



Animal Care

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Factsheet

Questions and Answers: Animal Care Functional Realignment

Q. Why is Animal Care realigning its organization?

A. Animal Care (AC) is realigning our functions, duties, and employees to support APHIS and USDA efforts to reduce administrative overhead, enhance accountability and authority, improve processes, and modernize operations by the use of innovative technologies and business solutions. In addition, the redesign initiative supports recommendations from four USDA Office of the Inspector General audits.

Q. What is a functional realignment?

A. A functional realignment groups connected organizational activities together to increase efficiency, improve accountability, and enhance uniformity. Specifically for AC, we will centralize administrative and program support and improve efficiency in our inspection process and enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act (HPA).

Q. Who made the decision to reorganize, and who had input into the process?

A. The AC Management Team made the decision after gaining input from all of AC. To help us make the changes we needed to be a better and more efficient organization, we worked with George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development in 2011. The team of researchers provided expertise in the most current philosophies on organizational development and change. The team evaluated AC in an unbiased, data-driven manner that could be quantified, documented, justified, and defended. This outside, scientific evaluation was utilized to create a modern, flexible organizational structure that could grow and adapt to future changes.

Q. What are the primary business units under AC's new structure, and what are their functions?

A. AC's structure is composed of four core business units with subunits organized by function. Field Operations includes Emergency Management, Animal Welfare Operations, Horse Protection, and Program Support. The Collaboratory includes the APHIS Center for Animal Welfare, National Policy Staff, and Regulatory Support Staff. Resource Management Support includes financial management, human resources, general administrative and data management functions and will include staff in Riverdale, MD; Raleigh, NC; Kansas City, MO; and Fort Collins, CO. The realigned information technology staff combines the database administration and customer service functions in the Riverdale, MD; Raleigh, NC; Fort Collins, CO; and Kansas City, MO offices.

Q. What is the responsibility of Emergency Programs?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Establish and sustain effective working relationships with States, Territories, and Tribal Nations pertaining to emergency management of pet owners and their pets, and other animals protected under the AWA.
2. Establish and sustain effective working relationships within the public and private sectors, and build needed national systems to coordinate response support for pet owners and their pets, and other animals protected under the AWA.
3. Prepare AC personnel so they can effectively execute AC's emergency management responsibilities.
4. Provide leadership in the development of national policy, plans, and protocols around emergency management for pet owners and their pets, and other animals regulated under the AWA.
5. Promote and support science and technology that improves animal emergency management capabilities.
6. Respond to emergencies under FEMA Mission Assignments or under statutory authority.

Q. What is the responsibility of Animal Welfare Operations?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Conduct inspections and other activities (i.e., complaints, inquiries, etc.) designed to ensure that AWA standards are met.
2. Participate in the development and interpretation of regulations.
3. Provide leadership and direction to (and coordination with) other Federal agencies and local authorities in addressing activities to safeguard regulated animals through the enforcement of the AWA.
4. In conjunction with Program Support, ensure that applicants meet all AWA requirements and that annual report submissions are accurate and consistent with the regulations.
5. Participate with Emergency Programs to prepare and deploy in an emergency.
6. Participate in field activities in conjunction with the Horse Protection Program.
7. Participate in outreach and education initiatives to inform stakeholders about AC and the regulated activity it oversees.

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Q. What is the responsibility of the Program Support unit?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Serve as point of contact and custodian of knowledge regarding AC program activities.
2. Ensure that the issuance, renewal, and cancellation of licenses and registrations are consistent with AWA regulations.
3. Ensure accurate and appropriate records management for Animal Welfare Operations, Emergency Programs, and Horse Protection.
4. Create and/or disseminate timely and accurate correspondence.
5. Collaborate with and provide customer support for internal and external stakeholders.
6. Provide accurate and timely response to FOIA requests.
7. Manage complaint process to respond to public concerns.
8. Manage the submission process of annual reports of research facilities.
9. Manage and disseminate outreach materials.

