To Turkey and Back Again: An International Travelogue

By Jim Rogers, LPA-Public Affairs

A U.S. Interagency Delegation on Avian Influenza visited Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia from January 17-26 to assess the situation on the ground, learn about the response on the part of the international community to date and determine how the United States might assist as part of the broader international effort. The team was led by the Department of State and included medical, veterinary and public health communications experts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).”  

Excerpted from the U.S. Interagency Delegation on Avian Influenza: Visit to Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia: Regional Overview Report, January 2006.

It all started late on a Thursday. The phone rang. “Jim,” said the voice on the line, “your country needs you.” By Sunday afternoon, I was on a plane to Ankara, Turkey, by way of Istanbul. Upon landing in Istanbul, I was escorted from the plane by a uniformed officer of the Turkish police. Quickly, he led me through the airport, waving aside airport security and customs whenever they tried to interfere. In less time than it takes to park at an American airport, I was seated on a small jet taking off for Ankara, the capital of Turkey.

Sounds exciting, doesn’t it? Many positions in the Federal Government offer employees domestic and foreign travel that can take them to exotic places around the world. But, it hardly ever happens the way I just described it outside of the television universe. For example, in between Thursday and Sunday, I had to wrap up my work here in Washington, get orders and authorizations for the trip from multiple Federal departments, convince the travel office to release my passport, go to the Armenian embassy for a visa and pack for two weeks travel. Oh, and did I mention my wife was due with our second child sometime within the next four weeks?

My flight out of Dulles Airport was a shared flight. That means that while I purchased my tickets from Delta, I was actually flying on another airline’s plane which, of course, always leads to confusion at the ticket counter. I languished in various lines for about an hour before I was sent back to the line where I first started. Luckily, I did manage to get aboard the plane prior to take off.

In Istanbul, I met up with the leader of the AI delegation (Anne). She was a ranking diplomat from State and carried the infamous “black” passport. Unlike the blue passport that tourists carry or the red passport that federal workers carry, the “black” passport is the one you flash and get to say, “diplomatic immunity.” That always works great with foreign officials. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work so well with Turkish Airlines. There

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was a problem with her ticket for the connecting flight to Ankara. The reason the police officer was able to move us through customs and security so quickly is because we spent so much time at the ticket counter trying to fix Anne’s ticket that we had approximately 3 minutes to make our flight.

Anne and I were met in Ankara by officials from the U.S. Embassy as well as other members of our delegation. At this point, we were driven into town, checked into the hotel and connected with the other members of our delegation. We needed to meet to discuss exactly what was going to happen on this trip. Each Agency representative had a different idea of what we would be doing.

And, for the most part, we each had it wrong.

On our first day in Ankara, Turkey, the human health experts from the HHS expected to go to the hospitals and visit with the few patients who had contracted AI. The USDA animal health experts expected to examine poultry for signs of the disease, and the USAID team expected to meet everyone involved including the industry. The U.S. Embassy on site, however, had arranged a full day of meetings with the Prime Ministers of Health, Agriculture, and Education.

As it turned out, Turkish Air lost the HHS experts’ luggage and equipment so they were wearing whatever they had on the plane. Several delegation members had dressed for the field and several others were wearing ties. I, myself, was wearing denim bib-overalls and work boots. At least, I remember thinking at the time, I looked like someone involved in American agriculture or, perhaps, the TV show *Green Acres*. When I learned of the meetings I managed to grab a sweater to wear over the overalls so it wasn’t that bad. Right?

Due to my background, I became the traveling press officer for the delegation. I worked closely with Anne, the delegation head from State, and the local embassy public affairs staff. Throughout the day of meetings, our group was dogged by the media. Each Minister’s office had invited the press to listen in on the meetings and take pictures and video throughout.

The Turkish press pretty much followed us around the entire time the team remained in Ankara. Since people had caught AI in Turkey, the public’s—and, therefore, the press’—primary concern was human health. As the media were following us everywhere, anytime we stopped for something to eat, which was rare, delegation members would answer questions about what they were eating. The number one question being: are you eating the chicken? This was a trick question on the media’s part as they knew that restaurants were not serving chicken and it couldn’t be bought in the grocery stores. We would answer no, we were not eating chicken as it couldn’t be found, and the next day the news stories would contain the fact that the U.S. delegation was not eating chicken. The communicators in the group, myself included, had a lot of work to do with the current public messaging. Whenever anyone would listen, we would explain that properly cooked poultry is perfectly safe to eat. By the time I finally found a soft boiled egg to eat to show the Turkish media that poultry and eggs are safe if cooked properly, the media were no longer interested.

In addition to Ankara, our delegation visited the cities of Beypazarit, Eserum, and Van. Upon leaving Ankara, we learned that the State Department had arranged for a milair plane to shuttle us around for the remainder of the trip. A milair plane is a U.S. military jet used to ferry around Americans traveling in a foreign country. At this point, almost all of the delegation members from HHS had received their lost luggage and equipment and were very excited to learn we would have our own plane. Imagine their disappointment when they had to leave almost all of their equipment behind due to weight problems. The military guys would load on as much as they could into the cargo hold and the small bathroom. Then they would load the people and then some more luggage into the cabin. They would check the weight of
the plane and start throwing stuff out for the Embassy people to keep until the delegation returned. As it was, the plane had trouble lifting off due to the weight. It was a small plane.

In every meeting with local officials that we attended in Van, we learned that their town is known the world over for their rare swimming cats. Turkish Van cats are unusual in that they sometimes have one blue eye and one of a different color. It is illegal to take these cats out of the country without permission from the government. In addition to the meetings (I had started wearing a tie by the way) with local officials, we were finally able to go out and examine field sites where bird culls had taken place.

The story from here is pretty much the same. The delegation left Turkey and visited Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. We didn’t sleep (14 hour days were becoming the norm), didn’t eat (at one very sad point I was reduced to eating sugar cubes served with tea at a meeting), and met with local officials to discuss AI. We had to abandon our milair plane due to mechanical problems that we didn’t learn of until airborne, (don’t worry, we didn’t abandon it while airborne), took a 5-hour bus ride through the mountains at night (we drove right by Mount Ararat—the supposed resting place of Noah’s Ark), and we ran across the worst snowfall Armenia had seen in decades due to a Siberian cold front coming down from Russia (it was very cold the whole trip and a lot of folks didn’t bring cold weather gear).

All in all, the trip was considered a success by the countries involved. It was interesting to see how some sections of these foreign governments were included and some were not. In many cases agriculture and human health folks didn’t get along or communicate and local governments were not working with their federal counterparts. Our delegation had a lot to share in terms of information, equipment and expertise. I learned from one local government official that they got their agriculture and food safety information directly from the APHIS Web site. They were downloading pamphlets and informational material, translating them and disseminating them locally.

International travel can be beneficial to all those involved. It is an important means of sharing information with others and learning first hand what is going on in another country. It also allows us to build bridges with the people we meet and provide them with resources that might not otherwise be available to them. I personally learned a great deal from this not-at-all-like-I-see-on-TV trip. And, if given the opportunity, I would certainly go again.

“Of the countries visited, Turkey is the only country with documented H5N1 infections among poultry and, at the time of the visit, the only country outside of Asia to have confirmed human infections of H5N1. Since late December 2005, when the current wave of outbreaks was first documented, Turkey has moved quickly to contain the outbreaks among poultry, limit the spread to and among humans, provide appropriate clinical care for those individuals infected and mount a national communications campaign to educate the public on AI. The World Health Organization (WHO) is confident that Turkey, with continued vigilance, will be able to successfully contain this outbreak, and the team believes lessons learned from Turkey’s experience will be of significant value to its neighbors and other countries facing the risk of avian influenza.” Excerpted from the U.S. Interagency Delegation on Avian Influenza: Visit to Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia: Regional Overview Report, January 2006.
As Wildlife Services works to eliminate rabies, program specialists are crossing borders to partner with Canada and Mexico.

The North American Rabies Management Planning Team held their inaugural meeting this past March. Representatives from Wildlife Services and International Services, as well as the Department of Health and Human Services’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; several U.S. States and universities; the Navajo Nation; and the governments of Canada and Mexico convened to discuss the details of a cooperative strategic plan to fight rabies. In the United States alone, the cost of living with rabies exceeds $300 million annually.

“Wild animals don’t recognize borders,” said Martin Mendoza, Wildlife Services’ Associate Deputy Administrator. “To be successful in eliminating rabies in the United States, we must partner with our neighboring countries.”

The main objective of the North American Rabies Management Plan is to strengthen existing working relationships among the three countries by focusing on increased rabies surveillance and communication.

At present, Wildlife Services and cooperators in the Texas Department of State Health Services are distributing oral rabies vaccination baits along the Mexico border targeting both coyotes and grey foxes. In the northeastern United States, Wildlife Services is working in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont and with their Canadian counterparts to distribute baits targeting rabies in raccoons along the border. These efforts help to establish rabies-free zones along international borders and allow Wildlife Services and its cooperators to focus on eliminating the raccoon and fox strain of rabies within the United States.

For the past 9 years, the cooperative Oral Rabies Vaccination program, which is coordinated nationally by Wildlife Services, has been working to control the spread of rabies in wildlife across the United States by distributing fishmeal or dogmeal-flavored baits. A main focus of the program in the eastern United States is halting the spread of raccoon rabies west of the Appalachian Mountains and north into Canada.

Due to vaccination efforts in domestic dogs in Canada and the United States, the virus’ last stronghold is in wildlife, primarily carnivores and bats. In Mexico, dogs remain a primary focus of control programs; however, wildlife have gained attention as a source of infection as well.

“An underlying goal of the North American Rabies Management Plan is to provide a forum for enhanced communication, coordination and collaboration in rabies border management, surveillance and control efforts, as well as in training and research initiatives among Canada, Mexico and the United States,” said Dennis Slate, APHIS’ Rabies Management Coordinator for Wildlife Services. “This plan should provide a continental framework for success.”

For example, Mexico currently has a rabies control program that relies on hand vaccination of urban dogs. While this program is effective, the North American partnership should help Mexican officials establish enhanced rabies surveillance for wildlife reservoirs and better plan for future expansion of oral rabies vaccination projects south of the U.S. border.

For more information about the program, please visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/rabies/index.html.
In his address to the 5th African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum held in Washington, D.C., Secretary Johanns discussed the importance of fostering partnerships between the United States and Africa on a broad range of policy issues. The annual AGOA Forum provides U.S. and African participants with the opportunity to build upon ongoing efforts under The Africa Growth Opportunity Act signed into law in 2000. The goal of AGOA is to promote economic development in eligible African countries and encourage the building of free markets.

“This forum is so important because it helps build the framework for valuable commercial relationships that will prove vital to the health and growth of our economies,” Secretary Johanns said. “Free trade is an engine of economic growth. It is the best means for reducing hunger, alleviating poverty, raising the standard of living, and creating stability.”

In its support of AGOA, APHIS (particularly PPQ and IS, with support from the Office of the Administrator) has worked collaboratively with other agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Trade Representative, State Department and USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), to assist African countries with the many challenges they face in gaining access to the U.S. market.

Since AGOA was enacted, APHIS has conducted training on phytosanitary issues for more than 35 sub-Saharan countries through a series of 12 seminars. This effort helped African countries to better understand obligations under the World Trade Organization agreement and helped to forge stronger relationships between public and private sectors across Africa.

Beginning in 2003, APHIS, in collaboration with USAID and FAS, assigned three risk assessment advisors to the regional Trade Hubs for Global Competitiveness in Gaborone, Botswana; Nairobi, Kenya; and Accra, Ghana. The advisors work directly with African plant health protection authorities to draft pest risk assessment for fruit and vegetable crops; to provide assistance to countries in their communications with APHIS risk assessment review teams; and to work as a liaison to help move the pest risk assessments through the required processes. To date, four African commodities have entered or are about to enter rulemaking to allow for their importation, and many others are in various stages of review by APHIS.

APHIS will continue its work on AGOA through a new five-year program to further strengthen African plant health systems. The program aims to continue to improve the ability of African countries to address plant pest issues, safely export horticultural products, and meet U.S. phytosanitary standards.
Spring was a difficult time for the APHIS family. Since March, we have lost three of our valued Wildlife Services employees: Brian VanNieuwenhuyzen, John Kane, and Randall Choate.

Brian joined the Wildlife Services program in 2002 and was a member of the program’s Maryland office. He was one of four original wildlife specialists hired for the nutria control program at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. He contributed greatly to the program’s success. Brian’s selection as a recipient of the Secretary of Agriculture’s 2004 Honor Awards for Heroism Rescuing Victims of Hurricane Isabel demonstrated the kind of individual that he was. Sadly, Brian passed away in a boating accident while conducting nutria control work on detail in the State of Washington.

John Kane spent 22 years with Wildlife Services as a bear and mountain lion specialist, serving with professionalism and dedication. John was well-respected not only by his peers in Wildlife Services, but also by employees with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the many landowners that he assisted. He truly loved what he did, and that was extremely evident to everyone who associated with him. John passed away from a heart attack while doing mountain lion work with the Wildlife Services’ Colorado program.

Randy Choate worked with Wildlife Services in south central Louisiana for almost 10 years, where he was an expert beaver, coyote, and small carnivore trapper. He was known for his positive, can-do attitude and was well-liked and respected by all. Randy loved Wildlife Services and was a mentor to many other program employees. His selflessness and dedication to helping others was evident when he bravely rescued people and livestock in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Less than one month later, Randy lost his own home in Hurricane Rita. For his efforts following the hurricanes, Randy received the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official Award. In June, Randy passed away after a courageous battle with lung cancer.

Brian, John, and Randy were each wonderful and dedicated public servants. Their expertise and compassion will be greatly missed as we continue on with the work to which they were so dedicated.
Any Asian longhorned beetles (ALB) lurking about Chicago’s hardwood trees had better beware. Once again, Chicago’s youth will hit the city’s streets, parks, and schoolyards in search of the invasive, tree-killing pest.

Working in conjunction with Chicago’s Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, APHIS has developed a science-based ALB educational curriculum and made it available to Chicago teachers. The curriculum builds upon the ALB Cooperative Eradication Program’s popular “Beetle Busters” outreach efforts introduced last summer.

By sharing information about ALB and signs of infestation through this service-learning project, the eradication effort gains additional knowledgeable searchers. With a declaration of eradication in sight for 2008, it is imperative that members of the community join the Federal, State, and local government workers and contractors now engaged in beetle searches. In the past, community members have proven helpful in alerting officials to beetle sightings in warehouses, backyards, and on city streets.

“The curriculum provides the resources to help students share information with their families. It provides the spark for students to lead their communities and to become part of the solution,” said Terry Van Doren, Special Assistant to USDA’s Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. On April 25, 2006, Van Doren spoke to 70 educators assembled at a Nature Museum’s Beetle Busters training session and reception to kick off the 2006 program. Some 800 curriculum kits have been ordered by teachers.

The Beetle Busters curriculum covers the history of the ALB in Chicago, its lifecycle, and signs of infestation, as well as the strategic plan to remove ALB from the United States. As part of the program, students and teachers report the results of their searches at a redesigned Beetle Busters web site. The new and improved Beetle Busters outreach program will also be used by Chicago Parks District summer camps again this year, with activities geared towards youthful day campers.

“When we wanted to expand upon the success of our Beetle Busters summer outreach program with an in-school curriculum, we were thrilled that the Notebaert Nature Museum supported a partnership,” said Christine Markham, National ALB Program Director. “Under the guidance of Chicago teachers and camp counselors, the curriculum will help young people make a difference in their communities and protect Chicago’s trees from an invasive pest.”
Innovation is Key to Stopping Horse Soring

By Abbey Shaffer, LPA-Intergovernmental Affairs

APHIS’ Animal Care program takes its mission to protect horses from “soring” very seriously. And, program officials have recently added some pretty high tech tools to their efforts to catch those who sore their horses and violate the Horse Protection Act (HPA).

During a series of recent listening sessions, the Animal Care Program announced that it would soon begin enforcing the HPA using gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS). GC/MS is not new to the program. Agency officials actually began testing horses using GC/MS in 2004 and 2005 in a trial run, but have not previously used the results as an enforcement tool. On April 14, 2006, the program announced that it would begin enforcing the HPA using GC/MS results.

So what is GC/MS and how does it work? In the past, Animal Care officials detected soring chemicals applied to horses’ legs by sight and smell and by lightly palpating the legs to test for sensitivity caused by the chemicals’ irritation to the skin. While inspectors are skilled in such practices due to their experience and extensive training, industry sometimes disagrees with the inspectors’ determinations. With GC/MS, Animal Care can now swab a horse’s leg at a show and send the sample to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, to quantitatively determine whether any chemical mixtures were applied to cause soring. GC/MS can detect even small amounts of substances.

So what does GC/MS find? In the preliminary testing done in 2005, Animal Care found prohibited foreign substances on 25 to 100 percent of the horses they tested at different shows. Remarkably, at some horse shows, every horse that Animal Care randomly tested was in violation of the HPA. The list of substances found reads like a chemist’s handbook: benzocaine, camphor, chloroxylenol, octyl methoxy cinnamate, sulphur, isopropyl myristate, and even diesel fuel.

Animal Care’s veterinary medical officers will continue to randomly test horses at every sale or show they attend for the remainder of 2006. If they find a foreign substance, they will issue an official APHIS warning letter signifying a violation of the HPA and post a summary of each show’s findings on the Animal Care Web site.

APHIS: Gotta Have Game

By Dan Kaczynski, PPD-Regulatory Analysis and Development

“As participation in APHIS’ Fitness Day was greater than at any other D.C.-area USDA facility.”

As an agency, APHIS needs to act quickly, carry out intensive response activities, and—in its quieter moments—create and implement a vision for efficiently accomplishing its multiple missions.

In sports lingo, APHIS has gotta have game. And, the best way to get “game” can be through exercise. Among its many benefits, exercise increases energy and stamina, reduces stress, and promotes mental acuity.

The need for exercise is of course year round, but the month of May is officially highlighted by the Federal Government as “National Fitness and Sports Month.” To encourage its employees to lead the way to fitness, the Government also identifies one day each May as Federal Fitness Day.

This year Federal Fitness Day was held on May 10. And, judging by APHIS’ Fitness Day participation, no other USDA agency in the Washington, D.C., area sets a better fitness example. More than 200 APHIS employees laced up their athletic shoes and walked or ran a 2.2 mile course that began and ended at USDA’s Riverdale, Maryland, facility. The turnout was the largest at any of USDA’s facilities in the metropolitan area, including the downtown headquarters, and the largest in the Riverdale event’s 11-year history.

As usual, the keywords for Fitness Day at Riverdale were exercise and camaraderie, with a
Did You Know?
To encourage employees to become and stay physically fit, APHIS partially reimburses regular exercisers for health club fees. For more information, contact Ginger Dorsey of APHIS’ Safety, Health, and Employee Wellness Branch at (301) 734-6138.

touch of friendly competition for recognition and awards. Participants ranged from serious runners (the course record for the Fun-Run is 12:55) to employees who chose to savor the wooded fitness trail course at a more leisurely pace. This year’s special recognition for the APHIS unit with largest overall turnout was awarded to the Plant Protection and Quarantine program. Wildlife Services earned bragging rights for the year with the highest percentage of participants from a single unit.

Additionally, Biotechnology Regulatory Services outpaced other units to receive two Fitness Day Challenge Awards. These awards are presented for both the Fun-Run and Fun-Walk and go to APHIS units based on a combination of participation points and bonus points to the top seven finishers in each event.

Fitness Day events were coordinated at Riverdale by the USDA Employee Services and Recreation Association, which also co-sponsored events with USDA. This year, each participant was given a commemorative exercise pack by the APHIS Headquarters Safety and Health Council and the Headquarters Work Life Wellness Program.

In addition to getting the heart pumping and muscles toned, Fitness Day gave APHIS employees the chance to mingle and mix with colleagues in other programs. And, not incidentally, it allowed course finishers to enjoy without guilt the cold drinks, frozen treats, and healthful snacks and desserts provided by the event sponsors and employee volunteers.

When Administrator Dr. Ron DeHaven announced APHIS’ health club reimbursement policy in March 2005, he told employees that “both you and APHIS can benefit from your participation in health and fitness programs.” If Federal Fitness Day 2006 is any indication, APHIS employees are taking that message to heart, and strengthening their own hearts in the process.
Dr. Richard Dunkle, Plant Protection and Quarantine Deputy Administrator, bestowed the prestigious Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Award for Outstanding Achievement upon 31 APHIS and California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) employees during a visit to the Los Alamitos, Calif., Cooperative Fruit Fly and Preventive Release Program May 22.

“This is, without doubt, the best part of my job—recognizing fine men and women who are dedicated to the safeguarding mission,” said Dunkle.

USDA’s top plant official met with program managers and toured the facility, located on Armed Forces Reserve Center property, while on a three-day west coast visit to examine safeguarding activities.

Since its 1996 beginning, the Cooperative Fruit Fly and Preventive Release Program has been responding to exotic fruit fly risks with an integrated system that incorporates surveillance activities, fruit fly control programs, and regulatory actions. The multi-tactical approach is the product of close collaboration and consultation between APHIS, CDFA and other stakeholders. The award recipients were recognized for their proactive, comprehensive and scientifically sound prevention plan that deters the establishment of new Mediterranean Fruit Fly (Medfly) infestations by maintaining a ‘shield’ of sterilized Medflies over a span of 2500-square miles within the Los Angeles Basin. Releasing sterile fruit flies in the area interrupts the breeding cycle of fertile Medflies brought into California.

“Thanks to the men and women here, the number of Medfly infestations in California has been reduced by more than 90 percent and $200 to $300 million in potential eradication costs have been spared since the beginning of the program,” Dunkle said.

The cost-shared program spends approximately $16 million annually to protect a $30 billion industry in California alone.

Recipients of the award are:

- Paul Eggert
- Helene Wright
- Clifford Smith
- Carolyn Pizzo
- Essy Zamudio
- Jose Ochoa
- Jerry Markham
- Gary Agosta
- Mohammed Al-Zubaidy
- Ian Walters
- Thang Ton
- Basil Ibewiro
- Adrian Gonzales
- Angelica Davis
- Alicia Ruiz
- David Falcon
- James Reynolds
- Wayne Burnett
- Eileen Smith
- Andrew Dang
- Debbie Sedgwick
- Rufino Santos
- Kevin Hoffman
- Cliff Ramos
- Eddie Serrato
- Reed Shoemaker
- Mamadou War
- Patricia Roberts
- Larry Olagues
- Joseph Hendrickson
- Charles Bernhardt

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Wildlife Workshops Assist with Asian Airport Hazards

By Abbey Shaffer, LPA-Intergovernmental Affairs

In January 2006, Wildlife Services completed two important workshops in Bangkok, Thailand, and Beijing, China, to teach airport wildlife hazard management. The workshops were held to help local airport and airline personnel prevent dangerous collisions between birds and planes. USDA’s National Coordinator for Airport Safety and Assistance worked with a representative from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration to conduct the two workshops for participants from China and countries in Southeast Asia. The 4-day workshops were designed to assist Asian airports in implementing programs to meet International Civil Aviation Organization standards adopted in 2003.

Collisions between aircraft and wildlife at airports disrupt air travel and compromise safety—risking lives in the air and on the ground. Birds account for roughly 97 percent of all aircraft wildlife collisions. Wildlife strikes can result in injuries or death to passengers and crew and cause damage to aircraft. Every year, wildlife strikes cause more than 530,000 hours of aircraft downtime and cost U.S. civil aviation an estimated $500 million. The costs from wildlife collisions with U.S. military aircraft are estimated at more than $100 million per year. In 2005, Wildlife Services biologists provided assistance in reducing wildlife hazards at 636 airports nationwide.

Picture includes: Dr. Richard Dolbeer (APHIS WS-second from left) and Ed Cleary (FAA-center) with the Wildlife Control team at Beijing International Airport, January 2006.
Today, researchers are developing genetically engineered (GE) pigs that produce omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to a reduced risk of heart attack; cows that are resistant to bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and oysters that do not spawn so they can grow faster and are ready for market before they succumb to disease. As researchers progress with their efforts, APHIS’ Biotechnology and Regulatory Services program is keeping pace to meet its regulatory mission.

APHIS’ Biotechnology Regulatory Services program, in coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Food and Drug Administration, is responsible for regulating the safe development of transgenic animals in the United States.

“APHIS as a whole is committed to ensuring the safe development of GE animals and animal products, including veterinary biological products such as vaccines and diagnostic test kits. The Biotechnology Regulatory Services program in particular seeks to provide a regulatory system for transgenic animals that is rigorous enough to instill public confidence and flexible enough to address a wide range of animal species and potential products,” said Dr. Richard Pacer, a program veterinary medical officer.

Part of Biotechnology and Regulatory Services’ role in regulating biotechnology involves helping to develop international biotechnology standards, to ensure that GE products can be traded between nations. For animal standards, the program works with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), two internationally recognized standard setting bodies. CAC was created to develop standards and guidelines to ensure fair trade practices, protect the health of consumers, and promote the coordination of food and feed safety standards. OIE was created to improve animal health worldwide by encouraging international solidarity in the control of animal diseases, disseminate information on animal diseases, and publish animal health standards for international trade.

CAC recently reformed an ad hoc intergovernmental task force to focus on foods derived from biotechnology. The task force was first created in 1999 and completed its initial work in 2003. One of the projects newly agreed to by the task force, of which Biotechnology Regulatory Services is a participant, is the development of guidelines for conducting food safety assessments for food derived from GE animals. This project will focus on the safety of these foods, complementing existing guidelines for GE plants and microorganisms. Codex standards are internationally accepted and strongly influence national food safety legislation.

OIE has also formed an ad hoc biotechnology group to develop guidelines for international trade. In April 2006, Biotechnology and Regulatory Services participated in the first meeting of this group, which was held at OIE headquarters in Paris.

“This was a great opportunity to start working to create guidelines for the complex issues involved in regulating GE animals,” said Dr. Wendelyn Jones, a program agriculturist who attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the group established the need to focus on the health and safety of animal clones and transgenic animals, as well as biotechnology-derived vaccines. Biotechnology-derived vaccines have not only significantly improved animal health, but have the potential to assist in addressing the issue of transmission of animal diseases to humans, such as the current concern over highly pathogenic avian influenza.

As the complexity and scope of biotechnology grows and new GE organisms are rapidly developed, APHIS’ Biotechnology and Regulatory Services program must continue to ensure that biotechnology products are safely developed and field-tested. “GE animals hold significant promise to improve human and animal health, and to benefit agriculture and the environment. It is our responsibility to evaluate the risks and ensure safety,” said Pacer.
Employees Bring Conference and Goodwill to New Orleans

By Corey Slavitt, LPA-Public Affairs

Not long after hurricanes pounded gulf coast States late last summer, the National APHIS Safety and Health Council made the decision to move its annual spring conference from Atlanta, Georgia, to New Orleans, Louisiana.

“The Council decided to support the rebirth of a city by bringing a conference to New Orleans,” said Juanda Rogers, Designated Agency Safety and Health Official and Director of APHIS’ Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services’ Employee Services Division.

“We wanted to be a part of the Big Easy’s new beginning,” said Rogers. “We also wanted our folks to enjoy the conference, make some new friends, and celebrate the music food, art and ambience of New Orleans.”

A record number of attendees were at this year’s conference in New Orleans, according to Richard Tyner, Occupational Safety and Health Specialist with the Employee Services Division.

“More than 200 registrants participated in the conference April 24th through 27th,” said Tyner. “This year’s meeting was so popular, the conference hotel couldn’t accommodate all of us. We had to book some folks at other hotels down the street.”

Attendees included those involved in the Safety and Health field within APHIS, as well as safety and health professionals from APHIS’ sister organizations in MRPBS – the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA).

The conference is sponsored annually by the National APHIS Safety and Health Council and the Safety Health and Employee Wellness Branch, which provides employee services in a number of critical areas. These areas include: the Employee Assistance Program, the Drug Free

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APHIS Manager Profile

Gregory Parham
APHIS’ Chief Information Officer

How long have you been with APHIS?
I have been with APHIS since I was born! My father started working for what became APHIS in the early 1950s, so my roots run deep. My own APHIS career began as a veterinary student trainee in 1978. Since then, I have served in various positions throughout USDA prior to rejoining APHIS in March 2006.

Most memorable APHIS experiences?
Learning to watch for alligators while testing cattle for brucellosis in central Florida with John Jones, Nick Szanyi, and Howard Yates.

Priorities for the coming months?
Fostering a greater understanding of the vision, use, and management of information and technology resources and forming collaborative partnerships across the entire spectrum of APHIS program activities.

Accomplishment most proud of?
Professionally – serving as the executive director for the Year 2000 (Y2K) readiness initiative in the Department of Agriculture while making a smooth transition into the new millennium.

Personally – being married to the same woman for 28 years—whew!!!

Last book read?
“The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century” by Thomas L. Friedman

Guilty pleasure?
Jelly beans and oatmeal raisin cookies.

Favorite meal?
One with lots of desserts, especially ice cream.

Favorite movies?
Anything IMAX.

Hobbies?
Reading, container gardening, and listening to different kinds of music.
Employees Bring Conference and Goodwill to New Orleans

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Workplace Program, the Workers’ Compensation Program, as well as ergonomics, industrial hygiene, and occupational medical monitoring programs. The theme for the 2006 APHIS Safety and Health Conference was “Prepare Today for Tomorrow.”

“We felt this to be an appropriate topic not only because of the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita last year,” said Rogers, “but also because of the challenges that we will face with the approaching highly pathogenic avian influenza.”

This year’s conference agenda was a combination of open sessions and workshops addressing challenges to all of the Marketing and Regulatory Program mission areas. Day-long, pre-conference workshops were also offered on Monday, April 24. These included: a session combining first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillators training; effective presentations; performing ergonomic assessments; a 10-hour Occupational Safety and Health Administration training; respirator fit testing; and an eight-hour workshop on hazardous waste operations for Incident Command System Safety Officers.

Shorter sessions during the conference week included such topics as indoor air quality, disaster planning for pets and livestock, and zoonotic diseases. Many workshops were filled to capacity with standing room only.

In attendance and providing special remarks at the conference general session on Tuesday, April 25, was Dr. Chuck Lambert, Acting Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

Lambert expressed pride to be among those expending efforts to establish a model safety and health culture within MRP. He also personally commended the National APHIS Safety and Health Council, “for sending this important message of compassion and support for the city of New Orleans.”

“I think it is particularly appropriate that the conference is being held here in New Orleans as we support the city and its residents in their mission to rebuild,” said Lambert.

“Marriott has told us that this is the first large Federal conference to be booked at this facility since last year’s devastating hurricanes. We hope that other Federal agencies will follow our lead. We realize that just being here sends the important message that New Orleans is open for business.”

Joining the general session with recorded remarks were Dr. Ron DeHaven, APHIS Administrator, and Lloyd Day, Administrator for AMS. Both administrators highlighted APHIS’ inclusion of AMS and GIPSA in the conference. They de-
scribed this as an example of collaborative efforts within MRP and stressed that the issues covered during the conference would be invaluable to the organizations’ collective emergency preparedness and work safety and protection activities.

Panel participants who shared their personal experiences at work and at home before, during and after last year’s devastating hurricanes received resounding applause and accolades from the audience.

While the conference was packed with information and training, wellness and health activities were also a part of the program. A Fun Run and Walk along the banks of the Mississippi received enthusiastic participation.

Mary Beust, Plant Health Safeguarding Specialist for APHIS’ PPQ program in Hawaii, was particularly moved by a different view of the city — the ride in from the airport. “I was overwhelmed by what I saw,” said Beust. “My husband and I have been vacationing in New Orleans and attending Jazz Fest for the last three years. The devastation I saw from the shuttle drive is indescribable. There are just no words. So much of what I looked for and came to recognize as New Orleans is gone, but what I feel is the soul and spirit of the city is still very much here and alive.”

At the conference’s awards program and banquet Thursday evening, 10 award categories were detailed, and in some cases multiple recipients were honored.

Awards were given in the following categories:

**Administrator’s Award:**
National Veterinary Services Laboratories, Center for Veterinary Biologics, Ames, Iowa

**Safety and Health Individual Achievement Award:**
Elma J. Salinas, PPQ Center for Plant Health, Science and Technology (CPHST), Mission, Texas

**Safety and Health Leadership Award:**
Keith M. Blanton, Wildlife Services, Knoxville, Tennessee

**Safety and Health Group Achievement Award:**
PPQ Port of Honolulu, Hawaii

**Safety and Health Defensive Driving Achievement Award:**
Edward W. Zydzik, Wildlife Services, Park Falls, Wisconsin

**2005 APHIS Environmental Excellence Award – Facility:**
PPQ Analytical and Natural Products Chemistry Laboratory, Gulfport, Mississippi

**2005 APHIS Environmental Excellence Award – Individual:**
Dave Cowan, PPQ, Pest Survey Detection and Exclusion Lab, Otis Air National Guard Base, Massachusetts

**Certificate of Appreciation – Environmental Excellence:**
Green Team, Ames, Iowa

**Safety and Health Special Achievement Award:**
PPQ, New York State Safety and Health Committee

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Employees Bring Conference and Goodwill to New Orleans

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Employees Bring Conference and Goodwill to New Orleans

There were multiple recipients of the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official’s (DASHO) Award, with special note made to the large number of APHIS employees who responded to assess employee well-being and make structural assessments in the wake of numerous hurricane events in the months of August and September. Those offices and employees nominated for the DASHO’s award were: PPQ-CPHST; PPQ’s Resource Management Support Staff, Mission, Texas; WS Louisiana Area Office, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.; and MRPBS.

Dr. Jim Davis, who previously served as the Executive Secretary for the National APHIS Safety and Health Council, received a special and unexpected award. He was recognized for his vision in making the annual Safety and Health Conference a training symposium, which has benefited APHIS employees as well as the Agency’s overall safety and health program.

Each award recipient was afforded an opportunity to speak, but perhaps none were so poignant as the words from Dwight LeBlanc, Wildlife Services’ State Director for Louisiana, who spoke on behalf of his team receiving the award. Without being asked, LeBlanc said that WS personnel deployed flat-bottomed and specialized airboats to assist with search and rescue operations, and offered their assistance with helicopter evacuation operations and the evacuation of two hospitals following Hurricane Katrina. They successfully moved many citizens to safety.

But an important Wildlife Services team member was not able to attend the banquet and receive the award, though he wanted very much to be in attendance. Randy Choate worked hard with his fellow program colleagues and helped save people from flooded areas and brought them to safety in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. But Choate was recently diagnosed with stage four lung cancer, and after losing his own home to flood waters last year. LeBlanc took the stage and accepted the award for his team. “Never let bureaucracy stand in your way!” said LeBlanc. “Randy, this award’s for you!” Sadly, Choate passed away on June 13.

Next year’s conference is set for Kansas City.
Message from Under Secretary Bruce I. Knight

After 2 months, I’m beginning to feel at home in Marketing and Regulatory Programs. I’ve met many dedicated APHIS staffers, and I’m looking forward to getting to know more of you.

For the past 4 years, I served as Chief of USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency focused on conservation and founded on partnerships. Now, I’m heading a mission area entrusted with safeguarding and promoting U.S. agriculture and facilitating and promoting sales of U.S. agricultural products. Yet these two different aspects of American agriculture actually have a great deal in common.

There is a strong link between conservation and protecting the environment and the health of the animals, plants, and humans who share the land. All of these concerns are interrelated and interdependent. As a farmer and rancher, I also understand the vital importance of fair, open, and orderly markets and the value of encouraging trade, promoting fairness, and reducing barriers.

We live in a small—and diminishing—world. Globalization affects every aspect of agriculture. Everything is increasingly intertwined. Since APHIS is such a far-flung organization, with employees around the globe, you know this.

Perhaps even more important than my experience with NRCS is my time growing up on a farm in South Dakota. I’ve sometimes joked that everything I need to know about managing Federal agencies I learned running the farm—the value of hard work and persistence, the need to stay on budget, the importance of optimism, and the seasonal nature of life.

I still own land in South Dakota and run a cow/calf operation. So I understand the importance of herd health and taking preventive action to avoid problems. From my father, I learned to keep accurate and complete records on each animal. And no heifer has ever left my place without a “Bangs” disease vaccination.

In the days ahead, we have many significant issues to address—working with our State and private partners and farmers and ranchers to implement the voluntary animal identification program, harmonizing beef trade, dealing with possible outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian flu as well as trying to control citrus canker, the emerald ash borer, and other plant pests—all the while addressing these issues with the highest level of scientific rigor.

There are also management issues that I know APHIS is working on—like the upcoming retirement wave and succession planning—as well as improving business tools and streamlining operations to increase efficiency. As your Under

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Under Secretary Knight to Host Riverdale Town Hall Meetings

Come meet our new Under Secretary at the upcoming Town Hall meetings. Sessions are scheduled for attendance by program area, but employees are welcome to attend either of the meeting dates below.

October 11, 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. in the Conference Center
Animal Care, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, International Services, Policy and Program Development, Veterinary Services, and Wildlife Services

October 12, 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. in the Conference Center
Legislative and Public Affairs, Plant Protection and Quarantine, and MRP-Business Services
Under Secretary Bruce I. Knight

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Secretary, I am committed to working with Dr. DeHaven and the rest of your management team to empower you with the resources and support you need to do your jobs. I want to know what’s working and what we need to work on. My door is open, and I value your input. You can count on me to respect and consider your views.

I’m excited about serving as your Under Secretary and working with you and the APHIS leadership team on the many challenges and opportunities facing the agency. ♦

Dolphin Rescue Revisited

By Christa Smith Anderson

Path of Destruction

As Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and churned inland, Animal Care (AC) veterinary medical officer (VMO) Dr. Tami Howard was on a phone call when her office in Jackson, Mississippi, went black; Dr. Laurie Gage, AC Big Cat Specialist and a marine mammal expert based in California, was on vacation photographing humpback whales in Tonga; and eight bottlenose dolphins belonging to the Marine Life Aquarium, an Animal Welfare Act (AWA) licensee in Gulfport, Mississippi, were negotiating their survival in the sea.

“Nobody knew if they were alive or dead,” Dr. Gage says of the dolphins in the days just after Katrina hit. Before joining APHIS in 2004, Dr. Gage had assisted the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with several marine mammal rescues. In the aftermath of Katrina, witnesses “figured from looking at the pool the dolphins were dead. There was no evidence they were alive.” Katrina’s 40-foot storm surge had left the pool—with walls approximately 30 feet high—in ruins; it was a maze of broken metal, glass shards, and other debris through which the dolphins were swept.

Signs of Hope

Twelve days after the storm, NOAA scientists spotted the dolphins in the Mississippi Sound. All eight had remained together. Before the official rescue was underway, the facility’s head veterinarian delivered much-needed fluids, including antibiotics, to the dolphins by using their trained behavior of swallowing stomach tubes. The trainers were going out three times a day to feed them. “The trainers were the real heroes in this,” Dr. Gage says. Conditions in the

Caregivers transport dolphins to a nearby pool onshore. Photo by Laurie Gage.

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Sound made the trainers’ persistence before and during the rescue all the more noteworthy and the dolphins’ survival all the more remarkable. “There was no marine life in the harbor, except for a few seagulls,” Dr. Gage remembers. The harbor was eerily quiet.

The captures began once the U.S. Navy had set up dolphin pools in the temporary construction battalion center. Dr. Gage acted as the operation’s safety officer and was one of three cetacean vets on-site. As the Marine Life Aquarium’s inspector, Dr. Howard observed and documented the rescue effort.

**How to Catch a Dolphin**

Rather than going out with a boat and net, Dr. Gage says, “We opted to use the dolphins’ training to capture them in ways that would cause them the least amount of stress.” On Navy mats that could hold up to five people and one or two dolphins, veterinarians and trainers worked with and treated the dolphins each day, then coaxed them onto the mat. From there the dolphins were hoisted on specially-designed stretchers into a boat provided by NOAA and transported to the waiting dolphin pools. One of the most severely wounded of the dolphins—with a dorsal fin that was cut about a third of the way through—was among the first two captured.

Dr. Gage would accompany the dolphins back to the base, performing physicals and drawing blood for laboratory analysis along the way. The operation ran smoothly until the day Dr. Gage was scheduled to leave, when rescue teams returned to the channel and the four remaining dolphins were nowhere to be found. “It was heartbreaking to lose them,” Dr. Gage said. Fortunately the loss was temporary.

**Heartbreak Turns to Joy**

A few days later, a Coast Guard sighting led rescue teams about a dozen miles east to Biloxi, where they found the last four dolphins swimming around in what had been a boat parking area for the Beau Rivage resort and casino. “I’d like to think they were playing the slots that were underwater,” Dr. Howard joked.

“I don’t want to be anthropomorphic about it, but it really seemed that the animals were happy to see us,” Dr. Gage said, based on the dolphins’ eager response to their trainers.

By the time Dr. Gage and Dr. Howard were leaving Gulfport, the area that had been remarkable for its lack of natural activity just days earlier was, as Dr. Gage describes it, teeming with life. Pelicans were coming back and fish could be seen jumping out of the water. For the Marine Life Aquarium though, the devastation was permanent. “The facility was wiped out. It won’t be rebuilt,” Dr. Howard says.

Since joining APHIS in 2003, Dr. Howard has logged 93,000 miles carrying out her VMO inspection duties in Mississippi and Tennessee. As she returned to the Gulfport area this spring, Dr. Howard noticed that much of the debris had been removed, but a lot remains to be done in the region. “Things are in recovery,” she says. “It will just take some time.”

As for the dolphins, all eight are in a new home: the Atlantis resort on Paradise Island in the Bahamas, where they live in a large lagoon and other enclosures. They are healthy, have gained weight, and are reported to be doing great.
APHIS’ first Administrator, Dr. Francis J. Mulhern, passed away on July 7, 2006, in Laguna Hills, California. He was 87 years old.

Many of us who now work in APHIS likely did not know him. Yet, we are in many ways—whether we know it or not—fulfilling his legacy to U.S. agriculture. Dr. Mulhern was the first to voice our Agency mission as, “protecting the health of U.S. agricultural resources.”

By the time our Agency was formed in 1971, Dr. Mulhern had a long history of service with what were then USDA’s animal health bureaus and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). At the time, many of the regulatory pieces of what we now call APHIS were carried out alongside USDA’s research programs and functioned as part of ARS. However, in October 1971, USDA’s animal and plant regulatory functions were separated from ARS and soon became APHIS much as we now know it.

The new Agency’s success, however, was not a given. There was much work to be done under Dr. Mulhern’s guiding hand. “At the time, the re-organization of USDA was a very big change. Eliminating USDA’s bureaus was somewhat like the recent creation of Homeland Security,” remembers retired APHIS veterinarian Dr. Saul Wilson.

“Early Years

Dr. Mulhern was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on January 8, 1919. His parents, Patrick and Mary Mulhern, had a total of eight children. However, by age 15, Mulhern had become an orphan, losing both parents and also five siblings. He ended up leaving high school, but later returned to graduate and eventually relocate to Auburn, Alabama, where he attended The College of Veterinary Medicine. With the love and guidance of his sister, neighbors, and community members, Dr. Mulhern found his way through the steep challenges of his early years.

After earning a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Mulhern worked in Mexico for the United States-Mexico Commission for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease from 1947-1952. The

The Agency needed someone who was able to overcome many difficult challenges. During his tenure as Administrator (1971-1980), Dr. Mulhern proved himself the right person for the job and showed strong leadership and communication skills. To this, he also added his awareness of APHIS’ unfolding future and the importance of valuing the people within the Agency.

Mulhern’s early years had prepared him well. His upbringing had not been easy, but it had taught him that success takes vision, hope, and effort.

Work Tip

Contrary to popular belief, sitting, which is thought by most to be a comfortable position, is actually hard on the back, legs, and feet. Sitting for lengthy periods of time can cause increased pressure on the intervertebral discs – the springy, shock-absorbing part of the spine. At the same time, gravity tends to pool blood in the legs and feet and create a sluggish return to the heart.

So, here’s a how-to guide to sitting. To obtain and maintain a high level of support and comfort when using your chair, make sure you do the following:

- Adjust seat pan depth so that the back of your knees are approximately 2-3 inches out from the edge of the seat pan.
- Adjust chair height so that your feet rest flat on the floor and are your thighs parallel to the floor. (Use a footrest if necessary)
- Adjust chair lumbar support so that you sit upright in your chair with the lower back supported by the backrest.
- If used, adjust arm rests so that they provide light support to the forearms and allow your shoulders to be relaxed.
- Alternate between sitting and standing positions as you perform your daily tasks.

For questions or concerns regarding your chair or workstation set up, please contact Ginger E. Dorsey, APHIS Ergonomics Program Manger at 301-734-6138 or ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov.
Francis J. Mulhern
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experience was a formative one for Dr. Mulhern and others who worked on the eradication effort’s front lines.

For Dr. Mulhern, the work again proved that determination and the support of fellow workers were key to success. Veterinarians worked in remote areas and under dangerous conditions. Some of those working for the Commission were injured or killed by herd owners who did not understand the need to kill their cattle. In some rural areas of Mexico, Commission workers were dubbed the “Cow Killers.”

Following his work under the Commission, Dr. Mulhern returned to Washington, D.C. and continued his career, advancing steadily among USDA’s ranks. In 1970, Dr. Mulhern became an Associate Administrator for ARS.

With Vision and Leadership

With his goal of establishing APHIS as a model agency, Dr. Mulhern understood that the new Agency needed a clear and simple focus for its mission. By defining that mission as “protecting the health of U.S. agricultural resources” he was able to rally APHIS employees and create for them and Agency stakeholders a distinct organizational purpose and identity.

Using his leadership and communication skills, he built upon this foundation. To him, a model agency got things done; spent its money wisely; regulated firmly but fairly; trained its people; and rewarded its outstanding personnel. He encouraged open communication between his managers and APHIS employees. He firmly believed that this allowed Agency decisionmakers to benefit from the talent and insight of Agency employees.

“He was a dynamic, energetic person with a bit of charisma,” says Dr. Wilson of Mulhern. “He wanted APHIS to be the best agency to work for in the Government.”

Dr. Mulhern was ahead of his time and a true visionary concerning what would become APHIS’ role for U.S. agriculture. He recognized that focusing on one disease alone left agriculture at risk to many others. He led the way in understanding that we had to keep in place the ability to detect and fight emerging diseases. He also saw that APHIS’ brucellosis program, while very important, was not unique. Instead, it was an indicator of the importance of securing a broader and effective animal health infrastructure.

Dr. Mulhern was likewise ahead of his time in understanding that there would be increasing trade among nations. He recognized that this would lead naturally to the Agency needing to develop offshore safeguarding activities and international cooperation. As Administrator, he led the effort to establish a screwworm eradication program in Mexico. He helped establish the North American Plant Protection Organization to ensure cooperation among the North American nations for their common good. Immediately after retiring from APHIS, he became active with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

Dr. Mulhern’s contributions to APHIS are many and his programmatic accomplishments continue to shape the Agency. For those who knew him and worked with him, he is remembered fondly. He reached out to employees and broke down bureaucratic barriers. He possessed a creative, can-do outlook, and he encouraged that outlook in others and in the Agency as a whole.

In tribute to Dr. Mulhern, we honor his memory as a skilled leader and as a fellow APHIS employee.

Poem written by Dr. Frank Mulhern

Wouldn’t this old world be better
If the folks we meet would say
I know something good about you
And treat us just that way

Wouldn’t it be fine and dandy
If each handclasp was fond and true
Carried with it this assurance
I know something good about you

Wouldn’t life be lots more happy
If the good that’s in us all
Were the only things about us
That folks bothered to recall

Wouldn’t life be lots more happy
If we praised the good we see
For there’s such a lot of goodness
In the worst of you and me

Wouldn’t it be nice to practice
That fine way of thinking too
You know something good about me
I know something good about you
APHIS has a long history of communicating with its stakeholders to share information, resolve problems, and develop sound policy. We do this daily through a variety of communications from APHIS offices around the world and through the critical, intimate work of our field staff. In June and July, APHIS Administrator Dr. W. Ron DeHaven approached APHIS employees for a similar information exchange by hosting a series of small focus groups followed by town hall meetings for employees centrally located in Riverdale, Beltsville, Fort Collins, Ames, Minneapolis, and Raleigh.

“I wanted to reconnect with employees and to make sure I have a good understanding of the ‘sense of the Agency,’” Dr. DeHaven said. “The town hall meetings and focus groups allowed me to share my perspectives with employees and to better understand their views and needs.”

During guided conversations led with the assistance of program analysts Dale Rendahl and Jan Grimes, Dr. DeHaven listened intently as supervisory and non-supervisory focus group participants responded to five key questions that focused on employees’ job-performance needs, information needs, methods for enhancing relationships with stakeholders, employee professionalism, and upcoming hot issues needing headquarters’ attention.

Employee responses varied, but some of the overarching needs identified by the focus groups include: improving internal and external communications; providing more timely and clearly defined requests; sharing information about important APHIS issues Agency-wide; creating a functional APHIS employee directory and possibly an APHIS for Dummies user’s guide of basic procedures; involving field employees in decisionmaking; and, making science-based policy decisions that also consider politics, economics, and other factors. The focus groups also identified the need to strengthen the APHIS workforce by focusing on succession planning, and enhancing, where necessary, skill sets pertaining to customer service and professionalism.

During the town hall meetings, Dr. DeHaven provided an overview of the challenges he has faced as Administrator during a period of intense media coverage of APHIS issues. He also shared some of the issues raised by the focus group participants as well as some of his priorities for the Agency. Those priorities include: furthering our avian influenza prevention and preparation efforts, reducing the backlog of Freedom of Information Act requests, reforming our rulemaking procedures for trade issues, and succession planning. Dr. DeHaven ended each town hall meeting by addressing questions posed by employees.

Dr. DeHaven plans to address the important issues raised through the focus groups and town hall meetings through APHIS and program strategic and operational planning efforts. For starters, the Administrator’s office is now e-mailing to employees the APHIS Weekly Activity Report, which has long been provided to the Secretary’s office. This weekly e-mail alerts employees to the important issues addressed by APHIS programs that week. APHIS employees can expect to see additional gradual changes and improvements stemming from the employee-to-Administrator exchanges.

“At every location, I was impressed with the very capable, enthusiastic, hardworking, and committed groups of APHIS employees. We all have worked hard and met extraordinary challenges, and I have no doubt that we will continue to do so in the future,” Dr. DeHaven said.
Speaking of APHIS: New Workshop Available

By John Scott

“This is fun stuff…if you’ve come here to suffer, you’re in the wrong room,” trainer Betsy Guardiola joked recently to a class of APHIS employees. Guardiola, along with fellow instructor Elaine Gilbert, were leading a new course designed to help employees overcome the challenges of public speaking and delivering training.

The new, 2-day course, “Training and Presentation Skills Workshop” targets both new and experienced speakers and trainers. The course covers everything from overcoming nervousness to how to analyze an audience and craft your presentation. It’s a hands-on course that’s designed to warmly welcome students to the art of public speaking and delivering training. Both of which are much needed Agency skills.

