



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and Plant  
Health Inspection  
Service

Washington, DC  
20250

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#### Open Letter to Stakeholders:

Customer feedback is essential to the success of every organization, and the Federal government is no exception. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and our Agency, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have much to gain from listening to the American people we serve, and I fully support Secretary Vilsack's goal of transforming USDA into a high-performing, customer-focused organization.

Every Agency is responsible for delivering on this commitment, and APHIS has taken this charge seriously. After hearing customers complain about slow approval processes for licenses and permits, burdensome rulemaking procedures and the confusing application of certain regulations, we committed to make significant changes in many of our long-standing processes. We began this forward-thinking initiative by analyzing and documenting current processes to identify streamlined solutions that would meet customers' needs and expedite and improve the delivery of the Agency's products and services. Our work was based on the premise that APHIS can be both a strong regulatory Agency and business minded at the same time, while increasing our transparency, accountability, and the predictability of our processes.

APHIS focused on improving the following processes:

- Veterinary biologics licensing – with the goal of reducing the processing time involved in reviewing product license applications from veterinary biologic firms and increasing transparency;
- Tribal consultation – with the goal of establishing consistent and methodical processes to ensure Tribal consultation occurs by the Agency when needed;
- Evaluating petitions to determine nonregulated status for genetically engineered (GE) organisms – with the goal of reducing the overall time it takes for the petition process;
- Enforcement actions for violations of Agency regulations – with the goal of improving and streamlining the overall enforcement process;
- Risk assessment and rulemaking regarding petitions to allow imports of animal and plant products – with the goal of improving and streamlining the risk assessment and rulemaking processes for imported animal and plant products; and
- Employee relations and misconduct/program investigations – with the goal of reducing the number of employee relations actions and requests for investigations and streamlining the investigative processes.



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The projected results we anticipate achieving in some cases are staggering and will dramatically decrease the time it takes for certain programmatic processes and procedures. In the case of the process for licensing veterinary biologics, APHIS expects to reduce the average processing time by 100 days. When it comes to conducting risk assessments for plant products, the Agency intends to reduce our delivery time by as much as 76 percent—or a total of 1,554 days. By streamlining its GE organism petition process by more than 50 percent, APHIS will reduce timelines down to 13-15 months. These are just a few of the changes in the making.

Surveys show that the American people often think of their government as more of a hindrance than a help, but I hope APHIS' customer-focused changes illustrate that we care about customer service and the bottom line as much as any Fortune 500 company. We recognize there's still more work to do, and you have my commitment that our efforts will continue.



Gregory Parham  
APHIS Administrator