Q. What is the responsibility of the Horse Protection unit?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Prohibit horses subjected to the inhumane and abusive practice of soring from participating in shows, sales, exhibitions, or auctions by thorough and consistent HPA inspections conducted by AC field staff in coordination with Animal Welfare Operations and Horse Protection seasonal staff.
2. In consultation with Regulatory Support Staff, review violations found from the AC field staff and recommend appropriate enforcement actions in order to pursue Federal penalties on individuals that violate the HPA.
3. Develop and/or amend regulations and policies for enforcement of the HPA, as well as represent the program to stakeholders, regulated entities, and media in coordination with National Policy Staff.
4. Research and implement the use of modern technology in assessing new soring techniques utilized on horses in conjunction with Center for Animal Welfare technology specialists and AC information technology staff.
5. Perform outreach to horse show management, State and local officials, and stakeholders to ensure understanding of the laws and regulations and their respective responsibilities in conjunction with Center for Animal Welfare compliance specialists.
6. Conduct proper and consistent training of all participants involved in enforcement of the HPA to include internal personnel, horse industry organizations (HIOs), designated qualified persons (DQPs), and show management in coordination with Center for Animal Welfare training specialists.
7. Monitor the performance of USDA-certified HIOs in enforcing the HPA and regulations through their affiliations of events and required recordkeeping due to the Department on a monthly basis, in coordination with AC Program Support specialists.
8. In consultation with Resource Management Support, continuously evaluate Horse Protection Program funding and performance measures to ensure the overall effectiveness of eliminating the inhumane and abusive practice of soring horses.

Q. What is the Collaboratory?

A. The Collaboratory consists of three independently managed subunits and is a networked organizational form that conceptualizes and formalizes a collaborative work unit. The Collaboratory is a unit where AC's scientists, species specialists, and technical experts are strategically aligned. This unit is responsible for providing scientific bases for regulation and policy development. This alignment will better facilitate collaboration, communication, and sharing of ideas regardless of physical location. The APHIS Center for Animal Welfare, one unit under the Collaboratory, employs species and compliance specialists with a focus on data analysis, program direction, technical support, licensee and registrant education and training, and building collaborative partnerships with underserved communities. The Collaboratory also includes the National Policy Staff, which is responsible for establishing national policy, direction, and oversight of AC programs and, in collaboration with the Regulatory Support Staff, is also responsible for rulemaking. The Regulatory Support Staff will ensure proper attention to case management, program and policy analysis, as well as focus on fostering a partnership with APHIS Investigative and Enforcement Services and the Office of the General Council.

Q. What is the responsibility of the Regulatory Support unit?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Develop and execute AC's national incentive, monitoring, and enforcement initiatives.
2. Use the best available information and innovative approaches and techniques to identify, address, and overcome regulatory challenges.
3. Promote the application of effective and efficient responses to noncompliances with the AWA and HPA.
4. Serve as the AC primary point of contact and subject matter expert on post-inspection actions involving noncompliances with the AWA and HPA.
5. Collaborate on the development of regulations and policies, training, education, and outreach as it relates to regulatory support.

Q. What is the responsibility of the National Policy Staff?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Develop and evaluate guidelines, written regulations, nonregulatory solutions, standards, policies, standard operating procedures, and other supporting documents to address animal welfare issues and help AC uphold and enforce the AWA and HPA.
2. Respond to requests for technical advice and information regarding our regulations, policies, procedures, and data from internal and external sources, including: media and congressional inquiries from APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs; stakeholder letters; public inquiries; ACIS search requests; briefing memos from the Secretary of Agriculture and APHIS Administrator; and requests for assistance from other government agencies.
3. Collaborate with experts inside and outside of AC to create and implement practical and effective initiatives and plans to further the program's animal welfare goals.
4. Present AC information to the public and stakeholders, as well as other units within APHIS, to expand their knowledge of our program and to keep our messages consistent.
5. Represent USDA, APHIS, and AC at national and international conferences, seminars, meetings, and working groups.
6. Conduct outreach, deliver external announcements, and provide online information to the public and stakeholders to increase their understanding of AC's purpose and animal welfare in general.
7. Ensure that agency and departmental decisions, statements, and projects include AC's viewpoints.
8. Improve communication and information sharing within AC so that all employees have access to valuable information in order to: perform their jobs better, stay connected, and provide correct information to their licensees and registrants.

Q. What is the responsibility of the APHIS Center for Animal Welfare?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Plan, develop, deliver, and evaluate program-wide training for AC.
2. Employ innovative training, education, outreach, and science-based solutions to address identified needs.
3. Evaluate and develop the strategic direction for the AC program.
4. Build collaborative relationships to facilitate the discussion and communication of animal welfare principles.
5. Promote animal welfare through leadership in research, data development, and information in science and technology.