Class size is kept small—about 25—so that everyone is comfortable and has a chance to participate. According to Gilbert, recent public surveys show that many people fear public speaking more than death. Knowing that some participants may be hesitant, course instructors work hard to pace the workshop and encourage participation.

The classes include people with various levels of experience. Many participants benefit from swapping stories and sharing helpful tips. “I picked up some good tips on improving my presentations,” said John Capehart with the Employee Services Division. “In fact, I’ve spent time this week revising my powerpoint presentations.”

Each workshop begins with a self-assessment to help students focus on their specific goals. Students are then guided through a series of discussions and exercises. For some, the class is a way to refine existing skills, to spice up presentations, and to better use visual aids. For others, the class offers valuable tips on managing an audience and developing essential messages for adult learners. And for others still, the class is a basic introduction to public speaking and training.

Tim Blackburn, Director for Training and Development, said that the new course came about after the Agency’s Policy and Program Development program completed a review of the Agency’s non-technical training.

“One thing they saw was that the Agency could better utilize its technical experts by strengthening their skills as presenters and trainers. As an Agency, we serve a lot of different groups and having more effective presenters and trainers is important to our success as an Agency,” Blackburn noted.

The Training and Development staff is making a strong push in the upcoming months to make the workshop available to both headquarters and central field locations. Based on a survey of Agency programs, about 500 people have been given priority for workshop registration, but the course is available to all interested employees.

Employee comments on the course have been positive. “I hadn’t given presentations before,” said Traci Ridley, with MRP Business Services. “I have one next week. This is going to really help. I think everyone should take this class.”

For more information and to register for the course, you can contact Cindy Pericak in Training & Development at 301-734-4990. Her e-mail is cynthia.m.pericak@aphis.usda.gov.

“I think everyone should take this class.”

-Tracey Ridley

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USDA recently presented awards to several familiar faces in Riverdale. At an award ceremony in June 2006, USDA recognized the achievements of four ARC of D.C. employees: Angela Reid, Charlotte Curtis, Dale Haynes, and their supervisor, Grace Lewis.

As employees in APHIS’ Printing, Distribution, Mail and Copier Solutions, Administrative Services Division, each was awarded for continuous service and the many diversified services provided to the Agency. Charlotte Curtis began work for APHIS in 1987, followed by Angela Reid in 1990 and Dale Haynes in 1991. Grace Lewis came to APHIS in 2006. ARC of D.C. is an organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life of persons with mental retardation and their families through supports and advocacy.

Even as fresh summer produce becomes hard to find, you can still look forward to the fresh fall crops coming in at your local Farmers Markets. To find a market in your area, visit www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/ for more information.

As a reminder, headquarters employees can easily reach the Riverdale Market hosted weekly on Thursdays at the Riverdale Park Town Center from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. During November, the market is open until 6:00 p.m.

“It’s real close and has great fresh produce, flowers, and local hand-made crafts,” said BRS’ Andie Huberty, who has gone to the market for the last 5 years. “They’ve got everything you’d want from a Farmers Market and live music.” Apples, pears, mums, and more are now available. The Riverdale Market features about 15 vendors.

You can learn about the market’s weekly specials, recipes, and also featured vendors and live music in the market’s weekly newsletter. Sign-up sheets and information are available at the market to receive the newsletter on your home computer.
Screwworm eradication efforts, which save U.S. livestock producers an estimated $900 million annually, will now be aided by the soon-to-be-completed Panama Mass Rearing and Research Facility. On July 12, 2006, USDA representatives joined Panamanian President Martin Torrijos, U.S. Ambassador to Panama William Eaton, and Panamanian agriculture officials to inaugurate the facility. The new $40 million, 210-acre facility will house more than 250 employees and is devoted to studying and producing sexually sterile New World screwworms. At full capacity, the facility will be able to produce up to 150 million sterilized flies per week. The flies are a central component to USDA’s screwworm eradication efforts.

The center will be jointly run by APHIS and the U.S.-Panamanian Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworms, also known as COPEG. Scientists with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS) will be located in the new facility to provide continuing research support. “There is worldwide interest in the program activities at the new facility and in the research we have planned for the future,” says Dr. H. Christian Hoffman, International Services Associate Regional Director in Panama. In addition to providing support, ARS scientists are working to develop new technologies for irradiation and are researching the possibility of genetically engineering male-only screwworms.

National Hispanic Heritage Month runs from September 15th through October 15th. Check your email for upcoming events and speakers at headquarters and field offices. At headquarters, some events will carry over into October.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Special Emphasis Program Managers are organizing events now.
2006 CFC Kickoff: Be a Star in Someone’s Life!

By Ruth Goldberg

Sometimes soon, if it hasn’t happened already, you’ll notice a change in the atmosphere around APHIS. It’s not just that we’ve begun a new fiscal year, or that the holidays are coming. At headquarters, or out in the field, you may be approached by employees behaving strangely—selling raffle tickets, performing karaoke, or peddling delicious baked goods to unsuspecting coworkers.

It happens every fall—the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The CFC is an annual fundraising drive conducted by Federal employees in their workplaces, raising millions of dollars to benefit thousands of local, national, and international nonprofit organizations. These organizations serve community needs in the areas of poverty, hunger, healthcare, education, and cultural enrichment. In 2005, the CFC received pledges totaling a record-breaking $268.5 million.

With the theme “Be a Star in Someone’s Life! Support the CFC,” the 2006 CFC campaign is reaching out to Federal employees everywhere. The official dates for the national campaign are September 1, 2006 to December 15, 2006; however, the dates of local CFC campaigns vary. APHIS is a leading contributor to the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area (CFCNCA), the largest successful workplace giving campaign in the world, involving the nearly 350,000 Federal employees in the Washington Metropolitan Area and beyond. While some employees in the field participate in their local CFC campaigns, others join the majority of APHIS employees in contributing to the CFCNCA. Individual CFC donations can be made by check or by payroll deduction, spread out over the year. Additionally, many programs within APHIS develop their own fundraising activities.

What to Look For

Some programs have annual traditions, while others try a different activity each year, whether it’s a book sale, cooking contest, or an afternoon tea. Western Region employees in Fort Collins have donated art, furnishings, food, and other items to be auctioned, held a Halloween Costume contest where employees vote with coins for their favorite costume, and put on a special “Salad Day.” LPA sells Krispy Kreme® donuts each year. For the past two years, the BRS staff has held a silent auction in Riverdale; to bring in a bigger crowd, BRS coordinated their 2005 event with the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security staff’s bake sale and raffle. BRS auction items included homemade pottery, an Ocean City vacation, and lunch with Administrator DeHaven.

PPQ gets extra points for enthusiasm: The staff holds multiple events, sometimes as many as one per week for the duration of the campaign. In 2005 these included a pizza sale, a rummage sale, a silent auction, three raffles, karaoke, and a chili cook-off. The 2005 PPQ team measured their progress every week against their own financial goals and against the performance of the other programs. Not surprisingly, they were out ahead of the pack every week. This year, the Agency’s National Wildlife Research Center has gotten off to the earliest start with an official kickoff event in September. In addition, the NWRC will hold a chili cook off and barbecue, a silent auction, bake sale, and several guessing games with prizes.

Although creativity, camaraderie, and competition are all part of the APHIS CFC experience, the CFC campaign is primarily about contributing. Each of us can be a star of this year’s effort. Even the smallest gift of money, time, and energy becomes powerful in combination with thousands of other small gifts. That’s why it’s called the Combined Federal Campaign.
Dr. Elizabeth A. Lautner  
Director, Veterinary Services,  
National Veterinary Services Laboratories

**What is your background?**  
I was raised on a livestock and fruit farm in northern Michigan. Following graduation from Michigan State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, I first practiced in northwest Iowa in a mixed practice. I then operated a swine health consulting practice while completing a Masters of Science degree at the University of Minnesota.

After practice, I headed up the Science and Technology Department at the National Pork Producers Council and the National Pork Board. Most recently, I spent 2 years serving as the Plum Island Animal Disease Center Director for the Department of Homeland Security.

**What prompted your move to APHIS?**  
There has never been a more exciting time to be at NVSL! There is a unique convergence of increasing mission responsibilities and expectations with many emerging and re-emerging diseases, laboratory networks, and new facilities at the National Centers for Animal Health at Ames. I believe diagnostics are the cornerstone of animal health!

**Most memorable APHIS experiences?**  
I just joined APHIS in May 2006, so I am looking forward to creating memories! I have always admired the dedication and expertise of APHIS personnel, and it is an honor to be part of APHIS Veterinary Services.

**Priorities for the coming months?**  
Learning more about APHIS programs. Strengthen NVSL’s position as a premier world-class laboratory AND a great place to work. Updating and continuing to implement NVSL’s strategic plan. Working with partners to continue creating the vision for and implementation of a comprehensive national laboratory system.

**Accomplishments most proud of?**  
Professionally—regardless of positions I have held, I like contributing to the creation of new, relevant knowledge and presenting that science to policymakers and others to use for good decisionmaking.  

Personally—family that works together to reach our individual and collective goals and has fun all along the way. Surviving kindergarten and college orientation in the same year.

**Last book read?**  
Good to Great and the Social Sectors (A Monograph) by Jim Collins and also Blue Ocean Strategy by W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne.

**Guilty pleasure?**  
Chocolate, chocolate, and more chocolate.

**Favorite meal?**  
My spouse’s Thanksgiving dinner (I am allowed to set the table).

**Favorite movies?**  
All the Mighty Ducks and Godzilla movies.

**Hobbies?**  
Reading, going to soccer games, and moving kids in and out of the house.
Fred Garza rises at daybreak to get ready for work. The first thing he does? Feed his horse and saddle up.

Garza works for one of APHIS’ oldest and most successful programs, the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP), which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. The “new guy” at camp, Garza has been a mounted patrol inspector, or “tick rider,” with the program for 10 years.

Before the CFTEP began in 1906, the ticks were widespread throughout the entire southern United States. Direct and indirect economic losses were estimated in 1906 to be $130.5 million—about $3 billion today. By 1943, the CFTEP inspectors had helped eradicate fever ticks from all areas except a permanent quarantine zone in Texas along the Mexico border.

Today, Garza and 60 other inspectors still patrol the quarantine zone, about 900 miles of land parallel to the Rio Grande River. In many ways, Garza carries out his work the same way CFTEP inspectors did a century ago.

“The science was sound enough when the program started,” says Ed Bowers, Director of Field Operations for the CFTEP and former inspector for 19 years, “that we basically do it the same way—beat the tick right to the river bank.”

Garza spends most of the day alone, patrolling a 15-mile territory on the riverfront. He carries a machete to cut back brush and vegetation growing along his trail. He watches for “things that don’t fit”—unfamiliar tracks on the trail, an unbranded cow in a herd of registered cattle—searching for signs of stray or smuggled animals with possible exposure to fever ticks.

When he finds suspect animals, he ropes, inspects, and sprays them. He then brings them to swim through the city dipping vat, a 7-foot deep canal-like structure filled with tickicide solution that disinfects the animals.

Cowboy Skills

Inspectors like Garza are key to the long-standing success of the CFTEP. Bringing the quarantine directly to suspect animals and immediately stopping them reduces the window of opportunity for the ticks—which reproduce rapidly—to build up and spread.

When it comes to catching fever ticks, there are no second chances. Missing even one cow exposed to cattle fever ticks could mean the beginning of a devastating outbreak.

The job requires a rare set of skills. “What we need is a trained cowboy,” Bowers says. “We can teach ‘em the other stuff, but we can’t make a cowboy out of ‘em.”

And not just any cowboy will do. As Bowers explains, working with wild and unpredictable livestock is risky enough. Carrying out this work alone amid the harsh terrain and illegal activities on the river—smuggling, drug running, river bandits along the banks is downright dangerous.

But most inspectors, including Garza, wouldn’t have it any other way. He grew up in Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border watching the riders work and always wanted to be one of them. Even though he was raised around ranches, Garza still finds the job exciting.

“There’s that saying,” he says. “Find a job you like, and you’ll never work a day in your life.”

- Fred Garza
Same Threat, New Challenges

More than 60 years after the initial eradication of the fever tick, most people have no memory or knowledge of the devastation the pest once caused to the U.S. cattle industry. And with the CFTEP’s hard work and longstanding success, it’s easy to forget that fever ticks still pose an imminent threat to our Nation’s cattle.

“It’s almost like the program’s done such a good job that people have lost awareness of the threat,” says Bowers.

As the CFTEP celebrates its centennial anniversary, the program is confronting serious new challenges: increasing populations of white-tailed deer and other wild animals that can carry fever ticks; the pests’ increasing resistance to Coumaphos, the only tickicide currently approved in our country to kill fever ticks; and an improved habitat for fever ticks in Texas and other southern States.

Program officials have been working closely with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service to address these problems. While they have come up with a number of innovative ways to control ticks on wild animals, and developed various methods for detecting tick resistance, the resources available for controlling and killing the ticks are still limited. If the ticks are reintroduced into this country, it would be extremely difficult to eradicate them again.

“There’s this specter in the background of resistance,” says Bowers. “We don’t have anything in our toolkit to replace the tickicide we have now.”

With these new and evolving concerns, the work of the CFTEP inspectors is more important than ever. Fortunately, people like Garza not only accept this responsibility, they embrace it.

“Most inspectors stay for a lifetime,” says Bowers. “They’re quite a group of men.”
Dr. Richard Dunkle, Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), recently presented several Safeguarding Awards in praise of PPQ employee efforts. The Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Awards are presented annually to both individuals and PPQ teams. While the awards are divided into various categories of service, they each highlight the important contributions that recipients have made in fulfilling PPQ’s mission to safeguard U.S. agriculture and plant resources.

**Safeguarding Awards**

PPQ recognized Plant Survey Specialist, Dr. Phillip Mason for his development of a Pest Survey Outreach Series, a database developed to inform stakeholders and cooperators of impending pest problems throughout the country. The database enables quick distribution of exotic pest information to field personnel for outreach activities. Because it includes PowerPoint presentations, the database serves as an information-rich resource of outreach materials for PPQ and USDA, as well as Agency stakeholders.

Dr. Dunkle also recognized the work of PPQ’s Treatment Quality Assurance Unit (TQAU) for its design and development of a web-based intelligence system. TQAU is the first unit within PPQ’s Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST) to receive the Safeguarding Award.

TQAU Director, Scott Wood, says, “I am very proud of this great award and feel that it reflects the high quality work of the TQAU team. I encourage other groups in CPHST to apply for this award in the future because I know that so much outstanding research is being conducted within CPHST.”

TQAU’s system consists of three web-based reference systems: the Web-based Treatment Manual Index; the Web-based Container and Vessel Certification & Tracking Database; and the Q56 Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Web-based Reference Database.

In combination, the system’s database-driven web applications share information with each other resulting in a highly integrated intelligence system. The system delivers information quickly, and it’s easy to navigate and needs no special software—other than a web browser—to use.

**Outstanding Achievement Awards**

In the Deputy Administrator’s Outstanding Achievement Award category, Dr. Dunkle presented three awards to recognize employee efforts that resulted in exceeding the program’s project goals.

PPQ’s Environmental Monitoring Team was awarded for its behind-the-scenes efforts to support the environmental compliance of PPQ’s Emergency and Domestic Programs. The team members awarded include: Ron Berger, Robert Baca, Susan Bright and Kiesett Newton. Collectively, their efforts reduced the number of environmental lawsuits filed against the program.

The two other Outstanding Achievement Award recipients—the USDA/CDFA Cooperative Fruit Fly/Preventive Release Program and The Multi-Agency Smuggled Citrus Bud Wood Group—were featured in the last issue of *Inside APHIS.*
When Stephen Gardner prowls the commercial produce markets of Los Angeles, he passes the same stalls, vendors, and products he’s inspected countless times before. After nearly 5 years as an officer in APHIS’ Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) group, he stays vigilant by constantly looking for changes—any small differences that could uncover a threat to American agriculture.

“You see so many boxes day in and day out, you notice any change, a spot, a mark, or a word,” he says. And then he starts digging for illegal products—because he knows the stakes involved in his job.

A case in point: fruit flies. Certain exotic fruit flies riding on smuggled fruit could threaten $7.2 billion worth of U.S. agricultural commodities. Gardner’s home state, California, grows $5.1 billion of these products. The flies can attack more than 400 kinds of host plants, spoiling or destroying the fruit. In addition to lost production, an infestation could trigger other devastating costs, including control and eradication measures, increased pesticide use, and loss of export markets.

Gardner and his fellow SITC officers patrol the front lines of agricultural trade to help prevent exotic fruit flies—and a myriad of other animal and plant pests and diseases—from entering the United States.

Although Gardner looks for all restricted or prohibited products, he focuses on the greatest threats to American agriculture. These include—among many others—fruit fly host material and poultry products from countries affected by the H5N1 strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza.
“But, even with a target in mind, we must be on the lookout for anything, anytime, anywhere,” Gardner notes.

A Vast Universe to Inspect

In SITC’s line of work, the most difficult question could well be: Where to begin?

“We look at all kinds of markets—Asian, Mexican, grocery stores, Costco, Sam’s Club, and craft stores,” Gardner says. In craft stores, potpourri could carry beetles from India and Christmas decorations could contain prohibited wood and pinecones.

At food markets, Gardner searches for suspicious discrepancies. When he notices discrepancies in price, quality, or appearance for the same type of commodity, he wants to know whether the products all came from the same country under the same certificate. And if any warehouses have changed their configurations, Gardner dives in to see why.

The list of items to check can seem endless. Any of the following animal products could require certification: cooked beef, pork, and chicken; canned and dehydrated soups; noodle bowls; bouillon; medicinal products with animal ingredients; and frozen meat. Some importers have labeled frozen boneless duck and chicken feet as jellyfish, so Gardner checks these packages closely.

Importers have also been known to cover a package’s foreign-language ingredient list with a sticker listing the ingredients in English—and the two don’t always agree. To check the products for prohibited meat, SITC officers carry a card listing the words for meat products—such as beef, pork, and chicken—in a variety of languages, including Chinese and Vietnamese. With the card, officers can remove the sticker and verify it against the package.

On the plant product side, Gardner ensures that Szechuan peppers (a citrus fruit) have been heat-treated, licorice melon seeds have been fumigated or cooked, herbs have been certified for any required treatment, and broom bristles contain no seeds. These items just scratch the surface.

At markets and warehouses, inspecting huge freezers packed with boxes can pose special challenges. If SITC officers suspect a problem, they typically ask the facility employees to move boxes before starting a comprehensive search. The effort can pay off, though, as it did when Gardner’s group found a frozen grapefruit product from Bangladesh that tested positive for citrus canker.

“You never know what you’re going to find, or where you’re going to find it,” Gardner says. In their search for illegal imports and smuggled prohibited products, the nine officers in SITC’s Los Angeles work unit cover 10 counties in Southern California.

Always a Good Cop, Never a Bad Cop

Gardner seeks to build close relationships with all importers and foreign market merchants—even those who violate the regulations. He understands that information gathering is key to smuggling interdiction.

“Our primary goal is to quarantine the product,” Gardner says. “Our second goal is to turn violators into sources for more information. It doesn’t end with this one violator—as soon as one is caught, another’s doing it.”

He notes that, once caught, violators are eager to have their competitors treated the same way. Valuable information begins to flow. “Usually tips from other importers are pretty accurate,” he says. “They say it’s in a container at this warehouse and at this time, and they’re right on.” Gardner adds that domestic producers are also happy to feed tips to SITC to stop imported illegal products from undercutting their businesses.

Still, after he seizes their products, Gardner gives violators the personal touch in his low-key, soft-spoken way. “We give them step-by-step instruction and guide them to get their permit,” he says. “We help them get started,
chocolate. The boxes, however, contained citrus budwood—some of which tested positive for citrus canker. CBP officials passed the information to SITC, and Gardner and his fellow SITC officers in Los Angeles jumped on the case because the budwood was destined for Ventura County.

Together, CBP, APHIS, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner’s office traced the budwood shipments. Working closely, the agencies linked the destination addresses—all residential homes—to a local nursery, which they connected to three orchards owned by the Japanese budwood exporter. SITC issued Emergency Action Notifications resulting in the burning of all the grafted budwood in the orchards as well as citrus trees from two of the residences.

APHIS’ management, recognizing the importance of the operation, presented Outstanding Achievement Awards to Gardner and 24 members of the budwood group. Reflecting on the case, Gardner notes, “It’s good to know that, even though a lot of things you do are dead ends, they’re not always a dead end. They’re huge to American agriculture.”

That’s why SITC officers relentlessly patrol their beats. And in Los Angeles, Stephen Gardner is always on the prowl.

Casting a Wide Interagency Net

Gardner knows firsthand the value of close collaboration with other agencies at all levels of government. In 2004, he served in the Multi-Agency Smuggled Citrus Budwood Group, which intercepted nearly 4,000 smuggled citrus plants in a major citrus-producing area of California. That bust could be a case study in interagency cooperation.

It began when U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors intercepted three mail shipments from Japan labeled as candy and chocolate. The boxes, however, contained citrus budwood—some of which tested positive for citrus canker. CBP officials passed the information to SITC, and Gardner and his fellow SITC officers in Los Angeles jumped on the case because the budwood was destined for Ventura County.

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Wildlife Services MOU

In October, Richard Turner, of the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO), joined William Clay, Deputy Administrator of Wildlife Services, in signing a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In the MOU, NASAO recognizes the national leadership and professional expertise of Wildlife Services in resolving wildlife-human conflicts and encourages State aviation offices to seek Wildlife Services assistance with wildlife hazards at airports.

Wildlife strikes at airports cause more than $500 million in losses annually to U.S. civil aviation. In 2005, Wildlife Services assisted 667 U.S. and 7 foreign airports to address wildlife hazards.
Donna West
Senior Import Specialist,
PPQ, President, PPQ
Managers
“This will be my 28th year with PPQ. And, I have both grown up and moved up within its ranks. With retirement near, I think about how I can give back to this wonderful agency.

My resolutions are: to increase my network of colleagues working in agriculture around the world; to mentor employees who want to make a difference in the agency and to help them fulfill their potential; and, to help managers make succession planning a daily goal, especially as we baby boomers move toward retirement. I will keep working as a shepherd of the regulatory process that brings exotic fruits to U.S. consumers. Lastly, I will keep smiling ‘cause I love this agency so much, and I’m lucky to be a part of it!”

Michael Wach
Supervisory Policy Analyst,
BRS
“My cubicle looks as if it were ransacked by thieves—thieves who didn’t find what they were looking for. So, I’d like to work on ways of managing my clutter, to get rid of old books and papers I’ll never read, to retire stress-relieving squeeze toys I no longer squeeze, to actually have some blank desk space. I just heard on NPR today that former Secretary of State James Baker maintained a completely bare desktop. That’s a goal I’d like to work toward.”

Vanessa Schreier
Plant Health Safeguarding Specialist, PPQ
“Graduating from APHIS’ Advancing Leader Program in 2006 was the highlight of my year. It didn’t come out of a specific resolution on my part. But, by focusing on and questioning what I thought I wanted to learn and who I thought I wanted to be, I became involved in projects more interesting than I could have imagined. Some projects I even initiated on my own! For the New Year, I simply want to see them flourish, but that is no small task. The best I can do is to resolve each day to dedicate my attention to understanding the people and to contributing to the programs that make our agency an exciting place to work.”

Pamela Simpson-Diedrick
Senior Staff Veterinarian, VS
“Each year I make a resolution that is eventually broken or forgotten. But this year is different. I’m making promises that are easy to keep.

I promise to do one good thing for someone every day. This will be done without expectation or return of favor. Mentoring and tutoring are important. So, I’ll participate again in the Partnership in Education program, help with a science fair, and encourage APHIS employees to join a mentoring program.

I also promise to write down every day at least one positive thing that has happened to me. And, I promise to write down every day at least one thing that I could have done differently or improved upon.

Have a Happy New Year! And, as Dr. Martin Luther King said, remember to “Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.”

Seth Swafford, Staff Officer for Wildlife Diseases, WS
“My New Year’s resolution—quitting old habits automatically come to mind. But, being proactive instead seems a better choice to ensure change. So, as I ride in an airplane, sitting behind the computer, and eating my in-flight snack—I realize being physically healthier would be a perfect proactive New Year’s resolution. Sure this sounds traditional, and it will likely not last very long, but an honest effort of walking upstairs instead of the using the elevator and walking to the metro in lieu of taking the shuttle bus seem to be easily achievable steps to better health. My improved physical health will likely lead to increased mental health, which is always beneficial when starting a new year.”
New Year Resolutions

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My goal is to keep good focus and help develop the discussions in a way that is respectful, open, and constructive. I care deeply about these animals and want to help find the solutions that will most benefit them. At APHIS, we often find ourselves at these busy intersections where many views come together.

For my personal goals, I also want to keep growing my technical knowledge and grow in other ways like through the APHIS Track II Advancing Leader program that I’m part of. And like many of us, I need to get back on that exercise wagon that I fell off of earlier this year. ;-)

APHIS Manager Profile

What is your background?
I was born and raised in southern Colorado and studied biology and chemistry at the University of Southern Colorado.

How long have you been with APHIS?
I’ve been with APHIS for 27 years. Prior to that, I spent a few years with the National Park Service and U.S. Customs.

Most memorable APHIS experiences?
Living and working in some wonderful places! Having grown up in Colorado and grousing about Texas tourists invading my Colorado home “state,” I ended up spending nearly 20 years working in the Lone Star State for Plant Protection and Quarantine. It turns out all those Texans really did offer genuine hospitality and friendship. I worked along the U.S./Mexican border for many of those years and experienced an incredible blend of people, culture, agriculture, and community.

Priorities for the coming months?
I want to continue to help build a strong APHIS leadership team in the regional hubs and build up our emergency response capabilities in APHIS. Within PPQ, I hope to contribute to the strengthening of our plant pest detection programs.

Accomplishment most proud of?
I’m proud of being selected as Regional Director to lead an outstanding group of employees in PPQ’s Western Region.

Last book read?
Neither Wolf nor Dog - On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder, by Kent Nerburn.

Guilty pleasure?
No guilt here; I love spending time around our house in the country with my wife Debbie. Star gazing on a cold, clear winter night is awesome!

Favorite meal?
A really good steak.

Favorite movies?
Les Miserables; Milagro Beanfield War and the Lord of the Rings.

Hobbies?
Fly fishing, skiing and snowboarding, bicycling, rock climbing and fly fishing (oops, I already mentioned that..)
Throughout the country’s numerous Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) areas, APHIS employees have embraced local CFC themes for giving and actively contributed to their respective campaigns. At headquarters, APHIS is close once again to meeting its CFC National Capital Area (CFCNCA) goals. Together, employees have so far raised more than $171,000 toward the agency’s 2006 goal of $184,602. With the agency’s mounting contributions, USDA is making its way ever closer to its CFCNCA contribution goal of $1.8 million.

In response to the CFCNCA theme “Be a Star in Someone’s Life,” many of APHIS’ brightest stars came out to make individual donations and to take part in organized fundraising events. “It has been a very successful and busy campaign year for APHIS,” said Michael Gregoire, the agency’s CFC National Capital Area Campaign Manager. “I have to give a big thanks to everyone who contributed and also to those who pitched in everywhere and held fundraisers.”

Among others, this year’s events at headquarters included CFC bay auctions, bake sales, a chili cook off, an all-day donut sale, and an “Everything Chocolate” market. Both the Veterinary Services (VS) and Plant Protection and Quarantine programs even held karaoke events where agency employees braved the stage for the cause.

“We had a really good time with the karaoke. It was hilarious and all for a good cause,” said Tami Smith, CFC Team Captain for VS in Riverdale.

Still Time to Give

Although many CFC activities nationwide are now winding down, it’s not too late to do your part for the CFCNCA and in other area campaigns as well. In Riverdale, the CFCNCA was scheduled to close on December 15 but has been extended through January 31. For more information concerning deadlines and contribution options, contact your local program CFC keyworkers.

CFC Success! The Stars Come out at APHIS

By John Scott

Even though we’re all public servants, many of us haven’t experienced what it means to go “public” and represent the agency at large meetings or events. For some of us, the prospect is hard to imagine. But, agency employees are asked to step into the public spotlight quite often. Here are some of their stories, along with the challenges and surprises they found.

Keeping it Positive

Adam Grow, a Center Director with Veterinary Services, recently attended a Farm Bureau meeting of about 500 producers in Arkansas to talk about the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). As it neared time for his presentation, Grow said the local Bureau representative advised him, “This group’s not real high on the NAIS right now and, by the way, there’s a newspaper reporter here that wants to talk to you.”

From there, the immediate challenges didn’t get any easier. The program began with local politicians presenting their views on NAIS. None were supportive, and some were quite vocal in stating their opposition. Just before Grow took the stage, one of the local candidates wore a “No NAIS” jacket as she addressed the crowd.

Despite what many would consider a thorny situation, Grow was able to give his talk and speak to the benefits of NAIS. Although he didn’t know it at the time, his presentation was to be followed by a group vote about whether to support the program. And, because the group represents a particularly intensive cattle-producing area of the State, the vote was important to the organization’s State-level support for the program.

“I got to see then and there whether I did my job or not,” said Grow with a laugh. As it turns out, the audience had warmed to his message, and they unanimously passed a resolution in support of the program.

As a speaker, Grow focuses on a couple key practices when talking to an audience. He credits them for the outcome that day. “First, I make sure I know my subject, and I always try to keep everything on a positive note,” Grow said. When

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presenting or handling questions, he aims for an even tone and gives concrete examples of the genuine benefits to his audience about the agency activities that he’s discussing.

Grow also credits the importance of trying to know his audience and to finding common ground. He listens closely to questions, and he also asks questions of his audience to better understand their situations. When that happens, the result is often that the speaker and audience become more human to one another and communicate better.

**Listening Counts**

As Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) for New England and senior AVIC in the country, Bill Smith has participated in many public meetings and made countless presentations.

“I’ve spoken at public meetings, industry conferences, and in classrooms to all ages, from grade school to vet school,” said Smith. His advice echoes that of others: know your stuff and know your audience. And to this, he adds another important tip. Be willing to admit when you don’t have the answers.

“If you don’t know the answer, just tell them you don’t. Then ask for their name and if you can get back to them. If you take a chance and talk about things you don’t know about, it only comes back to bite you.”

The majority of Smith’s speaking experiences have been positive, but he knows that events can get emotionally charged or personal. “In some cases, it helps to step in and at other times it’s best to let people vent. It’s part of knowing your audience,” said Smith.

At a pseudorabies meeting, Smith recalled one producer who wanted to use the event to air personal grievances about a particular agency veterinary medical officer in the State. “His comments were way off-topic,” Smith said. “In that case, I had to step in and say, ‘This is not the best time or place for this discussion. Can I talk with you after the meeting about your concerns?’”

At other times, tension is best defused by lending a listening ear. This advice is perhaps best illustrated by his recent experience at an early December meeting in Maine about NAIS. The meeting was the first gathering since a March meeting, at which some attendees surprised speakers by hurling cow manure at Maine’s State Veterinarian.

“I wasn’t at the previous meeting, but it went a lot better this time,” Smith said. Sometimes it’s just better if the message is simply ‘I’m not here to preach. I’m here to listen.”

**Surprises: The Good Kind**

As Fred Bourgeois, a field Veterinary Medical Officer in Louisiana, found out, surprises at public events can sometimes be good things.

In late September, Bourgeois was invited to an event in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, commemorating the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Rita. The event was well attended and featured numerous politicians, including the governor, lieutenant governor, and Senators Vitter and Landrieu. U.S. Army Lieutenant General Russel Honore, a notable figure in response efforts to the hurricane, and Freddie Richard, the Director of Emergency Services for Cameron Parish, also were there to mark the occasion.

At the very end of the event, Richard surprised Bourgeois by calling him on stage for special recognition. He said that when Bourgeois took on the task of running the cattle rescue effort, he lifted a huge burden from Richard’s shoulders and enabled him to focus attention on restoring critical services to the community. On stage, General Honore hugged and thanked him. The politicians all shook Bourgeois’ hand, saying that they were happy to meet the man that the General had been speaking of so highly all day long.

“It was overwhelming to be suddenly pulled into the spotlight,” said Bourgeois, who credits the work of many others in Veterinary Services and also USDA for supporting hurricane relief efforts. “It was great to get this kind of feedback from the people we helped. We left a real positive impression on folks with the work we did.”
Winter Tip

The Scoop on Shoveling Snow

For some of us, winter means enjoying outdoor, seasonal fun like skiing, hiking, or skating. For others, winter is more of an indoor time that is best spent near a woodstove or under a blanket reading a good book.

Whether you’re an indoor or outdoor winter person, you’ll likely find yourself at some point this winter clearing snow from your sidewalk or digging out your car.

To stay healthy and safe, the National Safety Council offers this advice on shoveling snow.

• Individuals over the age of 40, or those who are relatively inactive, should be especially careful. If you have a history of heart trouble, check with you doctor before shoveling.
• Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
• Take it slow! Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically, so pace yourself. Stretch out and warm up before taking on the task.
• For your back, don’t pick up too much at once. Use a small shovel. Also, push the snow as you shovel. It’s easier on your back than lifting.
• Shovel only fresh snow. Freshly fallen, powdery snow is easier to shovel.
• Lift with your legs bent, not your back. Keep your back straight. By bending and “sitting” into the movement, you’ll keep your spine upright and less stressed.
• Do not work to the point of exhaustion. If you run out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately.
• Dress warmly. Remember that your nose, ears, hands and feet, need extra attention during winter’s cold.

For more tips, visit the National Safety Council Web site at www.nsc.org/library/facts/snowshov.htm

USDA and Chinese Scientists Partner on Avian Influenza Study

By Gail Keirn

In April 2005, scientists first saw the potential effects of the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza on wild birds. More than 6,000 wild migratory birds died from the virus at Qinghai Lake nature reserve in central China. This event was highly unusual and likely unprecedented. Prior to the event, wild bird deaths from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus were extremely rare.

To obtain a better understanding of how the virus entered the Qinghai Lake ecosystem and resulted in the death of so many birds, scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Zoology and APHIS’ Wildlife Services program are studying wild and domestic animals in the vicinity of Qinghai Lake. Broadly, the goal is to study the role of wildlife as carriers of avian influenza. Specifically, the study’s objectives include: identifying reservoirs of avian influenza through surveillance of wild and domestic species; developing a risk assessment of avian influenza to people, poultry and wild animals in Qinghai and Xinjiang Providences; and, making recommendations for biosecurity and conservation on farming in northwestern China.

The 2-year study is part of a cooperative agreement funded through APHIS and implemented collaboratively through the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service/International Cooperation and Development.

“It’s important that we develop a better understanding of the role wildlife species may serve as vectors or reservoirs for highly pathogenic H5N1 and the risk these species pose to domestic or farm animals. Working with the Chinese near Qinghai Lake is an excellent opportunity to further our current understanding,” said Dr. Dale Nolte, program manager for Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) and project lead for the collaborative avian influenza work in China.

Putting the Plan to Work

Initial trips to China by Wildlife Services’ representatives in December 2005 and June 2006 helped determine the study’s objectives and finalize an official cooperative agreement between the USDA and Chinese Academy of Sciences. During August 2006, three wildlife biologists from Wildlife Services spent 3 weeks surveying the

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Chinese and U.S. scientists prepare traps in hopes of capturing animals around Qinghai Lake. Left to right: Michael Marlow (Wildlife Services), Mr. Yin Zouhua, and Dr. Guo Junging (Chinese Academy of Sciences). (Photo by Jeff Root, USDA)

Wildlife Services has invited Chinese scientists to the United States later this year to observe avian influenza surveillance activities and other wildlife management techniques. They also plan to revisit Qinghai Lake in 2007 to conduct additional sampling.

“This project is one part of the United States’ commitment to assist countries to control and eradicate highly pathogenic H5N1,” said Dr. Thomas DeLiberto, APHIS’ National Wildlife Disease Coordinator responsible for managing APHIS’ national and international avian influenza surveillance efforts in wild birds. APHIS is also assisting countries in Asia, Europe and South America, as well as Mexico, to monitor and control avian influenza in wild birds.

Michael Marlow, who traveled to China with fellow Wildlife Services wildlife disease biologist Carl Betsill, summed up their experiences this way, “Working with scientists in China provided us with new perspectives on wildlife management and disease issues in other countries. We value the new relationships and partnerships we made while working overseas.”

Qinghai Lake is the largest inland saltwater lake in China. At 10,500 feet above sea level, the lake spans 1,789 square miles and attracts large flocks of migratory birds, including geese, gulls, sandpipers, and cormorants. (Photo by Alan Franklin, USDA)
APHIS recently earned recognition for its innovative use of technology to better serve agency customers and improve the agency’s permitting activities. In early October, APHIS’ ePermits System was announced by Government Computer News as one of the publication’s 2006 Gala Award winners. The publication hosts the annual awards and gala event to honor distinguished project teams and programs in the field of government information technology. APHIS was one of only 10 organizations chosen from among 150 award candidates.

“We are extremely appreciative and honored to receive the 2006 Gala Award,” said Administrator Ron DeHaven.

Even before the 2006 Gala Award announcement, feedback on the new system was decidedly positive. Users from both inside and outside of the agency recognized the system as a “winner,” especially from a customer service perspective. Senior Plant Pathologist Eileen Sutker sees firsthand many e-mail responses from satisfied ePermits System users. “Folks who try it, love it,” said Sutker.

One ePermits System user wrote, “Thank you so much! That is the most amazingly fast and efficient service that anyone could dream of.”

Another e-mail said, “Thanks. My last permit took 7 months. This time it was done very, very efficiently.”

Customer feedback on the veterinary side has also been positive. “…The user interface is very clear and easy to use, and both the application and renewal processes are more streamlined….The ePermits system is a welcome improvement to the previous system,” wrote one user.

Released in multiple phases, the ePermits System is a Web-based tool that allows agency customers to apply for, track, receive, and pay for agency permits. The system, which became available to the public on April 3, 2006, offers both security and improved processing speed.

For some types of permits, turnaround time was reduced from 4 days to 1 day.

Because the ePermits System is an agency-wide initiative, it benefits the full range of APHIS customers. People who apply for a permit through Biotechnology Regulatory Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, or Veterinary Services can use the system. All of the agency’s permits are now available through e-Permits.

Making it a Success

The system’s development required close cooperation between the participating programs and beyond. “It took a real team effort to make this system a success,” said Alison Young, who has managed the ePermits project. With the help of Science Applications International Corporation, SAIC, an outside contractor, and many people throughout the agency, system developers had to navigate many complicated logistics concerning funding, security, and technology.

In the true spirit of e-Gov initiatives, the e-Permits System incorporates existing outside electronic systems as well. It uses the USDA eAuthentication system to register users and the U.S. Treasury Department’s Pay.Gov System to process payments.

Good News for Agency Employees

As Young points out, it’s not just APHIS customers who benefit from the ePermits System—agency programs and employees reap rewards as well. The programs gain much improved oversight and reporting options. For example, information is now uniformly managed, tracked, and stored; program staff can now more easily and accurately verify the number of permits and workload trends. In short, better information is leading to better management of agency time and resources.

With the e-Permits System, agency staff who process permit have reduced the time that they spend on paper hunts. As the number of registered users continues to grow, so will the time-savings for the agency’s permit.

Both inside and outside the agency, appreciation for the new system is strong. Young said, “I actually had someone I never met before come up to me in the café. Right out of the blue, she said, ‘Thank you for bringing ePermits to our agency.’”
Clean Up and Back Up Your E-mail Inbox

By John Scott

Throwing things out can be one of the hardest things to do. E-mail is a great example of something we’re good at saving. Sometimes for good reasons, but—as many employees freely admit—often not. For many, the result is an overcrowded inbox that buries the things you need under the things you don’t. And, as any computer specialist in the Agency will tell you, our Agency’s mail servers are straining under the e-mail clutter.

So, in the spirit of the New Year, here’s how to drop a few of those unwanted pounds from your e-mail inbox. There are two things that you can do: clean out what you don’t need and back up what you want to save.

Quick and Dirty Tips for Cleaning the Clutter

First, take a critical look at your inbox. If you take a minute and truly assess the mess, you may be surprised at how easy the pickings are for deleting. How many stray e-mails do you still have about lost cell phones or notary requests?

After cleaning out what first catches your eye, there’s more that can be done with ease to get rid of deeply buried e-mails. Instead of scrolling through your inbox line by line to delete single e-mails, use Lotus Notes’ “sort” options and searches to identify and delete groups of e-mails. It takes less time and can make a big dent in cleaning out your inbox. Try these tips:

- Click on the “Who” column at the top of your e-mail view. This re-orders your e-mails alphabetically by sender (and secondarily by date). Then, scroll through your e-mail list. Using this view, it’s easier to identify e-mails from specific senders that you know you don’t need to save. It’s also a powerful reminder of just how old some of your e-mails are.

- Use the Find/Replace function under the Lotus Notes Edit pull-down menu. Search for words that will help find common e-mails that you can delete. Search for words like: lights, notary, cell phone, etc.

- For an e-mail that you’re saving solely because of its attached file, consider detaching and saving the file to your hard drive. You can then either delete the original e-mail or, using the edit options in Lotus Notes, you can keep it and insert a note in the original e-mail to remind you where you have saved the detached file.

Remember, too, that some e-mails may be considered a record under the Federal Records Act. Before you delete any e-mail, be sure to review the Agency guidance available at http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/records/e-mailhome.htm.

With these basic tips and a little practice, you can quickly get your inbox back into shape. To keep the excess down, spend just a few minutes each day deleting what you don’t need. Your inbox and the Agency’s mail servers will thank you.

Saving Server Space with an E-mail Backup

For e-mails you truly need to save, consider making a personal backup copy of your e-mails and saving it to CD, DVD, or some other storage media, like a flash drive. Broadly, this is a three-step project: naming the backup file; copying the backup file; and moving the backup file to CD, DVD, or other storage. Armed with a backup copy, you may find it easier—possibly even enjoyable—to delete e-mails from your inbox.

To view step-by-step instructions on making a personal backup copy, select and open the file, Backup_stepbystep.pdf attached to this file.
As an international team of veterinary officials have found, the road to progress sometimes takes unusual turns: from Kuwait to Minnesota and then to Iraq. Along the way they also found that, in the company of dedicated people, together they can clear large obstacles in their path.

**Kuwait City, Kuwait 2004**

It began 2 years ago, when a team of veterinary professionals from different cultures and countries first met in a city surrounded by desert sand, waters of the Persian Gulf, and tens of thousands of U.S. service members and coalition partners. At 120 degrees Fahrenheit, in September, Kuwait City, Kuwait, is a place where many would rather be enjoying the cool of an air conditioner as opposed to being outside, baking in the sun. Despite the extreme weather, the veterinary professionals met gladly with the goal of helping to develop a road map to rebuild the veterinary infrastructures in Afghanistan and Iraq.

According to Dr. Paula Cowen, Director of Veterinary Services’ (VS) Professional Development Staff and a key member of the team, the workshop in Kuwait City was a starting point envisioned by Col. Cliff Walker, Veterinary Command, Commander at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

“Col. Walker’s vision for the team was to assist both Afghanistan and Iraq in rebuilding their veterinary infrastructures so that they could control the diseases of both animal and human health significance and ultimately allow them to produce more food animals for their people,” said Cowen.

It was clear to the team as it met in Kuwait City that Afghanistan and Iraq have many similarities, among them the presence of U.S. and coalition forces; however, they also have many differences. Afghanistan remains rooted in a tribal system and has throughout the years lost much of its talented workforce. Iraq on the other hand has maintained its educational system and a robust cadre of professionals. Iraq traditionally offered free education up to and including graduate school.

Yet, Iraqi scientists have been largely isolated for almost 30 years.

The first workshop held in Kuwait of 2004 happened as a result of the generosity of the Kuwaiti Humanitarian Operations Center and the Henry Jackson Foundation along with funding from APHIS’ International Services program.

At the meeting, Afghan and Iraqi veterinarians met with officials from the U.S. Armed Forces and USDA, as well as representatives from the American Veterinary Medical Association and from U.S. veterinary universities—including deans from the University of Georgia, University of California-Davis, and the University of Missouri.

“As a result of our first meeting in 2004, long- and short-term needs were identified. It focused the efforts to help rebuild programs,” Cowen said. To date, great progress has been made in Afghanistan with a number of technical experts holding workshops to assist in developing a National Animal Health Plan, as well as to start an Afghan Veterinary Association. The U.S. Agency for International Development has also contributed funding for a number of projects, including starting private veterinary practices.

**Minneapolis, Minnesota 2005**

In July 2005 the team gathered for a second time. But, not in the desert. This time, in a cooler climate—Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the World Veterinary Congress. There, they had frank discussions about the prospect of holding workshops in Iraq.

“From the beginning, the Iraqi veterinarians wanted to host workshops in their own country. They did not feel that they were treated well in Kuwait, and they were tired of being shipped outside of their country for training,” Cowen said.

In addition, it was difficult for them to secure VISAs and get approval from the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. As a result, the workshops typically could reach only a very few Iraqi veterinarians at a time.

To overcome this obstacle, Dr. Mo Salman, a key team member and graduate of the University of Baghdad over 30 years ago, began working...
along with others on a dream that they hoped to soon realize. Salman, now a professor at Colorado State University, had the dream of bringing a large group of veterinarians together in the relatively stable Kurdish region in northern Iraq. That dream would happen in September 2006.

**Erbil, Iraq 2006**

Once again the veterinary team traveled nearly 7,000 miles to the Middle East in the midst of intense heat and sand storms. In Erbil, Iraq, about 90 veterinarians, 8 of whom were women, gathered with representation from the central governments of Iraq and Kurdistan, veterinary schools and laboratories. The group also included private practice veterinarians from 16 of the 18 provinces/governorates. It was an unprecedented gathering.

“The ‘International Team’ in full was also represented by the U.S. service members assigned to the Iraqi theater of operations andAPHIS officials, including Dr. Paula Cowen, and Dr. Linda Logan. In addition, representatives from three U.S. veterinary schools—including Dr. Prema Arasu (North Carolina State University), Dr. Craig Carter (University of Kentucky), and Dr. Salman—were present. Dr. Max Coats, who had recently retired as APHIS Texas Assistant State Veterinarian, also participated. Coats’ primary responsibility had been to track and control brucellosis in Texas. Iraqi veterinarians had identified brucellosis as one of their greatest disease concerns and had targeted it as an important workshop topic.

The purpose of the 2006 workshop was to develop a way to enhance Iraq’s national animal health efforts by integrating government, academic, and private sector veterinary capabilities. The workshop format required participants to brainstorm, collaborate, prioritize, and network with their colleagues from throughout Iraq.

“This was definitely something not encouraged under Saddam Hussein and in fact could have led to death. We were amazed at how enthusiastically they embraced the process,” said Cowen. “The participants told us time and again how much they wanted a better life and to be proud of their profession and its contribution to the recovery of their people. They literally risked their lives to attend this workshop.”

Cowen noted that security of the participants was of highest priority and continues to be. “I would love to share with Inside APHIS readers the photos of the intense debates, the group reports, the voting for setting priorities, and the challenging of authority. But, for security purposes, we promised not to publish any photographs.”

Cowen recalled other observations as well. Though the women veterinarians in attendance were few in number, their contributions were significant. Rather than being deferential, they raised their hands to make comment and ask questions.

“One woman volunteered to be the spokesperson for a group report; another, from southern Iraq, apologized for her group that was dressed in black, but they were in mourning for the loss of family members, a stark reminder that this is a time of war,” Cowen explained.

At one point, another Iraqi woman confided to the team that, “…we women need to stick together and be strong,” said Cowen.

**Workshop Outcomes**

For 4 days, workshop participants set aside giant obstacles such as security, lack of funding, and their geographic and religious differences. Instead, the group focused on the things they could accomplish together, and they found them to be many. On the last day, Iraq’s chief veterinary officer delivered a 5-year vision plan for a National Animal Health Program. The plan identifies numerous concrete steps to be taken.

With the plan and its detailed steps, the participants will make solid progress in building the Iraqi veterinary infrastructure. Cowen noted, “It will be through their relationships and the care they have developed for each other that this progress will happen.”
2006 Senior Leaders Conference Mapping the APHIS Path

By John Scott

In October, APHIS senior leaders met and addressed the leadership challenges surrounding the development of science-based regulations and policies, the refinement of APHIS’ strategic plan, and the alignment of individual operational plans with the agency’s and USDA’s strategic goals. In all, 50 of the agency’s top leaders gathered, making the conference the largest agency leadership group ever assembled.

In addition to featured speakers Secretary Mike Johanns and Under Secretary Bruce Knight, the conference included a panel discussion led by USDA Chief of Staff Dale Moore, Administrator Ron DeHaven, and agency Chief Operating Officer Kevin Shea. The conference also hosted presenters from outside USDA ranks. Dr. Neil Kerwin, interim president of American University and director of the university’s Center for the Study of Rulemaking, spoke about the ongoing key issue facing the agency—the challenging task of developing science-based regulations and policies. Much of the conference’s first day was devoted to this topic.

Senior leaders invested significant time in reviewing APHIS’ many operational plans currently in place for fiscal year 2007. Participants discussed in detail the 38 plans developed by the agency’s programs and work units. In large part, the purpose was to highlight the importance of aligning individual operational plans with the agency’s strategic plan and, in turn, with USDA’s goals and objectives. Guest presenter, Chris Edgelow, president of Sundance Consulting, Inc., conducted group exercises to help sharpen how agency leaders lead and manage change brought about by current and new agency strategic direction and priorities.

The Administrator’s Office and agency leaders were so pleased with the work accomplished at the meeting that another conference is in the works for April 2007. Building upon the recent meeting’s discussions, APHIS leaders will use the April 2007 meeting to continue working on the scheduled revisions to the agency’s strategic plan.

USDA Honor Award Winners

In October 2006, Secretary Johanns announced the winners of USDA’s Honor Awards and hosted the 59th annual ceremony. The Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards presented by USDA, and APHIS was well represented in the ranks of those selected for the awards.

“The Honor Awards recognize truly outstanding service by USDA employees who have achieved great things through their dedication, leadership, and hard work,” said Johanns.

Congratulations to all APHIS recipients listed below!

Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation’s Agriculture and Food Supply
Asian Soybean Rust Team: Coanne O’Hern (Group Leader), Matthew Royer, Claude Knighten, Glenn Fowler, Anwar Rizvi, Arnie Tschanz, Laurene Levey, Mary Palm, Osama El-Lissy, Russ Bulluck

Foreign Agricultural Service Avian Influenza International Response Team: Eric Hoffman.

