a National Academy-USIP Roundtable initiative on using agricultural extension systems for peacebuilding and conflict management. In 2007, he served as Acting Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv as part of the State Department's Embassy Science Fellowship program.

Mr. Shaqir holds a Bachelor of Science in International Environmental Studies and Agricultural Economics and a master's in International Finance. He is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School Senior Executive Fellows Program and the American University School of Public Affairs USDA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program. With a career spanning over two decades, Mr. Shaqir is recognized for his visionary leadership, technical expertise, and unwavering commitment to advancing agricultural science and innovation on a global scale.

Matt Rhoads, Acting Deputy Administrator, Plant Protection and Quarantine



Matt Rhoads currently serves as the Deputy Administrator for APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ). From May 2025 until March 2026, he served in this role in an acting capacity. Prior to this assignment, Mr. Rhoads served as PPQ's Associate Deputy Administrator for Pest Exclusion and Import Programs beginning in 2019.

Mr. Rhoads began his career in 1997 in APHIS Policy and Program Development, writing regulations and other Federal Register publications. Since then, he has served as the Director of Regulations, Permits, and Manuals and as the Associate Executive Director of Plant Health Programs, Executive Director of Plant Health Programs and PPQ's Policy Management staff, where he was responsible for leading import and domestic policy development and key operational support activities for PPQ.

Mr. Rhoads has a bachelor's degree from Bucknell University and a Master of Public Administration from American University. He is a native of Berks County, PA, and lives in Maryland with his wife and three children.

Jessica Fantinato, Deputy Administrator, Wildlife Services



Jessica Fantinato was appointed Deputy Administrator for APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) in January 2025. Prior to this new role, Ms. Fantinato spent 4 years as an Associate Deputy Administrator in WS. In this role, she provided executive leadership to the National Rabies Management Program, the Airport Wildlife Hazards Program, and the Operational Support Staff, where she oversaw all of the program's administrative functions, including budget, fleet, purchasing, travel, and human resources, as well as National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and wildlife operations support.

Prior to this position, Ms. Fantinato served as the Director of the USDA Office of Homeland Security, where she was responsible for, among other things, coordinating the department's continuity of operations program, overseeing personnel and document security across USDA, and interfacing with the White House National Security Council staff on USDA equities in homeland security-related issues.

From 2011 through 2018, Ms. Fantinato worked in a variety of roles at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Her last position at HHS was as the Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) under the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. Her responsibility there included oversight of all nine divisions within OEM, including the Hospital Preparedness Program, which provides grants to healthcare coalitions, and the National Disaster Medical System, which maintains a roster of over 5,000 medical professionals ready to deploy for a disaster. Prior to that, she served as the Resilience and Infrastructure Coordination Division Director, where she was responsible for the oversight and management of the department's Continuity of Operations and Critical Infrastructure Protection programs. In this role, she played an integral part in HHS' preparedness for any disruptions to the mission-essential functions of the department's 17 staff divisions and 10 operating divisions and

oversaw the Healthcare and Public Health public-private partnerships fostered through the Government and Sector Coordinating Councils.

Before joining HHS, Ms. Fantinato spent 18 years with USDA. Positions she held before her departure include both Chief of the Homeland Security Division and Acting Chief of the Continuity of Operations Division within the USDA Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination. However, from August 2009 through September 2010, Ms. Fantinato was the Director of Continuity Policy on the White House National Security Staff (NSS). While working for NSS, she coordinated the implementation of the National Continuity Policy across the executive, judicial, and legislative branches.

Ms. Fantinato also held a variety of positions within APHIS early in her career, including Assistant to the APHIS Administrator for Homeland Security issues. She began her Federal career as a wildlife biologist with WS, working in the New Jersey, Virginia, and Utah WS programs.

Ms. Fantinato holds a bachelor's degree in Biological Basis of Behavior and a master’s degree in Conservation Biology, both from the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Alan Huddleston, Acting U.S. Chief Veterinary Officer

Heather Curlett, Acting Deputy Administrator, Legislative and Public Affairs

Sophia Kirby, Acting Director, Office of Civil Rights

Kent York, Acting Deputy Administrator, Policy and Program Development

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