Q. What is the responsibility of the Resource Management Support staff?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Serve as stewards of AC funding. Plan, implement, and execute financial management procedures and systems.
2. Provide national-level guidance and direction to ensure organizational flow in terms of administrative functions including, but not limited to, micro-purchasing, fleet inventory, accountable and non-accountable property, and time and attendance processing.
3. Provide AC supervisors and employees with guidance and direction in all travel-related matters, ensuring compliance with departmental, agency, and program travel regulations and processes.
4. Conduct analysis on a variety of program data in support of performance metrics to determine frequencies, advise management, and highlight program gains.
5. Provide human resources management and planning efforts to meet current and anticipated program needs by addressing diversity initiatives and ensuring workforce is representative of the civilian labor force.
6. Conduct financial and administrative reviews to ensure compliance with agency and program processes and ensure that proper internal controls are in place.

Q. What is the responsibility of Information Technology?

A. The function of this unit is to:

1. Ensure that AC information systems meet the needs of the AC program, stakeholders, regulated entities, and the general public; are in compliance with programs and initiatives; and have infrastructure aligned with agency and department direction.
2. Ensure that all IT investments align with AC's mission and support business needs by minimizing risks and maximizing returns throughout the investment's lifecycle.
3. Ensure AC IT investments are consistent with APHIS enterprise architecture to support AC's workforce.
4. Provide hardware and software customer support to AC personnel and ensure AC applications meet customer and stakeholder quality needs.
5. Develop and implement application security, policies, and procedures to ensure the security, reliability, and accessibility of applications and systems.
6. Research emerging technology to address program needs and requirements.

Q. How will this new structure benefit animal welfare?

A. The realignment will bring consistency and efficiency to the organization, which will allow AC to streamline operations and increase uniformity in applying our policies and procedures. This will result in more availability of resources for inspection and education and support efforts to target the areas of greatest need.

Q. What changes can stakeholders expect to see as a result of the reorganization?

A. The realignment will define responsibilities, communication, and supervisory structure by function. Our realignment will not change how we conduct inspections of regulated facilities or the role of our field inspectors. Concerned citizens can continue to use the same contacts to file an animal welfare complaint. We will maintain our current relationship with you and encourage you to continue communicating with the same AC personnel as you have in the past. We also commit that, should we plan any future refinements to our procedures that might impact stakeholders, we will communicate with you well in advance of any changes.

Q. When will the reorganization take effect?

A. The realignment will take effect on October 1, 2014.

Q. Is AC closing its Eastern and Western Regional Offices?

A. AC will not close any office. We will refer to the offices by their city locations.

Q. Are employees going to be relocated as a result of the reorganization?

A. AC will not relocate any employees.

Q. How will the reorganization affect inspections of regulated and licensed facilities?

A. The realignment will not include any policy changes that impact our inspections or our current relationships with entities we regulate. Licensees and registrants should continue to communicate with the same personnel and office contacts that they have been working with. AC will continue to conduct inspections, respond to animal welfare concerns, and use education, outreach, and enforcement tools to promote compliance with the AWA and the HPA. As mentioned previously, we do commit that, should any future refinements be made to our procedures that might impact licensees or registrants, we will communicate them well in advance of any changes.

Q. Will the role of the field inspector be changing?

A. No. The role of the inspector will not be changing.

Q. Who will be responsible for reviewing and finalizing inspection reports under the new structure?

A. The Supervisory AC Specialist and other personnel within Animal Welfare Field Operations will continue to be responsible for reviewing and finalizing inspection reports.

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Q. How can concerned citizens file animal welfare complaints under the new structure?

A. Concerned citizens may continue to use the existing contacts to file an animal welfare complaint. They may submit a complaint via the APHIS Animal Welfare Web site; by fax to the Raleigh, NC, or Fort Collins, CO, offices; or by email to ace@aphis.usda.gov.

Q. How does AC plan to keep stakeholders updated about the reorganization?

A. We will continue to update stakeholders on the realignment's process through our stakeholder announcements via GovDelivery, letters, Web site updates, during industry meetings, Webinars, or other methods, as well as periodically update this Q&A document. We are committed to meeting customer needs, so if you are unsure where to direct a question or comment, please call the Riverdale, MD, office at (301) 851-3751; the Raleigh, NC, office at (919) 855-7100; or the Fort Collins, CO, office at (970) 494-7478. You may also call the APHIS Center for Animal Welfare at (816) 737-4200, and we will get you connected to the right person.