Tracy Duvernoy, Dan Sheesley, Clifford Graham, John Hurley, Glenn Germaine, Ned Cardenas, Linda Logan, Peter Fernandez, Cheryl French, John Shaw, Lorrie Brundige, Gordon Cleveland, Joseph Annelli, Jennifer Grannis, Cheryl Hall

Protecting and Enhancing the Nation’s Natural Resource Base and Environment
OIG Animal Welfare Act Investigation and Prosecution Team: Robert Gibbens

Supporting the President’s Management Agenda and Civil Rights
USDA Human Capital Team: Terry Zietlow

Employee Recognition and Remembrance Awards
The following APHIS employees were recognized for significant contribution to the recovery and relief efforts in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Patricia Beetham, Steven Bennett, Randall Choate, Walter Cotton, Anthony Gruehl, Audrey Ingram, Dwight LeBlanc, Catherine Preston, Emily Pullins.
On October 26, 2006, APHIS employees gathered in Riverdale to celebrate the achievements of those receiving the 2006 Administrator’s Civil Rights Award. Founded 8 years ago, the award program highlights staff efforts that advance the cause of civil rights and equal employment opportunity and ensure the delivery of APHIS programs and services in an equitable manner.

Administrator Dr. Ron DeHaven was joined by Deputy Under Secretary Chuck Lambert in recognizing honorees in the following three categories: supervisor/manager, individual employee, and group effort. Honorees were chosen by a selection committee from nominations submitted throughout the agency.

Supervisor/Manager Category Awards

In the supervisor/manager category, three individuals were recognized for their noteworthy efforts. Ms. Susan Jojola, a biologist with the National Wildlife Research Center, was honored for her mentoring of a Native American high school student. Jojola, a member of the Isleta Pueblo Tribe, is also involved in ongoing outreach work with other young Native Americans to encourage them to consider internships and careers in the government. In addition, she serves as a tribal liaison for the APHIS Native American Working Group to facilitate joint efforts and information exchanges with Native American Tribes and groups.

Dr. Michael Firko, Director of Permits, Registrations, Imports, and Manuals (PRIM) for Plant Health Programs, was honored for his commitment and active efforts in support of equal employment opportunity and a truly diversified staff. PRIM employs 50 minority employees in a variety of grades, including 7 individuals hired under the Disabilities Program. Firko also actively supports four of his employees who participate as Special Emphasis Program Managers for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) programs, and he has created internship opportunities for minority youths in the Washington, D.C. area.

As Director of Veterinary Services’ (VS) Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), Dr. Rick Hill was honored for his strong support of the NVSL/CVB Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights Committee. Hill has encouraged the committee to attend and participate in special trainings, conferences, and special emphasis presentations. With the backing of Hill and the managers at Ames, the group has focused on recruitment of underrepresented populations at the annual Iowa Diversity Conference and at career fairs across the country.

Employee Category Awards

In the individual employee category, three individuals were recognized for their outstanding individual achievements. Dr. Terry Clark, Native American Program Coordinator for VS’ National Center for Animal Health Programs, has worked diligently to expand awareness of and interest in APHIS animal health programs among Tribal Nations, many of which historically have been hesitant to involve the U.S. Government in Tribal affairs. As a result of Clark’s work, 20 Tribes directly entered into agreements with APHIS for funding chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance, and one Tribal organization entered into a combined agreement to provide CWD sample collection and training to more than 20 additional Tribes. In addition, 16 Tribes entered into agreements to accept funding for National Animal Identification Program efforts, of which 2 were combined agreements to provide training, funding, and premises registration efforts for an additional 49 tribes.

Ms. Virginia Green, a budget analyst with Wildlife Services in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, was honored for her efforts in promoting cultural awareness and in the recruitment of minority candidates. Green contacted numerous 1890 Land-grant universities in an effort to reach recent graduates who might be eligible for wildlife technician and wildlife biologist positions. Green has also been Wildlife Service’s Federal Women’s Program Manager since 1994. In addition, she actively promotes awareness of Black history and distributes information about various special emphasis months.

Ms. Estela Diaz, Marketing and Regulatory Programs’ (MRP) Small Business Coordinator, was honored for supporting the agency’s civil rights efforts through her work with small business programs and the Javits Wagner O’Day program (JWOD), which provides employment opportunities in the manufacture and delivery

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Civil Rights Award Ceremony

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Did you know?
APHIS currently has nearly 8,300 employees, including 1,390 who were hired in 2006. Of these new hires, 40 percent are women and 28 percent are self-identified as being from minority groups.

of products and services to the Federal Government to people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Diaz helps businesses classified as small, small disadvantaged, women-owned, and service disabled veteran-owned to receive their equitable share of MRP contracts.

Group Category Awards

Four groups of APHIS employees were honored for their achievements in furthering equal employment. In August 2005, VS’ National Animal Health Policy and Programs established an Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Advisory Committee, which in a short time drafted a charter and work plans. In addition, the committee has distributed employment opportunity information at targeted job fairs, cultural events, and conferences, and developed brochures promoting Special Emphasis programs. The group also initiated a successful Multicultural Day, and representatives attend meetings with the VS Native American Working Group. Committee members honored were: Chris Bembenek, JoAnn Bentz-Blanco, Nathan Birnbaum, Cathy Chisley, Candy Clanton, Timothy Cordes, Cynthia Hough-Faunterloy, Jill Rolland, Betsy Sillers, Debbie Sweitzer, and Athena Walters.

The second group award recognized the work of PPQ’s National Civil Rights Strategic Plan Working Group, which developed a three-part civil rights strategic plan. The plan’s main goals are: to create a PPQ workforce by 2009 that, at all levels, utilizes and reflects the diverse demographics of the general population; to develop strategies that result in a 20 percent reduction in certain categories of complaints; and to strengthen the role of special emphasis program managers in creating a diverse work force. The working group members honored for their group effort were: Jane Berkow, Thomas Chaneille, Sharon Church, Gabriel DeLaGarza, Phillip Garcia, Carolyn Gethers, Christina Jewett, Larry Law, Ruth Lewis, Michael Lidsky, Kristen Luurs, Nancy Matthews, Feridoon Mehdizadegan, Robert Miller, Francis Murphy, Kiesett Newton, Michon Oubichon, John Payne, Mike Randall, Metwaly Sheta, Lillian Stewart, Nan Story, Pandy Tomko, Donna West, and Leeda Wood.

The third group award was presented to the VS Live Bird Marketing System’s (LBMS) Low Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (LPAI) program, which seeks to unify State LPAI programs and assist States in meeting their goal to prevent and control LPAI in the LBMS. To accomplish these goals, the LBMS-LPIA program recently focused significant education and outreach efforts toward minority populations that have not traditionally participated in VS programs. These include: the Amish and the Hmong communities, as well as those practicing Kosher, Halal, and Santeeria methods of animal slaughter. To provide all of its customers with full access to LBMS services and materials, the program has worked to develop an awareness of the unique practices and needs of each of these groups and has developed popular educational materials in multiple languages. The awardees were: Molly Ault, Teressa Chase, George Chambliss, Madelaine Fletcher, Fidelis Hegngi, Kristie Ludwig, Therese Mindemann, Patrice Klein, Michael Kornreich, Shannon Kozlowicz, Barbara Porter-Spalding, JoAnna Quinn, and Chrisslyn Wood.

The fourth group award honored the work of VS’ Pennsylvania Area Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities and Civil Rights, which was reactivated only a year ago and for the most part by new employees. The committee revived and completed efforts to draft an EEO/CR charter and action plan, planned an upcoming Multicultural Day, and has participated in minority recruitment activities at church events, colleges, and agricultural fairs. Committee members are now certified recruiters and focus on retention efforts, revising position descriptions, and outreach to minority populations. The committee members honored were: Murray Glickman, Bridget Griggs, Kristie Ludwig, Daisy Marrero, Kendra Stauffer, Chrisslyn Wood, and David Zellner.

“Our commitment to civil rights makes APHIS a better agency and a better place to work…”

-Dr. DeHaven
Collaboration Counts in 2006

By John Scott

Administrator W. Ron DeHaven recently created a new agency award called the “Collaboration Counts Award” to recognize employee cooperation across program and agency lines. Dr. DeHaven presented the awards for collaborative efforts in 2006 at the agency’s Holiday Awards Party in December.

Highlighting nine specific project areas, the awards honored the collaborative efforts of numerous employees who have worked not only with fellow APHIS programs, but also with other Federal agencies in USDA and beyond. Congratulations to the many employees and agency partners who earned the first ever Collaboration Counts Awards. To view a complete list of award recipients by category, select and open the file, Collab_Counts.pdf attached to this file.

APHIS Calendar

January

“Healthier Feds: Challenge 2007” kicks off January 22 and runs through March 18. More info from the APHIS Work Life Wellness Program coming soon by e-mail.

February

February is National Black History Month
Check your e-mail for upcoming events and speakers at headquarters and field offices.

Central Plant Board Meeting, February 5-8, Columbus, Ohio.

PPQ Regulatory Change Working Group meeting to plan revisions of pest permit regulations, February 6-7, in Riverdale, Maryland.

APHIS’ Martin Luther King, Jr. & Black History Month Celebration
February 7, 2007 at 10:30 a.m. in the Riverdale Conference Center

March

March is National Women’s History Month
Organizers are preparing events now. Ask your unit manager about how you can get involved!

Wanted: Your Feedback

The best way we can make Inside APHIS a newsletter that serves you is to hear from you. So, take a minute and send us an e-mail. Let us know your thoughts about what you see here. Fill us in on your likes, dislikes, or pass along your suggestions and ideas for stories.

Feel free to brag about a coworker. Give us a work tip. Tell us what others may need to know to help build a better APHIS. Or, simply share a story about a rewarding experience or a meaningful thank-you received from the public we serve. Send your e-mails to: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov
When Etiquette Becomes Mission-Critical

U.S. diplomats understand that, when abroad, Federal employees never really clock out.

As Dan Sheesley—Deputy Administrator for International Services—has seen, however, this wisdom isn’t always intuitive for APHIS employees overseas. Sheesley recalls in particular a group of agency technical experts who unintentionally slighted their host government by skipping an official dinner.

“An invitation is not necessarily discretionary,” Sheesley says dryly. After 20 years as an APHIS foreign service officer (FSO), he should know.

Like Sheesley, the agency’s other deputy administrators can recall similar diplomatic stumbles. In combination, agency leaders felt the missteps indicated an expectations gap between APHIS’ professional diplomats—the FSOs—and the agency’s technical employees working overseas. To close the gap, the APHIS Management Team (AMT) asked Sheesley to create the APHIS International Training Program (AITP), which graduates 23 students from its pilot class at the end of April 2007.

Well Beyond Charm School

Mary Ellen Keyes, AITP’s project manager in the Training and Development Branch, implemented the program. “I took Dr. Sheesley’s dream and put it in black and white,” she says.

Keyes helped design a “blended learning” curriculum, which includes two 4-day classroom sessions, online classes, a team learning project, personal assessments, and coaching. APHIS hired the GilDeane Group, Inc., a consulting and training company, to create the course materials.

The AMT identified three core competencies for the program to build: leadership, intercultural adaptability, and negotiation skills. “We want to instill leadership as well as diplomatic and representational awareness in every APHIS employee carrying an official passport,” Sheesley says.

To Sheesley, appreciating a country’s sometimes minimal conveniences only begins to define

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Leading by Example

As Dr. DeHaven has reminded agency employees, it’s up to everyone in the APHIS community to lead by example in promoting the health of our Nation’s animals. If you own livestock or poultry, please show your commitment to protecting animal health by registering your premises with NAIS—and encouraging your neighbors, family, and friends to do the same.

You can learn more about NAIS and the many benefits of the program by visiting the NAIS Web site at www.usda.gov/nais.

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APHIS Achieves NAIS Milestone

This past January, APHIS achieved an important milestone in the implementation of the National Animal Identification System, or NAIS. With the help of State and industry partners, APHIS succeeded in registering 25 percent, or 350,000, of all U.S. livestock premises.

Premises registration is the foundation of NAIS. Having what amounts to an emergency contact list will allow APHIS to respond more quickly when animal health threats arise and to provide better assistance to farmers and ranchers. With the 25 percent milestone accomplished, APHIS is looking toward USDA’s next goal for premises registration: ensuring that a significant majority of producers are on board by the end of January 2009.

Adding ‘Diplomat’ to a Scientist’s Credentials

By Greg Rosenthal

Alan Franklin displays a gift (above) he received during a trip to China, where gift-giving strengthens personal relationships. The Chinese saying, “The gift is trifling, but the ceiling is profound,” translates loosely as, “It’s the thought that counts.”
cultural adaptability, which also encompasses cultural knowledge, respect, and sensitivity. As for negotiation skills, he wants training participants to know the range of skills needed—from understanding subtle nuances to knowing how to handle raised voices and table-pounding.

The program also requires that students understand APHIS’ strategies, plans, and goals. “At the Agency level, that means our safeguarding and safe-trade missions,” Sheesley says. “At the individual level, it’s highly important that employees understand how the issues they’re negotiating could affect another program.”

For example, a country might use U.S. beef imports as leverage when negotiating its citrus exports. Sheesley wants course graduates to recognize that foreign negotiators sometimes link issues together. “If we’re ignorant of any linkages, we may not see the nuance and spend a week of frustrating and ultimately fruitless time,” he says.

Putting Students to the Test

To make the learning practical, students in the training program apply their knowledge to real situations, such as an actual diplomatic reception that’s part of the course. Before attending the pilot reception in December 2006, students learned the do’s and don’ts of a formal diplomatic event and then practiced their skills on embassy attachés.

Participants also apply their knowledge through learning projects. Working in teams, students research a current APHIS-related international topic and present their findings. Sheesley attended the pilot class’s presentations and heard recommendations for improving APHIS’ international activities.

“I was impressed with their depth of research and level of interest in producing a real product,” he says. In fact, International Services may institute one team’s recommendations almost immediately by expanding the services that the APHIS Visitors Center offers.

Alan Franklin: Before/After Case Study

Before attending the training program, Alan Franklin visited China with an admittedly thin knowledge of Chinese culture. Fortunately, the Wildlife Services project leader instinctively knew to act with caution. “I tried to watch what my hosts did and feel things out,” Franklin says.

Through the AITP, Franklin learned to be more proactive and confident in his actions. When he visited China a second time and later hosted a Chinese official in Fort Collins, Colorado, he eagerly applied his new cultural understanding.

Based on his AITP coursework and China experiences, he understood the importance of personal interaction in Asian cultures. That paid off when he hosted his Chinese counterpart. “I decided to take him everywhere—lunch, dinner,” he says. He and Bob Mclean, program manager for Wildlife Services’ Wildlife Disease Program, invited others to come along.

“That’s what I really learned in the course, that personal relationships are very important around the world,” Franklin says. “That’s different from our culture, where you have a lot of business relationships, but not necessarily personal ones.”

At Last, Shaking the Geek Image

According to Sheesley, APHIS is the smallest and most technical of all the U.S. foreign service agencies. “Our reputation used to be as technical experts who wear horn-rimmed glasses and who aren’t adept in this environment,” he says. “We’re working hard to upgrade that image. Essentially, the expectation is that our technical specialists are full-fledged diplomats.”

AITP’s goal is to help make that happen.

APHIS and other USDA agencies are active around the globe to combat highly pathogenic avian influenza. For more on this topic and to see APHIS and other USDA employees in action, check out the article entitled, “We’re Building Relationships—And Getting International Results”—

As We Guard Against Pandemic Avian Influenza” running in the March/April issue of USDA’s employee newsletter, “USDA NEWS.” The issue, which will be posted electronically in early May, can be accessed at www.usda.gov/agnews_pubs.xml.
Do You Know Ability One? Bet You Do

By Candace Paul

AbilityOne is the new name for the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Program or what many of us know as JWOD for short. The name change, which became effective in November 2006, was made to better unite the program’s name with the abilities of those who are employed through its efforts.

The AbilityOne program provides job opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities by employing them in the manufacture and delivery of products and services to Federal agencies.

How it All Works

The AbilityOne program is administered by an independent Federal committee called the Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. The committee is responsible for making the rules and regulations to carry out the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act passed by Congress in 1938.

The committee has designated two key nonprofit agencies—the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and National Industries for the Severely Handicapped (NISH)—to provide assistance to qualified nonprofit agencies nationwide. These qualified nonprofit agencies in turn employ the blind or severely disabled in the manufacture and/or distribution of certain products and services. The committee maintains a procurement list, which is recognized by the Federal Government and given preference as Federal agencies purchase certain products and services.

Who Benefits?

AbilityOne touches the lives of many individuals, including the blind and others with severe disabilities. In 2006, the program’s efforts provided approximately 47,000 people with employment. These employment opportunities generated revenues totaling $41.3 million.

As AbilityOne representatives point out, it’s far more accurate to think of those who benefit from the program as “differently-abled” instead of disabled.

At the second annual JWOD/AbilityOne Celebration held in Riverdale in January 2007, this message was echoed by guest speaker Beth Scott. “I believe that the only limitations you have are the ones you decide to accept,” said Scott.

Scott, who is visually impaired, is a gold-medalist swimmer who competed in the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia. As keynote speaker, she spoke about overcoming discrimination related to her disability and her battle with thyroid cancer.

“People with disabilities will surprise you…it’s important to see the gifts and talents they have,” said Scott.

What AbilityOne Means for You

According to AbilityOne representatives the nature of today’s Federal acquisition environment is “decentralized,” meaning that many Federal programs and offices operate independently in purchasing supplies and services. As a result, AbilityOne has to work hard to remind people of the Federal Government’s commitment to the program’s qualified vendors and of the products and services available through them.

For most APHIS employees, doing your part for AbilityOne is easy. It simply means being aware of the agency’s commitment to consistently ordering common office supplies and products from the JWOD/AbilityOne designated sections of supply catalogs. The administrative staff in your office who orders supplies should be able to direct you to the appropriate sections and products.

According to Howard Price, MRP-Business Services’ Administrative Services Director,
A Look Back: D.C. Cherry Trees’ Troubled Start

By Christa Smith Anderson

Since 1912, Washington, D.C.’s Japanese cherry trees have defined the city’s springtime landscape. But the events leading up to their planting were not nearly as graceful as the cherry blossoms that now appear each spring.

Like some APHIS issues today, the cherry trees’ arrival and the events that followed generated quite a few headlines.

As a gift from Tokyo’s Mayor Yukio Azaki to the United States, the cherry trees were highly anticipated. Unfortunately, the first shipment of trees in 1910 arrived heavily infested and had to be burned. The resulting diplomatic stir captured the public’s attention and greatly increased public awareness of agricultural pests in the United States. The events also coincided with USDA’s rapidly evolving pest-related authority.

A Budding Vision

Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, USDA’s Bureau of Plant Industry dispatched plant explorers across the globe to identify and introduce plant species into the United States. One of USDA’s explorers, David Fairchild, returned from his travels with a growing interest in ornamental trees. Fairchild, who was head of USDA’s Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, had imported 75 Japanese flowering trees for his own estate in Chevy Chase, Maryland. In 1908, Fairchild found a friend in Eliza Scidmore. Scidmore, a newspaper correspondent, had traveled to Japan and seen cherry trees in full blossom.

Fairchild and Scidmore shared a vision for bringing the tree’s beauty to the Nation’s capital. For several years, Scidmore had been working without success to win the support of public officials and import trees for planting in the city. Fairchild joined her in these efforts. And, in 1909, their efforts caught the attention of First Lady Helen Taft.

When Tokyo Mayor Yukio Azaki learned of First Lady Taft’s interest in flowering cherry trees, he sent a cablegram offering 1,000 trees as a gift. The gift later multiplied to 5,000 trees, and officials soon began making plans for the arrival and planting of the trees. National newspapers ran stories about the significance of the blossoms in Japan and reported on the gift’s travel status.

In December 1909, the first 2,000 trees arrived aboard the steamship Kaga Maru in Seattle, Washington, where they underwent preliminary inspection and were loaded onto temperature-controlled railroad cars. The trees’ journey went smoothly at first, but soon became complicated.

With a “Gnashing of Teeth”

When the train reached Washington, D.C., officials transported the trees to USDA’s Garden Storehouse for inspection. Together, scientists from USDA’s Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Entomology inspected the shipment. Unfortunately, the results were not what anyone had hoped for. Inspectors found numerous pests, and the trees were deemed unsuitable for release.

Do You Know Ability One?

Continued from page 3

APHIS’ commitment to AbilityOne is strong and the agency has set a goal of increasing its annual purchases through the program every year by a half percent.

“I have worked with different AbilityOne locations and the people who work there. The one thing that I have learned about the program is that the people involved are passionate about their work,” said Price.

“This is more than just meeting percentages or goals. In using the AbilityOne, we increase the ability to integrate people with disabilities into the workplace. It enables people who are blind or severely disabled to have the opportunities to pursue their hopes, dreams and desires.”

The list of products and services available through AbilityOne continues to grow. New technologies have added more service options, such as high-volume document scanning and archiving.

To learn more about the full scope of services and products available through AbilityOne vendors and how to increase your staff’s participation, you can contact Estela Diaz, MRP-Business Services’ designated AbilityOne/JWOD liaison. Her e-mail address is Estela.M.Diaz@usda.gov. ◆
The pest findings included: Diaspis pentagona (now known as Pseudaulacaspis pentagona), San Jose scale, several species of black thrips, a Sesiid moth, undetermined larvae of moth, boring larvae, a living Pierid chrysalis, a chrysalis of Cochleiid, an undetermined weevil, a Forficulid, several nests of black ants, a large living egg mass of a canker worm, root gall, crown gall, Pestalozzia, and fungous mycelium.

USDA officials recommended that the trees be burned. The Bureau of Entomology’s Acting Chief, C. L. Marlatt, recognized the diplomatic implications. In a report compiled for Secretary James Wilson, Marlatt pointed out that, because of the degree of infestation and the trees’ severely pruned roots, they likely would not live even if planted. He said that this probability “may lessen the feeling of regret at the necessity, which seems imperative, for the destruction of the entire shipment.” With President Taft’s consent, the trees were burned.

There was a clear sense of disappointment and public second-guessing about how the first major pest-related rejection of a diplomatic gift was handled. In the New York Times on January 31, 1910, one columnist suggested that, instead of burning the trees, U.S. officials should have had “some carefully arranged accident happen before the time came for setting (the trees) out—an accident of the obviously unavoidable sort,” so as not to embarrass anyone with reports of an infested gift.

The February 6, 1910, edition of the Washington Post characterized public response as “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth” at least among the “esthetically inclined.” At the same time, the article introduced many readers to the costs of pests such as the Hessian fly, San Jose scale, boll weevil, and codling moth.

**A Gift Takes Root**

In the end, Mayor Azaki persisted with his city’s planned gift despite the early setback. Soon after the first shipment was destroyed, Japanese scientists set out to prepare the next shipment. The scientists fumigated and grafted scions selected from trees along the Arakawa River to specially-selected understock.

In March of 1912, a new shipment of 3,000 trees arrived in Washington, D.C. and passed inspection. Another shipment arrived soon after. On March 27, 1912, First Lady Taft and Viscountess Iwa Chinda, wife of Japanese Ambassador Count Sutemi Chinda, planted the first two trees on the “Speedway” (now the corridor of Independence Avenue, SW., in West Potomac Park) with little fanfare and only a few people present.

By the end of that same decade, the Plant Quarantine Act had been passed, USDA’s plant import regulations—now often referred to as the Quarantine 37 regulations—had been implemented, and the Japanese cherry trees were thriving in the Capital City, drawing more tourists with each passing year.

The trees given to the United States by Japan have far outlived—and in many cases more than doubled—their average 40-year life span. To sustain the legacy of Japan’s gift, officials with USDA’s U.S. Arboretum have propagated the original Yoshino trees planted in 1912. Today, a special tree crew with the Department of the Interior’s National Park Service continues to maintain the Japanese cherry trees and nurture the vision of their graceful presence that first blossomed long ago.
Just hearing the words “freedom of information” can make some government employees nervous. For some, the phrase can conjure up unflattering images of files being pulled and of work e-mails being sifted through. Yet, despite the uneasiness the law can inspire, The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) plays an essential role in U.S. democracy and in our efforts to serve the public.

For the agency’s Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIPA) staff every day is a peek into the inner workings of democracy and the flow of information from government to the public. Their work is exacting and meticulous and, at times, can range from highly routine to highly contentious.

“This work is very important, and it takes a lot of focus and a lot of skill,” said Beth Jones, who as Acting Deputy Administrator for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) oversees the FOIPA staff.

“FOIA requests are definitely an agency-wide priority. The Administrator’s Office has put timely responses among the very top issues in APHIS’ Operating Plan,” Jones said.

**FOIPA Basics**

Enacted in 1966, the FOIA law was passed to provide the public with access to records kept by Federal agencies; to give the public insight into how agencies perform their statutory duties; and to increase government accountability.

Under the FOIA, Federal agencies must provide the records they maintain to those who request them as long as the information is not protected from release by one of the FOIA’s nine exemptions. The Privacy Act of 1974 is a separate law that regulates the collection, use, and dissemination of information about individuals maintained by Federal agencies. The FOIPA staff is responsible for administering both laws within APHIS. By far, FOIA requests make up the bulk of the staff’s work.

**FOIPA 101: Processing Requests**

APHIS receives FOIPA requests from various sources: individuals, organizations, the news media, law firms, businesses and even agency employees. The requests, which must be submitted in writing, ask for documents, ranging from permits and licenses to investigative and personnel files, among other records.

When APHIS receives a request, it first goes to the FOIPA director’s office. There, the director reviews the request, and the case is assigned to a FOIPA specialist. The specialist contacts the agency’s programs to ask for the requested documents and set a deadline. After program officials provide the documents to FOIPA, the specialist begins to review the documents and redact, or remove, information that is restricted from disclosure. The

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**Betsy Guardiola: Come On Down!**

Betsy Guardiola, long-time APHIS trainer and Price Is Right! fan, finally got the chance to “Come on Down” and be the next contestant on the game show. Betsy celebrated her appearance again by watching the show’s airing with her Riverdale coworkers in November 2006. “It was just crazy!” said Guardiola about the experience.

Although she didn’t make it to the Showcase Showdown, Guardiola did win her bid for the opening prize and get as far as earning the chance to spin the big wheel. “I had a lot of fun. Bob Barker told me he might have to call Security because I got so excited,” said Guardiola. ◆
Andy Rhorer,APHIS’ director of the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP), was recently honored with the Golden Egg Award presented to him by the Indiana State Poultry Association. The Association surprised Rhorer with the organization’s equivalent of a lifetime achievement award at its annual meeting on February 21.

“It was a kind of shocker. I wasn’t expecting it at all. They announced it, and then up on stage they brought out my family. My kids and grandkids were all there to be a part of it,” said Rhorer.

The Golden Egg follows another recent surprise award presented to Rhorer. In January, the North American Gamebird Association honored Rhorer with its prestigious Exceptional Leadership Award at its annual convention in Orlando, Florida.

Rhorer credits the high value of the NPIP to industry and his extensive networking in the poultry and gamebird community for the recent spate of attention. “I’ve been around poultry for more than 38 years now, and I’ve been exposed to every type of feather,” Rhorer said.

Rhorer has been senior coordinator for NPIP since 1991. NPIP is a cooperative industry–State–Federal program that establishes standards for the evaluation and certification of poultry breeding stock and hatchery products to ensure freedom from egg-transmitted and hatchery-disseminated diseases.

review is line by line and can be arduous as specialists routinely pour over thousands of pages of documents to ensure exempted information is not released.

Turning the Tide

Like many other Federal agencies, APHIS is facing a backlog of incoming requests. Clearing the backlog is no easy task, but the FOIPA staff is turning the tide.

Each year, the number of incoming FOIA requests grow. To keep pace, the FOIPA staff has worked hard to increase its productivity. The staff has 13 specialists and 2 administrative support persons. At any given time, each specialist has approximately 80 pending requests to process.

In fiscal year (FY) 2006, the FOIPA staff received 1,111 requests. They processed 1,197 requests; that’s 62 more than were processed in FY 2005 and an impressive 666 more than were processed in FY 2004.

All Hands Needed

Beth Jones attributes much of the staff’s progress to the greater emphasis placed on the FOIPA by the agency and to the hard work of the FOIPA staff. The staff’s continued success is also firmly linked to the agency’s other programs and to how well they understand the

FOIA and respond to document requests.

“To consistently meet the agency’s FOIA goals, it’s going to consistently take an ‘all hands’ approach,” said Kevin Shea, APHIS Associate Administrator.

“Responding to FOIA requests is an all-APHIS priority. As one of the top goals in the agency’s Operating Plan, it belongs to all of us in the agency. We each need to be prepared do our part,” said Shea.

Agency programs need to make sure that records are handled according to agency guidelines. Also, it is important to remember that when information is requested by the FOIPA staff, the agency’s programs should provide all responsive documents. Withholding documents can later result in lawsuits and/or challenges that obligate the agency to redo the search for records.

Because the relationships between the agency’s programs and the FOIPA staff are so important, the FOIPA staff routinely conducts training and is available to answer questions from program staff. For more information about a specific issue or to schedule training, the FOIPA staff can be reached by telephone at 734-8296.
Robert Huttenlocker
Director, Investigative and Enforcement Services

What is your background?
I have a B.S. degree in finance and an M.B.A., both from George Mason University. I have spent my entire professional career with the U.S. Government, starting in 1989 with the Department of Treasury. In 1990, I moved to a program analyst/compliance officer position with the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). As my first supervisory position, I was hired to head the Program Support Section for AMS’ Fresh Products Branch (FPB) and was later promoted to Assistant Chief of FPB. In 2002, I became director of what is now the Foreign Agricultural Service’s Compliance, Security, and Emergency Planning Division. Finally, I joined APHIS as Director of Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) in November 2006.

How long have you been with APHIS?
I’ve been with APHIS for about 5 months now, and every day has been a “great day to work for APHIS!”

Most memorable APHIS experiences?
This is actually an easy one. On January 18, I was in Raleigh-Durham Airport, my cell phone rang, and it was Dr. Andy Morgan and Under Secretary Knight calling. They needed to speak with an IES investigator about a “hot issue.” It was nearly impossible to hear them. Fortunately, I was able to facilitate the connection, and everything worked out. That certainly is not how I would have envisioned my first interaction with the Under Secretary, but it sure is memorable.

Priorities for the coming months?
I want to learn as much as possible about IES, my staff, and our work in support of APHIS’ programs. In terms of specific goals, I would put getting a handle on IES’ budget at the top of the list. IES’ workload has grown significantly, and we need to be able to increase staffing to respond to the demand for our services. However, we need to make decisions that will allow us to operate within our means over the long term. My second priority is to realign/restructure IES’ regional offices so that they operate as similarly as possible while reducing our employee-to-supervisor ratios. I also want to improve IES’ handling of administrative management-related issues through enhanced expertise and coordination. Finally, I hope to improve communications among IES employees at all levels.

Accomplishment most proud of?
Being appointed into the Senior Executive Service is my proudest personal accomplishment professionally. From a general perspective, I’d also say that it’s very satisfying to have left each of my past organizations in better shape than I found them. I am also very proud of my past accomplishments in improving diversity, particularly at the senior specialist and management levels.

Last book read?
The last book I read was True Speed: My Racing Life by NASCAR champion Tony Stewart. I am currently reading Crossing the Line by IndyCar phenomenon Danica Patrick.

Guilty pleasure?
Only one? I’d say a three scoop sundae at the local Baskin-Robbins or Hershey’s. While I can’t commit to all three flavors, Rocky Road is always involved.

Favorite meal?
If I had to pick one meal, it would be a big steak with melted bleu cheese, a side of grilled shrimp, lump crab meat, or crab imperial, a loaded baked potato, steamed asparagus, and a martini (or two).

Favorite movies?
I’d probably put Top Gun, Gone in Sixty Seconds, Batman Begins, Eight Below, and Walk the Line near the top of my list, as I tend to watch those movies again and again.

Hobbies?
I like to bowl, play basketball, and lift weights. I also collect football and auto racing memorabilia, and I like to attend/watch sporting events.
APHIS employees jumped in with both feet this year to take part in the 2007 HealthierFeds Physical Activity Challenge. Across the agency, more than 150 employees participated in the challenge co-hosted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

While some employees were encouraged by the lure of awards from OPM and the President’s Council, others signed up simply for the sense of personal accomplishment. In the end, the participants benefited simply by feeling healthier and more active.

The Challenge ran from January 18 until April 1 and featured two programs: one for individuals just starting to exercise and become more active, and another for individuals already active and wanting to reach higher levels of physical activity. All Federal employees and their families, as well as Federal retirees and contractors, were encouraged to get involved in the program.

Participants had a lengthy list of activities from which to choose, including walking, running, aerobics, basketball, cycling, and more. Everyone kept track of their activities by completing online activity logs.

For credit under the Challenge, participants provided copies of their activity logs at week four and week eight of the Challenge to their respective Work Life Wellness program coordinator.

APHIS employees again stepped up for fitness, taking part in the HealthierFeds Challenge, which ended April 1. Pictured are agency employees in Raleigh, North Carolina, during last October’s “Focus on Fitness Day.” Adrienne McKie (PPQ) finishes the fitness run/walk. (Photo provided by Work Life Wellness) and week eight of the Challenge to their respective Work Life Wellness program coordinator.

In Their Own Words

Each APHIS program had employees enrolled in the Challenge. Some employees got organized and participated as a group. At the Center for Plant Health Science and Technology in Raleigh, North Carolina, employees formed a group calling itself the “Less-At-Risk” to encourage and support one another.

Quick Tips:

Requesting Leave For Summer Vacation

By Nella Roberts

With summer’s kickoff holiday—Memorial Day—only about 6 weeks away, many of us are starting to think about vacation plans. To help, here are some tips from the MRP Human Resources staff about requesting leave:

- Request leave well in advance. Don’t wait until the week before your vacation.
- Put your request in writing or use email. It’s a good idea to use OPM Form 71, which is available online at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/opm/opm71.pdf
- Clearly outline the date(s) and specific hour(s) you are requesting.
- Don’t make travel reservations or book accommodations until your leave is approved.
- Remember that you may use a combination of various earned leave to cover your absence. This means you may combine and/or use accrued annual leave and/or earned credit hours; compensatory time off in lieu of over time (OT) pay; or compensatory time off for travel (CTOT).
- It’s recommended that you use leave in the following order: use/lose annual leave, earned compensatory time off in lieu of OT pay, and then either earned annual leave, credit hours or CTOT.

If you have additional questions, consult with your supervisor, resource management staff, or servicing Leave and Compensation Team Specialist. Contact information for your team specialist can be found at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/employee_directory/hro_mpls.pdf.
When David Campbell, a chemist in the agency’s Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, tells people that he’s working on synthesizing the sex pheromones of Siberian and rosy Russian moths, some people pause and ask blankly, “Why would you want to do that?” But for Campbell and others, this work is serious pest control business, and it requires the aid of a serious and agile research tool.

Fortunately for him and the rest of APHIS, all agency employees have access to DigiTop, a digital desktop library managed and run by USDA’s National Agricultural Library.

What is DigiTop?

Financially supported by APHIS and other USDA agencies, DigiTop contains thousands of journals and searchable databases. As an information resource, DigiTop is designed to meet the needs of USDA employees who are seeking information from a wide range of publications—ranging from technical scientific journals to popular publications, newspapers, and general reference sources.

Physical Activity Challenge

Continued from page 9

Other agency participants joined the Challenge individually, and some took advantage of being able to have family members participate with them. Bob Stiles, an investigator with the agency’s Investigative and Enforcement Services staff, ran and logged activities with his 18-year old son. “I really enjoyed it….keeping a log helps me stay motivated,” said Stiles.

Stiles, who also has a pair of 14-year old twin boys, admits that his house gets very busy, especially during soccer and basketball season. “We’re all pretty active...Saturdays are real busy around here,” said Stiles.

Denise Davis, an office automation assistant with MRP-Business Services in Raleigh, North Carolina said, “Before the HealthierFeds Challenge, I wasn’t doing much fitness-wise. But, I was about to start a weight loss program.”

Using the Challenge to help with the weight program, Davis reached the Challenge’s Active Lifestyle award level. “Since the Challenge, I have more energy, I feel better, and the weight is coming off,” Davis said.

Mike MaGrone, a computer specialist with Wildlife Services in Olympia, Washington, credits his coworker Diotha West for getting him to participate in the Challenge.

“I’m doing more activity each day, like walking for an additional 30 minutes. I feel better now. I even found myself swimming during my recent vacation,” MaGrone said.

As MaGrone and others experienced, even small increases in daily physical activity can make a difference and may encourage individuals to look for other ways to be more active. Participating in a little bit of activity each day—including doing things such as gardening or playing with your kids that may not typically be thought of as exercise—can add up to improved physical health. It is nice to know that getting more active does not always mean going to the gym and lifting weights. Every little bit of physical activity counts.

Not Too Late for Your Own Challenge

Although the HealthierFeds Challenge ended April 1, employees can still log their activities and keep physically active all year long. Even if you didn’t participate in the Challenge, you can start a new activity log by visiting and registering at the HealthierFeds Web site. The address is http://healthierfeds.presidentschallenge.org. For more information about HealthierFeds and general fitness tips, you can also visit www.healthierfeds.gov.

Keeping an activity log for your own personal challenge can have very real benefits. As one Challenge participant said, “keeping the activity log has been good…I can see my daily progress and consistency. The log motivates me to keep active.”
materials. APHIS users can access its resources from anywhere as long as they’re within a USDA network.

For the research savvy, DigiTop can be thought of as USDA’s version of EBSCOhost, with its focus on scholarly, peer-reviewed literature that has international scope and historical depth.

But, what makes DigiTop different, of course, is that it’s primarily centered around agricultural journals and issues—a feature that makes it very popular with APHIS’ entomologists, veterinarians, and other technical staff.

Again, PPQ chemist David Campbell can attest to DigiTop’s value. Working in the program’s Analytical and Natural Products Laboratory in Gulfport, Mississippi, Campbell carries out research for synthesizing pheromones that is often both complex and time consuming. He frequently finds himself searching for journal articles that are 50 or 60 years old or that are not written in English. With the University of Southern Mississippi’s library more than 75 miles away from his Gulfport office, his research is made all the more challenging.

Using DigiTop saves Campbell valuable time that he can spend carrying out his synthesis.

More than Science

In addition to agricultural science journals, DigiTop subscribes to a wide array of sources covering topics including, among others, general history, the social sciences, health and nutrition, and recent news stories. DigiTop is a valuable resource for any USDA employee trying to keep abreast of current events.

Jerome Patterson, a management analyst with the Facilities and Conference Services Branch staff, uses DigiTop weekly.

“I see DigiTop as a useful tool that allows me to find information that is not so readily available within my division,” says Patterson.

And it’s not just USDA employees that find DigiTop useful, as Lucy Reid, technical information specialist with PPQ’s Plant Epidemiology and Risk Analysis Laboratory (PERAL), has found.

Scientists from other agencies and countries frequently visit PERAL in Raleigh, North Carolina, for pest risk assessment training and call on Reid to assist with the basics of using DigiTop.

“They send people to us from other countries that are interested in doing pest risk assessments for fruit and vegetable commodities they want to export to the United States,” says Reid.

“I train them in the first week that they’re here, and they have the remainder of their visit to get the citations they need. They find it very useful.”

Rising to the Challenge

What happens when you can’t find what you’re looking for? Fortunately, DigiTop has a support staff that can help you. That was the case when Campbell was trying to locate a technical article in a Chinese journal. Not only was it not available on DigiTop, it wasn’t even available in English yet. Campbell called Eileen Welch, an information resource manager and DigiTop liaison, who was able to locate the article and have it translated and sent to Campbell.

Lucy Reid found herself in a similar situation when PPQ laboratory staff began asking how they could get access to a database called “Web of Science.”

She in turn approached DigiTop managers about adding the database to their collection. In response, she was steered to a similar citation tool called Scopus that was already available through DigiTop. When Reid compared the two, she found that the Scopus tool within DigiTop is easier to use and that it produces more results.

“I directed many of the PERAL scientists to it, and everyone seems to be very happy with it,” says Reid. ◆
On February 3, 2007, APHIS launched its newly redesigned Web site. Much more than just a surface makeover, the new site was reworked to match the look and feel of USDA’s Web site and to re-organize content in ways that improve public access to agency information.

“Our hope is that both employees and stakeholders will benefit from the new site and the improved content management,” said Ed Curlett, APHIS’ director of Public Affairs.

APHIS’ Web site is one of the agency’s most important tools for communicating with the public. The new design and its launch took months of planning and hard work by staff in several programs, including Legislative and Public Affairs, Information Technology Division, and the agency’s program web managers.

What’s Been Done?

The new site structures information around the Agency’s various functions, rather than by sorting and separating information strictly along program lines. As a result, the Web site’s top-level pages have undergone a big transformation in both content and organization.

So far, the agency has updated and converted about 85 percent or approximately 8,000 pages of the APHIS Web site to the new design. Work will continue in phases until the remaining pages have been revamped. During the ongoing conversion, agency staff are also reviewing the site’s content, and they are removing or updating information that is repetitive or outdated.

What Does the Reader Gain?

From the perspective of visitors to the Web site, the changes are good news. For employees and stakeholders alike, the redesign project is making information about the agency’s mission, activities, and services more accessible.

When visiting the Web site, you may first notice that the design and navigational features mimic USDA’s site. As required by the Department, the new design helps present a more clear and consistent USDA image to our stakeholders.

With the new design, information is now presented in a way that organizes content more intuitively around the fundamental questions of what does the reader want to do and/or what does the reader want to know? For example, the new structure recognizes that a new visitor to the Web site may want an animal health permit but not know that he or she needs to contact the agency’s Veterinary Services program’s National Center for Import and Export.

The result is a Web site that makes it faster and easier for customers to find what they’re looking for, even if it’s their first visit to the site.

“The layout’s different, but finding information on the new site has been easy,” said Stacie Johnston who works in MRP-Business Services.

What’s Coming? Content Management

Like all other USDA agencies, APHIS is now required to make its web content available in a seamless pass-through to USDA’s Web site. The goal is to create for web users an electronically transparent flow of information from the agencies up to the Department’s site. This means, for example, that when a user is browsing USDA’s site for information on an issue that—unbeknownst to them—is an APHIS issue, the user isn’t visibly referred or linked downward to the agency’s site; instead, the information is pulled seamlessly upward to the user who is accessing the Department’s site. The net effect is that the emphasis on governmental bureaucratic layering is greatly diminished. What emerges in its place is an emphasis on connecting the user to accurate information as quickly and consistently as possible.

This approach to integrating information requires the use of a web content management system to ensure navigational ease and that content is accurate, consistent and not duplicative. With these objectives in mind, APHIS will move all web content to Stellent, the web content management system that will be used throughout all of USDA. Stellent will be used to manage and approve content prior to posting it on the agency’s web site. While Stellent is completely transparent to Web site users, it will help keep APHIS on track with the Department’s goals for integrating information on the web. ◆
Bug Busters: PPQ Collaborates with Indiana State Police

By Gary Roush

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Facts
EAB is a destructive, wood-boring beetle from Asia that infests ash trees and has already resulted in the destruction of more than 20 million U.S. trees. EAB was first detected in southeast Michigan in an adjacent area in Canada in July 2002. The pest was discovered to have spread to Ohio in 2003, to Indiana in 2004, and to Illinois in 2006.

In December 2006, the entire States of Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio were placed under quarantine by a Federal Order, joining the lower peninsula of Michigan. EAB was also detected in 2003 in isolated infestations in nursery stock in Fairfax County, Virginia, and in Prince Georges County, Maryland. EAB larvae were re-discovered in 2006 in ash trees in southern Prince Georges County.

What would you do if you were one of only two regulatory officers assigned to safeguard more than 36,000 square miles of a State quarantined for two very aggressive invasive forest pests? Well, if you’re Rick McKay—a plant health safeguarding specialist in the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program—you would get creative pretty fast and look for ways to build helpful partnerships.

As a 10-year veteran in PPQ, McKay began a new position in Indiana in 2006 to focus primarily on regulatory enforcement efforts for the emerald ash borer (EAB) and gypsy moth quarantines. Faced with the formidable task of regulating the movement of unprocessed wood products such as logs, firewood, and pallets throughout Indiana, McKay decided to seek help from the Motor Carrier Enforcement (MCE) division of the Indiana State Police. MCE officers staff weigh stations and conduct spot checks of commercial vehicles 24 hours a day, to ensure that truckers comply with weight limits and mechanical safety requirements.

Help Wanted
Sensing a potential partner for APHIS’ quarantine activities, McKay broached the idea of a collaborative inspection effort with MCE’s commander, Major Ed Reuter. After explaining PPQ’s limited resources to enforce its quarantine regulations on America’s roads, McKay showed Reuter a tracking sheet he designed to document the movement of regulated articles on Indiana’s roadways. Quickly warming to the idea, Reuter sent copies of the tracking sheet to all of the State’s MCE posts to incorporate into their inspection activities. Reuter then invited McKay and PPQ officers from neighboring regions to participate in MCE’s annual meeting with counterparts from adjoining States. Moreover, MCE designated PPQ’s regulated articles as the primary inspection targets during four cooperative multi-State MCE exercises. PPQ officials participated in all of these two-day exercises, which were held in each corner of the State.

Partnership Brings Results
As a result of McKay and Reuter’s efforts, PPQ officers in Indiana—now a larger staff—often work alongside MCE inspectors at weigh stations and ride along with them on Indiana’s roadways. During one of McKay’s ride-alongs with an MCE officer, they stopped a truck for inspection and found it to be carrying a full load of ash logs from Michigan showing symptoms of EAB infestation. After issuing an Emergency Action Notification, McKay and the MCE officer escorted the truck back to the Michigan State line.

Because of the enhanced regulatory enforcement, McKay believes that industry’s awareness of the quarantine is growing and that compliance has significantly increased in Indiana. This has happened in large part due to the outstanding interagency cooperative spirit of the State Police/MCE inspectors throughout Indiana.

MCE officers throughout the State now fax information to PPQ on as many as 15 incidents each week detailing the movement of regulated articles. Armed with data documenting the commodity, point of departure, and destination, PPQ officers to date have detected four quarantine violations that have resulted in the issuance of administrative stipulations.

To recognize the State’s efforts, McKay recently attended the Indiana State Police’s annual awards ceremony on April 24 to honor Commander Reuter (now retired) and seven MCE inspectors for their outstanding cooperative service.

Building upon the collaborative relationship, MCE has requested that PPQ design training modules to incorporate into their annual in-service training. Training sessions under development for 2007 will focus on regulatory program procedures; documentation of the movement of regulated wood products; and the background, lifestages, and environmental impact of EAB and gypsy moth. ☼
Spring cleaning may bring to mind images of mops, buckets, and brooms, but you may also want to think about your cubicle’s phone, keyboard, mouse, and desktop.

A team of University of Arizona researchers have released several studies since 2002 focused on their sampling of germs and bacteria in office environments. Their latest study, funded by the Clorox Company, ranked the germiest workplace surfaces. Telephones ranked number one on the list, followed by the keyboard, mouse, and desktop.

The group’s earlier 2002 study found some telephones with more than 25,000 germs per square inch and desktops with nearly 21,000 germs per square inch. The group’s studies have repeatedly shown that personal work areas often have higher bacteria levels than common areas at work.

Many people eat lunch or snack at their desk and never think about cleaning it. As lead researcher Dr. Charles Gerba told CNN, “Nobody ever cleans a desktop until they start sticking to it, from what we’ve found.” Add to this the fact that most office cleaning staffs don’t disturb personal work areas to wipe them down, and you have a pretty good recipe for regular contact with germs and bacteria.

Spring Cleaning at Your Desk

By John Scott

With the help of environmental celebrities Woodsy Owl and Woody Weed, organizers of National Invasive Weed Awareness Week are working to spread the word about harmful invasive weeds in the United States. National “Weeds Week” opened this year with a family oriented program hosted by the Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition in cooperation with the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C.

Now in its eighth year, “Weeds Week” brings together representatives from industry associations, professional societies, non-governmental organizations and State and Federal agencies around the common goals of controlling invasive weeds and providing information about them.

This year about 150 attendees, including APHIS and other USDA officials, participated in the full week of events—many of which focused on sharing information, raising weeds awareness, and showcasing successful control strategies from across the country.

Spreading Weeds Awareness

By John Scott

“It’s always a great opportunity for State and local weed authorities to connect all at the same time with Federal agencies and leaders. The events also help bring public focus to the invasive weeds problem,” said Al Tasker, APHIS National Noxious Weed Program Manager.

Wiping Down and Washing Up

Like your kitchen countertop at home, you may want to regularly wipe down your desktop and clean other potentially germie areas in your cube—especially if you’re among those of us who eat lunch or snack at our computers.

The things we touch frequently throughout the day act as transfer points for moving germs and bacteria around by hand. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), germs can live for 2 hours or more on work surfaces like tables and desks. Periodically wiping work surfaces with disinfectant wipes or, if appropriate, warm soapy water will help reduce the amount of germs and bacteria within the reach of your hands.

The other part of the cleanliness equation is to take care of the germs and bacteria that reach your hands before they get any further. This means good old-fashioned handwashing.

The CDC’s advice is to wash hands frequently with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds. As a timer, they suggest washing while you imagine singing “Happy Birthday” twice to a friend.

If washing with soap and water isn’t convenient, CDC recommends using alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers and following the instructions on the product labels.
# APHIS Calendar

## April
- Western Plant Board 2007 Annual Meeting, April 30 through May 3 in Sun River, Oregon.
- Agricultural Quarantine Inspection (AQI)--VMO training, April 30 through May 11 in Riverdale, Maryland. All AQI--VMOs will participate.

## May
- National Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Check e-mail for upcoming events.
- Containment Facility Inspection Training, May 14 in Riverdale, Maryland. Many PPQ field employees will participate.
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) National Leadership Training Conference, May 29 through June 1, in Arlington, Virginia.

## June
- All APHIS: Cybersecurity Awareness Training to be completed by June 30, 2007; curriculum for the 2007 IT Security/Privacy Training is available on http://www.aglearn.usda.gov.
- APHIS Work Life Wellness Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony, June 18–22 in Dallas, Texas.

## July
- Also, visit the APHIS Work Life Wellness Web site (http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wlw) for additional upcoming area activities.

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**Wanted: Your Feedback**

The best way we can make Inside APHIS a newsletter that serves you is to hear from you. So, take a minute and send us an e-mail. Let us know your thoughts about what you see here. Fill us in on your likes, dislikes, or pass along your suggestions and ideas for stories.

Feel free to brag about a coworker. Give us a work tip. Tell us what others may need to know to help build a better APHIS. Or, simply share a story about a rewarding experience or a meaningful thank-you received from the public we serve. Call John Scott, *Inside APHIS* editor, or send your e-mails to: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov
DeHaven Farewell Interview
By James Ivy

Inside APHIS interviewed Administrator Ron DeHaven as he prepares to retire from Federal service and become the Executive Vice President of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. DeHaven looked back on his 28-year career with APHIS with his trademark blend of directness, humor, and deep appreciation for the agency and its employees.

IA: What was your first job with APHIS?
RD: I started with APHIS on September 5, 1979, as a field veterinary medical officer in Kentucky. I had gone through veterinary school with the intention of being a companion animal practitioner and had spent four years in the army. I had very little rural background, and so I was outside of my comfort zone.

IA: What were some challenges you faced?
RD: That was back in the days when we had lots of brucellosis. I dealt with over 400 brucellosis-infected herds in Kentucky, which is remarkable when you consider that today we have just a handful of infected herds in the whole country.

