



Animal and Plant  
Health Inspection  
Service

Office of the  
Administrator

1400 Independence  
Avenue SW  
Washington, DC  
20250

August 10, 2016

Dear Stakeholders:

Last summer, APHIS launched an agency-wide Customer Service Call Center dedicated to answering stakeholder questions or directing people to the appropriate program contact for additional information—all while providing outstanding customer service. The Call Center recently passed the one-year milestone, and based on the data we've collected, I'm pleased to report it has become a valuable resource for our many and diverse stakeholders. From June 1, 2015 through July 31, 2016, the APHIS Customer Call Center took 13,191 calls—an average of 942 calls per month! With a mission as broad as ours, it probably comes as no surprise that the range and type of calls the center receives are highly varied.

International pet travel is by far the most common reason stakeholders contact the APHIS Call Center. Recognizing the large number of customers who inquire about pet travel both at the APHIS Call Center and with Veterinary Services (VS) National Import Export Services, APHIS just launched a new user-friendly, [pet travel Web page](#) that allows customers to enter their destination country and their pet species to easily determine what requirements they need to meet prior to their departure.

Although pet travel is the most frequent reason customers contact us, we receive hundreds of calls each month covering all of our program areas. Questions about the import and export of plants and animal products is another common reason people contact us. The Call Center also receives around 105 calls each month that fall outside of our regulatory authority, but whenever possible, our dedicated program specialists do their best to help direct callers to the appropriate agency—whether it's at the Federal, State or even the local level.

Regardless of the nature of the call, our program specialists regularly go above and beyond to help customers. When a member of the military recently called in a panic because they were departing for a new duty station overseas, but discovered too late that their veterinarian had failed to explain the proper requirements for taking their dog Logan, one of our dedicated program specialists jumped into help. She explained the country's requirements and worked with the local VS office to devise a plan that enabled Logan to meet up with his family at their new home overseas.

In another instance, our Call Center received several calls from people who paid a private company \$100 for training to be able to respond to avian influenza outbreaks even though no such work existed. Recognizing the potential for fraudulent activity, the Call Center worked with APHIS' Investigative and Enforcement Services to provide a detailed summary of the issue to the local Attorney General's office for follow up.

Whether a customer is calling with a simple or complicated request, I'm pleased we have a dedicated line for assistance. I hope the knowledgeable and courteous service our program specialists provide communicates that we care about our customers and are here to help.

For those stakeholders who may not be familiar with the Call Center, the number is located on the [Contact Us](#) page of the APHIS Web site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Shea".

Kevin Shea  
APHIS Administrator