IA: Who were a few of your mentors early in your career?
RD: The first is Bob Geyer, who was the AVIC in Kentucky when I was there. Whatever the stress level, he never lost his sense of humor. I’ve never forgotten that.

Phil Pickerell, the AVIC in Mississippi, taught me that if you do what you believe is the right thing for the right reasons and feel good about it, ultimately when those decisions are questioned, you will be in a good position to defend the actions that you took.

IA: Can you trace the rest of your career?
RD: While serving as the director of field operations for the avian influenza task force in Virginia [in 1983], I started thinking about future management positions. Hence, my next job was as the assistant area veterinarian in charge in Jackson, Mississippi. There, I developed an interest in animal welfare activities. In 1988, I became the regional director for Animal Care in California. Eight years later, I moved to Riverdale and spent five years as the deputy administrator for Animal Care.

Continued on page 2

Animal Care Finds New Homes for Elephants
By Mandi Frederick

On April 2, 2007, former Hawthorn elephants Nic and Gypsy packed their trunks and headed west, moving from Illinois to their new home in Galt, California. With the 2 elephants’ relocation to the Performing Animal Welfare Society’s (PAWS) facility, Animal Care (AC) marked the end of its 3-year search to find adoptive owners for a total of 18 elephants formerly owned by animal exhibitor, the Hawthorn Corporation.

At their new home, Nic and Gypsy now spend their time being trained to have contact with trainers for husbandry procedures, playing in mud wallows, and sharing an occasional watermelon. Although the story ended happily for the pair, the path there was not easy.

It was challenging for AC to find qualified facilities to adopt the Hawthorn elephants. The task was further complicated because several of the elephants had been exposed to human tuberculosis, and two elephants had produced a positive culture for the highly contagious disease.

The Long Road Home
The lengthy relocation effort began in March 2004 when APHIS settled a case with the Hawthorn Corporation for

Continued on page 3
When Mr. Acord became the administrator, he asked that I serve as an acting associate administrator for six months. Then, in April 2002, I became the deputy administrator for Veterinary Services. My time with Veterinary Services culminated with the “cow that stole Christmas” in Washington State. That experience ultimately led to my selection as the administrator in April 2004.

IA: Are there any memories that stand out to you now?
RD: I suspect that I will be most remembered for my role as the public face of USDA in responding to BSE. I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. I think that as a team, from the people battling the snow and ice in Washington State, to the epidemiologist back in Riverdale, to our State counterparts, and a hugely cooperative industry, we all need to chalk that up as a huge success. I just happened to be in a role that was very visible to the public.

IA: Many refer to “before BSE” and “after BSE.”
RD: It’s a defining moment for our agency. It’s when our issues became important to the Secretary and even to the White House. It was tangible evidence that we are key players in the future of agriculture in the United States.

IA: How did you appear so calm in all those press conferences?
RD: As with everyone, I have certain God-given talents. The ability to appear calm and directed when, internally, I might not necessarily have been so calm and directed, is one of those gifts (laughs). I had many people ask, “Didn’t you get angry when you were asked the same question the third or fourth time?” My response was, “No, I just looked at it as another opportunity to reiterate our science-based response to the problem.” Much of learning is by repetition, and in this case, I think that worked in our favor.

IA: Is there anything you think someone reading this might be surprised to learn about you?
RD: Like most supervisors and managers in APHIS, I have done the Myers-Briggs assessment tool. I am an off-the-chart introvert. I suspect that I am still an introvert at heart, but due to experience on the job, I’m much more extroverted than I was say 20 years ago.

IA: How important has all your international travel been to you?
RD: As the Secretary often says, 95 percent of the world’s consumers live outside the United States. International [trade] is where American agriculture is going to grow. At the heart of that growth needs to be a credible, science-based agency that is very visible in interacting with counterparts around the world. That has been the motivation behind much of my international travel. One of the more enjoyable parts of the job has certainly been to get to know my counterparts in their countries and learn about their cultures.

IA: What strikes you most about the APHIS employees you’ve met and talked to during your time as the administrator?
RD: I have been saying—and will continue to say—that this is a great agency and what makes us great is our people. I’ve not been to an APHIS location anywhere in the world where our people weren’t totally enthused about what they were doing. They recognize the importance of our mission and the attitude is, “whatever it takes [to get the job done].” That enthusiasm is just contagious, and it makes me proud.

IA: Is that why everyday is a great day to work for APHIS?
RD: It is—because of our people and the importance of what we do.

IA: What are some of the things you’ll be doing at the AVMA?
RD: I’m extremely sad to leave APHIS. It has been 28 years of satisfying, rewarding, important work, and I leave the agency with nothing but admiration and fond memories. It’s been 28 years of great days!

At the same time, I’m excited about the opportunities as the Executive Vice President of the AVMA. The organization recognizes that, from a strategic standpoint, they need to focus on food supply veterinary medicine, the increasingly frequent intersection between animal health and public health, and other areas like the welfare of production farm animals. This is consistent with my background and what we have been working on in APHIS. I see my role to provide the leadership in AVMA to focus on these strategically important areas and, in doing so, help the veterinary profession meet the needs of our society in the future. ♦
Animal Care Finds New Homes

Continued from page 1

violating the Animal Welfare Act. Under the terms of the consent decision and order, Hawthorn paid a $200,000 fine and agreed to donate the entire elephant herd to other facilities. Although the decision was a regulatory accomplishment for AC, it quickly became a steep logistical challenge.

Facilities interested in adopting elephants had to meet many requirements—some of them quite costly—before AC could consider them as a potential adoptive home.

Eligible facilities had to have quarantine housing for tuberculosis-positive or -exposed elephants and had to employ personnel trained in administering anti-tuberculosis drugs and performing trunk washes—a method used to collect tuberculosis testing samples. Additionally, facilities had to be non-traveling and not permit public contact with the elephants.

Then, there was the financial hurdle. Caring for a healthy elephant costs as much as $10,000 a year, and that’s just for food. Depending on the health issues that arise, the annual drug costs for a tuberculosis-exposed elephant can add an additional $50,000 in expenses.

Due to the requirements, the list of facilities willing and able to adopt an elephant was sparse.

Hard Work Pays Off

Successfully placing members of the herd required the collaboration of several staffs, including AC, Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES), and USDA’s Office of the General Counsel (OGC). Working together, they managed to find homes for the entire herd.

Of the 18 elephants, 2 (Nic and Gypsy) went to the PAWS facility, 1 went to an individual licensed exhibitor, 1 to the Endangered Ark Foundation, and 11 to the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. Unfortunately, four of the elephants covered under the order died prior to or shortly after being placed in their new homes.

As APHIS officials searched for new elephant homes, the herd attracted the attention of TV personality Bob Barker. Barker, known for his commitment to animal welfare and his TV game show *The Price is Right*, pledged $500,000 to help PAWS build a habitat for Nic and Gypsy in San Andreas, California. The new habitat will include a barn, a lake, trees, and abundant vegetation. The site will be built on PAWS’ 2,300 acre sanctuary. In the meantime, Nic and Gypsy are content playing in their mud wallow, and the AC team can finally congratulate themselves on a job well done.

APHIS would like to thank the following people for their hard work on behalf of the relocated elephants: Eastern Regional AC Director Betty Goldentyer; Veterinary Medical Officers Ken Kirstein, Susan Kingston, and Barbara Kohn; Animal Care Inspector Chad Moore; Supervisory Animal Care Specialist Cathy Hovansack; Field Specialist for elephants Denise Sofranko; IES Investigator Harry Dawson; and Bernadette Juarez with OGC.

New “LincPass” ID cards are coming soon for all APHIS employees and contractors. Beginning this fall, agency officials will be issuing the new smartcard IDs. Named in honor of Abraham Lincoln, the LincPass is USDA’s answer to new ID requirements for all Federal employees and contractors.

As a smartcard—meaning it’s capable of holding an employee’s security information—the LincPass ID cards are highly secure and will be used by cardholders to enter USDA and other Federal facilities and to access agency computer systems.

In addition to the security benefits, the cards will ease the password burden for employees who juggle numerous passwords. When a LincPass ID card is docked in a computer’s card reader (to be provided soon), the computer will prompt the user for only a single sign-on for system and application access.

Watch your e-mail for additional information as the cards are issued.
As a second-year vet student in 1991, APHIS’ Julie Gauthier got to see firsthand what only a few second-year students ever see and what all U.S. producers hope never to lay their eyes on.

Gauthier, along with other students participating in Veterinary Services’ (VS) Smith-Kilborne Program, saw firsthand the devastation caused by several of the major foreign animal diseases that threaten the health of U.S. livestock and poultry.

For Gauthier, who is now a VS field veterinarian covering southeast Florida, the impression has been a lasting one.

Participating in VS’ Smith-Kilborne Program, she visited USDA’s biologically secure facilities on Plum Island and saw foot-and-mouth disease, avian influenza, classical swine fever, and other highly damaging diseases face to face.

“At that point in my life, it was one of the most important things I’d ever done,” said Gauthier.

“The program really opened my eyes to regulatory veterinary medicine….Without it, I may never have pursued my job with VS. It’s a great program.”

Focus on Foreign Animal Disease

The Smith-Kilborne program, which began in 1990, is an outreach and education program that gives second year veterinary students educational experiences and insights that aren’t available in vet school. The program’s emphasis is intensively upon foreign animal diseases. Course content consists of practical laboratory experiences combined with discussions facilitated by seasoned veterinary professionals and experts.

Typically, the program’s class size is 28, 1 student from every U.S. veterinary school. This year, with the intent of fostering international veterinary expertise, the program included for the first time two international students—one from Rwanda, the other from the Ivory Coast. Both attend the International Veterinary School in Dakar, Senegal.

Students in the 2007 program, which just ended June 5, attended discussion sessions held at Cornell University during the first four days of the program and spent the remainder of the week in activities on Plum Island. There, students participated in diagnostic workshops, observed the progression of clinical signs for major animal diseases, practiced sampling techniques, and performed necropsies.

“I was able to see diseases and lesions—things that once you see, you never forget,” said Shanna Seals, who just completed the program. Seals starts her third year of veterinary school this fall at Texas A&M. “It’s very different from a book when you get the chance to see, touch, feel and even smell them.”

According to Jason Baldwin, VS’ lead coordinator for the program, the program’s goals are both practical and important to U.S. animal health. The goals are to help future veterinarians recognize foreign animal diseases, understand what happens when detections occur, and be prepared for what their roles may be—either as a private practitioner or as a Federal veterinary professional dealing with public health issues.

“Students come to this program and are in awe of what they do and what they see firsthand,” Baldwin said. “Most vet schools don’t spend much time at all on transboundary diseases and emergency management and response.”

Gauthier echoed Baldwin’s observation. “During school, we spent just a couple days on foreign animal diseases and only practiced sampling methods for certain diseases once or twice.”

In addition to gaining technical veterinary experience, program participants also develop other critical skill sets and gain greater appreciation for career opportunities as a Federal veterinarian. Throughout the program’s discussions and simulations of disease outbreak scenarios, students polish their communication skills. As a requirement for completing the course, each student must return to their veterinary school and give a presentation related to their experience in the Smith-Kilborne Program.

Shanna Seals plans to give two presentations when she returns to school in the fall, a technical disease presentation and an overview of the Smith-Kilborne program and its benefits.

“The program really opened my horizons to see what I can do as a veterinarian,” said Seals. She added enthusiastically, “It helped me see the bigger picture and it makes you want to get out there and save the world.”

Shanna Seals (above) and other vet students got hands-on experience visiting Plum Island as part of Veterinary Services’ 2007 Smith-Kilborne program.
During his March 2006 visit to India, President Bush declared his intention to open the U.S. market to Indian mangoes—and APHIS shifted its rulemaking gears into overdrive to allow the mangoes to ship the following year. In March 2007, APHIS published a final rule that fulfilled the President’s vision while ensuring the mangoes posed minimal risk to U.S. agriculture.

“We could move with this unprecedented speed because we already had a priority system and an intra-agency coordinating group in place,” says Lottie Erikson, Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) trade director for India. “Still, it was a heroic team effort.”

As Erikson negotiated work plans throughout the process, the regulatory baton passed from unit to unit. First, PPQ’s Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST) assessed the plant health risks, and then PPQ’s Commodity Import Analysis and Operations analyzed possible risk mitigators. Once Policy and Program Development’s (PPD) Regulatory Analysis and Development drafted the proposed rule, PPD’s Risk Analysis Systems prepared the economic and environmental assessments. After the final rule’s publication, PPQ’s Quarantine Policy Analysis and Support established a pre-clearance program.

“This was a presidential initiative,” Erikson says. “That kept everyone extremely focused.”

Under the rule, Indian mangoes must be irradiated to neutralize the mango seed weevil, a serious threat to U.S. agriculture. Irradiation became an official pest mitigation option in January 2006 after APHIS established a standard radiation dose for fruits and vegetables. The rule marked the first time CPHST has certified a foreign irradiation facility to allow the import of irradiated fruit.

As of July 13, India has sent 133 mango shipments to the United States under the new rule.

**Tasting the Fruits of Their Labor**

PPQ hosted a small gathering in Riverdale to mark the completion of the final rule that allows Indian mangoes to enter the United States. Numerous PPQ and PPD employees, as well as guests, were on hand to celebrate with a mango tasting.

Alan Green, director of PPQ’s Plant Health Programs, congratulated attendees for their efforts. “This has been a very gratifying project. Each of you here worked hard to make this happen,” said Green.

Dr. Bhaskar Savani, president of Savani Farms, attended the event and, as the first importer of Indian mangoes, commended the agency staff for their work. “I’ve met lots of wonderful people in APHIS doing this,” he said.

Participants sampled fresh mangoes and mangoes prepared as yogurt drink, custard, and rolls. Savani noted the importance of the new rule to the Indian community in the United States. “Everyone in the Indian community is joyous. Mangoes are a cultural part of our community,” said Savani. 

**Did You Know?**

Did you know that APHIS employees conducted more than 570 inspections for Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program in calendar year 2006?

APHIS officials perform inspections to make sure genetically engineered products that are being field tested are grown and handled according to agency regulations. They also conduct movement/facility inspections for certain products that are being moved, imported, and stored.

During site visits, inspectors verify, among other things, that developers are keeping appropriate records, observing isolation distances, and following confinement measures and harvesting procedures.
“So You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor?”
The question might sound like a throwing-down-the-gauntlet verbal challenge, but in fact it’s the title of a new training seminar for APHIS employees contemplating possible futures as supervisors.

Piloted in March 2007, the 2-day seminar—which might more descriptively be titled as “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Being a Supervisor (But Were Afraid to Ask)”—is part of the APHIS Enhancing Supervisory Effectiveness initiative, a new move to strengthen the abilities of current and future supervisors. As you may recall from Dr. DeHaven’s all-APHIS e-mail of March 22, the APHIS Management Team (AMT) undertook this move after analyzing the results of the Organizational Assessment Survey conducted agency-wide in 2005. Workgroups explored three areas: hiring the people best suited to be supervisors, giving supervisors the necessary tools to succeed, and assessing supervisory performance and rewarding success.

The “So You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor?” course was designed to give prospective supervisors a sense of what they might be getting into. APHIS sensed a need for such a course after surveying new supervisors about their experiences; the survey showed that people weren’t always fully aware of what their new positions were going to entail, or of the specific skills they would need to succeed in their new roles. As Karen Benham of APHIS Human Resources puts it, “Many employees don’t recognize that when they are selected for supervisory positions, they are actually entering a whole new occupation.”

The course covers numerous topics, among them the difference between being a technical expert and being a supervisor, the importance of delegation skills, methods of identifying and setting priorities, techniques for managing projects, and strategies for supervisors to bridge the gaps between their own personality types and those of their employees.

In addition to encouraging prospective supervisors to learn about what such jobs entail and to evaluate their own suitability, the Enhancing Supervisory Effectiveness initiative also seeks to improve the hiring process. By screening for the right things, management can help ensure that they select the candidates who will make strong supervisors. This is particularly important in light of the need for succession planning.

The Enhancing Supervisory Effectiveness initiative also envisions the expansion of the current Fundamentals of APHIS Human Resource Management (FAHRM) training program, which all new supervisors go through shortly after entering their positions. In addition, it encourages ongoing education for supervisors, and the development of mentoring programs for new and prospective supervisors.

With the new multilevel performance-based rating system in place, APHIS is working to revise the standards used to grade supervisors to more fully reflect supervisors’ responsibilities for helping their employees develop. And whereas in the past awards have typically recognized technical accomplishments, APHIS is looking at new ways to recognize accomplishments in the supervisory arena.

Karen Benham describes the shift from the old supervisory concept to the new one as a “culture change.” While accomplishing this change poses a significant challenge, the AMT believes that enhancing the quality of supervision will enhance the quality of everyone’s day-to-day work experience.

Farmer’s Markets Now in Full Swing

To find a market near you, visit www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/ for more information.

As a reminder, headquarters’ employees can easily reach the Riverdale Market hosted weekly on Thursdays at the Riverdale Park Town Center from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Eastern Region hub employees in Raleigh, North Carolina, are nearest to the Raleigh State Farmers Market located on Agriculture Street.

Western Region hub employees in Fort Collins, Colorado, have three markets from which to choose. They are: the Drake Road Farmers Market, the Fort Collins Farmers Market, and the Larimer County Farmers Market.

Check the Web site above for hours of operation and additional markets in your area.
Prall’s Island: The Race to Remove Over 3,000 Trees

By Suzanne Bond

Since it began, the agency’s New York Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Cooperative Eradication Program has put its Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) employees in some interesting spots. The wooded depths of Central Park, the rooftop gardens of elite Fifth Avenue penthouse apartments, and the urban streetscapes of Queens and Brooklyn to name a few.

This spring, the New York ALB Program added a new place to its list of locations for program activities—one that’s far less developed. Prall’s Island is an uninhabited, undeveloped island, located just off of Staten Island. Because the small island has no dock and is accessible only by boat, PPQ employees had to go ashore wearing hip waders and hand-carrying much of their gear.

After ALB infested trees were discovered on Prall’s Island in March, what followed became a herculean effort to bring personnel and equipment to the 88-acre island. The project’s timetable was tight. The program needed to cut and chip roughly 3,000 ALB host trees to destroy beetle larvae and curtail the beetles’ spread to nearby Staten Island. And, the work had to be completed before the approaching nesting season for area shorebirds.

“The island itself is a bird sanctuary. Although we had good information that herons had not nested there for some time, our challenge still was to safely remove all host trees in time for it to be available to any birds that might want to nest there,” said Christine Markham, APHIS’ national director for the ALB Eradication Program.

The New York ALB Program’s partners at the local, State, and Federal levels had to work closely and at a brisk pace to coordinate their many efforts. They had to secure the needed permits, as well as coordinate manpower, equipment, water transportation, and handle lodging and meals for 50 people.

Using the Incident Command System (ICS), the program also established staging areas, an incident headquarters, and started tree removal efforts on the island—all within only 20 days after the first signs of infestation were found by APHIS ALB inspectors.

“We brought in a team from upstate New York who are very experienced with the Incident Command System,” said Jim Gilmore, incident commander for the Prall’s Island ALB Eradication Project. Gilmore is Region 2 Program Supervisor for Natural Resources, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Many of the men and women from NYSDEC came largely from the heavily forested regions of upstate New York.

“They do incident response as a full time job during forest fires and search and rescue operations,” Gilmore said. “That is the beauty of ICS, no matter what the incident, these guys can handle it.”

Additional project personnel came from APHIS, the U.S. Forest Service, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

The Buckeye Staging Area

On March 27th at 7 a.m., about 35 people from the project’s cooperating agencies gathered on Staten Island in a grassy field. As a staging area, the industrial property itself was accessible only through a winding gravel path, which is gated and locked by its owners to prevent trespassing. At the path’s end, the project’s ICS field operation headquarters, known as the Buckeye Staging Area, overlooked the Arthur Kill River. From the marshy, debris-strewn shore, workers could easily see but not reach Prall’s Island just a few hundred feet away.

To get back and forth to the island, crews had to use a variety of small watercraft, from a john boat to a larger harbor patrol craft manned by NYSDEC police. All of the boats carried people plus the chain saws, chaps, helmets, backpacks, machetes, and other equipment needed for their long day’s work.

Continued on page 8
Men and women tapped for the eradication project gathered daily for briefings outside an olive drab tent hastily pitched at the Buckeye Staging Area. There, a map was posted showing Prall’s Island divided into operational sectors. Work started in two sectors, beginning at the northern end of the chili pepper-shaped island and moving southward during the first week of operations.

Daily morning briefings were the norm for the 2-week effort. The key word for every briefing was safety. Each day personnel were reminded of potential hazards—dehydration in the extreme heat, poison ivy, scrapes, scratches, infection, insect bites, and of course, accidents with chain saws and heavy equipment. Given the working conditions, an emergency medical technician was on hand for any mishaps needing medical attention.

“Safety was a major concern because of the remoteness and danger inherent in working around chippers and chainsaws. I am pleased to say that the only injuries we had were minor scrapes and scratches from branches and other vegetation,” said Joe Gittleman, New York ALB Program Co-Director. “The worst thing people got was poison ivy.”

Prall’s Island

During the 2-week project, crews from the cooperating agencies worked side by side to remove ALB host trees, mostly birches and maples. Though most trees cut were less than 10 inches in diameter, the work was labor intensive. Teams had to cut, inspect, and haul trees to chippers and track the numbers and species of trees removed.

Maneuvering people and chipping equipment around the rugged island was difficult. Except for the occasional faded deer trail, there were no existing paths. The crews’ every step was met with weeds, briars, blackberry thickets, reeds, and the ubiquitous trailing thorny wild rose vines. By the project’s end, many pants and shirt sleeves were shredded by the island’s rampant thorny vines.

“It was very hard going with all the rugged landscape that the crews had to overcome. They were a very well-equipped and very hardworking and experienced staff,” said Diane Schuble, PPQ supervisor for the New York ALB Cooperative Eradication Program.

Wood chips from the completed project were left on the island. Re-growth is expected to take place naturally and fairly quickly. Local governments are seeking grants to replant non-ALB host tree species on the island in a continuing effort to improve nesting habitat for herons and other wading birds.

“All in all, this operation was a great success. The various agencies worked well together,” said Markham. “We were able to finish the project in time for the herons and other birds to nest. And, we removed ALB host trees before the larvae could emerge as adult beetles and spread to other host trees on nearby Staten Island.”

PPQ Employee Honored

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program employee JoAnn Cruse recently received a USDA GLEAC Award. The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council (GLEAC) recognized Cruse for, among other efforts, her exemplary Civil Rights leadership in coordinating an intergovernmental presentation regarding sexual orientation in the workplace. Cruse, who is PPQ’s Wisconsin State Plant Health Director, is the first ever APHIS/MRP employee to earn the GLEAC Award.
Interior Honors Wildlife Services’ Wolf Management Practices

By Greg Rosenthal

The U.S. Department of the Interior presented its Cooperative Conservation Award to Wildlife Services on May 9, 2007, in Washington, D.C., recognizing APHIS’ outstanding contributions to the Federal Wolf Control Program in Minnesota. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne celebrated the wolf program’s impressive achievement: the de-listing of the western Great Lakes area gray wolf population from the Federal list of threatened and endangered species.

Co-recipients of the award included six government agencies and three nonprofit organizations. Close cooperation was crucial to their accomplishment, according to Bill Paul, Wildlife Service’s assistant State director for Minnesota. The wolf recovery partnership also included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, International Wolf Center, Timber Wolf Alliance, and Timber Wolf Information Network. Paul accepted the award for APHIS.

Wildlife Services biologists developed wolf damage management practices in Minnesota that have become a model for wolf recovery programs nationwide. Paul notes that, as Minnesota’s wolf population rebounded from 500 to more than 3,000, many farmers viewed the predators as a threat to their livelihood. “We really acted as a mediator,” he says. “We addressed wolf-livestock conflicts and helped increase public tolerance by becoming wolf educators.”

To Paul, the award means much more than simply a plaque. “Wolves in the western Great Lakes region were the first gray wolf subspecies to be de-listed,” he notes. “I felt that, for some of us who have been in wolf management for so long, it was like receiving a lifetime achievement award.”

As an alternative to clicking and “mousing around” on your computer to get work done, here are some common keyboard shortcuts for Windows that you can use. Some people use them for their convenience, others for their speed. Try a few out and see if making them part of your workday helps get things done a little easier.

For more keyboard shortcuts, you can visit http://support.microsoft.com/kb/126449.

- Ctrl + z = undo the last command
- Ctrl + s = save file
- Ctrl + c = copy
- Ctrl + v = paste
- Ctrl + b = bold
- Ctrl + u = underline
- Ctrl + i = italic
- Alt + Tab allows you to cycle through open program windows on your computer. By pressing and holding Alt while hitting Tab, you can quickly get to the other programs you are working in.
- Ctrl + F4 closes the active file window you are working in, but does not quit the software application.
- Alt + F4 closes the active file window and quits the application that you are working in.
- If you have a keyboard with a windows logo key (usually next to the left Alt key), you can use the windows logo key + D to minimize all open windows and display your desktop. Using the same keyboard combination returns you to your previous view.
- For securing open files when you step away from your desk, hit the window logo key + L to lock your desktop. This locks your window view to the screen that prompts you for your password to regain access to your open programs.
- F10 activates menu bar options at the top of your application window. Using the up/down and right/left arrow keys, you can choose a menu command and hit enter.
If you work in Riverdale, you may have seen it once or twice. You may even have asked coworkers in neighboring cubicles if they’ve seen it, too: the cleaning staff emptying a recycling bin into a trash cart already brimming with regular trash.

At first glance, it may look like your best recycling intentions have been wasted. But that’s not the case, according to Lori Miller, environmental protection program manager with the agency’s Employee Services Division.

Under the agency’s contract with Consolidated Waste Industries (CWI)—a Maryland-based solid waste and recycling contractor—nearly 100 percent of the trash, paper products and other recyclables generated at the agency’s Riverdale headquarters is sorted, separated, and processed by the company at their facilities after leaving the building. In short, with the exception of kitchen waste from the Harvest Café, all of the trash and recycling at headquarters leaves Riverdale together in one truck, but it doesn’t stay that way for long.

**How it Works**

Riverdale’s cleaning staff collects trash daily from workstations throughout the building. They also collect trash from elsewhere—such as the cafeteria, lounges, and bathrooms—but this trash is bagged separately.

As needed, the cleaning staff also empties the large recycling cans and bins that are stationed throughout the building for collecting office paper, cans, bottles, and plastics. Often, these sorted items are bagged or handled in bulk as they are carted to the loading dock.

At the loading dock, all of the collected items are put into a single large dumpster that is trucked away by CWI about once a week.

At the company’s facility in Capitol Heights, the entire dumpster’s contents are loaded onto a conveyer and then sorted by hand and also mechanically to separate paper, cans, cardboard, plastics, and glass for recycling. The trash that’s left after sorting is taken to landfills.

“The ‘all-in-one-bin’ idea sounds odd to most people,” Miller said. “But companies like CWI have found that they can’t count on people to sort things, so they figured out cost-effective ways to do it at the receiving end. As a business, the money incentive is there. The more they sort, the more they can recycle and resell.”

According to CWI’s estimate, about 85 percent of the trash from the agency’s headquarters is recycled. Using data from comparable office buildings, the company’s estimate is based on a comparison of gross trash weight received versus the net weight of recycled product processed for re-sale. Given the nature of the work done in Riverdale, the bulk of the recycled material is office paper.

**Why Sort Recyclables at All?**

If CWI sorts everything, why use recycling bins? The answer’s pretty simple.

“The fact that CWI sorts everything is great, but the more we do here, the better it is for our recycling efforts and for the environment,” Miller said.

By sorting items, Riverdale employees increase the overall amount of material—especially white office paper—that can be cleanly recycled with minimal processing. That’s good news for the environment. The pre-sorted materials that arrive at CWI’s facility are more efficiently reclaimed for use as high-grade product for recycling. This means, for example, that the more office paper that’s pre-sorted and not mingled with other waste, the more easily it can be recycled once again into office paper instead of lower grade paper stock.

**What You Should Do**

As much as possible, Riverdale employees should use the large, shared recycling containers in the general services rooms to collect office paper. Staples do not need to be removed. In the lounges, large bins—previously used to collect only cans—are now used to collect cans, bottles, and plastics. Although Riverdale does not have designated collection points for newspaper, magazines, junk mail, and cardboard, employees can place these items in the regular trash and know that they will be sorted and recycled by CWI.

*Continued on page 11*
**APHIS Manager Profile**

**Kathy Fagerstone**  
Manager  
Invasive Species and Technology Development Research Program  
Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center

**What is your background?**  
I was born and raised in Colorado. I have a B.S. degree in zoology and a M.S. and Ph.D. in biology. I have spent my entire professional career with the U.S. Government as a wildlife biologist, first with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), then with APHIS. While with the USFWS, I conducted field research projects on prairie dogs, ground squirrels, and the endangered black-footed ferret.

**How long have you been with APHIS?**  
I’ve been with APHIS since 1986. In the early 1990s I became a research program manager. My current title is Manager, Invasive Species and Technology Development Research. I currently oversee a number of projects and field stations conducting research to look at cost/benefits of wildlife damage management, to develop contraceptive techniques for wildlife, to develop analytical chemistry methods, and to develop methods to manage invasive species in Florida and Hawaii and Guam, including the brown tree snake.

**Most memorable APHIS experience?**  
Probably that would be working with the brown tree snake in Guam. I had never worked with snakes before or spent time working in jungle conditions. The heat and humidity are intense, the spiders are huge, and it is extremely hard to get around. But, as one of my colleagues says, “Guam is good.”

**Priorities for the coming months?**  
The research center has just gone through a realignment that gave me oversight of additional projects. I want to make sure that transition goes smoothly. In addition, the program will be submitting data to register an immunocontraceptive with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase options for the management of overabundant white-tailed deer. We are excited about providing a new tool for Wildlife Services.

**Accomplishment most proud of?**  
When I first took the research program manager’s position, all of the pesticides that Wildlife Services uses were going through the re-registration process with the EPA. I am very proud that we were able to provide data to maintain all of those important tools.

**Last book read?**  
The last serious book I read was *Death by Meeting*, which is a light-hearted look at what makes a good meeting and when to have different kinds of meetings. For fun, I am currently re-reading the sixth Harry Potter book before the seventh book comes out.

**Guilty pleasures?**  
Sharing popcorn in the evening with the dogs. They sit in front of me and beg until I fix a bag—they get three bowls to my one.

**Favorite meal?**  
Juevos Migas at Las Chosas in Cozumel. This is a little, out-of-way open air restaurant with the best food I’ve ever eaten. At home, fondue is a fun meal to fix.

**Favorite movies?**  
The whole family enjoys the Harry Potter movies. I also really like BBC’s The Blue Planet series.

**Hobbies?**  
Scuba diving—whenever we can afford to go. At home, I enjoy bike riding in the summer and skiing in the winter. ♦

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**Recycling**  
Continued from page 10

Riverdale employees can contact Lori Miller to obtain small boxes for office paper, which can be kept at workstations and then emptied into the larger bins in the general services rooms. Some general services rooms also have buckets and instructions for recycling batteries. Riverdale’s Environmental Management Committee is also working on a recycling program for used toner cartridges to benefit the daycare.

At other APHIS facilities, recycling programs vary. Numerous facilities have also formed Environmental Management Committees to develop and promote recycling programs and other environmental-related activities. For information about your facility’s committee or to form a new committee, you can e-mail Lori Miller or Tom Franklin in the Employee Services Division. ♦
With the shrill cry of a train whistle and a hearty call of “All Aboard,” the 2007 Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) Safety and Health Conference and Training Symposium held in Kansas City, Missouri, was off and chugging down the tracks.

From April 23–26, the agency’s National Safety and Health Council, and the Safety, Health and Employee Wellness Branch (SHEWB) hosted the 2007 conference. With the theme “On Track with Safety,” the conference was the place to be to network about MRP safety initiatives and learn more about safety and health topics.

**For Your Safety and Health**

Beginning in 2005, conference organizers enlivened the yearly Safety and Health Conference and Training Symposums with a new format. What used to be simply a safety and health update held in a single room has become a multi-tiered training opportunity for all of MRP.

With nearly 200 attendees, the 2007 conference was well attended by APHIS employees as well as those from our MRP sister agencies: the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration.

“The conference is a chance for all of those who work to keep MRP employees safe, healthy, and well—and those who work on environmental protection—to come together. We get to network and share information,” said Juanda Rogers, APHIS’ designated agency safety and health officer (DASHO). “Participants learn from each other, which helps save time and money. By sharing information, people see that they don’t have to reinvent the wheel to develop a new safety or health program.”

To best fit their specific training needs, attendees had the option of selecting up to five workshops from a full schedule of training sessions. Workshop topics included: office ergonomics, risk assessment and job hazard analysis, hazardous noise and hearing conservations, transportation management, USDA Operations Center, healthy lifestyle choices, managing conflict and communication, preventing back injury, and more. Pre-conference training courses were also offered the day prior to the official kick off.

“…We all learned a lot and were disappointed we couldn’t make all the sessions—it was hard to choose from all the subjects,” said Sue Wageman, Veterinary Services’ area veterinarian in charge in Nebraska.

**Safety, Health, and Environmental Awards**

The annual awards banquet was held on the last night of the conference. Dr. W. Ron DeHaven thanked all those in the room for their commitment to safety, acknowledging that most do these duties in addition to their normal assignments. Showing his lighter side, Dr. DeHaven followed with a humorous slide presentation on what not to do to be safe.

Staying at the podium, Dr. DeHaven next presented the annual safety, health and environmental awards. To view a complete list of award recipients, select and open the file Awards.pdf attached to this file.

**Make Your Plans for Next Year**

Plans are already underway for the 2008 conference tentatively scheduled for April 2008 in Charlotte, North Carolina. PPQ employee and union representative for the National Association of Plant Protection and Quarantine Support Employees’ Union, Doreen Lewis, has stepped up to chair the Conference Planning Committee.

Conference registration typically takes place in February and March. All employees will receive information via e-mail as we approach the conference registration period.

**Special Thanks**

This year’s conference planning team was chaired by Wildlife Services’ Steve Greiner. A special thanks goes out to Greiner and the National Safety and Health Council and the SHEWB for all their hard work in planning the 2007 conference.
Ants Go Marching
By Gary Roush

“Ants never sleep.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Does it ever seem that ants quietly aspire to inherit the earth? While ants can be easily overlooked, they are an important part of many natural ecosystems. However, problems arise when non-native ants hitch a ride to foreign locales—often through shipping and other trade activities. When these “tramp” ant species invade new areas, they can decimate existing ecosystems, cause millions of dollars in damage to agriculture, and even pose a substantial threat to human health, which can negatively affect vital tourism.

The Pacific region—with its tropical/subtropical climates, lack of natural predators, multitude of islands, and explosion of shipping activity related to the globalization of trade—is proving to be an area particularly susceptible to colonization by invasive ant species. Fragile island environments are especially vulnerable to invasive ants. Once invasive ant colonies are established, they provide launching points from which colonies can spread to other areas or islands, typically as a result of human activity. Some Pacific region countries have spent millions of dollars conducting difficult eradication programs for invasive ants.

To help stop the spread of these pests, APHIS—along with the Hawaii Department of Agriculture—hosted the First International Pacific Invasive Ant Conference, in Hawaii from May 22–25, 2007. At the conference, 125 scientists and researchers affiliated with national and State governments, educational institutions, and regional, non-governmental, and private organizations met to share strategies and advice and to bring focus on ants as an emerging international invasive species issue. Attendees came from throughout the Pacific, including China, New Zealand, Australia, various Pacific island nations, Hawaii, and the U.S. mainland.

The conference focused primarily on three ant species that present acute problems in the Pacific region—the red imported fire ant, little fire ant, and yellow crazy ant (crazy ants are so-named for their erratic, seemingly random movements).

Given the difficulty and expense of eradication efforts, conference attendees devoted much of their attention to discussing the benefits of implementing comprehensive preventive measures and offshore management to keep the pests at bay.

“The emphasis on prevention is key. Everyone gains when we can get together and discuss how to prevent sharing ants,” said Carol Russell, one of the Plant Protection and Quarantine program’s lead coordinators for the conference. “Conferences like this remind all of us of our responsibility to help protect others. No one wants to be the global supplier of fire ants.”

Conference participants also had the chance to share their own experiences with detecting new ant infestations and developing eradication strategies that have been successful in their countries.

Delegates from Taiwan described their use of innovative control measures, including successfully training and using detector dogs to sniff out infestations of red imported fire ants. Representatives from Australia and New Zealand reported on the progress made in eradicating fire ant infestations from those countries.

Feedback on the conference has been positive, fueling interest in organizing similar meetings in the future. Because of the importance of the issue and because so many participants found the exchange of information highly valuable, delegates from two countries—Australia and New Zealand—have already volunteered to host a future conference for the group.
Beginning in 2002, APHIS’ Ag-Discovery program has each year given participating students an experience well worth writing home about.

Ag-Discovery is an APHIS outreach program designed to help teenagers, ages 12 to 17, learn about careers in plant and animal science and wildlife management. The program introduces students from all backgrounds and from all over the country to an active and diverse learning environment. Since APHIS launched the Ag-Discovery program in Mississippi on the campus of partnering institution Alcorn State University, the program has grown. In addition to Alcorn, four other leading institutions now host Ag-Discovery camps. Other host universities include: Florida A&M University, Kentucky State University, North Carolina State University, and the University of Maryland, College Park.

The Ag-Discovery program gives students hands-on experiences through lab exercises, workshops, and field trips. Many APHIS programs—including Animal Care, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, Legislative and Public Affairs, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), Veterinary Services, and Wildlife Services—sponsor program events or conduct activities for participating students. Students live on campus for 2 to 3 weeks and learn about various agricultural disciplines and get the chance to apply what they’ve learned.

“Agriculture really is all around us every single day,” said Chester Gipson, deputy administrator for the Animal Care program. “It’s critical that we reach out to diverse groups of students and help them understand APHIS’ role in agriculture and how it impacts their daily lives.”

Many of the students participating in the program have never been on a farm before or interacted with livestock or other animals shown at exhibits and aquariums. “It’s truly an eye-opening experience for the students, and it’s an exciting opportunity to invest in their futures,” said Gipson.

Vic Harabin, acting director of the Center for Plant Health, Science, and Technology, and PPQ’s eastern regional director, agrees.

“Ag-Discovery is a good program to get kids involved in science,” said Harabin. “It’s a great way to introduce students to a science-based curriculum and to make the connection between the work that APHIS does and how it relates to the food that they eat.”

**Dispelling the Myth of Farmer Joe**

According to Gipson, many kids don’t imagine a career in agriculture, and they don’t realize the wide range of opportunities that exist.

“I think the age-old image that kids have of agriculture—an overalls-clad farmer with a pitchfork or riding a tractor—obscures many of the career opportunities that exist today. Now, there are opportunities with biotechnology, animal welfare, wildlife management, and in doing cutting edge research into animal and plant diseases and pests,” said Gipson.

*Continued on page 15*
Harabin believes the Ag-Discovery experience can open doors to students who otherwise wouldn’t consider agriculture as a career option. “I’d like to see more kids get excited about agriculture and its potential,” said Harabin.

**Acres of Diamonds in the Making**

According to Gipson, by reaching out to students early, programs like Ag-Discovery can prepare them to someday become major contributors to APHIS and agriculture as a whole.

To this point, Harabin adds, “While these kids are still young, we can plant the seeds of scientific interest that we can harvest later as they go off to college.”

The Ag-Discovery program offers opportunities that can establish relationships between USDA and promising students. And, it offers ways to sustain students’ interest and enthusiasm into the future. The program exposes them to other opportunities like the Washington Internship for Native American Students, the William F. Helms Student Scholarship Program, and the Saul T. Wilson, Jr., Scholarship Program in Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, among others.

Both Gipson and Harabin agree that experiences like Ag-Discovery make kids more competitive and better prepare them for college, as well as make them ideal candidates for other USDA-sponsored programs and opportunities.

“This is a great program and it’s a tremendous recruitment source,” said Harabin. “That’s the payback. The more people we reach out to, the better quality of people we can attract to APHIS. It’s critical to invest in the students that we may someday look to as our agricultural leaders.”

PPQ Risk Analyst Tony Koop, who works at the Center for Plant Health, Science, and Technology, talks with students during a recent Ag-Discovery field trip. Koop spent time with students surveying local native species and describing the potential impact of destructive forest pests. (photo by N. Lemon)
July
Farewell Event for Dr. W. Ron DeHaven, July 31, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., Riverdale Conference Center, Riverdale, Maryland.

August
National Conference of State Legislatures 2007 Annual Meeting, August 5–9, Boston, Massachusetts.
National Plant Board Meeting, August 19–23, Honolulu, Hawaii.
Take Your Child to Work Day, August 16, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Riverdale, Maryland.
Fitness Month, 3rd Annual Fitness & Health Extravaganza, August 22, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Western Region Office.

September
National Hispanic Heritage Month.
National Plant Inspection Station Meeting, September 24–28, Houston, Texas.
AERO in Motion: employees participate in America’s Walk for Diabetes; Eastern Region Office, Raleigh, North Carolina; Watch for information in e-mails.
Volunteer Month, Eastern Region Office employees are organizing a local Saturday volunteer event; Interested employees should watch for e-mails; Raleigh, North Carolina.

October
North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO), October 21–27, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada.

Also, visit the APHIS Work Life Wellness Web site (http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wlw) for additional upcoming area activities.

On June 1, 2007, two Wildlife Services employees, Joseph Harris and Glen Stevenson, died when the plane they were in went down near Richmond, Utah. The two were conducting aerial predator control operations at the time.

As members of the APHIS family, we mourn their loss, and we keep their families in our thoughts during this time of grief.

If you would like to make a contribution, the Harris family has established a fund for donations. For contributions in the name of Joe and Amy Harris, please contact the First National Bank of Morgan, P.O. Box 870, Morgan, Utah 84050.

In Memoriam
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Inside APHIS
John Scott, Editor
inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov
(301) 734-4897

For a publication schedule and information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering Agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the Agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.
APHIS is recognized internationally as a skilled agricultural health organization. Our international partners as well as other countries around the globe often turn to APHIS to request advice, technical assistance, and capacity building.

Dan Sheesley, Deputy Administrator for International Services, says the number and complexity of these requests is on the rise, and the increase is expected to continue. To meet the demand, APHIS recently launched the International Technical and Regulatory Capacity Building Center. The new center will help the agency respond effectively and efficiently to requests, while advancing the international interests of U.S. agriculture. As part of the new center, International Services also launched the recently re-worked International Visitors’ Center.

With the new capacity building center have come some changes to the ways in which APHIS coordinates these activities internally. According to the APHIS Management Team, the changes are needed to make the best use of agency resources and to help keep APHIS a dynamic international organization.

### Capacity Building: What is it?

In the simplest terms, capacity building means helping others increase what they can do for themselves and how well they can do it.

In the context of APHIS, the objective is to enhance the ability of foreign officials to address—in their own countries and organizations—the kinds of animal and plant health issues that typically fall under APHIS’ mission in the United States. Among other things, APHIS’ capacity building activities include when agency personnel work with foreign officials to teach workshops, run orientation seminars, provide technical training/assistance, or consult on agricultural health issues.

Capacity building efforts are important to APHIS for several reasons. Foremost, they advance the agency’s core mission to protect and promote the health of U.S. agriculture through infrastructure development. As we work with our international partners and better understand their capabilities and efforts, we also better understand the steps needed to protect U.S. agriculture. Similarly, as our partners gain exposure to our many efforts and expertise, we are often able to promote

### Pay Stubs to Go Paperless

USDA soon plans to change how employees receive their bi-weekly Statements of Earnings and Leave. Beginning pay period 25 (December 9), the National Finance Center (NFC)—the central processing facility for USDA’s payroll—will no longer automatically print and send statements by mail.

Instead, with the exception of agency employees who receive an approved waiver, employees will need to access their Statements of Earnings and Leave electronically using their Employee Personal Page (EPP), which is part of NFC’s Web site. All employees already have access to their own EPP, even if they haven’t previously set up a password or visited it. The address for accessing your EPP is https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/index2.asp.

### Getting Ahead of the Change

Employees will be officially notified of this change in the Statements of Earnings and Leave mailed in pay periods 23 and 24. To preview the changes to come, APHIS’ Human Resources Division encourages all employees to set up a password and visit their EPPs now. Many employees have already opted to go paperless and are currently taking advantage of all that their EPP has to offer.

Continued on page 2

Continued on page 3
the trade of healthy U.S. products.APHIS capacity building efforts also strengthen international relations, providing a positive foundation for addressing future animal and plant crises and trade matters.

**Tuning the Process**
International Services’ new center will fine-tune the way the agency handles its international capacity building activities. The center is designed to better manage incoming requests and the workload that the requests generate for the agency’s programs. By managing requests, prioritizing the agency’s responding activities, and strategically steering the agency’s resources to respond, Sheesley—along with the rest of the APHIS Management Team—hopes to position the agency to live up to the familiar business adage “work smarter, not harder.”

According to Sheesley, the center will help the agency manage its efforts in ways that are to the best advantage of both the agency and its international partners. And, he adds, there will be benefits at the program level as well.

“Managers have long been frustrated with last-minute, ad hoc requests,” said Sheesley. “By using the center to organize the way requests are handled, we can improve how well we anticipate needs and also how well we match resources to requests.”

**Overview: Center Operations**
The International Technical and Regulatory Capacity Building Center and its review process serve as both a funnel and filter for all international capacity building and international visitor requests. Richard Pacer, director of the new center, will provide overall leadership and coordination of the review process and other center activities. Below is a quick overview of the process; for a complete description and step-by-step guide to working with the center, please open the attached file, “ITRCB How To.”

All program staff who want to pursue a capacity building project or host an international visitor need to submit a request form either directly to the center at ITRCBRquests@aphis.usda.gov or to their program unit’s designated point of contact. See this article’s sidebars for a list of program contacts.

After a request is received, the center begins its review process. This means that the Capacity Building Assistant Director/Program Manager, Jessica Mahalingappa, along with one of the center’s two Capacity Building Project Managers and the appropriate unit point of contact consult with one another regarding the request. If the request involves hosting an international visitor, the International Visitors’ Center Director, Bonnie King, joins the review process. Using a set of criteria, they approve or deny requests and assign priority levels to approved requests.

Unfortunately, given the agency’s finite resources, some requests will be denied. However, Sheesley and others expect that the number of denied projects will be minimal. Instead, the center will focus largely on aligning and scaling requested projects within the agency’s established priorities under the APHIS Strategic Plan.

After an approved project is assigned a priority level, the next step is implementation. At this point, the center’s Capacity Building Project Manager, the program unit point of contact, an International Services Field Attache, and possibly the International Visitors’ Center Director coordinate their respective activities to carry out the project.

**What’s to Gain**
Using the center’s review process to funnel and prioritize all international capacity building and international visitor requests is critical to ensuring that the agency applies its resources efficiently and as intended. Among other things, this process makes sure that proposed projects are within the

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Pay Stubs

In addition to Statements of Earnings and Leave, the site contains other helpful information. When you take your EPP for a test drive, you will find that the information is secure, well-organized, and easy to navigate. Viewing and printing your Statements of Earnings and Leave is simple.

Through the EPP, you can also review and manage some of the other choices you’ve made regarding such things as pay allotments, direct deposit, and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

What to Do

If you’re new to the EPP, you will first need to set up a password to access the site and your electronic statement. The NFC Web site noted above has instructions on how to set up a password and includes a demo that you can use to view the EPP’s many features.

After logging in, you can then begin viewing, printing, and saving your statements, as well as reviewing and managing other information. For agency employees who have already established a password for their EPP and currently use the system, the coming changes should have little effect. Their existing passwords and access to the EPP will remain the same.

Requesting a Waiver

Some employees—specifically, those without computer access in the workplace—will be eligible to continue receiving a printed statement through the mail. Eligible employees must, however, obtain an approved waiver. As USDA gets closer to implementing the coming change, more information concerning how to request a waiver will be included in a new MRP Directive that is currently being finalized. (Bargaining unit employees and their supervisors should check appropriate negotiated agreements for how the waiver process will be implemented for covered employees.)

Checking Your Statement and Reconnecting to Choices

You’ve heard it before, and it’s still good advice: you should regularly review your Statement of Earnings and Leave. This is especially true if you’ve recently made choices that affect your pay, such as changing your healthcare coverage, TSP contributions, or your tax withholdings. It’s always good to catch problems early. Over time, even small errors can add up and be financially painful to correct at a later date.

With access to your EPP, you can see not only your current Statement of Earnings and Leave, but your old statements as well, making comparing the two a bit easier. Using all of the information available to you on the EPP, you can also get reacquainted with some of the financial choices you may have made long ago and now want to reconsider. For example, a quick review of your tax withholdings, TSP contributions, or previously established pay allotments may reveal ways to improve how you manage your pay.

Capacity Building

Continued from page 2
agency’s mission area, not duplicative, and that the commitment of resources (both people and funding) are optimally timed and in scale with the agency’s many priorities.

During the review process, some requests—like those that involve other Federal agencies—will be directed to USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service. And, although the center is still relatively new, Sheesley anticipates handling some requests in other ways that make better use of agency resources and staff time. For example, he foresees that frequently received requests for information, such as a basic overview of APHIS programs, could be addressed by developing other communication tools, including a small inventory of standard APHIS electronic presentations.

Keeping Pace

Sheesley sees capacity building as one of the largest potential growth areas for APHIS in the next 10 years. Given the agency’s fiscal realities and the complexity of international agricultural issues like avian influenza, the emphasis continues to shift from doing for others to enabling others to do for themselves. According to Sheesley, “We must be able to meet this demand dynamically.”
You probably know about the recent indictment of Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick and three co-defendants by a Federal grand jury for, among other charges, conspiracy to sponsor a dog in an animal fighting venture. But you may not know about the existence of a little-known provision of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) concerning animal fighting.

For the public, the ongoing media coverage of the Vick indictment has provided fuel for numerous conversations in lunchrooms, classrooms, and around office water coolers. Within APHIS, it has raised a question a little closer to home and prompted agency employees to ask, “What is APHIS’ role regarding animal fighting?”

APHIS’ Animal Care program enforces the AWA, a law that protects certain animals from mistreatment and that includes prohibitions on activities related to animal fighting. The law prohibits individuals from sponsoring or exhibiting an animal in a fighting venture if the animal was transported across State lines or in foreign commerce for that purpose. It also prohibits the selling, buying, transporting, or delivering of an animal in interstate or foreign commerce for animal fighting. These provisions primarily affect dog and cockfighting ventures.

When APHIS officials have evidence that animals are used for fighting, they provide the information to USDA’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Depending on a number of factors—including its available resources and the extent of criminal activity at issue—OIG then works with other Federal, State, and local authorities to conduct investigations. Investigations typically are conducted by law enforcement authorities, because animal fighting ventures and/or the people participating in them are often associated with other criminal activities involving gambling, drugs, or weapons.

In May 2007, President Bush signed the Animal Fighting Prohibition Act, a law making violations of AWA animal fighting provisions felony offenses that can lead to jail sentences of up to 3 years.

**Game Birds Used for Fighting Can Carry Infectious Diseases**

While much of the media focus on animal fighting has surrounded the use of dogs, cockfighting is equally inhumane and is of particular interest to APHIS from an animal health standpoint. Game fowl transported for fighting often do not undergo the normal testing and quarantine requirements that prevent the spread of avian influenza and exotic Newcastle disease (END). In fact, backyard flocks of game fowl and laying hens were among the possible sources implicated in the 2002–2003 END outbreak in California. As many APHIS employees will remember, Federal and State eradication efforts were successful but the cost to U.S. taxpayers was great—around $200 million.

**What the Public Can Do**

People with substantive information about alleged violations of the AWA animal fighting provisions should contact OIG. However, in most cases, information regarding suspected animal fighting activity should be forwarded to State and local officials. Dog and cockfighting are now illegal in every State except Louisiana, whose ban on cockfighting takes effect August 2008. States are often in the best position to enforce these laws and have broader authority to prevent animal fighting and any related criminal activities.

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**North Carolina Awards Wildlife Services Employee**

Frank Newell, a wildlife specialist with the North Carolina Wildlife Services (WS) office, received the “Order of the Long Leaf Pine,” the highest civilian honor granted by the State of North Carolina, from Governor Easley on September 21.

Newell joined WS in 1994 and gives more than 20 public presentations annually to diverse audiences in addition to his regular duties. He also leads a volunteer team that has built thousands of bluebird nesting boxes, earning him past awards including one from the North American Bluebird Society.
New Facility Supports APHIS Mission in Ames

By Josh Smith

In July, USDA dedicated its new $85 million high-containment, large animal facility in Ames, Iowa. The new facility completes the second component of the comprehensive, multi-phase Ames Modernization Project.

At $462 million, the Ames Modernization Project is the largest construction project in the history of USDA. When completed, it will enhance the capabilities of APHIS’ National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) and Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), and the Agricultural Research Service’s National Animal Disease Center.

“Construction of this state-of-the-art animal health center is an important milestone in USDA’s efforts to provide first-class animal health services,” said Secretary Mike Johanns, who attended the building dedication. “The work here has generated tremendous benefits for livestock, agricultural workers, and consumers of agricultural products.”

The high-containment facility meets strict design and construction standards that enable safe research and diagnostic work with infectious agents that require Biosafety Level 3 Agriculture (BSL3Ag) containment when the agents are present in large animals. The facility will house cattle, elk, bison, deer, reindeer, hogs, and sheep. It contains more than 155,000 square feet and includes designated areas for APHIS diagnostic testing, training, and biologic product evaluation as well as ARS research. It also includes a range of biocontainment safety features such as airtight walls and doors, HEPA filtered air, and liquid waste treatment technology.

“This new facility is an important part of the overall modernization. It positions us to respond to new and emerging diseases and emergencies and to continue our role as a leader in worldwide animal health,” said Dr. Beth Lautner, NVSL Director.

The final two phases of the Ames Modernization Project include construction of laboratory and administrative facilities and a low-containment animal facility for work with infectious agents requiring lower biosafety level containment. When completed in 2009, the Ames complex will be one of the largest animal health centers in the world with more than 1 million square feet of laboratory and research facilities. “This facility will allow us to continue to retain and attract talented science staff, which is critical to us fulfilling our role as a leading national and international reference laboratory,” said Lautner.

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Did You Know?

Do you know why Congress chose September 15 as the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month?

Five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua—recognize that date as their Independence Day. Additionally, two other countries also celebrate their independence during the middle of September: Mexico on the 16th and Chile on the 18th. So, during this time of year, to honor the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

Did you know that, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated Hispanic population in the United States as of July 2006 was 44.3 million? That’s approximately 15 percent of the total U.S. population at that time. About one of every two people added to the U.S. population between July 2005 and July 2006 was Hispanic.

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Diana Whipple, deputy director for ARS’ National Animal Disease Center—which shares the new Ames facility with APHIS—answers questions from Secretary Johanns and Senator Tom Harkin during a recent tour.

(photo by J. Fosse)
The Tohono O’odham Nation lies in the heart of the Sonoran Desert, an important cultural, natural, and economic resource that is central to the lives of the people who live there. Mindful of the desert’s significance to the Tohono O’odham, APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program recently cooperated with the Tohono O’odham Community College (TOCC) and the University of Arizona to run a new 2-week educational program reaching out to students ages 14–17. Named “Safeguarding Natural Heritage: Tohono Land Connections,” the program included a schedule of activities that gave students the chance to experience both plant and animal sciences and their connection to Native American lands.

Sparked initially by PPQ’s interest in furthering its invasive species work, the program was carefully and cooperatively shaped with Tohono O’odham leaders and academic staff from TOCC and the University of Arizona.

Jose Ceballos, national coordinator for PPQ’s Postentry Quarantine Program, originally presented the idea for a youth outreach program at a meeting of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium in late 2006. TOCC leaders attending that meeting were among the first to step forward with interest in developing a program. According to Ceballos, the starting point for the conversation with TOCC and Tohono O’odham leaders focused purposefully on learning about the Nation’s needs.

PPQ’s Joel Floyd echoes Ceballos’ point. “For tribal projects, success really depends on first listening to tribal leaders and then understanding their needs and goals,” said Floyd, who has worked previously in Arizona on Native American projects.

Nurturing the Sciences
The Tohono O’odham Nation’s lands comprise about 2.8 million square acres, making it the second largest Indian Nation—measured by land area—within the United States. To protect its natural resources and to farm select areas of the land’s dry desert conditions, one of the Nation’s goals is to nurture science among its youth. Scientists with a grounding in both western and indigenous science, coupled with knowledge about cultural heritage, are very valuable to the community.

With the Nation’s goals as its foundation, many of the new program’s activities invited the students to broaden their views of possible careers in agriculture and science. Students spent the first week of the program in Tucson at the University of Arizona. In addition to experiencing a college campus firsthand, the students also toured the university’s agricultural facilities, including its diagnostic laboratories, greenhouses, and a cattle feedlot. Students met with professors to learn about cattle, cattle diseases, and plant and insect identification. The week ended with field trips to the Reid Park Zoo—accompanied by Animal Care Inspector Warren Striplin—and to the Port of Nogales to see animal health inspections and activities at the agency’s plant inspection station.

During the program’s second week, students returned to the Tohono O’odham Nation and TOCC in Sells, Arizona. There, the learning continued, and students were given opportunities to view their experiences in ways that united what they were learning about science and agriculture with Tohono O’odham lands and its resources.

Among other activities, the group visited a riparian restoration project on the Santa Cruz River, worked on a GIS mapping project for buffalo grass, and talked about invasive insects and plants like the cactus moth and onion weed, which could someday threaten tribal resources. The week ended with a trip to Schuk Toak Farm—a commercial farm enterprise of the Tohono O’odham Nation—and an overnight horse camp held in a canyon within Baboquivari Tribal Park.

Floyd said that only a few of the 10–12 participants had any direct agricultural experience prior to the program. Much of what the students saw was new to them. Like their Tohono O’odham partners, PPQ organizers hope that their efforts in the classroom, in the laboratory, and in the field helped enrich the connection that the students have with their lands and their heritage.
APHIS Manager Profile

Michael Colbert
Branch Chief
Training and Development Branch
Employee Services Division
MRP-Business Services

What is your background?
I was born and raised in Annapolis, Maryland; graduated in 1985 from Delaware State University, where I earned a B.S. in agri-business while on a full athletic scholarship for football. I started my Federal career with USDA in 1992 with the Farmers Home Administration, now Rural Development. As a specialist in the national office, I developed policies, procedures, and training for rural housing programs and for civil rights compliance. In 2002, I earned my master’s degree in public administration from American University, Washington, D.C. I have been married for 20 years to my high school sweetheart Clara, and we have two sons, Mike Jr. and Marcus.

How long have you been with APHIS?
I joined APHIS in 1999, as a member of the Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance staff as manager for program delivery and outreach. In 2001, I transferred to APHIS’ Conflict Prevention and Resolution (CPR) staff, now called Collaborative Resolution and Team Development Branch, as a mediator/conflict resolution specialist. There, I enjoyed providing mediation services, conducting team building activities, and performing training and group facilitation.

With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003, I volunteered to transfer to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). While with CBP, I provided training and management analyst support to the APHIS leadership and agricultural mission within CBP. In 2005, I returned to APHIS as a mediator/conflict resolution specialist until being selected as Branch Chief in June.

Most memorable APHIS experience?
After only two days in my current position, I had the pleasure of introducing our past Administrator Dr. DeHaven at our Operation Jumpstart graduation. During my remarks, I shared a little about how and where I started my Federal career. He commented personally that I had a great story and how he would miss seeing me grow as a new leader within APHIS.

Another memorable experience happened while working with a team as a dispute resolution practitioner. Prior to starting a training session, I remember one team member who expressed their feelings about not needing the training. That same team member later commented that “this was the best and most useful training I have ever had.” What a good feeling to know that you can make a significant difference doing the work that we do here in APHIS.

Priorities for the coming months?
My priorities are to get my arms around the APHIS Training and Development mission. Soon, I will be completing a leadership transition with my team. Also, we will be charting a strategic and collaborative approach to fulfilling future organizational priorities and needs, while building APHIS’ capacity to provide the best training and development approaches within USDA.

Accomplishment most proud of?
I am most proud of completing the Key Executive Master’s Degree program at American University. I am also very proud of my recent selection as APHIS’ Training and Development Branch Chief, for which I am humbled and honored to serve in this leadership capacity.

Last book read?
Tony Dungy’s Quiet Strength, which is about the principles, practices, and priorities of a winning life. Also, I’m reading The Speed of Trust by Stephen M.R.Covey, the son of Stephen Covey.

Guilty pleasure?
At any time, pepperoni pizza with extra cheese.

Favorite meal?
My wife’s homemade spaghetti and meat sauce with garlic bread fresh from the oven.

Favorite movie?
Strictly Business, starring Halle Berry and Tommy Davidson.

Hobbies?
I enjoy working on home improvement projects, refinishing antique furniture, football season, and on occasion a round of golf.
How High Can Deer Jump?
By Gail Keirn

It seems like a simple question. But, as researchers at Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) found out, it’s a question that has received little scientific attention. Instead, most discussions on the topic rely largely on anecdotal evidence. And, as with fishing stories where the catch increases in size with each telling, deer often seem to jump higher and become more acrobatic each time a whitetail tale is told.

So, beginning in March 2006, NWRC joined with others to put this question to the test. Together with scientists from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Wildlife Services’ Wisconsin State office, NWRC designed a study to investigate the minimum fence height that deer were not able to jump.

The answer to the question serves more than merely satisfying idle curiosity. It provides important information to farmers and agriculture officials alike, especially those trying to protect valuable crops or prevent the spread of damaging animal diseases. For example, chronic wasting disease (CWD), which can be spread by both direct and environmental contact with infected deer, continues to threaten wild and captive cervid herds. Tuberculosis, another costly disease, can also be spread via the intermingling of livestock and wild deer. Many State and Federal officials—in both natural resources and agricultural agencies—are revisiting current fencing guidelines and developing new ones to help reduce the risk of disease transmission. NWRC anticipates that the joint study’s findings will be a great resource to these efforts.

“This study is important to a lot of ag officials and producers. It’s information that’ll help with several different disease programs,” said Dean Goeldner, CWD program manager with Veterinary Services. Goeldner also worked with NWRC officials as they developed the study.

Up and Over
Although deer can breach fences in several ways—by going over, through or under—NWRC’s study focused on the jumping prowess of deer. As a complement to the basic question of how high, researchers also looked at the effectiveness of shorter fences relative to a deer’s level of motivation.

In the initial round of testing for the study, 22 wild, white-tailed deer were captured and placed in a 6-acre pen surrounded by a 14-foot tall perimeter fence. In the pen, researchers constructed one interior or cross fence. During the study’s trials, researchers raised the cross fence in increments, added motivational factors, and recorded the results.

For each height trial, deer were motivated to jump the fence by using three people to drive them toward the fence. If this did not sufficiently motivate the deer to jump the fence, the trial was repeated the next day using leashed dogs and people. Motivation ceased once it became clear that all the deer that were going to cross the fence had done so. Those that did not jump the fence were released back into the wild. If deer successfully jumped a fence, its height was raised one foot. After 7 to 14 days, a new trial was conducted at the new height. Cameras stationed at the ends of the cross fence recorded all activities.

All deer successfully jumped the fence at 3-, 4-, and 5-foot-high levels. At 6 feet, 91 percent of the deer jumped the fence. At 7 feet, only one deer jumped the fence. None of the deer in the original trials cleared the 8-foot fence. Currently, researchers are testing additional deer at the 8-foot level to increase confidence in findings.

“Though it may be possible for deer to jump higher fences, we found it isn’t the norm,” said Kurt VerCauteren, wildlife research biologist at NWRC. “There may always be stories of deer jumping higher fences, but at least now we’ll finally have scientifically documented information to help develop disease policy and management guidelines.”

Ames Green Team Earns the Gold
In August, Iowa Governor Chet Culver awarded APHIS’ National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) and the Centers for Veterinary Biologics (CVB) the 2007 Governor’s Iowa Environmental Excellence Award. Calling their efforts “a model for the entire State,” Culver presented the award in recognition of the facilities’ numerous environmental stewardship activities.

Employee volunteers known as the “Green Team” led the charge on NVSL’s and CVB’s lengthy roster of environmental accomplishments. In 2006, NVSL/CVB employees recycled 82,659 pounds of paper and cardboard, increased plastic recycling by 20 percent, and participated in an electronics recycling program. Employees are also working with county officials to restore 12 acres of native prairie lands. Other efforts include revising vaccine disposal practices and repairing facility steam leaks, resulting in environmental benefits and annual savings estimated at $20,000 and $18,000 respectively.
E-mail is a wonderful form of technology. It’s hard to imagine the workplace without it. With e-mail, we can work more productively and communicate with greater speed. Unfortunately, there’s also the very real potential—perhaps faster than ever before—to embarrass ourselves or worse yet, harm our professional reputations as well our agency’s.

Even if you’re a cautious e-mailer, it’s a safe bet that you’ve had some close calls. So, here are some tips that range from improving your e-mail manners to avoiding those more serious, crawl-under-your-desk e-mail blunders.

**E-Mail Etiquette**

Practicing good e-mail manners may not make the difference between keeping or losing your job, but it can help you shine in the workplace. Good e-mail etiquette can make communications smooth and directed and prevent you from unknowingly annoying your coworkers.

► It’s advice often given, but well worth repeating. **DON’T USE ALL-CAPS.** It’s equivalent to shouting nose to nose with someone. If your point is an important one, say so and avoid all-caps.

► Use clear subject lines. No one likes guessing what an e-mail is about or, worse yet, searching through their e-mail inbox looking for a 1-month-old message with an obscure subject line.

► Whenever possible, keep your e-mails brief and concise. Be clear about your purpose and what you want. It can still be said with “please,” but if you need a reply, a phone call, or a project taken to the next step, be clear about it.

► If you’re joining a lengthy e-mail thread, make sure that your e-mail is clear. A reply like “I agree” may be confusing if different people have chimed in with differing opinions. Or, it may force readers to unnecessarily re-read the entire thread of e-mails to try and decipher your point.

► If you send an important e-mail requesting an action or reply and you get no response, follow up. It’s not safe to assume your job is done after you click the “send” button.

► Make it easy for people to contact you, especially if you’re asking them to. Either use an automated signature in your e-mail or manually add your contact info at the end of your e-mail.

**E-Mail Mistakes**

As the saying goes, “Everyone makes mistakes.” Some are more serious than others, but none are worth repeating if you can help it. Below are several tips to help prevent e-mail pitfalls.

► Leave the “To:” box of your outgoing e-mail empty until right before sending. This prevents accidentally sending an unfinished e-mail and helps ensure that you’re sending it to the correct person.

► As a companion tip, always check the “To:” box of your outgoing e-mail before sending. It’s obvious, but it’s a very valuable habit. Misdirected e-mails can range from mildly embarrassing to fully disastrous.

► Use “Reply All” with great caution. We’ve all heard horror stories and cringed at the thought that it could be us.

► Remember that you have no control over your e-mail after you click send. Others can accidentally or intentionally forward it. As a check, ask yourself if it contains sensitive information that would be better delivered by hand or over the phone.

► Don’t confuse your work e-mail with your personal e-mail. What is appropriate for one may not be so for the other. If you wouldn’t be willing to stand up and read it aloud to a group of coworkers, you may want to re-think sending it.

► Re-read your e-mails and run spell-check before sending.

► Be careful with attachments. Forgetting one is embarrassing but forgivable; sending the wrong one can cause more serious problems. ♦
Growing Excellence:
2006 PPQ Safeguarding Awards

By John Scott

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Deputy Administrator Richard Dunkle recently presented the program’s 2006 Safeguarding Awards. The awards are presented annually to both individuals and PPQ teams. Various award categories highlight the important contributions of PPQ recipients to fulfilling the program’s mission to safeguard U.S. agriculture and plant resources.

This year, a third category was added to the awards. In all, six groups were selected from three categories: Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Award, Outstanding Achievement Award, and the newly established Promising Practices Award.

Safeguarding Awards
In Michigan, PPQ awarded the efforts of the Detroit Snail Project, headed by Brian Sullivan. The project works to eradicate four exotic snail species from six different rail yards in the Detroit metro area. With little guidance from existing procedures or policies, the group has successfully maintained the program over several years and gained the cooperation of rail yard operators and property owners for control activities.

In Florida, PPQ recognized the collaborative efforts of the Florida Hot Zone. Led by Paul Hornby, the group’s work resulted in the first detection of citrus greening in the continental United States. In August 2005, a cooperative State and Federal survey team conducted a hot zone survey, targeting high-risk farms in south Florida. Surveys at a Homestead, Florida, farm revealed pummelo trees with classic symptoms of citrus greening. Samples collected later tested positive for the disease.

Outstanding Achievement Awards
The Outstanding Achievement Award category recognizes efforts that reach or exceed designated goals for a given project.

With this award, PPQ recognized the actions of the Treatment Quality Assurance Unit (TQAU) headed by Scott Wood. The TQAU conducted a methyl bromide treatment review of grape fumigations in Chile targeting the Chilean false red mite and found that the approved treatment did not destroy the actionable pests. The unit led the research effort and USDA’s response that allowed Chilean and U.S. fumigators and importers to adjust their activities and continue safely importing products valued at more than $500 million annually. This was accomplished with minimal trade disruption. USDA and its Chilean stakeholders have since worked collaboratively to design four research studies to establish effective treatment protocols.

PPQ also recognized its Eastern Region Agreements Section group led by Jim Stewart. The group actively practices core values that include effective resource management, innovative solutions, and leadership. The core values have resulted in a strong, effective, and flexible team capable of meeting shifting program needs. Stewart and PPQ credit both Margaret Crabtree and Linda Schepers in particular for the group’s success. The Eastern Region Agreements Section has been chosen by other PPQ offices and stakeholders alike as a model for others to follow.

Growing Excellence:
2006 PPQ Safeguarding Awards

By John Scott

PPQ Deputy Administrator Ric Dunkle (second from left) presents David McKay, Brian Sullivan, and David Dehn (left to right) with a 2006 Safeguarding Award for their work on the Detroit Snail Project. (photo by A.Eaglin)

Help Wanted:
Your Best Thank You

Have you ever received a particularly meaningful thank-you in the workplace? How about a well-timed compliment from your supervisor or an agency stakeholder for a job well done?

Inside APHIS would like to hear your story. For employees and managers alike, these stories can help remind us that good deeds don’t go unnoticed and that positive feedback can be a powerful motivator in the workplace.

Send a brief e-mail with your best thank-you story to inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov and—with your permission—it may be included in a future newsletter story. ♦
CFC: Ready, Set, Go

It’s fall again, and with the changing season comes the colorful leaves, cooler weather, and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Throughout APHIS, employees everywhere will soon be busy planning or participating in the agency’s many fundraising events. For some this may mean testing favorite recipes to prepare for bake sales and chili cook-offs. And for others, it may mean printing up raffle tickets or warming up the karaoke machine for an agency sing-along.

Whatever the activity, it is all for a good cause.

CFC is the annual fundraising drive conducted by Federal employees in their workplaces. The campaign, which runs from September 1 through December 15, raises millions of dollars to benefit thousands of local, national, and international nonprofit organizations. Organizations that benefit from your CFC contributions serve community needs in the areas of poverty, hunger, healthcare, education, and cultural enrichment, among many others. In 2006, CFC received pledges totaling a record-breaking $271.6 million. Year in and year out, no other annual employee-giving program raises as much money for charity.

CFC is organized into more than 285 independent geographic campaigns located around the country. To participate, APHIS employees throughout the United States should watch closely for e-mail and other postings about local events, campaign activities, and where to go for contribution forms and other materials.

CFC donations can be made by check or by payroll deductions spread out over the year. Keyworkers in your program area are available to provide additional information about how to contribute and the organizations that will benefit from your giving.

Promising Practices Awards

PPQ’s newest award, the Promising Practices Award, honors common sense and ingenuity.

Christian Dellis received the award for his use of webinars to meet program training needs. Under his own initiative, Dellis investigated online options, set up web-based training, and conducted training sessions for Government and industry personnel using the program’s Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking (PCIT) system. Because of Dellis’ innovative approach, the system’s usage across the country has increased dramatically. Dellis’ webinars have garnered positive feedback from both Government and industry. He will be conducting additional webinar trainings as new versions of PCIT are released.

PPQ also recognized The Port of El Paso, Texas, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) training initiative. The initiative trains CBP agriculture specialists and officers on pest identification and types of intercepted host materials commonly seized and regulated. CBP officials met with PPQ’s officer-in-charge and area pest identifiers in El Paso to implement the training. The initiative has increased the effectiveness and efficiency of CBP’s efforts by focusing on locally intercepted or approaching pests and diseases.

Using feedback from PPQ identifiers and the program’s National Identification Service and the Pest Identification Network, the training initiative continues to improve.

BugFest 2007

Numerous APHIS employees recently participated in the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences’ 11th Annual BugFest in Raleigh. Above, Center for Plant Health Science and Technology employee Dianne Hoffman places an emerald ash borer tattoo on a cub scout during the festival.

More than 26,000 people attended this year’s show, the largest 1-day, live-insect show held in the United States.

(photo by N.Lemon)
From salmon in Alaska to lobsters in Maine—from trout in the Great Lakes to oysters harvested in the Chesapeake Bay—the U.S. aquaculture industry is both expansive and diverse. Annual sales of U.S. aquaculture products were estimated in 2005 by USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to be valued at more than $1.09 billion, up from the previous 1998 NASS estimates of $978 million.

Veterinary Service’s (VS) Aquaculture Program is tasked with protecting the health of farm-raised aquatic animals. Program activities cover an amazingly wide range of aquatic species. In the United States, farmed aquaculture species include shellfish (oysters, clams, scallops, and mussels); crustaceans (prawns, crayfish, shrimp, and brine shrimp); fish (cotia, salmon, hybrid striped bass, tilapia, catfish, belfish, and more); and other nontraditional aquatics (turtles and alligators). Methods used for culturing or raising U.S. aquatics are equally diverse, ranging from raft lines running just off a beach to producers who manage concrete raceways, earthen ponds, tank settings, and net pens in open water.

“When you talk to veterinarians and start naming the different species and the variety of the commercial operations we cover, you can see their eyes get really big,” says Jill Rolland, VS’ assistant director of aquaculture, swine, equine, and poultry health programs (ASEP).

**Background and International Consequences**

Since 2002, when fish were added to the definition of livestock under the Animal Health Protection Act, VS’ ASEP staff and regional and field personnel have been tackling the many slippery issues associated with aquaculture. These issues are as fundamental as building recognition among agency and State veterinarians about the aquaculture industry’s diversity, and as technical as dealing with specific disease outbreaks like the recent cases of viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS).

As a member of the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE), the United States is obligated like other OIE member countries to report detections of specific animal diseases with high economic consequence. For example, diseases like foot-and-mouth disease in land animals must be reported to the OIE when detected. The same is true of significant aquatic diseases. Since 2001, the United States has faced five reportable aquatic disease outbreaks. These outbreaks, capped by the recent VHS detections, make a clear point: For VS, aquatic diseases are going to be a steadily growing area of concern requiring focused planning, resources, and veterinary expertise.

**More Than Treading Water**

In 2002, the National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force on Aquaculture was formed under the auspices of the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture. The task force includes representatives from the three Federal agencies with primary authority for aquatic animal health: USDA and the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Interior. Together, they were charged with creating a National Aquatic Animal Health Plan. The plan—which will soon circulate to each of the departments and the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy for approval—has been developed slowly with much input from State officials and industry groups. When approved, it will provide the foundation for shaping APHIS’ and the other participating Federal agencies’ aquatic animal health activities. It will also enable APHIS to be more proactive in disease management and surveillance efforts and to better position itself to obtain budgeted funding, as opposed to emergency funding.

While the national plan has been under development, VS has operated in a reactive mode to aquatic diseases. According to Rolland, with a finalized plan, hopefully that will change. “Using budgeted dollars, we won’t be in the position of working to put out fires as much,” says Rolland.

With reliable funding and the national plan’s more proactive stance, VS—along with its Federal, State, and industry cooperators—will be able to focus its efforts more effectively on the complexities inherent with aquatic diseases. Not the least of which is that agency veterinarians are typically battling pathogens that are literally in a fluid and ever-changing ecosystem. And often, the diseases are equally capable of spreading to and damaging both wildlife and agricultural settings, which to the aquaculture industry are frequently impossible to separate.

*Continued on page 13*
Aquaculture
Continued from page 12

Reaching Beyond the Plan
VS has taken additional measures to support the aquaculture program and the growing demand for aquatic veterinary services in the field. The program has established a regional aquatic epidemiologist staff position based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Otis Miller, former APHIS national aquaculture coordinator, has been with VS for 15 years, recently filled the post after completing a PhD. program in epidemiology at North Carolina State University.

VS is also providing ongoing aquaculture training to select veterinary medical officers (VMOs) in each of VS area offices throughout the country. These trained VMOs are, in turn, available to work with other VS field personnel when issues arise. For some, this may mean consulting on how to perform facility inspections or how to collect and submit samples for diagnostic testing.

In addition, to reach a larger number of field personnel, VS helped develop online training modules now available through the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For more information about the online training modules and other VS resources for field personnel, see the attached file entitled “Aquaculture Field Resources.”

Five Significant OIE Reportable Aquatic Diseases Detected to Date in the United States

1. Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA)
2. Spring Viremia of Carp (SVC)
3. White Spot Disease
4. Taura Syndrome
5. VHS

VHS was first detected in Lake Ontario in 2005. The current outbreak of VHS in the Great Lakes region is the most serious U.S. aquaculture threat to date. While not a threat to public health, VHS is a serious disease, affecting as many as 37 species of marine and freshwater fish. The Great Lakes strain of the virus is causing massive die-offs and in more species of wild fish than previously experienced. APHIS has issued restrictions on the movement of susceptible species of fish out of the Great Lakes region to prevent further VHS introductions. To date, VHS detections have been limited in North America to wild ocean-going and freshwater fish. For more info, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/vhs/vhs.shtml.

Small Packages Make a Big Difference
By Brandon Giles

In Palmetto, Florida, employees with the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program know that small packages make a big difference.

Since 2004, PPQ employees with the fruit fly program in Palmetto have sent numerous care packages and items to members of the U.S. Armed Forces deployed abroad. Many at the Palmetto duty station have served in the military or have family who have served in the Armed Forces. They understand personally how packages from home can lift the spirits of those who are in harms way, far from friends and family.

Using the Web site “anysoldier.com” as their guide, the small group of PPQ employees organize what to send and where. Since sending their first care packages, the group’s efforts have steadily expanded.

This year PPQ Supervisor Irene Shepherd organized the largest fundraiser to date, a two-Saturday garage sale. The number of items donated for the sale nearly overwhelmed the group. As the sale approached, some feared they would run out of space to store the mountain of items donated.

The garages sales were a success, with Palmetto employees raising $2,150 to purchase and ship snacks, drink mix, beef jerky, toothbrushes, magazines, and other requested items.

The PPQ Palmetto employees plan to continue sending “any soldier” packages, and they have also adopted an Air Force unit of 14 men and women from Florida. In a recent package sent to the unit, the Palmetto employees included a letter and a group photo of themselves holding a “We Support Our Troops” banner.
USDA continues to make steady progress in issuing its new Federal ID cards—known as “LincPass” cards—to its employees. USDA recently completed testing enrollment procedures for the new IDs by printing and issuing LincPass cards for approximately 600 USDA employees, including 70 from APHIS.

In the coming months, many APHIS employees should expect to participate in the enrollment process and receive a new ID. Here are some key points that you should be aware of:

► The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is managing the new ID enrollment for USDA and numerous other Federal agencies. GSA officials will soon be contacting APHIS employees with information concerning the new IDs.

► Although GSA refers to the new ID initiative as “USA Access,” it is the same as what USDA is calling the LincPass. Both names refer to the new Federal ID initiative.

► To receive notification about ID enrollment scheduling and other ID related information, all APHIS employees must make sure that their work e-mail and phone contact information as listed in AgLearn are up-to-date. This contact information—which is part of your e-authorization and gives you access to AgLearn—will be used by GSA to contact you.

► As a first step to getting a new ID, all APHIS employees will receive an e-mail from GSA regarding enrollment, including where and when to enroll for a new ID and what forms of ID you will need to present.

► GSA officials will also provide critical information about verifying that the personal ID employees will be asked to present matches the name and address used for their Statements of Earning and Leave (i.e., payroll). Employees who have personal IDs and work IDs with information that does not correspond to their payroll information will be provided guidance regarding the steps to take.

► Some employees with outdated or incomplete security information may need to undergo a new background check prior to beginning the enrollment process for a new ID. The agency personnel security officer will be contacting employees as needed to complete background checks.

► Enrollment stations for issuing new IDs will be established at key APHIS office locations, including Riverdale, Maryland; Ft. Collins, Colorado; Raleigh, North Carolina; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Ames, Iowa; Oahu, Hawaii. Portable enrollment stations and other GSA locations will be made available for APHIS employees outside of these work locations.

If you have questions concerning the new LincPass IDs or the enrollment process, please contact Ken Miller with APHIS’ Employee Services Division by e-mail at Kenneth.W.Miller@aphis.usda.gov. For questions concerning background investigations and clearances, please contact Dru Dukart by e-mail at Dru.Dukart@aphis.usda.gov.

Update:
USDA Begins Issuing LincPass ID Cards
By John Scott
Legislative Corner:

2007 Farm Bill

By James Ivy

Every 5 years, or thereabouts, Congress reviews U.S. farm policy and passes a new Farm Bill. During this past year, Members and staff of both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have talked with farmers, ranchers, industry representatives, and others concerning the pending 2007 Farm Bill—specifically, to scope out possible changes, determine which statutes to reauthorize, and write new programs into law.

USDA takes an active role in this process. As the Federal agency charged by Congress to carry out Farm Bill provisions, USDA provides input to the Committees about the President’s management priorities and program delivery.

Former Secretary Johanns, Acting Secretary Conner, and senior USDA staff have taken visible leadership roles with the 2007 Farm Bill. Using feedback from town hall meetings held throughout the country, USDA has submitted Farm Bill proposals and legislative language to the Committees for consideration.

Over the summer, Johanns and Conner visited the Hill during House Agriculture Committee markup sessions—where Members of the Agriculture Subcommittees review legislative language, vote on proposed changes, and pass the different Titles that comprise the Farm Bill.

Before Congress adjourned in August, the House passed its version of the 2007 Farm Bill. The speed with which the House prepared and passed its bill surprised many observers.

The Senate Agriculture Committee marked up its version of the Farm Bill during the week of October 22, and the bill went to the Senate floor for debate on November 5. The Senate bill differs from the House-passed bill. This is common; after the bill clears the Senate Agriculture Committee and is passed by the Senate, any differences between the two bills will be reconciled in conference committee. There, select Senators and Representatives from the Agriculture Committees will address differences and shape a final bill to send to the President for signature.

The Farm Bill and APHIS

Historically, Farm Bills have focused on crop support payments, insurance, conservation, and trade assistance programs. But with the growing

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November
National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month.

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), 64th Annual Convention and Trade Show, November 11–16, Denver, Colorado.

December
Entomological Society of America meeting, December 9–12, San Diego, California.

Visit the APHIS Work Life Wellness Web site (http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wlw) for additional upcoming area activities.

Legislative Corner
Continued from page 15

importance of agriculture safeguarding, the continued focus on homeland security and emergency preparedness, and the public’s interest in animal welfare, Congress has previously used the Farm Bill to pass provisions related to APHIS activities.

This year, in particular, the Agriculture Committees have focused on programs related to “specialty crop” (ones other than traditional row crops like wheat, corn, rice, and soybeans) production and protection. In the House and Senate, this focus introduced debate concerning the proposed return of the agriculture inspection force to APHIS from the Department of Homeland Security. USDA and DHS both strongly oppose the transfer and, ultimately, the statutory language requiring the transfer was stripped from the House bill. However, leadership from the Agriculture Committee and Homeland Security Committee have promised future hearings on the issue.

The House-passed bill also includes a new horticulture pest detection program, as well as a provision that prohibits the use of live animals in marketing medical devices, and that addresses class B random source dealers under the Animal Welfare Act.

What’s Ahead
Congress is at the midway point in its efforts to pass a new Farm Bill. It’s difficult to predict how the legislative process will unfold, but many in Congress are still hoping to pass a Farm Bill later this year, or early in 2008.

Check out the next issue of Inside APHIS for a recap of legislative action in the Senate and for an update on any final Farm Bill provisions related to APHIS activities. ♦

Inside APHIS
John Scott, Editor
inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov
(301) 734-4897

For a publication schedule and information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.
Home-Grown Administrator Takes the Helm

By Greg Rosenthal

When Cindy Smith began her job as a part-time APHIS clerk-typist in 1979, she thought she had found a great way to help pay for college. Little did she know that she had taken the first small step on a path that would include numerous and varied positions spanning the agency—and that 28 years later she would be leading APHIS as its first female Administrator.

Throughout her remarkable career, Smith has taken advantage of APHIS’ many opportunities and carefully cultivated her leadership skills. Now, as APHIS Administrator, she wants all agency employees to have the chance to make the most of the opportunities before them. “I’ve learned that the only way to be an effective leader is to give employees what they need to be effective,” Smith says.

Testing the Leadership Waters

On her first day of work at the Plant Protection and Quarantine program, Smith admittedly knew very little about APHIS. But she kept her eyes open for growth opportunities, taking on more responsibility and gaining experience as a library technician and eventually a technology information specialist for the agency’s former Biotechnology, Biologics and Environmental Protection program.

In that role, she began to supervise others in entry-level positions similar to her first job and also college students working in information and data support. “I became a supervisor because it was an opportunity to advance,” Smith says. While she found the new job interesting and rewarding, she admits, “I hadn’t given it a lot of thought—it was different and harder than I had expected.”

She also gained experience observing her supervisors and other agency leaders. They left a lasting impression on her. “Working for leaders who inspired me made me excited about leadership and taught me that I could make a difference,” she says. “It opened my eyes to the tremendous amount of leadership and political savvy a management or executive position requires.”

In addition to tapping resources like supervisor training and guidance from mentors, Smith acknowledges she sometimes drew on her experiences as a mother to overcome challenges she

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Protecting Avian Influenza Responders

By Thomas R. Walker

APHIS is an emergency response agency. Ask anyone who works in one of our busy State offices, or who has staffed the APHIS’ Emergency Operations Center, or been asked to carry a blackberry.

For many employees, however, APHIS’ role as an emergency response agency does not usually affect their day-to-day experience in the workplace. Many of us typically are not dispatched to collect disease samples or establish emergency quarantines.

Yet, the truth is that we can all be called upon to do our part in the event of an emergency. In 2002, APHIS mobilized a large-scale response to exotic Newcastle disease (END) using many employees from throughout the entire agency. The rapid and successful response to END required the services of veterinarians and animal health technicians, and also personnel from other areas, including information technology, administrative support, budget, and public affairs.

Because we’re an emergency response organization, it’s important for each of us to be familiar with what the agency is doing to protect its own,
faced as a new supervisor. “Being a mom helped me understand how people want to be treated,” she says. “All people are different, and you have to treat them as individuals.” Smith also notes that motherhood provided some of the best training available for how to remain calm under pressure.

Keeping It All in Balance
With six children in her blended family, Smith understands the art of multitasking—juggling work, family, and sometimes school. “You keep it in the forefront of your mind, always focusing on how you’re balancing,” she says. “You need to take advantage of the flexibility the agency offers and put your time in at work and at home when it’s most important for each.”

Administrator Smith’s Career Milestones

Prior agency positions include:
Clerk Typist; Library Technician; Technical Information Specialist; Biotechnology Analyst, Chief of Management, Planning and Technical Assistance (BBEP); National Staff Officer (WS); Assistant Deputy Administrator (WS)
1979: First hired by APHIS
1983: Earned B.S. in microbiology
2000: Earned M.S. in management
2001: Appointed Associate Deputy Administrator of Wildlife Services
2002: Appointed Deputy Administrator of Biotechnology Regulatory Services
2007: Appointed Associate Administrator
2007: Appointed Administrator

Smith started her family while working part-time for APHIS and completing her B.S. degree in microbiology at the University of Maryland. “APHIS was very flexible and allowed a part-time schedule with hours that worked for me,” she says. The juggling act grew even more intense later when she pursued a Master’s degree in management.

And just a few years later, while working as Wildlife Service’s Assistant Deputy Administrator, one of her children began to struggle in middle school. “I had to make a decision to walk away from what I thought I wanted in a career to support someone at home,” she says. Fortunately, once again the agency was able to provide the flexibility she needed. Shifting to a part-time position, Smith was able to adjust and re-balance her family and work commitments.

When the time was right, Smith was able to put more on her career, developing her leadership style and philosophy as the Associate Deputy Administrator for Wildlife Services, Deputy Administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services, APHIS Associate Administrator, and finally as APHIS Administrator.

Steering the Agency into the Future
Looking ahead, Smith believes that APHIS’ main challenge will be handling multiple emergencies while maintaining effective daily operations. “An Administrator has to make sure that no matter what comes our way, we’re prepared for it,” she says. “But not in a way that burns out employees.”

Smith also wants APHIS to become an employer of choice. “I want APHIS to be the kind of organization that everyone else envies,” she says. “That includes taking care of employees and their development and putting the right people at the right places to get the job done.” To reach that goal, she has made employee development and succession planning one of her top priorities as Administrator.

She offers this advice to APHIS newcomers for their own success: “To make a difference in the agency and to position yourself to grow and advance, it’s essential to find work that’s important to the mission, and do the best job at it you can.”

Cindy Smith would like to dedicate this piece to the memory of her mother, June Feronti, who also began her career as a secretary at USDA during World War II.

Fillo Awarded 2007 Economist of the Year

Frank Fillo, assistant chief for APHIS’ Policy Analysis and Development staff, was recently named the 2007 USDA Economist of the Year. The annual award was presented by the USDA Economists Group, a professional organization with members USDA wide.

Fillo, who has 15 years of service to USDA, was honored with the award in recognition of his extensive work related to USDA’s high-profile BSE Minimal Risk Regions-II regulation.
especially in response to possible agricultural risks like highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Protecting You
APHIS has been preparing for possible HPAI outbreaks for some time; however, those not directly involved in the response planning may be asking, “What is being done to protect me if I get called to respond?” Here are some of the steps APHIS has taken to protect responders in the event of an HPAI outbreak.

The APHIS Safety, Health and Employee Wellness Branch staff—with assistance from the National APHIS Safety and Health Council—has conducted specialized training for safety officers who will be deployed in the event of an outbreak. The training will assist safety officers in evaluating, monitoring, and recommending measures needed to ensure a safe and healthy work site for emergency responders. To date, 40 safety officers have been trained and are available.

In the Incident Command System, safety officers report directly to incident commanders and provide them with recommendations, corrections, and/or changes for the safety and health of responders. This may include: taking noise level readings; monitoring for chemical, biological, or radiological materials and/or exposures; providing site-specific safety training; stopping activities that could directly endanger worker safety and health; and recommending personal protective equipment.

During an emergency response to avian influenza, APHIS has arranged for on-site medical services to be provided through an interagency agreement with Federal Occupational Health (FOH). FOH is a service unit within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and works in partnership with Federal agencies to help with occupational health needs. FOH’s on-site medical service providers will administer first aid and dispense medications and also available vaccines. Medical service can be expanded to include delivering respiratory medical clearance examinations if needed. During a response, FOH will also provide on-site employee assistance program services (EAP) to help employees address personal issues that may arise.

APHIS has also assembled stockpiles of personal protective equipment, which includes respirators, protective outer garments, eye protection, gloves, and other necessary equipment. The stockpiles include antiviral medications that could, based on need, be dispensed to those responders performing high-risk duties.

In addition, the agency has established an Occupational Medical Monitoring Program that is managed by the Safety, Health, and Employee Wellness Branch and is administered by FOH. Through this program, potential responders receive a respiratory medical clearance examination to ensure their ability to use the respirators that will be required for responders performing high-risk tasks during a response. Once they are medically cleared, responders will select a respirator from those recommended by the agency Industrial Hygienist, Peter Petch. They then undergo a process called fit-testing to ensure that the chosen respirator provides an adequate protective seal, and they receive training specific to the selected respirator.

Networking for Health and Safety
In September 2007, APHIS co-hosted a conference with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, on protecting avian influenza responders. The conference had representatives from Federal agencies, State and local government, academia, private industry, and international responders.

During the conference, participants discussed and exchanged ideas on how to best protect our most important asset: the employee/responder. The conference enabled APHIS and other participants to further explore ways to tap the support and collaboration of the larger safety and health community.

Don’t Forget to complete “USDA Computer Security Awareness Training FY08,” and “USDA Privacy Basics FY08.” The deadline for both courses is March 31, 2008.

Please contact your staff’s AgLearn program administrator with questions. To learn who your AgLearn program administrator is, call the Training and Development Branch’s eLearning Support number, 301-734-5984.
APHIS employees gathered in Riverdale on October 25, 2007, to celebrate the achievements of those receiving the 2007 Administrator’s Civil Rights Award. The award program highlighted employee efforts that advance the cause of civil rights and equal employment opportunity and that ensure the equitable delivery of APHIS programs and services.

Administrator Cindy Smith presented the awards recognizing recipients in the following four categories: manager/supervisor, individual employee, program achievements, and group effort.

Manager/Supervisor Awards
Smith recognized Animal Care (AC) Deputy Administrator Chester Gipson for increasing the number of minority employees in AC. With help from AC’s regional directors, his efforts have had an effect at headquarters and the field level. Gipson is also an active participant in a number of programs, such as AgDiscovery and 1890s scholars programs, which support APHIS’ goals for minority student outreach, recruitment, and hiring.

Elizabeth Lautner, director of Veterinary Services’ (VS) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL), was also honored for her efforts. In her 2 years as NVSL’s director, Lautner has demonstrated her commitment to civil rights; she has nurtured employees’ individual skills and given employees opportunities for professional growth. In addition, Lautner has devoted resources and supported civil rights-oriented programs, including the recently created “Veterinary Career Pathways for Under-Represented Minorities.”

Smith also awarded Renee Schnurr, a microbiologist and inspections section leader in VS’ Center for Veterinary Biologics. Schnurr was honored for promoting the leadership potential in employees at all grade levels and offering training opportunities. Schnurr has also served as a mentor for students in the Stay-in-School and Career Intern programs—one of whom recently joined APHIS as a full-time employee.

Individual Employee Awards
Roberta Morales with VS’ National Center for Import and Export was recognized for her part in proposing and collaboratively developing the new internship program, “Veterinary Career Pathways for Under-Represented Minorities.” Her tireless support for the program earned her an individual award as well as recognition in the group award category.

Policy and Program Development’s Dan Kaczmarski earned honors for organizing and leading charitable service projects. Working with two non-governmental organizations, his efforts focus on providing food and employment opportunities to those in need. Kaczmarski’s additional volunteer activities include leading Riverdale’s annual Federal Fitness Day activities and coordinating APHIS-Riverdale’s participation in the Any Soldier program.

Smith also awarded David Petendree, a supervisor with the Citrus Health Response Program. In addition to actively reaching out to the South Florida community and to hosting employee civil rights training, Petendree significantly contributed to establishing the Florida PPQ Civil Rights Committee. The committee charter, which he and others developed, was so well-received that it has been requested as a template charter for other state civil rights committees.

Program Achievement Awards
Judy Garrison, director of Biotechnology Regulatory Services’ (BRS) Resource Management Programs, was honored for her focused efforts to create and maintain a diverse BRS workforce. Her actions, along with those of BRS’ hiring managers, have contributed to substantially increasing staff diversity since 2005.

Betty Goldentyer, director for AC’s Eastern Region, was recognized for the outstanding job she has done recruiting and retaining African-American professionals. Goldentyer has also provided consistent support for a regional employee who serves as a special emphasis program manager for African-American issues on AC’s Civil Rights/EEO committee.

Mohammad Khan, with VS in Des Plaines, Illinois, was honored for his sustained commitment and exceptional performance as chairperson of the Eastern Region Civil Rights Advisory Committee over the past 4 years.

Continued on page 5
Managing stress is an ongoing challenge for most of us. Our emotional and physical reactions to events, situations, and people shape our quality of life and can affect our health in many ways.

At times, stress—and the adrenaline that comes with it—can be a positive force. For example, it can help us productively focus when we’re up against a tight deadline. However, frequent and ongoing stress can negatively affect our health. One stress management resource published online by LifeCare® indicates that, “Stress is related to 60 percent of the problems brought to physicians in the United States.”

And according to Greg Brannan, a speaker/trainer with the Shady Grove and Washington Adventist Hospitals, our lives are chock full of opportunities for stress at home and at work. “Forty percent of Americans feel rushed most of the time,” said Brannan who ran a stress management seminar in Riverdale, sponsored by the headquarter’s Safety and Health Council.

So it’s important to think about how you respond to stress. How do you manage it? What things work best for you? Among others, Brannan offered the following suggestions.

- **Adjust Your Attitudes and Thinking**
  Find ways to consciously take control of your reaction to stressors. Remember that “stress” is not the external events around us, but our physical, emotional, and mental response to those things. Our response habits can be intentionally reshaped. For example, try changing your self-talk to be more positive. When under stress, don’t pile on with additional worries or unobtainable expectations.

- **Maintain Your Balance**
  Take time for yourself regularly. Commit to taking a break during the workday and use it to do something relaxing. If you feel overwhelmed, set priorities and break the work down into smaller, achievable steps.

- **Keep Laughing**
  Humor can be a positive and productive force in the workplace. Value others and find laughter in your workday.

- **Strengthen Your Resilience**
  Exercise, eat well, and get good rest. Exercise releases tension, and proper food and rest fuel both your body and your outlook.

For more information and self assessments related to stress management visit the LifeCare® Web site at www.lifecare.com. The Web site is an employee information resource made available through APHIS’ Work Life Wellness Program and the Federal Occupational Health service unit. To access the Web site, enter “aphis” as your screen name in the member log-in and use “lifespan” as your password. Once logged in, enter “stress management” in the site’s search box or search the site for other topics of interest.

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**Civil Rights Award Ceremony**

*Continued from page 4*

**Group Effort Awards**

PPQ’s Veterinary Regulatory Support staff earned recognition for making civil rights and the support of EEO missions, policies, and programs a staff priority. With attention to recruiting and outreach efforts, the staff of 25 has grown increasingly diverse. Maureen Bell, Keith Wiggins, Terry Wiggins, and Terry Morris were each noted for their leadership contributions.

Agency employees from various programs—PPQ especially—were also recognized for developing the Tohono Land Connections Enrichment Program. The program provided participating high schoolers a chance to experience plant and animal sciences through a variety of agricultural activities. The program also introduced participating APHIS employees to a new culture, gave them a greater understanding of Tribal needs, and initiated an ongoing relationship with the Tohono O’odham nation.

Finally, Smith recognized numerous APHIS employees and State collaborators in North Carolina for their work on the new “Veterinary Career Pathways for Under-Represented Minorities” program. This program is an investment in developing future veterinary leaders with interests in public service and regulatory medicine. Through a 10-week internship, the program introduces students to veterinary career opportunities in agriculture and public service. Student feedback on the program has been overwhelmingly positive.
It takes a special combination of knowledge—joined with skilled and patient hands—to work for APHIS’ Plant Germplasm Quarantine Program (PGQP). Working at the National Plant Germplasm Quarantine Center in Beltsville, Maryland, the PGQP staff propagate, test, treat, and release imported germplasm and commercial cultivars of high-risk plants that would otherwise be prohibited entry into the United States.

For PGQP staff, the work routine revolves around a cycle of methodically propagating, observing, treating, testing, and shipping plants. For some imported plants, like fruit trees, this cycle may be repeated numerous times for as long as 5 years. But as importers, producers, and plant health officials agree, it’s time well spent. The PGQP, which is part of the agency’s Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, has helped prevent costly introductions of plant pathogens like Plum pox virus, Potato virus T, Potato virus V, Sugarcane streak mosaic virus, Xanthomonas oryzae pv. oryzae, and a smut fungus in Miscanthus.

Before PGQP scientists release plants from quarantine, they must be sure that the plants are healthy and free of known foreign pathogens, rare domestic pathogens, and even those that are not yet named or scientifically characterized.

“Our jobs are most like PPQ inspectors…. except we’re also looking for pathogens too small to see,” says PGQP director Joe Foster.

What and for Whom

Under construction from 1979 to 2005, the PGQP facility is the largest plant quarantine facility in North America, and it handles the widest variety of plant materials. The facility houses numerous greenhouses, screenhouses, growth chambers, and containment areas, as well as several laboratories and offices. The program staff of about 15 people is organized largely around 3 plant groupings eligible for import under quarantine: potatoes and sweet potatoes; sugarcane, grasses, and rice; and fruits, including stone fruits (e.g., peaches, cherries, almonds) and pome fruits (e.g., apples, pears, quinces).

Prospective importers typically include U.S. researchers, commercial importers, and plant repositories. Researchers, for example, import fruit tree germplasm, looking for beneficial traits concerning ripening times or resistance to certain pests or diseases. Other importers, like those in the commercial turf industry, look for traits like adaptability to different environmental conditions. Plant repositories, which are mostly associated with universities and/or USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS), often import plant germplasm for preserving diversity and unique genes.

Testing Procedures

To minimize risk, plant materials sent to the PGQP for quarantine first arrive at the Beltsville Plant Inspection Station that adjoins the quarantine facility. Plant materials are imported for quarantine at different times of year based on their seasonal growing cycle. They arrive in a variety of propagative forms, including seeds, cuttings, cane sets, tubers, plant tissue cultures, dormant budsticks, and bare-rooted plants.

PGQP scientists examine and test plant materials upon arrival and propagate them for further testing. Scientists use a full range of laboratory and biological tests to detect various bacterial, viroid, viral, and phytoplasma pathogens. PGQP scientists also work to improve these tests or incorporate new ones to ensure detection of pathogens.

“The PGQP staff uses the latest lab technologies. They do molecular laboratory testing and PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing,” says Alan Green, PPQ’s director of Plant Health Programs.

The overall strength of the program’s testing regimen comes from its rigorous combination of laboratory and biological testing. Jorge Abad, who oversees testing for potatoes and sweet potatoes, points out that certain laboratory tests are specific for particular pathogens and may not detect other unrelated pathogens.

“The additional biological testing we do helps us see things that we may not find during laboratory testing,” says Abad.

As a case in point, Abad excitedly describes how a recent group of plants tested clean in the lab. Grafting tests, however, revealed some unexpected symptoms. As a result, Abad and others were performing further molecular testing. “We may be characterizing a virus that has never been described before,” says Abad.

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Quarantine Program
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Plant Therapy
Beyond growing and testing quarantined plants, PGQP scientists are tasked with an additional challenge. They also work to eliminate pathogens by using various therapies to treat infected plants. As a result, infected plants poised for import are usually not destroyed; instead, PGQP scientists are able to produce clean plants and clear them for safe import.

Protecting U.S. agriculture is always the top priority, but PGQP’s scientists count importers as valuable stakeholders, too. The entry of healthy plant material is important to U.S. researchers who develop desirable plant traits for U.S. producers.

For certain plants and pathogens, heat treatment and chemical therapy are the tools available to the scientists. In other cases, scientists may use a combination of heat and chemical therapies plus an approach called meristem tip culture. With this approach, an infected plant is intentionally stressed using high temperature—with or without chemicals. In response, the plant generates new and rapid growth. The resulting growth happens so quickly that it can outpace the spread of the pathogen from the older into the newer part of the plant. Scientists then remove the new growth and use it to cultivate a new plant. Only time and additional testing reveal whether the therapy has produced a plant free of the original pathogen.

Making Strides
Despite its large size, the PGQP facility has only a finite amount of space for handling import quarantine requests. Juggling these requests is an ongoing challenge. And, it is not eased by the fact that plants need to be grown and nurtured in sync with their seasonal cycles, or that sometimes quarantined plants may not be cleared for release as quickly as hoped.

While many importers understand the difficulties that can arise during a plant’s quarantine, some do not. Importers often contact PGQP staff for regular updates. According to Margarita Licha—who oversees both stone and pome fruit trees—some importers get very attached to their plants and call frequently as if checking up on an old friend. “We have had stakeholders who call regularly and ask about their trees.”

Despite their many challenges, the PGQP has made recent strides. Since moving from ARS to APHIS in 2005, the PGQP has significantly increased the number of quarantine requests and releases it processes. That’s good news for importers, and for plant health officials, too. As Foster notes, the PGQP provides a safe avenue for certain clean plants to enter the country. Without PGQP’s timely efforts, importers may turn to other sources and are tempted to smuggle risky plant materials into the United States.

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Editor’s Note: As we begin 2008, Inside APHIS asked agency leaders to share a wish that they have for APHIS or their program in the new year.

Their contributions to this piece focus on program goals and also on broader agency hopes for 2008. Bill Hudnall—who recently retired from Marketing and Regulatory Programs—Business Services—closes out the “wish list” with a simple parting wish of success and happiness for all.

Cindy Smith
This year, my hope for the agency is that we can continue to build on our successes while we plan and prepare for the future. I recognize that this is very often easier said than done. Accomplishing the important day-to-day operational activities keeps each of us meaningfully occupied. However, stakeholders nationwide and around the world depend on APHIS and continue to see us playing a vital role well into the future. My wish for 2008 is that, as an agency, we will be able to anticipate what the future holds and be well prepared to embrace it.

Rebecca Bech
With a new year beginning, my hope for PPQ is that we will look back and be thankful for all that we have, build on our mistakes, and appreciate all that we have accomplished. Looking forward to a new beginning, my wish for PPQ is that we will appreciate and enjoy each other more, understand and let go of the negative things that hold us back, and embrace the new things that will come our way in 2008.

Continued on page 8
Bill Clay
We have many goals in Wildlife Services in the coming year, including increasing our intra-agency collaboration activities, implementing our International Capacity Business Plan, and more.

Of course, like all of the agency’s programs, our success will always depend on the hard work of our employees. So, in the coming year, I wish my program the best in its succession planning and recruitment efforts. All of us will be feeling the effects as those in the agency begin to retire in greater numbers. As we work to bring new people into the agency and update our program’s succession plan, I wish for us to attract the best and the brightest.

John Clifford
I am so proud of our VS team’s accomplishments last year. Like the rest of the agency, VS employees maintain a tireless devotion to the APHIS mission.

To build upon VS’ successes, in the coming year I have several things on my wish list. First, with USDA’s Business Plan to Advance Animal Disease Traceability, we plan to make progress toward achieving 48-hour animal disease traceability. Second, I wish to further grow VS’ collaboration with our many stakeholders. Collaboration has been the key to our progress with the National Animal Identification System and it will be a critical part of my third wish: to improve our emergency management infrastructure and capabilities.

Chester Gipson
My wish for 2008 is that Animal Care (AC) will continue to provide leadership that addresses the complex issue of animal welfare and that addresses quality of life issues for AC employees. In the coming year, I hope AC will continue to meet the challenge of successfully responding to demands and expectations as the mission of the program expands. The additional resources accompanying the expanded mission will provide additional personal and professional developmental opportunities for our dedicated AC employees.

Anna Grayson
My wish for the coming year is that we all work toward increasing and maintaining a diverse workforce and that the number of EEO complaints continues to decrease. My hope is that we will all put forth extra efforts to extend our recruitment and hiring to include more people with disabilities—especially disabled veterans with an emphasis on those returning to the workforce from active duty. It is also my hope that CREC will continue to provide the best possible service to managers, supervisors, and employees and to flood the agency with civil rights information and updates.

Michael Gregoire
First, I wish all APHIS employees and their families health and happiness and hope they find their work rich and rewarding. For Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS), I hope that we can accomplish our goals, including revising APHIS’ biotechnology regulations, implementing the Biotechnology Quality Management System, and making progress on the issue of regulating genetically engineered animals. I hope that I serve the agency well in a new capacity as the recently appointed BRS deputy administrator. My final wish is that we in APHIS can find additional ways to emphasize leadership development as well as recruitment and retention of more great talent.

Beth Jones
In the coming year, I wish the Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) staff continued success and the ability to gracefully face whatever professional or personal challenges the year may bring. To me, LPA’s greatest asset is its employees, and how incredibly talented they are in all aspects of communications. I hope that we continue to utilize our relationship building and communications expertise to gain support for and
Every year, Federal employees pull together to make a positive difference in the lives of others through the more than 300 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) areas throughout the country and abroad. For APHIS’ headquarters and field offices, not only did the 2007 CFC campaigns provide a chance to better the lives of others, it also gave APHIS coworkers across the country the opportunity to work together as a team and have some fun while giving back to their communities.

The 2007 CFC National Capital Area (CFCN-CA) campaign, “Campaign of Dreams,” added a baseball twist to last year’s theme, “Be a Star in Someone’s Life.” Although making dreams come true is a tall order, the APHIS family teamed up, making a big difference one donation at a time. Whether it was at a sloppy joe lunch, a Halloween costume contest, an ice cream social, or a chance to send a “thank you” gram to a colleague, the agency’s 2007 CFC fundraising events livened up the workplace and brought colleagues together. Altogether, headquarters employees raised more than $167,000 for CFC. APHIS employees throughout the country also donated generously to their local campaign areas.

“It’s been a very exciting campaign year,” said Beth Jones, the agency’s CFCNCA campaign manager. “The fundraising activities have been really creative and fun and it’s helped to make the campaign a big success. I’d like to thank the people that participated for being so supportive. Everyone at APHIS should be proud of what we’ve accomplished by pulling together and working as a team.”

Reminder: Thank-You’s Wanted
Inside APHIS would still like to hear your best “Thank-You” story. E-mail us about the most memorable thank-you that you’ve received either from a co-worker or an agency stakeholder. As the CFC “Thank-You Gram” fundraiser showed, a thank-you can mean a lot in the workplace. Send your story to inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov and—with your permission—it may be included in a future newsletter story.

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understanding of the agency and its programs. Finally, in 2008 it’s my hope that LPA will work hard, laugh often, and take pride and enjoyment from working for one of the most multi-faceted, respected, and dynamic agencies in government.

Dan Sheesley
My desire for International Services is to position us in strategic locations worldwide to effectively support APHIS’ mission in protecting American agriculture and facilitating safe agriculture trade. We hope to continue building lasting foreign relationships with our counterparts that will allow APHIS to have a foothold into foreign agriculture for years to come. I also hope to recruit the best and the brightest to continue to build a diverse workforce that will have the talent and motivation to face our future challenges.

Bill Hudnall
I will be sitting on a beach by the time you read this but here is my wish for MRPBS employees and the entire agency. In the coming year, I hope that each of you succeed in whatever you do and that that success brings you nothing but satisfaction and happiness.
**APHIS Manager Profile**

**What is your background?**
I was born, raised, and graduated from high school in Norman, Oklahoma. During junior high school, high school, and college, I played French horn in a variety of concert bands, orchestras, and marching bands, as well as some smaller ensembles.

After high school, I spent 8 years at Oklahoma State University, earning a B.S. in zoology and a D.V.M. I then spent the next 6-plus years working in a two-man, small animal veterinary practice in Oklahoma City.

During my last year in private practice, I learned of the various opportunities for veterinarians in the Federal workforce. So, I applied for a position with USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service at a poultry plant in Arkansas. After spending 1 year on the night shift there, I joined APHIS in 1992.

**How long have you been with APHIS?**
I’ve been with APHIS for 15 years. My initial position was as a field veterinary medical officer for Animal Care in Utah. After 3-1/2 years in Utah, I was promoted to a field supervisor position in Sacramento, California. Two years later I was selected as the Western Region Director.

**Most memorable APHIS experience?**
My most memorable experience was spending 2 days in 1995 working with the State of Idaho, wildlife facilities, a SWAT team, and other government agencies at an unregulated big cat facility in southeast Idaho. The facility housed over 50 ligers (lion–tiger hybrids), half of which had escaped into the surrounding area and town. The escaped ligers had to be shot by the SWAT team and other law enforcement officials to protect the public, but we were able to immobilize, provide veterinary care to, and relocate the remaining ligers to a wildlife facility in California.

**Priorities for the coming months?**
My top priorities for the coming months are: the continuing evolution of APHIS and Animal Care’s role in pet evacuation and sheltering during disasters; strategic planning for Animal Care; space issues in the Western Region hub; and the elephant, big cat, and commercial pet issues that Animal Care is currently dealing with in the Western Region.

**Accomplishment most proud of?**
*Professional*—I led a task force that resulted in the successful placement of several hundred dogs and cats that were being held by an animal broker who was illegally procuring the animals to sell to biomedical research facilities. In addition to placing the dogs and cats in new homes, our efforts resulted in the largest civil penalty ever collected under the Animal Welfare Act.

*Personal*—My wife and I have been married for 26-plus years and have spent most of those years raising a family, of which we are very proud.

**Last book read?**
*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

**Guilty pleasure?**
Warm, fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies.

**Favorite meal?**
Sausage, mushroom, and jalapeno pizza at The Hideaway in Stillwater, Oklahoma (with a cold beer).

**Favorite movie?**
*Monty Python and the Holy Grail.*

**Hobbies?**
I enjoy fishing, swimming, softball, watching college athletics, movies, and playing a variety of games with my family.

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**Reader Survey**

Inside APHIS wants to hear your thoughts. Click on the link below to complete a short reader survey.

The survey takes only 3–4 minutes, and it will help us to produce a newsletter that best matches your needs as an agency employee.

Enter the following web address in your browser or click directly on the address to go to the survey site automatically.

On December 14, 2007, the Senate concluded debate on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee’s version of the next Farm Bill and voted to approve the measure before adjourning for the holiday recess, which ended just recently. The full Congress is now back in session.

In the lead up to the vote, Agriculture Committee Chairman Tom Harkin and Ranking Member Saxby Chambliss worked with Senate leaders to forge agreements on the number and kinds of amendments offered to the bill on the Senate floor, as well as the contents of a large manager’s amendment.

The resulting floor-passed bill reads differently than the version passed out of the Agriculture Committee in late October. A number of provisions of note to APHIS remain in the Senate bill, however, or were added via amendment. Here is a sampling of significant provisions:

- Prohibition on the importation into the United States of dogs that are younger than 6 months of age;
- Phase out of random source class B dealers that provide animals to research facilities;
- New specialty crop pest protection programs and establishment of a clean plant network in the United States;
- Prohibition on the importation of illegally harvested timber from abroad;
- Establishment of an invasive species protection program in Hawaii;
- Increase in penalties under the Plant Protection Act for biotech-related regulatory violations;
- Development of regulations regarding how USDA, under the Freedom of Information Act, will handle requests for records associated with the National Animal Identification System;
- Establishment of an advisory committee for the Secretary on aquatic animal health in the United States.

The next step in Congress’s passage of a new Farm Bill is conference on the bill. Select members and staff from both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees will work in the coming weeks to address differences between the two versions of the bill. The conferees’ challenge will be to work quickly and craft a single piece of legislation that can pass both houses of Congress and be signed by the President.

In conference, significant changes can be made to the bill as compromises are reached and other changes are made to the language. The next installment of Legislative Corner will provide an update on the process and look ahead to APHIS’ implementation of new provisions in the new law.

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**Updating Your Federal Income Tax Form, W-4**

If you do not expect to owe any taxes this year and plan to claim exempt status from Federal tax this year, you must file a W-4 claiming exempt status BEFORE FEBRUARY 17, 2008 (pay period 4). Important: Employees who claimed exempt status last year must file a new claim form for this year.

To update or revise your W-4 Form, contact Processing/Files Unit Chief Margaret McKinney in the Minneapolis Human Resources, processing section. Her e-mail address is Margaret.K.McKinney@usda.gov. Her telephone number is (612) 336-3334.

Also, remember if you have a change in your marital status, number of children, or work duty station, you may want to revise your W-4. You can revise your W-4 for such reasons at any time throughout the year.

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**The Employee Assistance Program (EAP)—More than You Know**

The EAP (FOH4you) is a confidential counseling and referral service that can help you and your family successfully deal with life’s challenges. It doesn’t have to be a crisis; you may just want help getting some information. EAP benefits include: will preparation kits, crisis management, counseling, legal services, financial services, and more.

EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for confidential help with work, family, or personal matters, and legal or financial issues. Many EAP services are available to you at no cost. Go to http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/safety_eap.shtml for a quick overview of EAP.

Call EAP at (800) 222-0364 with your questions about program services. You can also visit www.FOH4you.com where you can find additional info as a registered or non-registered “member” user.
Bob Oppenheimer talks matter of factly about the day a mountain lion leapt at him from a nearby rock. Oppenheimer, a retired Wildlife Services employee, recalls how the animal “…come right at me, you know, and run right over me…”

His and many other stories from Wildlife Services field employees are being recorded and transcribed as part of the program’s “Trapping Oral History Initiative”—the brainchild of the National Wildlife Research Center’s John Shivik.

Begun in 2005, the oral history initiative is preserving through audio recordings and transcripts the knowledge and experience of numerous field personnel—some who have worked with wildlife almost daily for 30 to 40 years. To date, Wildlife Services’ Diana Dwyer and Nancy Freeman, who work with Shivik on the initiative, have recorded about 24 interviews and have begun making transcripts.

The concept for the initiative began at a conference when State operations staff observed how much useful information could be lost as field employees retired and passed on.

Shivik says, “The original idea was to interview people and just hold onto this information.”

However, as Shivik readily admits, he has gotten more from collecting the stories than he originally envisioned. The audio recordings and interviews have yielded much more than insights about the tools and techniques of trapping.

Says Shivik, “In the beginning, I just wanted to steal all of their secrets. What they know about capture devices, lures, and how to outsmart the animals they work with. But there’s a real cultural richness here… the people and their stories are so interesting.”

Sharing the Stories
Nancy Freeman, archivist for NWRC, shares Shivik’s enthusiasm for the stories they are gathering. She laughs freely about how easy it is to get her talking about the interviews. “Just wind me up and I go!” Freeman says.

Working with a list of established questions, Freeman and Dwyer spend about 3 hours with each interviewee. The questions cover a lot of ground, including general background information, specific techniques, personal reflections on the work, and more. The resulting conversations have unearthed a wealth of information that otherwise would never have been recorded.

“It’s saving the history of the service, of the work, of the tools, and some personal history too,” says Freeman.

Each of the participants responded a little differently to being interviewed. Some spoke almost unprompted while others chose fewer words but offered equal insight.

With stories about mountain lions, bears, foxes and more, their recollections run the full range from informative and insightful to comical and hair-raising.

“It’s been a real honor to talk to these guys,” says Dwyer, who was struck by the deep respect that each of those interviewed have for animals and the environment. For most, their careers became a lifelong, never-ending schooling about wildlife.

Retiree Don Hawthorne told Dwyer that to this day he still walks with his “eyes on the ground” looking for tracks.

Almost universally, the participants commented about wanting to help people, and wanting to fix the problems that others were having. Many expressed an outright love for the job and for working outdoors.

Odon Corr, who worked for 34 years in Minnesota and North and South Dakota, spoke happily of returning to work on Mondays. “You know, a lot of people, they don’t like Monday mornings, but Monday was one of my favorite times—to get back to work.”

Wildlife Service’s Dale Booth, who currently works in Utah, said, “…it’s been a good job. It’s been my life, you know. I mean, that’s what I’ve enjoyed. After working 38 and a half years, if I could be young again, I’d do the very same thing.”
Screwworm Detection:

Veterinarian’s Watchful Eye Makes Big Find

By John Scott

On October 29, 2007, Danielle Munday, a private practice veterinarian in Massachusetts, called Veterinary Services (VS) to report some unusual larvae she had seen while examining a client’s dog recently imported from Singapore. Munday’s watchfulness and her follow-up actions triggered a response that’s an almost textbook example of the cooperative relationship between APHIS and private veterinarians that helps to safeguard U.S. agriculture.

Responding to Munday’s call, VS officials collected sample larvae later that same day and promptly sent them to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) for identification. NVSL entomologist James Mertins soon confirmed that Munday’s alert eyes had detected a case of Old World screwworm, Chrysomya bezziana—quite likely the first report of this particular species of screwworm in the Western Hemisphere.

In October, Acting Secretary Chuck Conner presented USDA’s 2007 Honor Awards and hosted the 60th annual ceremony. Two APHIS groups earned Honor Awards, and one agency employee received award recognition as a member of a Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) group.

APHIS’ BSE Risk Status Dossier Team, led by John Greifer, earned distinction for the group’s exceptional effort in preparing the submission that led to recognition of the United States as a controlled-risk country for bovine spongiform encephalopathy by the World Organization for Animal Health.

The agency’s Irradiation and Indian Mango Approval Team, led by Alan Green and Paul Gadh, received the award for facilitating, against all odds and in a timely manner, the import of Indian mangoes treated with newly approved, environmentally friendly irradiation technology—while at the same time protecting American agriculture from quarantine pests.

APHIS’ Jonathan Zack was honored for his participation with FSIS’ Melamine Response Team. USDA awarded the team for its exceptional investigative, response, and communication activities in protecting the public health. The team’s efforts focused on addressing the safety concerns about meat originating from food animals that consumed feed containing melamine and related compounds.

Congratulations to Jonathan Zack and to each of APHIS’ group recipients listed below!

BSE Risk Status Dossier Team
John Greifer, Group Leader
APHIS Group members: Elizabeth Barrett, Neal Bataller, Debra Beasley, Elizabeth Brown, Gary Colgrove, Michael David, Lisa Ferguson, Brian McCluskey, Christina Myers, Dorothy Roe, Keith Zotti.

Irradiation and Indian Mango Team
Alan Green and Paul Gadh, Group Leaders

For more info about the Irradiation and Indian Mango Approval Team’s efforts, see the article in Inside APHIS’ 2007 Summer Issue, “APHIS Delivers on Presidential Initiative.”

Like the New World species of screwworm that USDA eradicated from the United States in 1966, the Old World species could pose a threat to U.S. livestock if it were introduced and established. Screwworms are destructive parasites that enter the open wounds of host animals. If left untreated, a screwworm infestation can kill a host animal within 7 to 14 days.

Fortunately, in this situation, the potential threat was quickly addressed. Munday and VS officials responded without delay, and the dog received appropriate veterinary treatment. The larvae were extracted while still immature; the dog’s lesions healed without complications and with no further evidence of screwworm infestation. Additionally, the local climate conditions at the time were not suitable for the larva’s survival.

Bill Smith, VS’ area veterinarian in charge for the New England States, presented Munday and her veterinary practice with a plaque in recognition of their efforts and prompt response.
As I conclude my career with the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, I reflect upon my experiences as Deputy Administrator, and consider what the future holds for PPQ.

In 1999, when I began as Deputy, PPQ was in the throes of the citrus canker eradication program in Florida. We still had the agricultural quarantine inspection (AQI) port inspection program. Trade issues were on the rise. Potato wart in Canada was causing political turmoil. The safeguarding review was just completed, and one of my first challenges was to figure out how to respond to its 300 recommendations! Our organization was being pulled in many directions.

My initial goals focused on strengthening PPQ’s science base, investing in technical and leadership training and development, improving dialogue and transparency with our many stakeholders and partners, strategic and operational planning, and fostering more awareness and support of our programs in the Department and in Congress. By taking the safeguarding review seriously, we improved our rapport with the National Plant Board, NASDA, and many others in the agricultural industry. We even developed a broader support with new stakeholders, such as the Nature Conservancy and forest and timber groups. We went back to basics and reevaluated our mission, setting long-term goals to strengthen our technical and leadership capacities. We augmented our capacity to handle exponential growth in trade and to respond to new and increasing pest outbreaks and other emergencies.

We’ve experienced many changes in the last 8 years, including the transfer of the AQI program. While it made for some difficult times, one positive outcome was that it allowed PPQ to focus on improving other safeguarding efforts, such as offshore risk reduction, pest detection, Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance, and emergency response. In addition, we were able to strengthen other areas, such as risk and pathway analysis, treatment technology, pest permitting, and our Plant Inspection Station system. We streamlined rulemaking and made major strides with IT systems and databases such as PCIT, OPIS, E-Permits, and many others. Because of these investments, we have been able to address unprecedented increases in new pest and disease introductions and outbreaks, and to implement the superior regulatory protocols and sophisticated programs necessary in these challenging times.

All these accomplishments occurred because of the quality, creativity, and innovativeness of our people. We are recognized as world leaders in plant protection and regulatory science. We are blessed with a cadre of motivated, competent, and well-trained individuals, who always step up to the challenge. PPQ employees embrace and support the mission and always go beyond expectations!

What lies ahead? I believe that PPQ is poised to both anticipate and respond to new challenges. We will continue to find new pests and diseases, and we will figure out how to eradicate them or minimize their potential impact. We will continue to streamline rulemaking to be more responsive to our stakeholders. We will continue to find, adapt, and apply the latest and best technologies to accomplish our mission. And, we will invest in our workforce because it is the quality and caliber of our people by which we will achieve success.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as PPQ’s Deputy Administrator. I am very proud of our accomplishments and achievements. The importance of our mission to agriculture, to consumers, and to preserving our natural resources is incredible. I know that each of you will continue to perform with this sense of importance and urgency in mind. I wish all of my colleagues in PPQ and in APHIS the best of everything in the years to come.

“lt has been an honor and a privilege to serve as PPQ’s Deputy Administrator.”
—Ric Dunkle

Correction: Mandatory Training Link
In our last issue, we provided a web address for the regularly updated listing of APHIS-wide mandatory training requirements. This address has since changed. The new address is http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/training_employer_development.shtml.

We encourage you to bookmark this training link for your reference throughout the year.
Looking toward APHIS’ future, agency managers, human resource officials, and civil rights specialists recently participated in the 7th Annual Leadership Institute Recruitment Conference hosted by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF).

The annual career preparation conference is the largest to serve the Nation’s public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This year’s event—attended by more than 500 students from HBCUs—exposed students to potential careers in the public and private sector. APHIS representatives were there to encourage students and develop recruitment opportunities.

Ken Johnson, APHIS special programs consultant, participated in the conference as a guest speaker at the Agriculture/Life Sciences career panel session. Johnson discussed the variety of internships and career options within the field of agriculture and provided students with information about what is needed to compete in this challenging work environment.

Rebecca Bech, recently named as deputy administrator for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, delivered the keynote address at the event’s leadership luncheon. Bech spoke to student participants about her career experiences and provided key leadership advice for translating academic achievements into meaningful skills in the workplace.

“It was an amazing opportunity to meet with future scientists, engineers, and doctors,” said Bech. “They have a remarkable thirst for knowledge and the determination to be successful leaders in the future,” she added. Her advice, “Don’t wait for someone to ask you to be a leader, step up today!”

**Thurgood Marshall College Fund**

The TMCF, whose representatives hosted the conference, was born of the life and legacy of Thurgood Marshall—Supreme Court Justice and civil rights leader. Marshall is remembered for his efforts concerning equal rights and opportunities, for his role in arguing Brown v. Board of Education, and for his unwavering commitment to education.

Since its inception in 1987, the TMCF has awarded more than $68 million in scholarships and provided programmatic support to over 6,000 students to attend public HBCUs. The TMCF offers undergraduate and law school scholarships to students attending the United States’ 47 HBCUs.

Students participating in the TMCF program must meet high standards of academic excellence. To participate, entering freshmen must have at least a 3.0 GPA, 1650 SAT, or a 25 ACT score. Students are required to maintain a minimum of 3.0 to retain their TMCF scholarships.

**Resource for Recruiting Talent**

APHIS’ activities related to the TMCF are a rewarding investment toward recruiting and maintaining a talented workforce—one of the agency’s key challenges noted in the APHIS Strategic Plan. Efforts to grow APHIS’ involvement with the TMCF support the agency’s goal to build a work environment that is reflective of today’s changing labor force.

Agency managers and supervisors are encouraged to contact Ken Johnson and use TMCF’s talent and skills database as a tool for filling positions in APHIS. Based on a supervisor’s hiring needs, Johnson can query the database and generate a list of TMCF scholars with related educational backgrounds and experience. Using this list, Johnson can then contact TMCF scholars and help supervisors deepen the pool of qualified candidates applying and competing under vacancy announcements. For additional information, contact Johnson by e-mail at Ken.E.Johnson@aphis.usda.gov.

Alternatively, supervisors can work with APHIS’ Human Resources officials and use the Federal Career Intern Program to recruit and hire individuals more directly. TMCF scholars who have completed either an undergraduate or graduate program may be eligible for hire under this Federal appointment program. For more information, about the Federal Career Intern Program contact Linda Blackmon. She can be reached at linda.blackmon@aphis.usda.gov or by calling (202) 720-9176.

**Recruitment Resource**

For information on recruiting TMCF scholars, contact Ken Johnson by e-mail at Ken.E.Johnson@aphis.usda.gov.

For additional information about the Federal Career Intern Program and about hiring TMCF scholars who have graduated, please contact Linda Blackmon. She can be reached at linda.blackmon@aphis.usda.gov or by calling (202) 720-9176.

In 2007, APHIS hired TMCF Scholar Tanika Greene as a program analyst with the Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance staff. To learn more about her experience as a TMCF Scholar and her participation in this year’s conference, contact Greene by e-mail at Tanika.Greene@aphis.usda.gov.

By Tanika Greene
Wildlife Services’ Deputy Administrator Bill Clay was honored recently with the 2007 Presidential Rank Award.

Each year, the President recognizes and celebrates a small group of career senior executives with the Presidential Rank Award for exceptional long-term accomplishments. Clay is one of only ten USDA senior executives to receive the 2007 award in the Meritorious Executive category.

Recipients of the prestigious award are recognized as strong leaders, professionals, and scientists who have achieved results and consistently demonstrated strength, integrity, industry, and a relentless commitment to excellence in public service.

“Obviously, I am very humbled at receiving the award,” Clay said. “For these kinds of awards, the head person often gets the credit, but there is no way that I could have gotten the award without the dedication, professionalism, and cooperation of all members of Wildlife Services.”

“As Deputy, I can offer direction, but achieving goals requires a cooperative effort,” Clay added. “I appreciate Dr. DeHaven’s support in making this nomination and the understanding of the reviewers who recognized Wildlife Services in approving it.”

Among other career accomplishments, Clay was recognized for his efforts through the Wildlife Services program to lead change, increase diversity and build domestic and international coalitions.

Clay has supported initiatives to encourage minority participation in Wildlife Services programs. Under Clay’s management, Wildlife Services has also supported diversity among program employees. Seventy-five percent of the women hired by Wildlife Services in the last year filled positions that were not traditionally occupied by women.

Clay and Wildlife Services have built both domestic and international coalitions focused on program related activities, including rabbies surveillance and response work with Canada and Mexico; airport safety work in Africa, South America, and Asia; and avian influenza surveillance work with numerous countries around the world.

APHIS Calendar

February
National Black History Month. Check your e-mail for upcoming events and speakers at headquarters and field offices.

Work Life Wellness (WLW) efforts will focus on “Emergency Preparedness” throughout the upcoming months. Contact your regional WLW Committee for information about staying connected and remaining healthy while deployed for APHIS emergency response activities and about returning from deployment.

NASDA 2008 Midyear Conference, February 7–11, Washington, D.C.

“So…You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor?” Seminar, February 12–13, Riverdale, Maryland. Contact Will Bostwick in the Training and Development Branch by e-mail or at (301) 734-0867 for more information.

March
National Women’s History Month. Organizers are preparing events now. Ask your unit manager about how you can get involved!

Agricultural Emergency Response Training, March 2–7, held at FEMA’s Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. Co-sponsored by APHIS and FEMA. Contact Gordon Harman at (256) 847-2350 for more information and upcoming dates. His e-mail address is Robert.G.Harman@aphis.usda.gov.

“So…You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor?” Seminar, March 18–19, Raleigh, North Carolina. See listing above for contact info.


April
2008 Southern Plant Board Annual Meeting, April 6–9, Nashville, Tennessee.

Take Your Child to Work Day, April 24. Contact your regional Work Life Wellness Committee to find out about activities planned in your area.

APHIS-CBP Stakeholder meeting, April 28–May 2, The Hyatt Dulles, Herndon, Virginia.
Taking a break from their classroom, a group of Chicago students recently got a real-life lesson in government cooperation, media, and the serious threat presented by invasive species. On April 17, elementary school children watched as USDA Under Secretary Bruce Knight officially declared the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) eradicated from Illinois. Knight made the announcement at a press conference held in front of the Pilgrim Lutheran Church and School in Chicago’s Ravenswood neighborhood.

“This successful eradication would not have been possible without the solid partnership between Federal, State, and local governments fighting ALB in Illinois,” said Under Secretary Knight to the assembled crowd of about 40 onlookers.

The declaration of eradication follows 4 years of negative survey findings in the 61-square-mile area of Illinois previously considered to be infested.

“Illinois is now the first State where we have been able to declare ALB eradication,” said Michael Stefan, director of Emergency and Domestic Programs for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ). “With this and the Hudson County, New Jersey, declaration of eradication earlier this month, we are making undeniable progress in the fight against this invasive species.”

A Nearly 10-Year Battle
The ALB infestation in Illinois took almost 10 years to eradicate. As many as 1,550 infested trees and 220 non-infested trees were removed—more than 1,200 of them in Ravenswood alone. The last ALB was found in the Oz Park neighborhood of Chicago in 2003.

“The ALB is such a significant threat to certain hardwood tree species that the goal of the ALB Cooperative Eradication Program is to eliminate all reproducing populations of the insect in the United States,” said Christine Markham, national ALB program director.

Continued on page 2
At the press event in Chicago, USDA honored several people who were instrumental in the fight against the dangerous invasive insect. The honorees included former APHIS Illinois Plant Health Director Ken Kruse, who retired 4 years ago after 43 years of service. Knight presented Kruse with a plaque expressing USDA’s appreciation for his hard work. Plaques were also presented to representatives of the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago, to the Pilgrim Lutheran Church Community, and to Barry Albach, the citizen who reported the first Illinois beetle.

Albach found strange beetles on firewood cut from the branches of a tree in the Ravenswood neighborhood. He typed “beetle” into an internet search engine, and the first hit he found was an ALB pest alert urging individuals to report sightings immediately to the State department of agriculture. The Illinois ALB Program began with his reported sighting.

“There were so many different aspects to the program: bucket truck surveys, treatment operations, climbing surveys, the regulatory requirements, and extensive outreach with homeowners. I learned so much,” said PPQ Officer Jennifer Medina. Assigned to the program since October 1999, Medina was one of the first people hired by the new ALB Program. “There were so many intricacies to the program, and they all flowed together very well.”

Something for Everyone
Leadership skills are valuable regardless of the career path you choose.

“No matter what your goals are or how you choose to be a part of the agency’s mission, there’s something for everyone in the Leadership Roadmap,” says Smith.

For some, the roadmap will help plan for far-reaching goals. For others, it will help with more immediate training and mentoring decisions. For all employees, it provides a framework for discussing training and other opportunities with their supervisors. The roadmap will also guide current managers and supervisors with ongoing professional development and with suggesting developmental opportunities for those they manage.

Smith is very enthusiastic about the roadmap as a resource for all employees. “With the roadmap, people have a guide. They can make good choices about how to grow and develop,” she says.

“The agency gains, too. Our succession planning will thrive only if we help our employees and agency leaders grow.”

More to Come
APHIS will soon be announcing more informational resources and tools in connection with the Leadership Roadmap. Next in line is the Leadership Development Toolkit, which will provide more detailed examples of coursework and behaviors for developing core competencies.

“The roadmap is a great place to start, but the toolkit drills down into a deeper level of detail,” says Colbert.

For more information about the Leadership Roadmap, program contacts, and other related resources to come, visit the APHIS intranet site at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/esd/leadership_roadmap.shtml.
For the first time in the 74-year history of U.S. brucellosis eradication efforts, all 50 States—along with Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands—have simultaneously achieved Class Free status. This status is granted to a State or Territory with no known brucellosis in cattle for the 12 months preceding its designation as Class Free.

USDA’s announcement on February 1, 2008, marks a milestone in U.S. animal health and a significant accomplishment for the Cooperative State–Federal Brucellosis Eradication Program.

The newly achieved status is a testament to the long-term commitment and dedication of many APHIS and State officials and U.S. cattle producers.

“We are very pleased to achieve class free State status nationwide; however, we must remain vigilant,” said Debbi Donch, Veterinary Service’s national brucellosis program manager. “There are still challenges out there.”

For Veterinary Services and agency cooperators, the focus is now on what it will take to maintain this hard-earned status and to respond to possible recurrences of the disease.

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that causes decreased milk production, weight loss, infertility, loss of young and lameness in cattle, elk and bison. There is no known treatment for brucellosis, and depopulation of infected and exposed animals is the only effective means of disease containment and eradication.

Through the years, the program has adjusted and reshaped its efforts against the disease, using new scientific technology and sound epidemiological strategies. The program has incorporated new tests and vaccines and improved surveillance procedures to detect the disease, prevent exposure to susceptible herds, and respond rapidly to detections.

Early in the program, brucellosis was widespread throughout U.S. livestock. In 1956, testing indicated approximately 124,000 affected herds in the United States.

Beginning in the 1970s, testing at “first points of concentration” became a significant tool contributing to program progress. (photo provided by VS)

**Password Time-Saving Tip**
APHIS Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) staff can now reset your USDA eAuthentication password—often within minutes of receiving your request. Previously, only USDA’s eAuthorization help desk was able to reset passwords.

Contact ATAC if you have forgotten your password or if you need help resetting your password. For assistance, e-mail “ATAC” or call (877) 944-8457 (U.S. toll free) or (919) 855-7888 (international).

**Important:** Contact ATAC before your third failed log-on attempt. Otherwise, you will need to wait 1 hour before the password can be reset.

eAuthentication passwords are used for a growing list of applications, including AgLearn, Employee Personnel Page (EPP), ePermits, APHIS Cost Management System (ACMS), and Veterinary Services Processes Streamlining (VSPS) project.

**Report Lost/Stolen IT Equipment**
USDA has set up a toll-free hotline for reporting lost or stolen government-issued information technology equipment such as laptops, personal data assistants, cell phones, and removable storage media. The hotline is: 1-877-PII2YOU (or 1-877-744-2968). It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

ALL equipment incidents—including those involving personally identifiable information (PII)—should be reported within 1 hour of the incident to USDA’s Cyber Security officials at the above hotline. For more information regarding PII, please visit: http://pii.usda.gov.

Please Note: If your incident involves an APHIS facility break-in, Physical Security MUST be called immediately at 1-970-494-7169.
By regularly updating your voicemail greeting and contact information in Lotus Notes, you can do yourself and your coworkers a great favor.

E-mail and telephones are the most commonly used tools in an office. But not being able to reach someone by phone or confidently leave a message can be a real roadblock in your workday. And on the receiving end, if people can’t reach you, you might miss important deadlines and information.

Voicemail: Stop the Wondering
Have you ever left a message on voicemail and wondered if the person is actually around? If you consistently update your voicemail, you can help coworkers avoid this problem and put their wondering to rest.

Always give your name, date, and program in the greeting so that callers know it’s current and that you’re in the office. In addition, indicate your availability and if there are alternate people, telephone numbers, or other options—such as pressing zero—for obtaining assistance.

Updating Lotus Notes Contact Information
Many employees use the address book in Lotus Notes as a resource for locating coworkers. Updating your contact information takes only minutes and can save others both time and trouble.

Follow the instructions below or call an ATAC representative [toll-free: (877) 944-8457; international (919) 855-7888] to walk you through these few simple steps.

1. Depending on how your Lotus Notes is set up, you will need to do one of the following steps to open the APHIS address book.
   - If your Lotus Notes initially opens to the Workspace, double-click on the APHIS Address Book icon on your Workspace. The icon should read “APHIS Address Book on Mailxx”—the “xx” part of the icon's text will vary depending on your primary mail server.
   - If your Lotus Notes initially opens to anything other than the Workspace, click on the Databases icon on the far left side of your screen to bring up the Databases list. Right-click on “APHIS Address Book” and select “Open Replica” from the pop-up menu.
   - From the list that appears, select the name of your primary mail server, which should read as “Mailxx/INT/APHIS/USDA”—with the “xx” varying depending on your primary mail server.

2. Locate your listing in the address book by either typing your last name or scrolling. Select the “Edit Person” button at the top of the screen.

3. Select the work/home tab and enter information as needed to update your listing. For the company entry, enter APHIS and your program name separated by a hyphen (e.g., APHIS-LPA).

4. Other important information fields include: location (city, State), manager/supervisor, office phone, fax number, and the address information to the right under company information.

5. Click on the “Save and Close” button at the top of the screen and close the APHIS Address Book.

Note: To avoid system update errors, click “Save and Close” only once; if further edits/updates are needed, wait 20 minutes before re-selecting “Edit Person” to make additional changes.

Spreading the Word
APHIS programs work hard spreading the word about career opportunities with the agency. Veterinary Medical Officer Julie Gauthier (on the right) speaks with people visiting Veterinary Services’ recruitment table at the recent North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, Florida. (photo by R. Cambre)
Wildlife Services officials are using an innovative approach to attract and develop the interest of possible future employees. They’re going back to school.

In Georgia, Wildlife Services State Director Douglas Hall co-teaches a wildlife damage management class as an unpaid adjunct professor at the University of Georgia. The course is offered as an elective in the School of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Hall and university professor Mike Mengak teach graduate and undergraduate students about wildlife damage management and how Wildlife Services fulfills its responsibility for managing and resolving human/wildlife conflicts. The course is similar to other Wildlife Services cooperative teaching efforts in Indiana, Mississippi, New York, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and other States.

Through lectures and field exercises, students get the opportunity to obtain real-world, hands-on experience in resolving complex damage issues. Working as volunteers, students participate in and learn from ongoing wildlife projects in their State.

Student activities vary by semester, but past opportunities have included assisting with the non-lethal capture and relocation of waterfowl; drafting an airport management plan; conducting predation management to protect threatened sea turtles and increase native quail nest productivity; assisting in wildlife necropsy work; and capturing and/or removing nuisance beavers.

Students also gain communications experience by attending meetings with cooperators to learn about the decisionmaking process. Additionally, APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) specialists provide classroom training on dealing with the media and conducting outreach presentations. Students then get to practice their skills by giving presentations in local public schools.

**Access to Valuable Experience**

With their strong hands-on component and small class size, the wildlife damage management classes are often very popular with students.

The Wildlife Services employees teaching the courses have decades of knowledge and experience in “real-world” wildlife damage management practices. Students raised in more urban and suburban settings are aided by the course for this reason in particular.

“We created the class we would have wanted to have as students,” says Jason Suckow, Wildlife Services State director in Wisconsin.

Suckow is very involved with the course offered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The course includes lessons taught by visiting specialists from the program’s National Wildlife Research Center and LPA.

**An Investment that Pays**

Since 1994, approximately 16 percent of the students completing the course at the University of Georgia have joined the ranks of Wildlife Services. To date, the program’s investment in Georgia has yielded about 24 new and highly qualified employees. Their positions in the program range from State director and district supervisor to wildlife specialist. Similarly, Kris Godwin—Wildlife Services State director in Mississippi—has found that classes offered in her State have been good for fostering potential future employees. But this isn’t the only gain for the agency.

Those students who choose a different career path each gain a deeper understanding of wildlife conflict and of the agency’s efforts to manage them. And as they enter other related professions in the field of natural resources, they—as our future partners—will have this understanding and their firsthand experience with the program to draw upon.
The Art of Policing Butterflies

By Greg Rosenthal

Like kaleidoscopic acrobats, they flit, flutter, and fascinate visitors at the Smithsonian’s new Butterfly Pavilion in Washington, D.C. Throughout the exhibit, deep, iridescent blues, greens, and reds flash in the air as butterflies perform their aerial dances. Others alight on the bright flowers lining the winding path, happy to take a break—and a sip of nectar.

In this indoor Garden of Eden, spellbound tourists may have trouble believing such delicate beauties could threaten American agriculture and natural resources. APHIS, however, fully understands the potential risks. That’s why each flitting butterfly at the Smithsonian—and 200 other exhibits nationwide—flies under an APHIS import or interstate movement permit.

“There’s a reason we’re policing butterflies,” says Senior Entomologist Wayne Wehling, APHIS’ chief butterfly cop for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program’s Permit Services office. “Just look at the plant-pest risks, and the justification is solid.” Wehling says business is booming in Permit Services, noting that 30 to 40 percent of all permitted containment facilities are butterfly exhibits. Their popularity continues to soar.

Beware of the Butterfly!

Wehling focuses mainly on the two most serious threats that imported, exotic butterflies can pose: diseases and parasites. Escaped butterflies could deliver new diseases to local insect populations via fungal pathogens, viruses, bacteria, and microorganisms. Equally bad, Wehling notes, is the threat of introducing parasitic flies and wasps.

“After the mother fly or wasp lays her eggs in the butterfly caterpillar or chrysalis, the larvae feast inside,” he says. “When several dozen tiny parasitic wasps emerge from a chrysalis instead of a butterfly, it can be quite a surprise.” About 1 in 1,000 imported pupae contains parasites, and many exhibitors import 1,000 or more chrysalises a week.

Wehling respects the potential threat these hungry parasitoids pose, remembering the consequences of a parasitic fly (Compsilura) that had been purposefully introduced into the United States to fight gypsy moth. Regrettably, the parasite devastated several species of giant silkmoths—among the largest moths in the world—in the Eastern United States. “That’s an example to take note of,” says Wehling.

As a safeguard, APHIS bars European butterflies from exhibits. Unlike the typical tropical specimens, European butterflies are far better suited to become plant pests or to compete with native North American species. APHIS also excludes nearly all moths—which are often agricultural pests of economic significance—except for the domestic giant silkmoth group. For exhibits, Wehling notes that butterflies are more manageable to contain, while moths go right for the door.

Corralling Butterflies

Containment is the top concern for butterfly exhibits. To prevent escapes, only chrysalises or cocoons can be imported; eggs, caterpillars, and live adults are prohibited. Each import permit that PPQ issues details 20–30 containment measures, depending on the facility. These measures range from packaging and labeling requirements to the disposal of dead butterflies, host plants, trash, and other materials.

“The safeguarding measures run the gamut,” says Wehling. Visitors must enter and exit through a double-set of doors with a vestibule. The doors cannot be opened simultaneously—or even held open individually—and must lock whenever they close. Exhibit staff must inspect visitors for butterfly hitchhikers on jackets and pocketbooks.

Additionally, exhibitors must place imported chrysalises in an emergence chamber where the butterflies will hatch. Should parasites emerge, they are contained in the chamber, which must be carefully inspected before being opened. The chamber is typically in a lab that also has a double set of doors and a vestibule.

“We spell out to our stakeholders what we expect them to do—it’s in everyone’s interest,” says
Wehling. “Above all, we must uphold our obligation under the National Environmental Policy Act to do no harm.”

Butterfly Cops on the Beat
In 1999, when Wehling first reviewed an import permit application for a butterfly exhibit, he recognized the agency’s need to develop more formal import protocols and policies. With a Ph.D. in zoology—his dissertation involved butterfly research—and his later experience with an insect zoo and butterfly exhibit at Michigan State University, he found himself uniquely prepared for the task.

“We with each passing year, we’ve built more and more conditions and developed best practices,” says Wehling. “We don’t leave anything to guesses.” His staff developed a checklist to help ensure compliance with permit conditions.

To date, about 80 PPQ employees have been trained to evaluate butterfly exhibit facilities for permit compliance. Most are State-level PPQ officers, who usually evaluate local facilities, while the Riverdale staff handles first time evaluations of large exhibits.

After nearly a decade as APHIS’ butterfly police chief, one thing remains very clear to Wehling: America has yet to satisfy its desire for enjoying butterflies. And that means APHIS’ butterfly cops will continue to walk their beat.
APHIS Manager Profile

Jessica Mahalingappa
Assistant Director
International Technical & Regulatory Capacity Building
International Services

What is your background?
I was born and raised in Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania, a small town outside of Pittsburgh. After completing a B.A. in International Relations and French, I spent much of my early career overseas, including a tour with the U.S. Peace Corps in Turkmenistan.

I also completed a M.A. in International Relations from the Johns Hopkins University, which brought me to the Washington, D.C., area.

How long have you been with APHIS?
I started working for APHIS in 1999 with the Budget and Program Analysis staff of Policy and Program Development (PPD). I spent 4 years in various PPD positions, which gave me a great opportunity to learn about many APHIS programs.

In 2004, I joined International Services (IS) as the chief of staff to the deputy administrator, left in 2006 to take care of family, and returned in 2007 to join IS’ new International Technical and Regulatory Capacity Building (ITRCB) Center.

Most memorable APHIS experience?
There have been many, but probably it was my first trip overseas as an APHIS employee to visit the Medfly program in Guatemala. I had a great but harrowing trip in a helicopter to visit the program sites in the countryside. It gave me an appreciation of the field work that many APHIS employees do every day, in less than comfortable conditions!

Priorities for the coming months?
As we are putting together our small staff, my first priority is to put our best foot forward in reaching out to the programs and other agencies with whom we work. We’re building the relationships that we need to play an adequate role in capacity building.

As a supervisor, my priority is to set meaningful goals for our fantastic staff and maintain the level of enthusiasm that we have for this new project.

Accomplishment most proud of?
Professionally, I feel like I can’t claim any accomplishment as my own, since I’ve always worked as a team in APHIS. I’m proud of the many things I’ve learned from my colleagues and the relationships that I’ve built with a wide variety of people here. I’m also proud of my two happy, wonderful kids!

Last book read?
The last book I finished was *Atonement*, so I don’t need to see the movie. I’m in the middle of *Jupiter’s Travels*, an old motorcycle voyage story. Of course, I’ve read most of the *Curious George* series recently as well.

Guilty pleasure?
Staying up late to watch The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.

Favorite meal?
Sushi.

Favorite movie?
*Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*.

Hobbies?
Playing piano, reading, yoga, jogging, and, like most moms, scrapbooking. ♦

APHIS Earns USDA 2008 Diversity Award

By John Scott

On April 18, USDA Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Margo McKay presented APHIS with the first ever USDA Diversity Award. The new award honors APHIS as the USDA agency that has made the most outstanding efforts and achievements in promoting diversity within the department.

The award recognizes APHIS’ commitment to creating, supporting, and sustaining diversity at all levels. From the Administrator, through the agency’s senior leadership, employee ranks, and summer interns—the APHIS team is a dynamic mixture of individuals. Congratulations all!
In the United States, more than 2 million people are assaulted in the workplace each year, and workplace violence is the leading cause of on-the-job death for women, according to the most current data available.

To help create a safe workplace, APHIS Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Training provides essential information about violence in the workplace and how employees can protect themselves.

**What It Is and Knowing the Signs**

Last year, APHIS received 52 requests for assistance in dealing with workplace violence or the threat of workplace violence. That’s an increase of eight requests for assistance compared to the previous year.

According to John Capehart, who coordinates APHIS’ Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program, the first step in addressing the issue is to create awareness of workplace violence and an understanding of what it is.

Capehart emphasizes that workplace violence can take various forms and isn’t always physical. USDA defines it as, “Any act of physical violence, threats of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening, disruptive behavior.”

For example, violence may show itself as someone who consistently intimidates and argues with coworkers, swears frequently at others, or makes inappropriate sexual comments or gestures.

Workplace violence also isn’t always between employees. It can enter the workplace as common crime (i.e., a mugging or robbery) or involve a client who acts out in frustration against an employee. Sometimes even an abusive relationship outside of work can spill into the workplace and result in harm to the involved employee or others.

**Treat All Threats Seriously**

Typically, violence doesn’t happen suddenly or without context. More often there are warning signs, and violent actions occur in connection with real or perceived situations and problems that have history.

Early warning signs for potential violence include an employee who has attendance problems, decreased productivity, poor on-the-job relations, unusual or changed behavior, poor health and hygiene, or a disproportionate and negative impact on a manager/supervisor’s time.

Sometimes an individual’s outward indicators for potential violence increase perceptibly, while in other cases someone may simmer and appear the same for some time. But Capehart says to take all indications of threat seriously. It’s better to get others involved early in resolving concerns rather than to wait for more serious physical violence to occur.

**Sharing the Responsibility**

Employees, supervisors, and managers each have a role to play in preventing and responding to workplace violence. That role begins with reporting and addressing any threat or signs of violence. Call John Capehart at (301) 734-3174 or toll-free at (866) 234-3174. The toll-free number operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Once contacted, Capehart will provide guidance and enlist the help of other offices as appropriate, including the APHIS Management Team, the Employee Assistance Program, Collaborative Resolution and Team Development, Employee Relations, as well as local law enforcement, or the Office of the Inspector General.

**Training Available**

Capehart teaches the Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Training throughout the year. Upcoming dates and locations include: April 30, Riverdale, Maryland; May 13, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and, May 14, Fort Collins, Colorado.

For additional training dates or to schedule an on-site presentation, please contact Capehart by e-mail at John.L.Capehart@aphis.usda.gov.

You can also complete the course online through AgLearn. The Web site is www.aglearn.usda.gov.
Tabletop Exercise: How Does the Info Flow?

By Jim Rogers

Last fall, APHIS participated in an emergency response tabletop exercise funded by the Department of Homeland Security. The exercise focused on communications and information sharing between State and Federal agencies and private industry groups. Because of the exercise’s non-traditional and shifting scenario, it helped identify communication gaps. It also prompted participants to consider the complementary value of both formal and informal channels of communication.

The Situation

The two-day exercise began as what looked like a foreign animal disease outbreak scenario. However, the scenario context quickly shifted to a full blown terrorist incident involving the intentional contamination of animal feed. APHIS was first to respond because of the indications of a foreign animal disease. But as the scenario progressed, State and Federal law enforcement agencies, as well as FDA, became involved and APHIS’ role lessened.

In the beginning, the lines of communication were clear. The animal disease situation clearly required an APHIS response. Internal and external emergency communications moved as normal from the field, through the regions, to headquarters, and back again.

During the initial foreign animal disease scenario, APHIS provided the growing number of affected States with necessary information about the situation and the actions APHIS planned to take. APHIS also communicated with private industry, congressional contacts, and the media and provided USDA’s Homeland Security Office with current information. However, when the scenario took a different path, the lines of communications had to change, and they became much more complicated.

Lines of Communication

When the possibility of intentional contamination arose within the scenario, APHIS’ participation was suddenly moved to the background as Federal and State law enforcement authorities became involved. The initial lines of communications were no longer usable. A new and larger network had to be established between APHIS and various law enforcement agencies.

In the new scenario, official information had to be thoroughly reviewed and approved at higher levels within participating organizations prior to circulating externally and among other involved organizations. This slowed communications both internally and externally.

Yet, as the exercise continued, tabletop facilitators observed that participants at lower organizational levels often received important information through unofficial channels—sometimes more quickly than through official communications.

This happened because a number of the participants knew one another professionally through previous meetings, conferences, and other exercises. These relationships formed a very important unofficial network of communication.

Unfolding the Lessons

As with most tabletop exercises, the participants left with a better understanding of where refinements are needed.

“I think the exercise presented a great opportunity to have discussions that needed to take place,” said Jessica Fantinato, deputy director of USDA’s Homeland Security Office. “The interesting part was that walking through a non-traditional scenario allowed us to see communication gaps that I don’t think were recognized before now.”

In addition, the exercise provided definite food-for-thought about official and unofficial communication channels. Certainly, in real-life situations, agency actions cannot be made without using official lines of communication. Actions based upon unofficial information can create problems for everyone involved and harm law enforcement investigations on the ground. But this exercise suggested that unofficial communications can provide benefits too.

Participants found that unofficial information traveling through personal networks provided them with a preliminary understanding of a developing situation and helped prepare responders for the official communications and orders that followed. ◆
Eight Country Program is Win-Win

By Madelaine Fletcher

The way live bird markets operate in Central America and the Caribbean is pretty much the same as in the United States. And, so are the concerns about the avian diseases that threaten live bird marketing systems. That’s the conclusion that Veterinary Services (VS) veterinarians Fidelis Hegngi and Patrice Klein reached after conducting workshops in eight countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

Working together with veterinarians Jose Juan Bruzual of USDA’s International Avian Influenza Coordination Group and Mara Gonzalez Ortiz of the non-governmental organization Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA), Hegngi and Klein carried out a novel educational effort during the past year. With a focus on addressing biosecurity and disease prevention in live bird marketing systems, the education program visited El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago.

“It’s a win-win situation for everyone,” said Hegngi. “Helping neighboring countries prevent avian influenza and make their markets safer also helps the United States.”

Fresh Poultry

The live bird market concept is simple. Fresh chickens, ducks, and other birds come in from farms and are sold as dressed poultry to shoppers who select a bird. While many love the fresh poultry, public health and safety officials, here and in other countries, worry that markets and suppliers have the potential to spread diseases such as highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). It’s a worry shared by the poultry industry in many countries as well. Worldwide, the H5N1 strain of HPAI has caused tens of millions of birds to be put down and also caused several hundred human deaths.

VS has a Federal-State cooperative program covering the U.S. live bird marketing system. Now, thanks to USDA funding, APHIS is also able to help some neighboring countries.

Organizers held three-day workshops in each of the eight participating countries. OIRSA and APHIS’ International Services (IS) invited government ministries including agriculture, human health, environment, labor, and education to participate. Other participants included local municipality officials, the commercial poultry industry, market owners, supervisors and workers, as well as international organization representatives, and the veterinary community. Some participants had never been to a live bird market.

“We drew from a broad range of people. They might not all have known each other, but everyone attending had a connection to avian influenza,” said Klein.

“In addition to the educational part, the workshops allowed people to exchange ideas and expertise and to discuss common issues,” said Hegngi. The workshops’ small-group format maximized discussion and collaboration.

Spending Time in the Markets

The workshops started with scientific and technical presentations on HPAI, a review of the host country’s avian influenza response plan, and discussions about the impact of the poultry industry on the economy and the dynamics of the country’s live bird marketing system.

Workshop groups informally inspected a live bird market (selected beforehand by the country’s agriculture officials). Using a checklist they looked at such things as licensing/registration, conditions in the market, recordkeeping, sanitation, drainage, variety of species and types of birds and bird products sold.

“Each group shared its findings and recommendations, using what they’d learned in previous sessions as a yardstick,” said Klein.

Finding Similarities and Differences

Hegngi and Klein—along with their colleagues in IS and OIRSA—found more similarities among the countries and the United States than anyone expected.

“Each workshop echoed similarities in the problems and concerns about disease transmission in the marketing system,” said Hegngi. “We all have common regulatory challenges and resource limitations.”

However, in contrast with efforts in the United States, for most of the countries participat-
Win-Win

Continued from page 11

APHIS has been in the agricultural emergency response business for more than 36 years. Recently, however, the agency’s emergency response role has grown to include what are called “all-hazards emergencies”—events like hurricanes, wildfies, and blizzards. With this expanded role come a number of changes. It is important for agency employees to understand some of these changes.

National Response Framework

In the last few years, the United States has faced numerous and difficult all-hazards emergencies. As a result, U.S. officials have taken steps to improve the national response structure for responding to emergencies. This improved structure is outlined in the recently implemented National Response Framework (NRF)—which has replaced what was known as the National Response Plan.


NRF Basics

The NRF includes 15 distinct Emergency Support Functions (ESF) that define various areas of potential need during emergencies. DHS’ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the central coordinator for all 15 ESFs and chooses which ESFs to activate for assistance during an emergency.

Agricultural needs fall specifically under “Emergency Support Function #11—Agriculture and Natural Resources,” better known as ESF #11. Under ESF #11, USDA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) are paired to support FEMA. ESF #11 covers Federal-to-State support in the following areas: nutrition assistance, animal and plant disease and pest response, assurance of the safety and security of the commercial food supply, protection of natural and cultural resources and historic properties, and the safety and well-being of household pets.

How it Works at USDA

USDA’s Homeland Security Office has delegated its coordinating role for ESF #11 activities to APHIS. When ESF #11 is activated by FEMA

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All-Hazards Response

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during an emergency, APHIS is notified and takes the lead. APHIS then coordinates communications and provides USDA and/or DOI “responders” to support the operations at FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center, its Regional Response Coordination Centers, and any Joint Field Offices that are established.

The responders, known as desk officers, represent a defined single point of contact for FEMA officials, and they help FEMA tap the many emergency response resources within USDA and DOI. For example, through the ESF #11 desk officer, FEMA officials can coordinate with APHIS and obtain assistance with specific animal and/or plant disease issues that arise during an emergency.

Similarly, FEMA officials coordinate with representatives from all of the various activated ESFs during an emergency.

New Efforts Under ESF #11

With the new NRF has come a new area of responsibility for APHIS. Under ESF #11, FEMA officials can request that APHIS provide technical support to States during the evacuation and sheltering of household pets.

The Animal Care program is leading this effort based on its experience in setting animal care standards under the Animal Welfare Act. Animal Care’s goal is to provide technical assistance to support States with their emergency preparedness operational plans for pets. These State plans—now required under Federal law—should help prevent pet tragedies like those that occurred during Hurricane Katrina when approximately 250,000 pets were left stranded.

New Coordinator Positions

The agency is building its ESF #11 response structure by creating a number of coordinating positions. In keeping with Administrator Cindy Smith’s emergency preparedness goals, the new positions strengthen APHIS’ efforts to prepare for all-hazards emergency response.

In addition to the national coordinator position, APHIS has recently established three headquarters liaison officer positions, two regional emergency program manager positions—one for both the Eastern and Western region offices—and 10 emergency program specialist positions. The specialists’ responsibilities are aligned with FEMA’s regional structure, which divides the Nation into 10 regions.

Brenda Lisi, national ESF #11 coordinator for USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, discusses emergency nutrition assistance with a colleague during the recent ESF #11 conference. (photo by D. Knott)

Federal Employee Polling Results

Federal Times asked its readers: “Has the uncertain economy affected your career or retirement plans?”

I will retire later than planned

I will retire as planned

I will retire earlier than planned

No change

Total votes: 1973

The Value of a Thank-You

By John Scott

The workplace is a busy world. It’s easy to get swept up in the daily rush and lose sight of the positive and direct impact of our work. But getting a well-timed thank you can renew our sense of purpose and remind us of the deeper value of our efforts.

Several people responded to the Inside APHIS call for stories about memorable and meaningful thank-you’s in the workplace. Some of the stories touch upon our everyday efforts to serve agency customers. And one story highlights how actions in the workplace can make a big difference to coworkers and colleagues. The stories are below, and we thank our contributors for sharing.

An Unexpected Reply
APHIS receives and responds to many letters from both the public and high-level officials. During an especially busy period with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, many people wrote USDA asking difficult questions. Former New York Mayor Ed Koch was one of them. After Koch received the agency’s reply, he wrote again to say thanks.

“I have had a great deal of correspondence with federal agencies and rarely have I received such a comprehensive and well thought out reply,” Koch wrote. “All the best and many thanks.”

Ruth Goldberg in Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA), who prepared the outgoing letter, and Jere Dick in Veterinary Services (VS), who signed it, were both surprised by Koch’s note. “The note was a great morale booster. It was gratifying to know that he not only read and understood our very technical response, but felt strongly enough about it to write a personal letter of thanks,” said Goldberg.

Customer Service Earns a Thanks
Throughout the country, VS handles numerous requests each year from people wanting to move their pets internationally. Many people are unsure about how the process works and what paperwork is needed.

In Louisiana, both Mark Scalfani and Betty Watts examine export documents for VS and successfully walk people through this process often. But they still appreciate the occasional thank-you that customers send their way.

One woman wrote recently to say, “I can’t tell you how delightful it was to work with these two people…. Because these two knew their job, and were very pleasant and helpful, shipping my cats was easy!”

Watts remembers talking to the woman, who was nervous about the process. “I always tell people, ‘call if you have any questions,’” said Watts. “It sure feels nice when you feel like you helped someone.”

A Series of Thanks
Beth Stone-Smith, program director for Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter (GWSS) program, values both the giving and receiving of thanks.

In June 2007, when Stone-Smith learned that several GWSS were detected outside of the quarantined area, she took some pretty quick action. Using a PPQ database, she located the involved traps, mapped a treatment area, compiled a list of growers, and initiated coordinating treatments—all within a day’s time.

The rapid response got the attention of Tulare County Ag Commissioner Gary Kunkel. Kunkel e-mailed his thanks to Stone-Smith and others on the APHIS team.

“I’ve said many, many times that the kind of cooperation we’re seeing with the GWSS control effort is unparalleled. The interaction between our growers, USDA, and CDFA, has simply been superb…Thanks to all of you for the great work,” wrote Kunkel.

For Stone-Smith, the e-mail was a great lift. “I thrive on praise so it was really great to get a ‘thanks’ like that. It means a lot and makes me proud to be a part of a team that works so effectively together,” she said.

Her appreciation for thank-you’s and for teamwork on the job is genuine. In fact, by the time Kunkel e-mailed her, she had already contacted her colleagues in PPQ with her own enthusiastic thanks. “I just wanted to send a quick note and thank you!” she wrote. “Bravo, team!”

Recognizing Compassion
In March 2008, Dolores Strum presented a very personal thank-you to her VS coworkers at the Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB). As a local member of the nonprofit organization Compassionate Friends, Strum had successfully nominated the
Thank-You

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USDA Ames offices for national recognition as a 2008 “Compassionate Employer.” Compassionate Friends is an organization that assists families following the death of a child.

Strum nominated the offices to thank her co-workers for the support she received after the tragic loss in 2005 of her daughter, Samantha, and two grandchildren, Caitlyn and Carter, in a house fire.

“I just can’t say thank you enough,” said Strum, who was greatly pleased that the nonprofit accepted her nomination letter. “I was so excited. You know I was never so proud to be a Federal employee as when I received the letter saying USDA was chosen as a compassionate employer.”

Strum’s coworker and CVB Team Leader Sophia Campbell remembers how everyone pulled together for Strum. “She went through a lot. We made sure her work was covered—everybody really pitched in,” said Campbell.

CVB leaders and staff also provided assistance through the leave donor program and by adjusting Strum’s schedule and work expectations in ways that eased her return to work.

“I was very proud of the agency in how they handled it,” said Campbell. “It made me feel good. I was glad to see how much better she did having been given the chance to take the time she needed.”

Just a Quick Word

Sometimes just a quick word of thanks between coworkers can provide a needed lift at work.

Janet Wintermute was LPA’s publications editor for 18 years before recently becoming the agency’s Native American program-delivery manager. While with LPA, she often worked with Dennis Carroll, the lead editor for USDA. Carroll frequently complimented Wintermute for her editing. But last fall, a simple message of thanks at the end of an e-mail got Wintermute’s attention. “Did I ever mention that working with you is one of those things that keep me coming back each day?” wrote Carroll.

About the quick note, Wintermute said, “He’s always been very generous with the kudos, but finding out that my work keeps him hanging on, after many years of collaborating, really made me feel great.”

Service Dog Links USDA Employees

Folks at Fidos For Freedom in Laurel, Maryland, have a saying: “No one plans a disability.” This certainly was true for Sandy Ball, who suffered an injury in 2002 that left her with permanent mobility impairments. Because of her injuries, Ball’s long commute to work became too painful, prompting her to seek work closer to home.

Little did she know that this search would lead not only to a new job but also to a pair of new and lasting friends—with USDA connections.

New Job, New Journey

In 2005, Ball interviewed with Jean Larson For a position with USDA’s Animal Welfare Information Center (AWIC) at the National Agricultural Library (NAL). “It was difficult getting around. My husband had to hold me up to even get to the interview,” she says.

Larson soon offered Ball the job. She also encouraged Ball to contact Fidos for Freedom. Fidos provides trained service dogs and hearing dogs to people who are physically challenged, deaf, or hard-of-hearing. Larson had seen a local Fidos demonstration and was impressed by the organization’s assistance dog program.

On Larson’s advice, Ball decided to check out the program. In 2005, she was accepted into the Fidos program. She soon began training to learn the necessary dog handling skills and started the process for being matched with a dog. “Your first day of training is such a rush because you know a new journey has begun!” says Ball.

During this time, Ball met the first of her two new friends—APHIS’ Tracy Bowman. Bowman, who works on the agency’s Policy and Program Development staff, is a Fidos for Freedom volunteer. She trains service dogs and works with the program’s human clients to teach dog handling skills.

“People think this is about the dogs. I love dogs, but I also really love helping people work towards a more independent lifestyle,” says Bowman.

Finding the Right Fit

Ball and Bowman got to know each other very well during training classes while practicing dog handling. Ball was initially matched after about a year with a dog named Reese. But the match didn’t take.
Service Dog

Continued from page 15

Around this same time, Bowman was training a beautiful golden retriever named Quincy. She was patiently teaching him important skills, like how to stand and brace; retrieve dropped items; and help take socks and shoes off. Although no one knew it yet, Quincy was soon to become a new and important friend to Ball.

As Bowman trained Quincy, his talents and agreeable nature quickly blossomed. “People are drawn to him—they were more likely to know his name than mine!” says Bowman.

With the permission of her supervisors, Bowman occasionally brought Quincy to work at APHIS. “It may not seem like a lot, but it takes discipline for a dog to stay calm and quiet all day. That’s why we practice it in training,” says Bowman.

Making the Match
As she trained Quincy, Bowman got a call to ask her opinion about matching Quincy with Ball. By this time, Bowman knew them both quite well and had seen them work together during classes. To her, it was clear that they would make a fabulous team.

The two were matched on April 11, 2007. Bowman spent a lot of time with Ball and her family after the match. “They are the nicest people you could meet, and I also learned about Sandy’s job with AWIC. I’m delighted to be helping a fellow USDA employee. There’s a real connection with her work and the APHIS mission,” says Bowman.

In the summer of 2007, Bowman declared Ball and Quincy ready to work independently. For Ball, it was not a moment too soon. “In July, I was an exhibitor at a veterinary conference in Washington, D.C. Quincy and I were on our best behavior in case Tracy sent her veterinarian colleagues to check us!” says Ball.

Since then, Quincy has been at Ball’s side, helping her balance as she walks; picking up things she has dropped; helping her up hills and stairs; and even accompanying her at work in Beltsville and on travel. With Quincy at her side, Ball stands ready to take on any challenge that life throws her way.

Bowman admits that each dog holds a special place in her heart. And, although she misses Quincy, she still sees him during refresher training classes. Bowman copes by taking on fresh recruits—like her most recent pupils, Loki, a Norwegian Buhund and Maya, a Labrador pup, who may visit Riverdale soon.

APHIS Calendar

April
Joint APHIS–CBP Stakeholder Conference, April 29–May 1, Marriott Renaissance Hotel, Washington, D.C.
Operation Jumpstart II Class 10, April 28–June 20, Riverdale, Maryland.

May
May is Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Check e-mail for upcoming events.
Western Plant Board 2008 Annual Meeting, May 4–8, Cody, Wyoming.
Federal Fitness Day, cosponsored by the APHIS Headquarters’ Work Life Wellness Program and Safety and Health Council, May 14, Riverdale, Maryland.
Europe, Africa, Middle East Strategy Session, May 19–21, led by IS/SMT, Riverdale, Maryland.

Agricultural Emergency Response Training (AgERT), May 19–22, held at FEMA’s Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. Co-sponsored by APHIS and FEMA. Contact Gordon Harman at (256) 847-2350 for more information and upcoming dates. His e-mail address is Robert.G.Harman@aphis.usda.gov.

June
AgERT, June 9–12. See listing above for contact info.

July
Federally Employed Women (FEW) National Training Conference, July 14–18, Anaheim, California.
AgERT, July 28–31. See listing above for contact info.

Visit the APHIS Work Life Wellness Web site (http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wlw) for additional upcoming area activities.
Animal Care inspectors are stepping up to some new technology in the agency’s efforts to enforce the Horse Protection Act (HPA) and combat the soring of horses.

Animal Care’s veterinary medical officers (VMOs) are incorporating thermography into their HPA inspections in preparation for using thermal—also called infrared—cameras to detect signs of soring.

Soring is the abusive practice of accentuating a horse’s step or gait for competitions. Some owners and trainers sore their horses by irritating an animal’s foreleg with chemical applications and injections or through mechanical irritants such as straps and chains.

With thermal imaging technology, Animal Care VMOs can see and record surface temperature variations on a horse’s foreleg. Viewing these variations helps to identify sites of irritation and/or increased blood flow—both possible indications of soring.

As of yet, thermal images are not being used to initiate regulatory action or penalties; however, inspectors are collecting images to establish a baseline of how a healthy animal should appear in a thermal image. After completing this step, Animal Care anticipates that it will soon begin using thermography in the program’s HPA inspections and enforcement activities.

What an Image Shows

A thermal or infrared camera (see photos) measures an object’s surface temperature and produces digital images showing the range of temperatures present. Cool temperatures show as cooler colors (i.e., purple and blue), and warmer temperatures show as yellows, oranges, reds, and white. Hot spots may indicate inflammation due to chemical applications. Abnormally cool areas may point to cooling agents applied by trainers to mask signs of soring.

Animal Care’s infrared cameras are about the size of an average home video camera and can record/display both normal and abnormal images.

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On October 1, 2008, APHIS will be converting to USDA’s new five-level performance appraisal system. The change follows closely on the heels of the agency’s 2006 shift from a two-level system to the current four-level system, prompting some employees to now ask what is changing and why.

Why the Change?

All USDA agencies are making these changes. USDA’s Office of Human Capital Management developed and implemented the USDA-wide performance appraisal system.

The system is designed to provide consistency among USDA’s many agencies and ensure a systemic approach to performance management.

What is Changing?

The changes are few, but they will affect when and what employees see during their annual and mid-year performance appraisals. The new system has five, rather than four, final employee performance rating levels. The five levels are: outstanding, superior, fully successful, marginal, and unacceptable. Each of the performance elements or standards will be evaluated using: exceeds, fully successful, meets fully successful, and does not meet fully successful. This is similar to the current system, but the terminology has changed.

In addition, employee performance elements will no longer be weighted by percentages.

Continued on page 2
and thermal images. They can also display a normal photo with a corresponding thermal image overlay—visually highlighting areas for closer inspection.

Applying the Technology
Traditionally, inspectors have assessed horses by observing their movements and by palpating or touching areas of an animal’s forelegs from the knee to the hoof. Horse owners and trainers have often contested these methods, claiming that they are subjective.

As a tool, thermography won’t replace the traditional inspection methods, but it will assist and support them by providing objective and recordable scientific data.

“Thermography gives us an objective tool,” says Rachel Cezar, Animal Care’s horse protection program coordinator. “It settles some of the concerns about subjective inspections.”

Animal Care conducted training on the cameras in May 2008, and VMOs are collecting images during horse protection inspections this year. The program plans to reconvene with VMOs in early 2009 to review the images and determine the next steps toward incorporating thermography into the program’s HPA enforcement efforts.

Critical elements will be uniformly weighted as two; and non-critical elements as one.

Under the new system, the rating cycle for all employees will be timed to begin and end with the fiscal year. The new performance rating period will begin October 1, 2008. For employees currently in a rating cycle ending before September 30, 2008, rating periods will be extended until that date in order to adjust to the new rating cycle.

With these changes, supervisors will need to prepare and revise employee performance standards to reflect the five-level system. Supervisors will use new forms (AD-435 and AD-435b) for this step and to complete appraisals under the new system.

In another change, performance plans for supervisors must now include a “Human Resource Management” critical element that addresses accountability for performance management and employee and/or customer and stakeholder feedback. This new mandatory critical element is in addition to the EEO/Civil Rights element already required for supervisors’ performance plans. Information about both is available at http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/performance_management/downloads/HRM_EEO_Element.doc.

More to Come
More information will be made available as the agency approaches the October 2008 date. APHIS’ Human Resources Division will provide guidance via e-mail and on its Web site, http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/performance_management/performance_appraisals.shtml.

Additionally, an AgLearn course should soon be ready to assist managers and supervisors in the transition to the new performance system. Similarly, USDA plans to offer an AgLearn course this fall to provide performance management information to all employees.

In the meantime, agency employees can contact Rick Traetow with questions about the performance appraisal process. He can be reached at (612) 336-3440 or by e-mail at rick.e.traetow@aphis.usda.gov.

APHIS’ Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) office is developing an external communications strategy. Led by LPA’s Heather Curlett, the project goal is to prepare a strategy for how we at APHIS can better tell our story.

Please take a few minutes and complete the survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=TKU_2bQRHrKix_2fkLqr95vqog_3d_3d. Having an effective external communication strategy is important to every organization—including APHIS. With a strong strategy APHIS can define and deliver clear and concise messages, confirm credibility, and better connect with our stakeholders and customers.

Your thoughts about APHIS are essential to this project. Survey participation is anonymous and will take only 10 minutes.
New Directors Announced

Center for Plant Health Science and Technology

Philip Berger has been selected as director of APHIS’ Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST) in Raleigh, North Carolina. CPHST supports APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) regulatory decisions and operations through methods development work, scientific investigation, analyses, and technology. As director, Berger will provide national leadership and direction to the Center’s seven laboratories and five support units. He has served as acting director and acting associate director of the Center since October 2007.

Berger began his Federal career in 2003 as PPQ’s national science program leader for molecular diagnostics and biotechnology at CPHST. Prior to joining the Federal Government, he worked for the University of Idaho. Berger has authored more than 70 research papers, books, and book chapters. In 2006, he received the University of Minnesota’s Distinguished Alumnus Award for his research in virus transmission, virus detection, viral evolution, and the development of virus-resistant plants.

National Wildlife Research Center

Larry Clark has been named director of APHIS’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Fort Collins, Colorado. Prior to being named the head of NWRC, Clark served as the Center’s assistant director and was responsible for managing NWRC and its field stations, setting internal policies and directives, and promoting collaboration among research programs.

As part of Wildlife Services, NWRC is dedicated to resolving problems caused by the interaction of people and wildlife. Through scientific solutions, NWRC researchers help create a balance enabling people and wildlife to coexist peacefully.

Clark began his career with APHIS in 1991. During the past 17 years, he has been instrumental in establishing NWRC’s wildlife disease research capabilities and has held positions as both an APHIS science fellow and research scientist. In 1995, Clark became one of the first NWRC staff members to establish a cooperative relationship with the Colorado State University community.

In early May, APHIS participated in a nationwide Federal Continuity of Operations (COOP) test exercise.

During the exercise, employees practiced carrying out agency operations in a scenario that included a major hurricane striking the east coast while at the same time a chemical explosion and fire affected areas of Umatilla, Washington.

Within the practice scenario, agency functions remained operable, but participants identified additional needs concerning backup communications and access to vital records systems. Program officials agree that the exercise signaled each program’s need to renew its commitment to COOP planning and preparedness.

COOP exercises, like the one in May, are crucial to sharpening APHIS preparedness for disasters that can impact agency facilities and essential operations.

“We need to be ready and able to quickly get back to carrying out our duties. This exercise helped highlight what we need to do better,” said APHIS Associate Administrator Kevin Shea.

“Disasters like hurricanes can change our lives in an instant. But one thing that will not change is our mission to protect U.S. agriculture.”

To learn more about the agency’s efforts and how to contribute to your program’s COOP planning and preparations, contact your program’s COOP coordinator. To learn the name(s) of your program’s COOP coordinator(s), call the APHIS Emergency Preparedness Staff at (301) 436-3110.

Now is the Time for COOP

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With construction of the National Detector Dog Training Center underway, the agency’s Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program is learning some new tricks. Green ones.

The PPQ’s Beagle Brigade, located at the soon-to-be-built center, will not only sniff out prohibited agricultural items, but help lead the pack with the agency’s efforts to save energy.

The 14-acre training center in Newnan, Georgia, scheduled to open in June 2009, will be the first new APHIS-leased facility to carry the ENERGY STAR building label. Commercial buildings earning the ENERGY STAR label incorporate significant energy-saving measures into their design, construction, and operating systems. ENERGY STAR buildings, on average, use 35 percent less energy and generate one-third less carbon dioxide than similar types of buildings.

As an ENERGY STAR building, the new training center will be in the top 25 percent of U.S. facilities for energy efficiency and comply with an executive order steering Federal agencies to strengthen their environmental, energy, and transportation management efforts.

The training center’s energy-saving features will include:

- Eight 5,000-gallon water tanks to store rainwater for cleaning canine runs and flushing facility toilets. Additionally, men’s bathrooms will use water-free urinals.
- Motion sensors in training center rooms to turn lights on and off.
- Outdoor yards with field turf that don’t need watering or cutting. The synthetic surfaces also provide an allergy-free environment that virtually eliminates ticks, fleas, and fire ants.

Synthetic surface areas will have other benefits as well. “The field turf will be soft for the dog’s paws and easier on the joints,” said Michael L. Smith, director for the training center. “Right now we have river rock in the break areas, and when you put dogs out on river rock their pads are susceptible to cuts and soreness.”

In addition to the energy savings, the new center will provide other training program improvements. The existing facility, which opened in 1997, currently operates from four separate locations in Orlando, Florida. With the new center, the trainers and their dogs—which are being groomed for several different inspection tasks—will work at one common site.

The National Detector Dog Training Center currently trains 40 to 50 dogs each year for PPQ and Wildlife Services; the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection; and state agriculture agencies and foreign ministries. Smith said he expects the new facility to train as many as 80 dogs annually.

PPQ broke ground for its new National Detector Dog Training Center on April 22. At the consolidated facility, PPQ trainers will prepare dogs for inspection work at airports, border crossings, postal facilities, and cargo areas, and for brown tree snake detection efforts. (photo by L. Beckett, APHIS)

New ID Update
By Julia Mazerov

USDA efforts to issue new Federal ID cards (LincPass cards) continue moving forward. Here are three things you should know to stay on track for getting your new ID.

- Continue to check your e-mail regularly for updates. Do not delete messages from EDS or GSA without reading them first. These messages are not spam and may contain important ID scheduling information.

- USDA is running a summer circuit of registration stations for employees in field locations. Take advantage of these stations while they are in your area. Stations are in one place for only about 2 to 3 weeks. A mobile enrollment schedule is available at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/classification/downloads/summer2008mobilestationschedule.pdf.

- If you have questions about ID enrollment, please contact Ken Miller with APHIS’ Employee Services Division by e-mail at Kenneth.W.Miller@aphis.usda.gov.

By Scott Moore
Plans for new Federal facilities that would replace and update the existing Plum Island diagnostic and research facilities continue to move forward at a steady pace.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials anticipate announcing a site selection decision in October 2008 for the new National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). As with the current Plum Island facilities, NBAF will house research activities conducted by DHS, APHIS, and USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

In addition to the option of re-developing the Plum Island site, officials are reviewing five other possible locations on the U.S. mainland.

With DHS and USDA’s shared interest in the project and the public’s ongoing attention to the prospect of moving the facilities to the mainland, the pace of the project is likely to remain gradual and deliberate.

What It Is
NBAF is critical to ongoing U.S. efforts to guard against both new and known high-consequence animal diseases and potential bioterrorist releases. When completed, NBAF will provide much improved facilities for USDA research and diagnostic work on highly contagious and devastating pests and diseases.

NBAF would include space for biosecurity level-4 (BSL-4) activities not currently possible on Plum Island, such as working with diseases like Rift Valley fever, Nipah virus, and Hendra virus.

Additionally, the mainland sites under consideration should ease operational costs, improve facility accessibility, quicken response times to disease threats, and increase opportunities to collaborate with scientists in the research community.

Where We Are
Since 2003, Plum Island facilities have been managed under DHS, and their officials will retain responsibility for NBAF.

While DHS will select the new facility’s site, USDA has been closely involved and supports the criteria developed to select potential sites. DHS recently published a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for six site alternatives, which include Plum Island and five mainland locations.

The mainland sites under consideration are: Athens, Georgia; Manhattan, Kansas; Butner, North Carolina; Flora, Mississippi; and San Antonio, Texas. The comment period for the draft EIS closes August 25, 2008.

A 2002 study completed by the Science Applications International Corporation concluded that there was a valid USDA need for a BSL-4 facility, and that a BSL-4 facility for large animal work could be safely located on the mainland.

Officials estimate that NBAF construction and transition activities will take approximately 7–10 years.

Photos from the Field

Inside APHIS is adding a “photos from the field” page. In this issue, our photos come from coworkers responding to flooding in the midwest. To view the photos, click on the camera.

Send Your Photos for Next Issue
Whether you work on a desktop or a mountaintop, send us your photos. Give others the chance to step outside their day and into yours.

It’s a quick way to share your work and your workplace with others and to connect with the wider APHIS community across the country and around the globe.

Send photos by e-mail with a brief caption to: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov
Earning strong kudos from participating industry and media, APHIS recently hosted an event highlighting the agency’s preparedness to combat foot-and-mouth (FMD) disease. Dubbed “FMD media day,” the outreach event included tours of the agency’s Emergency Operations Center and a tabletop exercise that put participants in the front row of an FMD emergency response.

“I didn’t realize how much preparation was already in place to deal with a disease outbreak,” said Pam Jahnke of Wisconsin Farm Report Radio and current vice-president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB). “This event made me more respectful of all the behind-the-scenes activities.”

Twelve reporters and seven industry representatives attended the first-of-its-kind event on May 7. In addition, several APHIS employees facilitated event activities. The event was co-hosted by APHIS and Veterinary Services’ Cross Species Working Group, whose members include representatives from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, Dairy Management Incorporated, and the National Pork Board.

In the Driver’s Seat

Participating media and industry members ran through an intensive exercise to simulate what would happen during an FMD outbreak. With assigned roles as first responders and producers, participants made decisions and experienced firsthand the consequences and impact of their choices.

Through the aid of a tabletop display, participants could see the exercise scenario take shape. They could also better understand and appreciate the actions that APHIS takes during an emergency situation.

The exercise simulated a real-life, behind-the-scenes experience for participants and helped them become more familiar with how APHIS works.

“It gave a sense of realism you just can’t get on a piece of paper,” said Mark Teachman, director of interagency coordination for the APHIS’ National Center for Animal Health Emergency Management. “The exercise showed the complex issues that go into dealing with situations like an FMD outbreak.”

Seeing the Connections

The event also emphasized the connections between APHIS, the media, and industry.

During animal disease emergencies, APHIS needs to be in close communication with stakeholders and the public. It’s important for producers to know and understand what is going on. Agency partnerships with industry and with the agricultural media are critical to getting timely and accurate information into the hands of producers.

“The relationships between APHIS, industry partners, and the media are important,” said Cindy Cunningham, assistant vice-president of communications for the National Pork Board. According to Cunningham, these relationships allow partners to prepare in advance for a situation, deal with it when it arises, and then quickly return to business as usual.

NAFB’s Pam Jahnke shares this perspective and also recognizes the value in strong partnerships. She plans to run a similar tabletop activity at the NAFB National Convention.

“We want to be a good partner for APHIS,” said Jahnke. “We are committed to being out in the trenches with officials to get the correct information out.”

Success Leads to More Interest

Based on the success of the FMD media day, other APHIS programs are interested in running similar events on a smaller scale to educate producers and stakeholders at the local level.

Mark Teachman of APHIS’ National Center for Animal Health Emergency Management is exploring a “train the trainer” concept, using tabletop displays to help county emergency managers plan for the impact of an animal disease outbreak.

External feedback about the FMD media day has been complimentary. Several publications and agency partners—including National Hog Farmer, the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association and the Brownfield Network—have run positive stories about the event.
On June 28-29, 2008, the Animal Care staff—along with the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Louisiana State Animal Response Team—took part in an emergency exercise in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The exercise helped to test procedures and protocols for the evacuation of household pets during an emergency. It specifically targeted the evacuation of pets owned by people who don’t have personal transportation.

The exercise focused on two key objectives: determining registration protocols for evacuated pet owners and their animals, and measuring the environmental conditions in refrigerated trucks used to evacuate pets. The registration of owners and pets evacuated with State or Federal assistance is important so that owners and animals can later be re-united. Environmental testing using CO2 and O2 monitoring equipment and thermal technology is critical to ensuring that animals maintain good health while in transport.

“The FEW training conference is invaluable,” said Terri Klein, who works at the agency’s National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).

Klein and three coworkers—Danielle Koski, Sandra Conrad, and Mary Souers—recently attended the 39th annual training conference hosted by the Federally Employed Women (FEW) organization.

FEW is a national organization committed to improving opportunities for women in Federal employment. The annual conference provides training and networking opportunities that support women’s efforts to establish and build successful Federal careers.

This year’s conference offered 115 workshops, including sessions about creating equity in the workplace, building work relationships, and seeking professional growth through leadership development, education, mentoring, and networking.

According to Klein, the FEW conferences are highly recommended and always energizing.

“We come back with so many great ideas for training and diversity programs,” said Klein. “You always get something new out of it.”

Klein is chair of the NVSL/Center for Veterinary Biologics EEO/Civil Rights Committee, whose membership also includes Danielle Koski (NVSL/CVB Federal Women’s Program Manager), Sandra Conrad (NVSL/CVB Disability Program Manager).

For more information concerning specific training sessions or to learn more about her experience attending the FEW conference, contact Terri Klein. Her phone number is (515) 663-7976. Her e-mail is Terri.A.Klein@aphis.usda.gov.

Federally Employed Women (FEW)

Annual National Training Program

NVSL/CVB employees (left to right) Mary Souers, Sandy Conrad, Terri Klein, and Danielle Koski attended this year’s conference.
Did you know that a group of coqui frogs can generate calls exceeding 70 decibels—a noise level that rivals the sound of a lawnmower?

First reported in Hawaii as early as 1998, the coqui frog threatens property values and tourism because of its loud calls and high population densities.

With its voracious appetite, it also has the potential to out-compete native species, especially native birds, for insect food sources.

To prevent the coqui frog’s spread, Wildlife Services works cooperatively with Hawaii State and county officials and conducts research into environmentally sound control and eradication methods.

Wildlife Services research led to the development of citric acid applications as an effective eradication tool. The citric acid is environmentally safe to use but lethal to the frogs when it penetrates their skin.

In the winter 2008 issue of Inside APHIS, we solicited feedback through a brief reader survey.

Our goal was to learn about our readers’ preferences regarding content and about the newsletter’s accessibility. We would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey.

From our readers, we learned that many (88 percent of survey respondents) find the newsletter easy to access. Similarly, 88 percent of survey respondents indicated that the newsletter is overall the right length. A combined total of approximately 72 percent of those responding indicated that they read the newsletter “sometimes,” “often,” or “always.”

Looking to the Future

While survey feedback was positive overall, numerous participants commented about how busy they are and about how much information they receive. Of those respondents who said that they “seldom” or “never” read the newsletter, about 47 percent said it’s because they are too busy.

With this in mind, we plan to renew our efforts to keep articles brief and tightly organized around essential information.

Several participants also commented on the importance of balancing newsletter stories/photos from agency field locations and from headquarters. We agree, and we will be working to reach more into the field to keep a rich balance of stories representing all of the agency. To get started, we have added information on the newsletter’s web page to better describe how all employees can contribute their ideas and stories to Inside APHIS.

Go to the “Contributing to Inside APHIS” subhead at the following link to see more: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/

And beginning with this issue, we are introducing a new photo feature to the newsletter. We plan to dedicate a full page of Inside APHIS to photos from the field.

We’ll run photos and captions showing APHIS at work where the “rubber hits the road.” So, get out your digital cameras and send us your photos. For more info, see the article “Photos from the Field” on page five.
What is your background?
I’m a native Washingtonian, kind of a rare breed here at USDA. While finishing my graduate work at the University of Maryland, College Park, I landed a summer intern position at the Foreign Agricultural Service at USDA, and ultimately, served 32 years there in a variety of challenging and rewarding positions, including as an agricultural attaché overseas. More recently I began working intensively on agricultural biotechnology, so Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) is a natural fit.

How long have you been with APHIS?
I’m heading into my fourth month, and every-day I’m learning more and more about the many facets of APHIS and its important role in U.S. agriculture.

Most memorable APHIS experience so far?
Although I didn’t “come up” through APHIS, the welcome and acceptance into the APHIS family I’ve received is pretty memorable. Speaking of memory, figuring out the numbering system for office space in Riverdale and learning a whole new set of acronyms without looking or sounding clueless has been a challenge.

Priorities for the coming months?
My top priority is to contribute in a meaningful way to the implementation of the new BRS Strategic Plan and the development of a long-term international strategy.

Accomplishment most proud of?
I have to say I’m most proud of being a part of the professional development and growth of so many of my colleagues. Over the years, I’ve been fortunate enough to mentor and foster the advancement of some amazing people.

Last book read?
I’ve been involved in a neighborhood book club for several years. Last month we read The Year of the Fog by Michelle Richmond; now we’re reading People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks.

Guilty pleasure?
Spending time at the beach doing absolutely nothing.

Favorite meal?
I’m partial to Italian cuisine. But I also adore dark chocolate; it’s good for you, right?

Favorite movie?
No violence, no blood, no monsters. Anything under three hours and with a happy ending works for me.

Hobbies?
I’m a huge Orioles fan. Is there anything else besides baseball?
Two young girls in Oregon recently avoided a cougar attack near their home by closely following the advice of their parents and of Wildlife Services Specialist Cricket Peyton, who had visited their school last year.

On May 31, the sisters, ages 6 and 8, were on their bicycles headed home when they saw a cougar stalking them from the brush.

Drawing on the lessons and tips that Peyton gives to schools and other groups, the girls were able to avoid harm and get help. The girls maintained good visual contact and kept the bicycles between themselves and the cougar. Most importantly, they didn’t just run away—fleeing often triggers a predator’s instinct to attack. One girl was able to reach her father nearby. The father later located and shot the cougar.

**Good Listening Prevents Attack**

Peyton had visited the girls’ school, Wimer Elementary, to talk about cougar biology, behavior, and what to do if you encounter one of these animals. He spoke with about 200 students, answering their questions one-by-one and showing them a cougar pelt. The principal had invited him to talk to students because of cougar sightings near the school. For several students, the sightings had triggered nightmares.

The sisters proved themselves to be good listeners, remembering the instruction that Peyton and others had provided.

“They did exactly what we taught them,” said Peyton. “Something like this comes along and it’s a good feeling.”

**Outreach with Results**

Wildlife Services established program activities in Jackson County, Oregon, in 2006 to help address the growing threats to human health and safety posed by the county’s rising cougar population.

“We get about 400 cougar complaints statewide, but we take far fewer animals than that,” said Dave Williams, Wildlife Services State director in Oregon.

Williams is pleased that the incident demonstrates the variety of services that Wildlife Services provides to address conflicts. County officials have been supportive of the program’s local efforts, which include public outreach and onsite technical assistance.

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**Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness**

Summer is here and so is the heat. Visit the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention link for info and tips about staying safe in extreme heat, whether at work or at play. Go to [http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp).

**Thrift Savings Plan (TSP): Any Time is a Good Time to Review or Catch Up**

TSP is an important part of retirement savings planning. Remember that you can enroll in TSP or change or stop your TSP contributions at any time. While there’s a limit on making only one such transaction per pay period, this still leaves you with lots of flexibility to best match your needs and your savings situation.

Go to [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/tsp.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/tsp.shtml) to learn more about how to contribute or to change your contributions. For those who are eligible and want to step up their contributions for retirement, you can also learn more about TSP “Catch Up” contributions and how to make them.

**HR Broadcast Newsletter**

APHIS Human Resources publishes this quarterly newsletter to share HR-related information. Learn the latest HR news by visiting it today, at [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/publications/hr_broadcast.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/publications/hr_broadcast.shtml).
Conflict is a natural part of any work environment. While most often we find ways to manage it and to keep our work efforts on track, sometimes employees need advice, coaching, or training to help resolve workplace conflicts.

APHIS’ Collaborative Resolution and Team Development (CRTD) staff is available to help employees deal with workplace conflicts and to develop skills for effectively responding to them. The staff’s mission is to respond to and try to prevent conflict at the earliest possible stage.

**Help and Advice within Reach**

CRTD offers its services one-on-one and also to groups—including entire work units. Discussions with CRTD mediators are completely confidential. Employees who contact CRTD can speak openly and focus on constructively working through their concerns.

“Often our work is about helping employees remove barriers caused by miscommunications,” says Ayanna Smith, branch chief for CRTD.

CRTD staff are trained mediators and are available to serve the needs of employees nationwide. Mediators are on-hand at agency offices in Ames, Minneapolis, and Riverdale, and they frequently visit field locations for mediation and training sessions. “Every APHIS employee is our customer,” says Smith.

“The majority of requests for our services come through referrals by other customers. That in of itself is a true compliment.”

**What They Can Do for You**

The CRTD staff provides several basic services. Through mediations and facilitated conversations, CRTD mediators provide individuals in conflict with the opportunity to sit down together and discuss conflicts with the help of a neutral, third-party facilitator.

CRTD staff also offers coaching to individuals facing conflict. Through conversation, CRTD staff can help individuals explore ways to approach a conflict with others.

For work units and teams, the CRTD staff provides conflict management training. The coursework helps employees consider what conflict is, how to manage it, and the different communication and resolution styles.

Managers and supervisors can also contact CRTD for team development assistance. Team development work is tailored to the particular needs of work units.

Through interviews and exercises, CRTD staff work to identify solutions and approaches that correspond with a unit’s specific functions and organization.

For new managers, CRTD provides leadership transition meetings designed to help work units and new managers get started on the right foot.

For individual and/or team development efforts, CRTD also offers Myers/Briggs self-assessment tools as a way to help employees better understand themselves and workplace communications.

**Who to Call**

To learn more about CRTD’s services or to request assistance, please call (301) 734-4950. CRTD’s work with individuals is completely confidential. All information—including who requests assistance and what is discussed—remains private.
Computer eye strain has become one of the major office-related health complaints. Studies show that eye strain and other bothersome visual symptoms occur in 50 to 90 percent of workers using computers. These problems can cause physical fatigue, decreased productivity, and an increased number of work errors.

Here are six tips for reducing computer eye strain:

1. **Use proper lighting**
   - Eye strain is often caused by excessively bright light either from natural light coming in through a window or from harsh interior lighting (e.g. fluorescent lights).
   - Close shades or blinds. Position your monitor so that windows are to the side of it, instead of in front or back. Also, consider a small task light with an incandescent bulb positioned for your reading area, not onto the computer screen.

2. **Minimize glare**
   - Install an anti-glare screen on your monitor and, if possible, cover walls with a medium color, flat or textured.
   - If you wear glasses, apply an anti-reflective (AR) coating to your lenses. AR coating reduces glare by minimizing the amount of light reflecting off the front and back surfaces of your lenses.

3. **Adjust the brightness and contrast of your computer screen**
   - Adjust the brightness so that it is about the same as your work environment.
   - Adjust the screen settings to make sure the contrast between the screen background and the on-screen characters is high.

4. **Blink more often**
   - Blink to rewet your eyes to avoid dryness and irritation.
   - Try this exercise: Every 20 minutes, blink 10 times by closing your eyes as if falling asleep (very slowly). This will help rewet your eyes.

5. **Exercise your eyes**
   - To reduce your risk of tiring your eyes, look away from your computer every 20 minutes and gaze at a distant object outside or down the hallway.

6. **Modify your workstation**
   - Place written pages on a document holder between the monitor and keyboard. Adjust your monitor distance to an arm’s length away. Position the height of your monitor at or below eye level.

Contact the APHIS Ergonomics Program at ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.uda.gov or (301) 734-8432 for more tips on reducing eyestrain at work.
Inside APHIS

August
National Plant Board Meeting, August 11–14, Solomons, Maryland.
Blacks in Government Annual Conference, August 11–15, New Orleans, Louisiana.
Work Life Wellness Year-End Meeting and Awards Ceremony, August 11–14, Indianapolis, Indiana.
Take Your Child to Work Day (Headquarters), August 19, Riverdale, Maryland.
Bird Strike Committee USA, August 21–25, Orlando, Florida.

September
Nomination Deadline for 2008 Administrator’s Civil Rights Award, September 12; See APHIS-
all e-mail from July 2, or contact Sophia Kirby at (301) 734-5366 for additional information.
National Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15–October 15.
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting, September 7–12, Saratoga Springs, New York.
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Annual Conference, September 19–24, Bismarck, North Dakota.

October
National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

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Busted on eBay

4 and 14, 2007, that scoured eBay for potential violations of APHIS regulations. SITC brought additional officers to its Western Region office to support the effort. By the end of the operation, SITC had identified 14 sellers who posted several thousand sales or auctions on eBay. SITC closed 212 traces nationwide, yielding more than 222 seizures—including Florida citrus, foreign citrus, giant African snails, foreign bamboo, and walking stick insects.

Outside of special operations, cases typically begin with a tip about a seller. Tips usually come from SITC field officers, Plant Protection and Quarantine staff, or citizens who bought a product but received an empty box because U.S. Customs and Border Protection intercepted it in the mail.

“We go to eBay, look at their product listings, and comb through their feedback comments to find the prohibited article,” Blount says.

If a seller is selling prohibited commodities to U.S. buyers, SITC informs eBay’s fraud investigation team, a long-time cooperator with APHIS in this effort. The fraud team provides a spreadsheet listing of all the seller’s transactions. A SITC analyst sifts through the list, identifies prohibited items, eliminates foreign buyers, and finds the buyer’s State.

Following the Silicon Trail
To get to the next level—the buyer’s city and address—the analyst turns to LeadsOnline, a Web-based data collector that collaborates with eBay and holds user information. The analyst then confirms the buyer’s current address—and any business affiliation—using online reference databases such as Lexis/Nexis and Autotrack, and finally enters the trace into SITC’s own database, the SITC National Information, Communication, and Activity System (SNICAS).

SNICAS automatically e-mails SITC field officers, who investigate the trace and enter the results back into the database. Although SITC designed SNICAS primarily as a communication tool, it has also proven to be a powerful resource that provides data for analysis, budgeting, metrics, and management decisions. The more data it collects, the more effective it becomes as a weapon in SITC’s high-tech arsenal.

SITC currently has three operational analysts in the Eastern Region, five in the Western Region, and two at headquarters. To keep the momentum of success going, SITC plans to increase its numbers. The ultimate goal: to protect American agriculture by keeping the heat on online smugglers. ♦
Wildlife Services employees in Guam were honored recently with an Unsung Hero Award, presented by the Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The group of 58 Wildlife Services employees works around the clock to contain the island’s invasive brown tree snake (BTS) and prevent its spread to other islands, including Hawaii. Despite the increased cargo leaving Guam and program budget challenges, the program consistently achieves APHIS’ performance goal of zero BTS sightings in Hawaii.

Since 1993, Wildlife Services has annually eliminated an average of 7,000 BTS through activities focused on air and sea ports. Their tools include snake traps, nightly spotlight searches, toxicants, detector dogs, and public education.

The unit’s 16 canine teams represent the last line of defense to prevent BTS escaping the island. Wartime military cargo processing requires the unit to provide inspection services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The teams use Jack Russell terriers trained at the Plant Protection and Quarantine program’s Detector Dog Training Center.

About 75 percent of BTS are removed by the work unit’s 3,000 traps, which use live mice as bait. To attract snakes and maintain the traps’ success rate, the 3,000 mice must be well cared for. WS trappers developed a paraffin-and-grain food block that withstands high humidity and devised an innovative water source and shelter for the mice—a large, baker-sized potato.

The current BTS population on Guam is estimated at 13,000 snakes per square mile. The snakes have eliminated most of Guam’s native forest birds and lizards, cause expensive power outages, and prey upon poultry and other small animals. If BTS were to become established in Hawaii, the economic impact is estimated at more than $400 million annually.

Working with universities around the country, APHIS co-hosted six different AgDiscovery programs this summer.

Participating students got the chance to experience and enjoy a full schedule of activities related to the agricultural sciences. Photos shown are from the University of Maryland AgDiscovery program.
In May, President Bush kept his word and vetoed the Farm Bill. And as congressional leaders planned to override the veto before the Memorial Day recess, the Farm Bill took one last surprising turn.

Due to a rare mistake in Congress’ printing office, the bill did not include the Trade title. Congress passed the bill over the President’s veto and then re-passed the entire bill after the holiday. The President vetoed the bill again and, finally, on June 18, Congress overrode the veto, ensuring that all parts of the new Farm Bill were enacted into law.

The following are the major provisions relevant for APHIS:

- **Section 3203**: Requires an annual report on specialty crop exports
- **Section 7204**: Calls for nationwide surveillance of honeybee pests and pathogens
- **Section 7525**: Directs the Secretary to issue a permit for live foot-and-mouth disease virus at the successor facility to the Plum Island Animal Disease Center
- **Section 8204**: Prohibits imports of illegally harvested timber
- **Sections 10203 and 11012**: Give APHIS new subpoena authority and increase the maximum penalties for violations of the Plant Protection Act and Animal Health Protection Act
- **Section 10201**: Requires cooperative plant pest and disease management, surveillance, and disaster prevention programs
- **Section 10202**: Establishes a national clean plant network
- **Section 10204**: Calls for action on each issue identified in the document, “Lessons Learned and Revisions Under Consideration for APHIS’ Biotechnology Framework”
- **Sections 11010, 11011, and 11013**: Respectively, establish a voluntary trichinae certification program for pork exports; lock in the compensation rates for the low-pathogenic avian influenza program; and outline requirements for projects under the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan
- **Sections 14207 and 14214**: Increase the maximum penalties for violations of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA)
- **Section 14210**: Prohibits the importation into the United States of dogs that are younger than six months of age, and Section 1426 calls for a report on Class B dogs and cats in federally supported research and steps to ensure the animals are treated in accordance with AWA regulations

The next and final step is implementation of APHIS’ provisions. Agency leaders are analyzing the law and developing a plan for making necessary program and regulatory changes. ♦
Inside APHIS Fall 2008

Where TB Meets IT

By David Morris and Elisabeth Lively

They may not be magic wands, but they come pretty close.

Veterinary Services’ (VS) electronic wand readers—paired with other pieces of mobile technology—are showing their power to transform the way agency veterinarians test herds for bovine tuberculosis (TB).

Collectively, the new technology is referred to as mobile information management (MIM) technology. MIM technology is improving the program’s TB testing efforts and shows the same potential for other disease programs as well.

Developed and tested first in Michigan and then in New Mexico for VS’ TB efforts, MIM technology is basically an IT toolset used to quickly collect, record, and transmit testing data. It reduces the burden of administrative tasks—traditionally completed by hand during herd testing—and increases the speed and accuracy of information.

The program’s current emergency TB efforts in California, which began in December 2007, have now almost fully adopted MIM technology for their herd testing.

“California alone is on track to test up to 400,000 animals during this TB investigation,” says Kevin Varner, the area veterinarian in charge for California and Nevada.

A Hard Job Gets Easier

Herd testing for bovine TB is routine, hard work. It begins with a veterinarian injecting antigen into each animal near the base of its tail and returning 3 days later to check injection sites for reaction. If there is one, VS conducts further diagnostic testing.

Continued on page 2

CFC Launches 2008 Campaign

Letter from Marilyn Holland, Chair 2008 CFC Campaign

Dear Friends and Coworkers,

All around the country, Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) efforts are now underway for the 2008 season. I invite each of you to join your local campaign and to participate in the giving and in the fundraisers that are happening in your area.

To understand the good work that results from your CFC efforts, you likely need to look no further than to your friends, family, neighbors, and even coworkers. I’m sure that some of them—and maybe even you personally—have been touched by local organizations that receive CFC funding.

CFC dollars reach into your community, wherever you may live, and they make good things happen. The organizations that receive your CFC contributions serve community needs in many areas, including poverty, hunger, healthcare, education, and cultural enrichment.

This year’s CFC campaign is taking place against a backdrop of economic uncertainty. And this will most likely be felt by the organizations that depend on your CFC donations. While we are all affected by today’s economic uncertainty, we still have much to be thankful for and CFC is an opportunity for us to share our good fortune.

As chair for APHIS’ CFC efforts, I know that our success this year will rely on many hands to do the lifting.

I encourage you to give what you can and to do what you can for CFC efforts in your area. ♦

Marilyn Holland
APHIS CIO
TB Meets IT

Continued from page 1

Sounds simple, right? Except that sticking needles into numerous side-stepping, heavy-footed animals—while trying to stay safe—can be highly challenging. Imagine visiting a dairy operation to test 2,000 cows. It makes for long and physically exhausting days.

The days get longer and harder when you add in the recordkeeping and paperwork. Throughout the entire process, veterinarians must stay focused and accurate while reading and recording animal identification tags.

During follow-up visits to check injection sites for signs of reaction, they must examine the exact same animals previously injected, not just the same number of animals. They also cross-check animal identification numbers and reconcile records.

Traditionally, much of the recordkeeping in the field is done manually. Handwritten ID numbers and test results collected during the day are later entered into a computer.

Now, MIM technology makes herd testing easier and faster with less opportunity for error.

Moving Information Fast

Using an electronic wand reader, a veterinarian first scans and collects an animal’s identification number from its radio frequency identification (RFID) ear tag. The wand sends this data via a wireless signal to a rugged, hand-held, personal digital assistant (PDA).

The veterinarian then checks the animal and easily enters additional information—such as other identification numbers, age, sex, breed, and test results—into the PDA using a stylus, touch screen, or key pad.

Once entered, all of the relevant information about an animal is immediately retrievable onsite and in real time. Later, this same information can be quickly transferred to a computer and uploaded to appropriate databases.

This not only reduces the time required to process animals on the farm and build valuable databases, but increases test accountability and the accuracy of data collection.

Where to from Here

Using MIM technology to improve herd testing for TB is only the tip of the iceberg. Critical spinoffs include the ability to incorporate USDA’s National Animal Identification System (NAIS) standards into data collection. NAIS helps trace animal disease by linking standardized location and animal identification numbers. By pairing NAIS and MIM technology, VS can improve the accuracy and speed of its disease program information and enhance traceability.

MIM technology is also spreading to other VS programs, such as the brucellosis program. The latest field test of a MIM application, which also incorporates NAIS data standards, involves brucellosis vaccination efforts in the Greater Yellowstone Area.

En Espanol

The APHIS Biosecurity For Birds Web site is now available in Spanish. While APHIS has a variety of outreach materials available in translation, this new site marks the first time that APHIS has created a Web site in a foreign language.

Launched in August, the site’s goal is to reach the significant number of backyard poultry and pet bird owners who are native Spanish speakers. The site is also a valuable resource to Spanish speakers in other countries who are interested in Biosecurity For Birds information.

The site provides information about infectious diseases, such as avian influenza and exotic Newcastle disease, as well as important guidance on backyard biosecurity and practical steps that owners can take to keep their birds healthy. Visitors to the site can also order outreach materials online.

To access the Spanish version of the Biosecurity For Birds Web site, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/enespanol/. ♦
A Good Crop Year for PPQ Safeguarding Awards

By John Scott

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Deputy Administrator Rebecca Bech recently visited several field sites to honor this year’s crop of Safeguarding Award recipients.

The PPQ Safeguarding Awards are divided into three categories—each awarded in recognition of individual or team efforts to carry out the program’s mission of protecting U.S. agriculture.

The three award categories are: Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Awards, Outstanding Achievement Awards, and Promising Practices Awards. This year, for the first time, PPQ presented honorable mentions in all three categories.

**Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Award**

The *Cactoblastis cactorum* Cooperative Program, led by PPQ’s Joel Floyd, received honors for its efforts. The program has successfully halted the westward movement of this damaging pest along the U.S. Gulf Coast.

The Red Palm Mite Response Team, led by PPQ’s Florida State Plant Health Director Paul Hornby, earned recognition for its multi-agency cooperative efforts. The team is effectively addressing one of the suspect pathways for red palm mite on handicrafts carried by passengers travelling on cruise ship lines.

**Outstanding Achievement Award**

PPQ’s Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes efforts that reach or exceed the goals designated for a given safeguarding project.

Alisha Shumaker, an agricultural specialist with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in Seattle, Washington, received an award for creating a comprehensive training program. Targeting CBP agricultural specialists, CBP officers, and the U.S. Coast Guard, the training program aids in the detection of Asian gypsy moth on vessels arriving from the Russian Far East and Japan.

PPQ’s Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Program, a multi-state group led by Philip Bell, also received recognition for its work. The program’s efforts have uncovered and identified pathways for host materials and have furthered EAB enforcement actions, new heat treatment initiatives, and the regulation of pallets.

**Promising Practices Award**

This award category honors common sense and ingenuity in new safeguarding efforts.

The Quarantine 56 (Q-56) Rule Revision and Implementation Group earned the award for its regulatory initiative that streamlines the approval of certain imported fruits and vegetables. In addition to its PPQ members, the group includes members from Policy and Program Development and USDA’s Office of the General Counsel.

PPQ’s Eastern Region received the award for its Cooperative EAB Program Clinics. The two-day clinics provide stakeholders with practical information on the EAB program together with field demonstrations and hands-on-training.

**Honorable Mentions**

PPQ also awarded honorable mentions to the following teams: the Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) National Information, Communication and Activity System Development and Implementation Team; the PPQ-CPHST Treatment Quality Assurance Unit, 556 Cold Treatment Tracking Team; the Eastern Plant Board for their work on the *Sirex noctilio* survey; and CBP’s Susan Spinella and Charles Cunningham—both in Washington State—for developing CBP agricultural training.


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*Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Program group award presentation. Click on photo to see listing of those shown. (photo by D. Bopp)*

*The Red Palm Mite Response Team award presentation. Click on photo to see listing of those shown. (photo by Z. Mann, CBP)*
In early July 2008, APHIS began using the new e-travel system, GovTrip. The USDA-wide system is still new to many agency travelers, but after some initial implementation hurdles, the changeover is making progress and now operating more smoothly.

“It has been a lot of hard work, but we expect the agency savings to be well worth it,” says Donna Ford, GovTrip implementation lead for APHIS and USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service.

Ford estimates that more than half of agency travelers are now preparing their own travel documents using GovTrip, and she expects that number to increase.

As with any new system, there have been bumps during implementation. “This is a major change, and it will take some time for everyone to feel comfortable with the system,” says Ford.

Initially, employees had problems accessing the new system. The agency’s GovTrip implementation team, which consists of five specialists, handled more than 5,000 phone calls, e-mails, and other inquiries per week in the first 3 weeks of implementation. Since then, most of the initial problems have been resolved, and the agency continues to work on new issues as they arise.

**What to Expect**

For agency travelers, the GovTrip system is designed to do most of the work—from finding and booking the cheapest air fares, hotels, and rental cars, to making sure per diem amounts are accurate, to allowing employees to upload receipts and other documentation right into their travel documents. GovTrip even assigns authorization numbers automatically and stores employees’ entire travel files for 6 years and 3 months.

Additionally, GovTrip also automatically routes both the employee’s travel authorization and voucher through the appropriate approval chains, making paper copies a thing of the past. According to Ford, most travelers using GovTrip are receiving their voucher reimbursements within 5 days.

GovTrip is also able to split an employee’s voucher reimbursement, paying Bank of America charges and then routing the remaining voucher reimbursement via direct deposit to the employee’s established paycheck address.

“Travel spending has received a lot of attention lately,” says Ford. “This system is helping APHIS save time and resources. It also has tools for producing the many travel reports that we’re asked for by Congress and others.”

**Where to Turn for Help**

“We have done our best to make sure at least one person from every office has been trained in GovTrip,” says Ford. To learn who to contact locally with travel questions, Ford recommends that employees check with their unit’s travel specialist to see who has received the GovTrip training.

In addition, Federal Agency Travel Administrators (FATAs) have been trained and are located in each of the agency’s programs to assist travelers. And, as always, the Travel Services Team, which is within the Financial Management Division, is also available to provide help. The main telephone number is (301) 734-0882.

“The Travel Services Center is very aware that some travelers need some ‘hand holding’ and they’re doing an excellent job,” says Susan Murphy in Biotechnology Research Service. “No matter how many times I ask for help, they’ve been there to assist me.”

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**Getting Involved**

**Hispanic Heritage Month**

For National Hispanic Heritage Month, headquarters employees recently participated in several events celebrating the agency’s diversity and the contributions of its more than 900 Hispanic American employees, who together comprise about 10.5 percent of the current APHIS workforce.

For Riverdale’s celebratory kick-off event, agency employees contributed to a video, sharing on camera their heritage experiences and thoughts about the celebration’s theme, “Getting Involved: Our Families, Our Community, Our Nation.” Organizers showed the full video at the event.  

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[Click photo to view video excerpts](#)  

([photo by A. Eaglin])
As Federal agencies have discovered, there’s an upside and downside to laptop computers. The good thing is they’re portable. The bad thing is… well, they’re portable.

So to answer the question—“Is your laptop secure?”—you need to think seriously about your computing habits and the precautions you take.

**What’s at Risk**

The greatest risk is of someone taking and maliciously using information from your computer. Armed with your data, a thief may be able to seriously harm the agency’s computer resources, or steal other people’s identities.

Identity theft is a real problem. As Federal employees we are responsible for protecting the privacy of agency employees and our customers. This means protecting what is called personally identifiable information (PII). PII includes information such as names, social security numbers, and other data that when combined with other ID information can be linked to specific individuals. For more information regarding PII, please visit: http://pii.usda.gov.

Lost or stolen laptops result in other costs for the agency as well. Each laptop lost is money out the door, plus the cost of replacing it. So far in 2008, the agency has lost 17 laptops.

There’s also significant potential for the loss of public confidence in APHIS. When the agency loses a laptop, it runs the risk of becoming the next Federal agency in the media spotlight for putting PII at risk.

**Guard Your Laptop**

Employees are responsible for protecting government property and information that is entrusted to their care. Here are some quick tips for preventing the loss or theft of your laptop.

- Treat your laptop like cash: when in public, don’t leave it sitting out and don’t leave it unattended.
- Make stealing hard: use laptop security cables at work, hotels, and conferences.
- Use caution at airports: keep an eye on laptops and don’t get distracted at security points.
- Ground rules: don’t set your laptop on the floor or, if absolutely necessary, place it between your feet or lean it against your leg.
- Take it with you: never leave laptops unattended and unsecured at conferences.
- Car care: don’t leave your laptop in your car unless you are transporting it between work and home. When transporting, lock it in the trunk and out of sight.

**Secure Your Data**

Guarding your laptop’s whereabouts is vital, but here are some other steps you should take to protect your data.

- Save to the H drive and put sensitive information behind the firewall. Don’t save PII on your laptop’s C drive.
- Practice good password habits: remember your password and don’t write it down.
- Use encryption software and password protect sensitive files.

In this issue, our photos come from PPQ coworkers doing Asian citrus psyllid work in Louisiana and educational outreach in Indiana. Plus, we have one employee’s brush with the President.

**Send Your Photos for Next Issue**

Give others the chance to step outside their day and into yours. We’re still accepting photos.

It’s a quick way to share your work and your workplace with others and to connect with the wider APHIS community across the country and around the globe.

Send photos by e-mail with a brief caption to: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov
To the general public, its appearance may have gone quietly unnoticed. But the “request for information” (RFI) recently published by the Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program is the latest important step in the agency’s look into a new and rapidly advancing area of biotechnology: genetically engineered (GE) animals.

APHIS published the RFI on September 19, 2008, to gather information about ongoing and future research on GE animals. The goal is to ensure that these animals do not pose risks to U.S. livestock health. BRS is seeking to gain a better understanding of this issue through public input before drafting any official guidance or policy.

With the rapid development of the biotechnology industry, it’s important for BRS to look ahead to possible future developments. With planning, APHIS and other agencies can keep pace as industry opens new doors for science and farming.

BRS’ request coincides with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announcing the availability of its draft guidance clarifying its oversight of GE animals under its new animal drug regulatory provisions.

**Animals on the Horizon**

Many kinds of GE animals are in development, although none have yet been approved for commercial use by the FDA. At this time, the largest class of GE animals under development is those that would produce substances that could be used as human or animal pharmaceuticals. Through genetic engineering, scientists potentially have the ability to completely change the way that certain chronic diseases are treated.

An example is bleeding disorders. The clotting factors used for medical treatments of these disorders are difficult to obtain; people are currently treated only following acute attacks. With an increased supply and use of clotting factors—produced by GE animals—patients could potentially have bleeding disorders better controlled.

Scientists are also trying to develop GE cattle resistant to bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

GE animals could also be engineered to grow more quickly, or to reduce their environmental impact by virtue of producing a lower level of pollutants in their wastes. Other GE animals may be developed to have improved fat composition and provide a more healthful nutrient profile.

**Viewing Online Comments**

With its RFI, BRS is asking the public for comments and information concerning several areas. They are: GE animal research being conducted or planned; possible implications for the health of U.S. livestock from importation and interstate movement of GE animals; and, the steps APHIS should consider under the Animal Health Protection Act to complement the requirements and recommendations described in FDA’s draft guidance.

The public is able to submit input using the Federal eRulemaking portal. To view online comments, you can visit this site as well and read the electronic comments received. The address is http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2006-0188.

**APHIS Calendar**

**November**

- National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month: watch e-mail for local events.
- National Association of Plant Protection and Quarantine Managers (NAPPQM) Annual Convention, Nov. 5–8, San Diego, California.
- Mandatory U.S. Bank Travel Card Training: employees with travel cards must complete the training by Nov. 30. Contact your program travel specialists for information about completing the training.

**December**

- APHIS Headquarters Holiday Party, Dec. 16, Riverdale, Maryland.

**January**

- Mandatory FY09 IT Security Training, course title: “USDA Information Systems Security Awareness,” deadline Feb. 16. See AgLearn or contact your program’s Information Systems Security Manager.
- Basic Agricultural Safeguarding Training, Jan. 21–Mar. 26, Frederick, Maryland.
APHIS has created and recently filled two new State liaison positions within the agency’s Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) program. The positions represent a new function for LPA, bringing focused attention and energy to APHIS’ outreach, collaboration, and communication efforts with States.

Through the two new dedicated positions, LPA will work to strengthen and grow the agency’s information sharing and relationships with our State cooperators—major partners in APHIS’ work.

Hallie Zimmers, who joined LPA in 1999 and has worked as interim liaison since early 2008, was selected in mid-September. She is joined by Jake Hegeman, who recently worked with a firm specializing in State regulatory and legislative issues.

The idea for the positions within LPA grew out of a joint assessment report completed by APHIS, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), and other State partners. Zimmers and Hegeman are responsible for overseeing the assessment’s recommendations and ensuring progress on each. Additionally, the two LPA liaisons serve as central points of contact for the States, bringing APHIS and State officials together to address issues.

Veterinary Services’ (VS) leadership is actively engaged in the process of determining what kind of organization VS needs to become by the year 2015. This effort has resulted in a draft strategic document, recently shared with VS employees, that many are referring to simply as “VS2015.”

VS2015 is a draft strategic prospectus that projects a broad view of the program as it is anticipated to be in the year 2015. It’s not a detailed map outlining how to get there; instead, VS2015 takes the first critical step in describing the scope of the organization’s activities, mode of operation, and its partnerships.

**Feedback for the Future**

Many of the features on VS’ future work landscape remain familiar, but the program is also looking at issue areas that are growing or changing. These include: the program’s greater emphasis on disease prevention, preparedness, detection, and early response activities; an expanding veterinary health mission that is responsive not only to issues impacting animal agriculture, but also public health concerns connected to animal populations of any kind; and an expanding portfolio of interstate and international certification services.

Program leadership has shared the draft VS2015 prospectus with all VS employees, who are encouraged to review it and provide feedback to their supervisors. Additionally, VS leadership has recently begun discussing VS2015 and the program’s future direction with external organizations.

To help manage implementation of VS2015, the program has selected Nora Wineland, from VS’ Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health, as project leader. Wineland has been assigned to the position full time and will soon establish work teams and create other avenues to gather both employee and stakeholder input.
When more than 400,000 gallons of tar-like oil spilled into the Mississippi River on July 23, APHIS’ Wildlife Services (WS) program was called in to rescue any and all manner of wildlife, including birds, snakes, and alligators. Responding to the spill, which was the result of a tanker collision with an oil-filled barge along the New Orleans shore, WS biologists used all the tools of their trade to capture oil-encrusted wildlife and prevent healthy wildlife from entering the spill zone. Oil from the spill affected an approximately 100-mile stretch of the river.

Working alongside the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, WS provided assistance based on their unique expertise in dealing with wildlife issues. In total, WS rescued 31 oiled animals—including 23 birds, 5 alligators, and 3 snakes—to be cleaned by FWS rehabilitation specialists and released back into the wild.

While some of the rescued animals were only partially coated, others were entirely covered with oil from the spill. “The spill was number six fuel oil, which is real sticky, like tar,” said WS’ Walter Cotton, a supervisory wildlife biologist in Louisiana. “When it dries, it’s like asphalt.”

In addition to capturing animals, WS used pyrotechnics and other noise devices to prevent birds from entering the oil spill zone. As part of the project, WS also did fieldwork to study whether mammals successfully learn to avoid oil spills. WS captured more than 50 mammals, including 27 raccoons and 12 opossums, to visually inspect them for oil. None of the animals were harmed by the oil spill, and they were immediately released.

Net Success
Capturing the affected animals was no easy feat. Even coated in oil, the birds and reptiles moved quickly, attempting to avoid getting caught. Working in three teams of two individuals each, WS used some newer technology to assist with the rescue efforts.

In addition to traditional handheld nets, throw nets, and catch poles, WS used soft-catch traps modified to capture wading shore birds. They also used the CODA capture-net system, a commercially available and innovative tool similar in function to conventional rocket and cannon net systems but easier, safer, and more efficient to operate in many situations.

Most net launchers require the use of regulated explosives to fire a net over the targeted animal. The CODA net launcher, however, is propelled by .308 blanks, making the process safer and quicker to set up and reload.

“The CODA launcher takes about 12 minutes to set up,” said Cotton. In contrast, the other rocket net equipment used by the program can take up to 2 hours to prepare for use.

WS performed all capture activities without any injuries to wildlife and received numerous compliments on how well employees responded to reports of oiled animals. With the successful use of the tools in New Orleans, WS anticipates expanding their use in other locations.

Got Dragon Fruit?
Thanks to APHIS’ streamlined regulatory approach, you just might.

APHIS announced on July 30 that it would begin issuing import permits for dragon fruit entering the continental United States from Vietnam.

APHIS began allowing imports of the fiery looking fruit using its Q56 import regulations. Based on a previously published pest risk analysis, APHIS determined that the dragon fruit could be safely imported if subjected to the application of one or more designated phytosanitary measures.

APHIS’ decision became effective upon publication of notice in the Federal Register. The first shipments of irradiated dragon fruit from Vietnam arrived in Long Beach, California, on October 25.

For a quick overview about dragon fruit—including a description of its taste, texture, and nutritional value—visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitaya.
If you spend a little time looking at the new APHIS Leadership Development Toolkit, you just might find something interesting. Your future.

The Leadership Development Toolkit is a detailed and thorough guide to prepare yourself for leadership positions and professional growth within the agency. Whether you’re just starting your APHIS career or are a more seasoned employee, the Toolkit offers specific guidance for learning experiences that will help you grow.

**A Critical (But Easy) First Step**
The first step is to get familiar with the Toolkit. Open it up and take a look around. You don’t need to read it cover to cover. The Toolkit is a reference document and can be easily navigated online using its clickable links and tabs.

Start with the brief “How to Use the Toolkit and Roadmap” section. Then, go to the section that applies to you and invest time in yourself and in learning how the Toolkit can help your career.

**Let’s Get Specific**
The Toolkit starts with the 28 core leadership competencies for APHIS employees—the same competencies identified in the APHIS Leadership Roadmap. It then offers numerous “behavioral examples” for these competencies at each of five different employee levels within the agency, ranging from “all employees” to agency “executives.”

The behavioral examples provide concrete instances of the kinds of actions and experiences that you can use to show mastery of a specific competency at a given leadership level. In short, the behavioral examples give you clear ways to show proficiency and to identify actions/experiences that you may want to focus upon for growth. Both of these are useful—especially when competing for a new position or when preparing an individual development plan (IDP) with your supervisor.

Finally, to help you plan your development, the Toolkit suggests learning experiences for each competency. These learning experiences are not limited to the classroom—they include free AgLearn courses, books lists, developmental assignments, and personal development activities.

**Good Things Come in Threes**
The agency is providing employees with three ways to access the Leadership Development Toolkit. It’s available online as an easily navigable pdf file. Go to http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/esd/leadership_toolkit.shtml to view or save a copy.

In addition, the agency is also sending each employee a copy on CD, and a print version is available in limited numbers through designated program contacts. Click HERE for a list of program contacts.

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**Coming Soon**

**New Look for Inside APHIS**

*Inside APHIS* will be getting a new look for the new year.

Beginning with the 2009 winter issue, we will introduce a new design that sharpens the newsletter’s look and feel. The revamped design offers improved readability by changing the format and by providing better options to navigate newsletter content.

**The Look**

We’re changing the layout to a horizontal format, minimizing the need for up-and-down scrolling when reading articles. We’re also adding white space and bolder headlines and subheads to bring better focus to the newsletter’s content and images.

**One Click Away**

For convenience and speed, we’re building in new functions that make it easier to get around. The redesigned newsletter includes clickable page numbers along the top, forward and backward buttons on each page, and a clickable list of articles up front.

“I’m looking forward to running the new design,” says John Scott, Inside APHIS editor. “I think readers will really like the new look and options for moving around.”

**The Good Stuff Stays**

Although the look is different, the good stuff will remain the same. Many of the articles and features that readers enjoy will stay—including program focused articles, the APHIS Manager Profile, stories from our contributors, and photos from the field.
Emerald ash borer (EAB) beetles have killed tens of millions of ash trees in the United States, and APHIS is in the middle of the epidemic. Literally. The Riverdale headquarters sits inside the quarantined area of Prince George’s County, Maryland—one of 10 States with confirmed presence of the invasive little pests.

APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program is also at the center of the $120 million Federal effort to fight EAB, first found in Michigan in 2002.

Ongoing APHIS efforts include: regulatory activities, trapping/surveillance, public outreach, and the development of biocontrol methods. The fight against EAB involves many hardworking hands within APHIS and its partnering agencies. Here’s a brief recap of some key agency activities and people:

- PPQ’s Phillip Bell and Ken Witt coordinated efforts to distribute 60,000 EAB traps—corrugated, purple prisms that were put in place in the spring at high-risk locations in 48 States. EAB’s have a natural preference for purple (hence the color of the traps) and a particular shade of light green. The purple traps are part of survey efforts to delimit the edges of known infestations and identify pockets of infestation outside of quarantined States. The distinctive traps also helped raise public awareness.

- James Zablotny and Robert Brown, PPQ entomologists and identifiers, examine collected samples, sorting through similar-looking native beetles—and the occasional flies, bees, and other insects—to see if the surveys have found new areas of infestation. The discovery of EAB in the State of Missouri and Charles County, Maryland, were confirmed by the survey effort.

- Sharon Lucik, in APHIS’ Legislative and Public Affairs, coordinates the extensive public outreach effort that includes distributing 600,000 bumper magnets with the message, “Don’t move firewood, it bugs me.”

  Brochures, T-shirts, identification guides, and other tools are also being used to make citizens aware of the purple traps and alert them to the dangers (and illegality) of moving firewood outside of quarantined areas. The campaign funnels citizens to a central Web site, www.emeraldashborer.info, and has resulted in another 10 detections.

- PPQ’s Juli Gould leads the program’s EAB biocontrol research efforts. APHIS has established a laboratory in Brighton, Michigan, where three insect enemies of the EAB will be reared. The five-year plan calls for millions of stingless wasps to be produced and then released in targeted areas.

  “It doesn’t appear that EAB will be eradicated; however, with good preparation, municipalities can proactively plan for its arrival,” said Craig Kellogg, State plant health director in Michigan.

  “If biocontrol efforts are successful, managing the pest may be an option, therefore ultimately reducing the impact on our ash resources.”

The ABC’s of EAB

By Scott Moore

Did you know that, as part of their inspections under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), Animal Care employees also inspect the animal food prep and food storage areas for exhibitors?

Large zoos throughout the country often have several food prep areas and can be responsible for feeding hundreds of animals each day. In the commissary, the “central kitchen” of many zoos, you can often find hundreds of pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables; boxes of frozen meat, fish, and rodents; bales of hay; bags of grains and other dry food (“monkey chow,” anyone?); and even live insects.

AC inspectors look at exhibitors’ sanitary practices in preparing meals and in storing food supplies to prevent spoilage and infestation, among other things. Inspectors also review whether exhibitors are meeting the varying nutritional needs of their many animals.
APHIS and several other research partners recently completed the third year of evaluating and validating the first live test for chronic wasting disease (CWD) in elk. The new test uses a rectal-tissue biopsy method for detecting the disease in elk.

“Until now, there was no practical live test for CWD in elk,” said research wildlife biologist Kurt VerCauteren with Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center.

Research on the new test—which is still undergoing validation—has been a collaborative effort between APHIS’ Wildlife Services and Veterinary Services programs, as well as other Federal, State and international partners. They include: USDA’s Agricultural Research Service, Colorado State University, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. To date, researchers have collected more than 1,500 biopsies from captive elk in Colorado and used the test to find 15 CWD-positive elk.

“We’re hopeful that this new live test will greatly aid in the management and control of the disease in the wild, as well as in captive settings,” said VerCauteren. “To better understand its limits and usefulness, we need to test a lot more animals—especially during the depopulation of entire infected herds.”

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, a disease in which abnormal proteins accumulate in the central nervous and lymphatic systems of infected animals, and brain lesions develop, followed by a “wasting-away” death. Currently, there is no cure. At this time, the only validated tests for CWD in elk require brain and lymphoid tissue removed from an animal after its death.

CWD has been reported in captive and free-ranging mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and moose. The disease is devastating for the captive elk industry. An estimated 12,000–14,000 captive elk have been killed in the western United States and Canada in the past 8 years to control CWD. Additionally, several thousand free-ranging mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk have been killed in efforts to reduce CWD in the wild.

First, a big thanks to the 109 readers who responded to our last question of the day. Here’s how your coworkers answered the question, “How far is your typical roundtrip drive to and from work?”

Your New Question

How many hours a month do you volunteer with outside organizations?

- I don’t currently volunteer
- 4 or less hours
- 5–10 hours
- 11–15 hours
- 16–20 hours
- More than 20 hours

Click on the following link to participate in the poll: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=jm6aDLGhfHUk9VodYWasA_3d_3d. Participation is voluntary and confidential.

To suggest future questions or stories, please e-mail: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov.
For many, the winter holidays bring joy and special times with family, friends, and coworkers. But safety officials remind us that it is also a time to be careful. Without the right precautions, the winter holidays can be a time of greater risk—especially from fire.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, each year 400 people lose their lives and another 1,650 are injured due to fires during the holiday season.

Take a quick scan of the following tips. They’re good reminders about common fire safety cautions to keep in mind at home and in the workplace. And as always, be sure to follow your work facility’s fire safety rules and policies.

**Electrical Safety**
- Don’t overload outlets by plugging in too many lights or other devices
- Practice good extension cord safety: Use outdoor cords when needed; match your cord’s wattage rating with what you’re powering; don’t run cords under carpets
- Check light strings and extension cords for signs of wear. Replace them if you find cracks, frays, or gaps in the wire insulation

**Space heaters**
- Follow your office building’s rules regarding space heaters (many facilities, including APHIS’ Riverdale headquarters, prohibit their use)
  - When used, keep space heaters away from objects that could ignite or become overheated
  - Make sure the heater is in good condition and follow the manufacturer’s instructions about proper maintenance and ventilation

**Candles at Home**
- Always make sure candles are in a stable base
- Keep candles away from burnable items and replace when wick is low
- Never leave burning candles unattended

**Decorations**
- Use nonflammable decorations when possible
- Keep away from heat sources and vents
- Before leaving home or office, do a quick safety check of candles, lights, and other powered decorations

**Trees**
- For live trees, select a fresh tree that doesn’t show signs of already being dry
- Keep live trees watered and away from heat sources that could dry or ignite a tree
- When selecting an artificial tree, choose one labeled “flame retardant”
- Never locate decorated trees where they can block foot traffic, doorways, or exits

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**Holland Named New CIO**

During the summer, Marilyn Holland was selected as APHIS’ new chief information officer (CIO) and director of the agency’s information technology (IT) division.

As CIO, Holland provides agency leadership concerning IT planning and design, application development, systems administration, telecommunications, security and information management, and customer support services.

Holland plans on working across the agency and building upon the work already underway to provide a secure and stable IT environment. “We need to streamline and standardize our IT investments so we can focus on those that are critical,” says Holland.

Holland first joined APHIS as deputy CIO in 2006, and she served as acting CIO from February 2008 until her selection as CIO. Prior to joining the agency, her positions included working as chief of the program planning and management division in USDA’s Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). In that office, she was responsible for, among other things, IT capital planning and investment control, enterprise architecture, IT workforce planning and project management.

Holland also served on management details while in OCIO, including working as the associate CIO for IT management and the chief of the information management division. Additionally, she worked on a detail with the Office of Management and Budget in 2003 as a policy analyst.

Holland obtained her bachelor of arts in history and masters in business administration from Georgetown University, and she holds a project management certification from the Project Management Institute.
What is your background?
I was born and raised in Prince George’s County, Maryland. I attended the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and graduated in 1992. I first started working in the Federal Government as a cooperative education student right out of college and went on to complete my graduate school degree at Bowie State University with a M.A. in Public Administration. I have worked as an analyst, specializing in working with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and privacy policy. I’ve also worked for a number of years at both the U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Commerce on their FOIA/Privacy staffs. I have been married for 12 years to my husband Mark, and I have three sons, Mark, Jr. (9), Michael (5), and Malachi (3).

How long have you been with APHIS?
This is my second stint at APHIS, having worked in the FOIA and Privacy Acts Office from 2000 through 2004. I rejoined APHIS as the Director in March 2008.

Most memorable APHIS experience?
My most memorable experience with APHIS was as a FOIA specialist. During the detection of BSE in Washington State, I had the opportunity to travel there and assist the State FOIA folks in reviewing APHIS records. APHIS shares a lot of information with their various State partners and what became apparent was how the State access laws differed from the Federal FOIA statute. We were able to offer assistance and advice to the State regarding how to protect APHIS records.

Priorities for the coming months?
Can you say backlog, backlog, backlog? My main priority is to reduce our backlog of FOIA requests. The FOIA office currently has many initiatives in place to assist with backlog reduction, and I am looking forward to showing off our accomplishments as a staff.

Accomplishment most proud of?
On a personal level, I am most proud of my family. My husband and I have three young boys and a great home life. We are excited about our part in helping our children to become young men. Professionally, I am proud of my position here at APHIS. The FOIA is the cornerstone of our democracy—in very few countries are citizens allowed to participate in the governmental process. The FOIA allows anyone in our country and world to learn about what the Federal government does by requesting Federal records. It’s a huge accomplishment to assist APHIS with its FOIA program.

Last book read?
I read a lot of fantasy novels, and I am currently reading *Knife of Dreams* by Robert Jordan.

Guilty pleasure?
I love warm pie and ice cream.

Favorite meal?
Ledo’s cheese pizza with a large salad.

Favorite movie?
*Beaches* with Bette Midler.

Hobbies?
I enjoy reading, shopping, and going to my boys’ soccer/basketball games. ♦

Prepare for Winter
Operating Status Information
As winter weather approaches, you may need a quick way to find out the operating status of Federal offices where you work.

Visit and bookmark the following Office of Personnel Management web page for quick access to information about offices in the Washington, D.C. Area. The OPM web address is http://www.opm.gov/Operating_Status_Schedules/.

The OPM web page includes a link to Federal Executive Boards nationwide as a way of providing information about offices in other geographical areas. Some (unfortunately not all) have up-to-date status information. ♦
During an emergency response, it’s important to be prepared and have the right number of people with the right set of skills. For the Veterinary Services (VS) program, the National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps (NAHERC) is a crucial part of making that happen.

VS created the volunteer corps to make sure that—in addition to its own ranks—it has an external established network of trained veterinarians and technicians available to combat U.S. animal disease outbreaks. NAHERC consists of private and State animal health technicians and veterinarians willing to step in and support APHIS. Depending on the situation, duties may include examining herds or flocks, vaccinating animals, collecting epidemiologic information, depopulating diseased animals, or inspecting livestock markets, trucks, and vehicles.

Proven Needs and Proven Benefits
During the United Kingdom’s (UK) foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 2002, the UK’s Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food requested APHIS’ help. VS provided veterinary medical officers to assist, but UK officials needed additional help to control the outbreak. In response, VS coordinated sending approximately 145 Corps members on 30-day rotations. Corps members provided valuable skills to help complement and support APHIS employees during the outbreak.

In October 2002, APHIS again drew upon the NAHERC for assistance. In response to an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease (END), VS worked closely with State and local officials in California. Together, VS and its cooperators conducted aggressive END quarantine, control, and cleanup efforts to prevent the disease from spreading. NAHERC was there too, providing much needed help. Approximately 340 Corps members participated in the disease response.

Growing the Numbers
VS primarily recruits NAHERC personnel through veterinary conferences, fairs, and Web sites, as well as through colleges and universities. Veterinarian students serve as excellent technicians and can earn pay while gaining valuable on-the-job experience.

Thomas Cunningham, NAHERC coordinator, is working to form university-based task forces, consisting of five professors and 20 students ready to be deployed as a team for 3 weeks.

To aid with recruiting, NAHERC also began utilizing USAjobs in June 2007 and enrolled more than 500 qualified members in the first year. Members include animal health technicians, veterinarians, retirees, and students.

VS employees can also help grow the Corps’ numbers by sharing information about NAHERC with others outside of the agency and by telling them how to get involved.

Individuals can apply through www.usajobs.com. Qualified personnel become temporary VS employees and can serve as veterinary medical officers or as animal health technicians during an emergency situation.

For more information, please visit http://naherc.aphis.usda.gov.

North American Rabies Management Plan

On October 3, APHIS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) signed the North American Rabies Management Plan along with Canadian and Mexican officials. The plan’s aim is to strengthen cooperation and communication in addressing wildlife rabies management and control. Pictured (seated left to right) are Canadian officials Peter Buck and Francine Lord; U.S. officials Scott Bender (Navajo Nation), Cindy Smith (APHIS), and Julie Gerberding (CDC); and Mexican officials Fernando Vargas Pino, Francisco Velarde Garcia, and Martin Vargas Prieto. (photo by B. German)
National Disability Employment Awareness Month takes place in October, but USDA’s Target Center is a valuable resource all year long—even for employees and supervisors in APHIS field locations.

Disabilities and individual needs can vary widely, and it’s difficult for employees and supervisors to know what equipment and options are available to meet those needs. The good news is that the Target Center is a good place to turn for information.

As a resource for all USDA employees, the Target Center’s mission is to ensure that employees have safe and equal access to electronic and information technology by assessing, educating, and advocating for the integration of assistive technology and worksite accommodations.

If you haven’t contacted the Target Center before or visited their Web site, you may be surprised by the services they offer.

Below is a quick sampling of some of their key services. Check out their Web site at http://www.usda.gov/oo/target/index.html for a full view of what they can do for you.

**Assistive Technology**

The Target Center provides assistive technology assessments nationwide for USDA employees with disabilities. Assessments can help match individual employee needs with equipment. They can be done either in person, over the phone, or through an online connection.

The Target Center staff can offer informed advice about equipment and information about vendors and pricing.

Additionally, the center loans a variety of equipment for evaluation purposes and to help address temporary disabilities. For example, an employee with a temporary hand injury can borrow a one-handed keyboard during recovery.

Some assistive technology equipment is even provided to employees with qualified disabilities at no cost to the agency. Examples of such equipment include screen readers, screen magnifiers, speech recognition software, and more.

**Training & Presentations**

The Target Center provides educational programs and materials on a variety of topics. They host a regularly scheduled online program series called the Target Discovery Series. Viewers can participate live or access archived programs online at their convenience. Past topics range from ergonomics, to mobile reader technology, to workforce recruitment programs.

Additionally, the center offers training on demand at local offices and at field offices via its online service, Target Web Connect.

**More Information**

For more information, you can contact either of the APHIS disability employment program managers, Sophia Kirby and Tammy Lowry. Additionally, Kimberly Meyer-Chambers, who serves as the Marketing and Regulatory Programs designee for reasonable accommodations, can be reached by e-mail in Lotus Notes or by telephone at (301) 734-8299.

Employees are also encouraged to visit USDA’s Target Center online or to call them directly at (202) 720-2600.

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**Use or Lose Annual Leave Information**

Deadlines are approaching. Go to the following link for the latest information about “use or lose” annual leave. The address is http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/pay_leave_tod/pay_leave_tod_news.shtml.

For additional information, contact your program’s resource management official, administrative officer, or Nella Roberts in the Human Resources Division. Her e-mail address is Nella.H.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov.

**Retiring Soon? Read This**

The end of the year is the most popular time to retire. Keep your retirement plans on track by following the Human Resources Division’s retirement checklist. Check it out at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/retirement_checklist.shtml.

For more information, please call or e-mail the benefits specialist who services your program/location. For a list of specialists go to http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/benefits.shtml.
As the 110th Congress comes to a close, we thought it helpful to provide a brief recap of last year’s legislative activities and a quick look ahead.

The 110th Congress tried to tackle many high profile issues during its 2-year session, ranging from the Nation’s economy to the U.S. food safety system. During this time, many in Congress also kept their eyes on APHIS activities.

More than 100 bills that could affect the agency were introduced. The most significant—the 2008 Farm Bill—touches all APHIS programs through the creation of new activities and authorities, increased funding, and new partnerships.

Other new legislation signed into law includes the Animal Fighting Prohibition Act of 2008, which strengthens animal fighting statutes, and the Openness Promotes Effectiveness in Our National Government Act, which enhances the Freedom of Information Act. While most bills introduced were not signed into law, we anticipate many to be reintroduced in the 111th Congress.

In the past year, APHIS also worked to help Congress better understand the agency’s role and authorities. APHIS responded to approximately 550 congressional calls and conducted over 80 briefings for Hill staff. Numerous agency issues received significant congressional interest, including light brown apple moth, export difficulties with Mexico, and environmental compliance related to biotechnology.

Looking Ahead
All 435 Members of the House, as well as 35 Senators, were up for reelection this year. There were many tight races, particularly for incumbents, and some races remain undecided as of November 5. APHIS will continue to be busy surveying the new political landscape and preparing to discuss issues that matter most to Congress.

Here’s a taste of issues likely to arise next year:

- The House Committee on Agriculture has committed to evaluating the efficiency of USDA’s current organization. To date, no mention has been made about whether APHIS would be affected.
- The outlaw of horses to slaughter in foreign countries was a hot issue for Congress this year, and the issue is expected to return again.
- We anticipate significant interest in how APHIS and its Federal partners implement the Farm Bill’s provisions concerning illegal logging.

Legislative Corner
Looking Back and Looking Ahead
By Abbey Shaffer

Volunteer Spotlight
Lissa Scott

Protecting U.S. agriculture and getting the job done—that’s what APHIS does everyday at work.

And for many of your APHIS coworkers, there’s even more that they do outside of the workday to serve the needs of others. Many volunteer their time and energy to community organizations.

To acknowledge and promote the volunteer spirit that is part of our agency community, Inside APHIS plans to run a series of Volunteer Spotlights on employee volunteers. If you would like to share information for future spotlights about an organization and your efforts, or the efforts of someone in the agency you know, please send an e-mail to volunteerisminaphis@aphis.usda.gov.

Employee Name: Lissa Scott, Information Technology Division

Volunteer Organization: Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League

Organization Mission: The rescue league is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that rehabilitates and finds homes for about 350 shelter and owner-relinquished Great Dane dogs each year. With more than 500 volunteers, it operates within 9 States and also provides owners with information to help them keep their Dane.

Volunteer Activities: Scott assists the rescue group in many ways, including attending public events to increase awareness of the breed and rescue efforts; organizing fundraising activities; writing fliers and other publicity materials; and helping to match adoption applicants with rescued Danes.

Time Given: Scott has been involved with the rescue league since March 2001. On average, she donates about 40 hours a month—combined spring and fall being peak times for the group.

Organization Web Site: To learn more about the organization, you can visit http://www.magdrl.org/.

Employee E-mail: To learn more about her volunteer efforts, contact Scott at lissa.n.scott@usda.gov.
As the Obama Administration begins its tenure, you may wonder how the transition will affect your work. While we cannot predict exactly what will happen, the one thing we can be sure of is that our basic mission of protecting American agriculture will remain important to the Nation.

On January 20, incoming Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack was confirmed by the Senate. President Obama and Secretary Vilsack have both spoken about the agricultural issues they plan to emphasize over the coming years—support for family farms, biofuels research, country-of-origin labeling regulations, and increased information technology capabilities at USDA, to name a few.

President Obama has also laid out his plan to take a hard look at Federal Government programs to ensure each program makes sense and is getting results.
wildlife services

birdstrikes back
on the public radar

By Rachel Iadicicco

The recent crash of US Airways Flight 1549 into New York’s Hudson River—purportedly caused by birds ingested into the plane’s engines—has put the potential risk of bird-strikes back on the public radar. Likewise, it has rekindled attention to the efforts by those, such as Wildlife Services (WS), who work to prevent them.

Immediately following the January 15 crash, Mike Begier, national coordinator for the WS Airport Wildlife Hazards Program, and Allen Gosser, the program’s assistant State director for New York, traveled to the crash site to assist in the National Transportation Safety Board’s investigation.

[focus factors]
“...We are really, really lucky no one died,” said Gosser, who is helping to identify the bird species that could have been responsible for the crash. His work has focused on several factors, including flight altitude, time of year, bird remains, eyewitness accounts, and local bird species and populations.

WS has been active in co-managing wildlife hazards at La Guardia and JFK International Airport since 1990. At La Guardia and other airports across the country, WS works to decrease problem bird populations through habitat alteration, bird-scaring techniques, or lethal removal.

Because over 70 percent of reported wildlife aircraft strikes occur below 500 feet, the program first works to reduce birds on and around airports. Then WS works outward with adjacent property owners.

[the approach]
Wildlife hazards are unique for each airport. WS conducts individual wildlife hazard assessments and assists airports in developing and maintaining wildlife hazard management plans. Gosser notes that many airports don’t practice abatement due to funding issues. His hope is that this incident raises awareness of the issue.

Birdstrikes cause over $600 million a year in damages to civil aviation. Due to increases in bird populations, quieter airplanes, and increased airline travel, birdstrikes are a growing problem.

To combat this trend, WS’ National Wildlife Research Center researches wildlife behavior, habitat management, and new harassment techniques. Currently, WS is conducting bird detection radar and goose movement research near LaGuardia and JFK. “Local bird detection radar could promote earlier detection and prevent incidents," noted Gosser.

In 2008 alone, approximately 5,622 birdstrikes were reported. An estimated 80 percent of birdstrikes go unreported each year.

APHIS-wide mandatory training reminder
All APHIS employees and contractors must complete “USDA Information Systems Security Awareness” by February 16, 2009. The course covers IT Security and Privacy Act training requirements and is currently available in AgLearn.

Contact your program’s information system security manager(s) if you have additional questions.
Need to quickly find the import requirements for specific fresh fruits or vegetables? The Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program has done you a favor.

Actually, it’s FAVIR—the Fruit and Vegetable Import Requirement database. This new Web-based tool allows customers to search for products by commodity or country and quickly determine whether fresh fruit or vegetables are authorized to enter the United States. If the commodity is authorized, the database lists the general rules for entry.

Click on the following link to access FAVIR: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/favir/info.shtml.

[what’s in FAVIR]
Need to import Hass avocados to make an authentic guacamole? Just type in “avocado” and “Mexico” in the form and FAVIR provides an easy-to-read list of six main requirements.

FAVIR also includes a compilation of frequently asked questions, a handy glossary of terms, and a complete list of authorized ports of entry. A password-protected, employees-only section contains additional inspection information.

APHIS developed FAVIR in response to the final rule known as Quarantine 56 or the Q56 revision, which established a streamlined approach for the importation of certain fruits and vegetables without specific prior rulemaking. Any commodities now approved under the Q56 revision will be identified through FAVIR, not in the Code of Federal Regulations.

As of the end of last year, 496,630 premises nationwide were registered as part of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Producers registered more than 55,000 premises in 2008.

With the growing numbers, 13 States now have more than 50 percent of their total estimated production premises registered through NAIS. Iowa is the most recent State to surpass the 50 percent mark for premises registration.

The 13 States that have topped 50 percent are: Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Illinois is within close reach of the 50 percent mark, with 48.6 percent of its estimated 30,046 premises registered.
At the 61st Annual USDA Honor Award ceremony held on October 22, 2008, APHIS employees again received well-deserved recognition for their efforts on behalf of U.S. agriculture.

In the category of “Protecting and Enhancing the Nation’s Natural Resources Base and Environment,” an APHIS team led by Christine Markham, the Illinois Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Coop-eration Eradication Program, was recognized for its successful efforts to combat ALB in the Chicago area of Illinois. Through the team’s hard work and dedication, the eradication program was able to declare victory over the invasive insect in the Chicago area in April 2008. ALB continues to threaten U.S. urban and suburban shade trees and recreational and forest resources valued at billions of dollars.

The APHIS team members included: Robert Benjamin, Suzanne Bond, Jeffrey Coath, Margaret Crabtree, David Gruchot, Stephen Knight, Phillip Lewis, Vic Mastro, Jennifer Medina, Renee Perry, Greg Rentschler, Alan Sawyer, Gwen Servies, Michael Stefan, Julie Twardowski, Scott Walock, and Baode Wang.

Another group of APHIS employees earned distinction through their participation with the Foreign Agriculture Service’s (FAS) Biotech Rice Group. Under the award category “Enhancing International Competitiveness of American Agriculture,” this group, led by APHIS’ Beverly Simmons, was recognized for its exceptional leadership and sustained efforts in responding to the potential disruption of U.S. rice exports. Group members are credited with responding to a situation in 2006 in which trace amounts of regulated genetically engineered rice were found in bins of commercial long grain rice. The group moved swiftly and took effective steps to ensure that foreign market access was maintained.

APHIS team members included: Rebecca Bech, Terri Dunahay, Michael Henney, and Cindy Smith.

Also under the award category “Enhancing International Competitiveness of American Agriculture,” APHIS employees earned honors for their contributions to a second FAS group, the BSE Post-OIE Group.

The group was recognized for its diligence and creativity in monitoring efforts to regain key foreign beef export markets and for creating new strategies and trade policy initiatives to obtain foreign market access.

APHIS team members included: Lynn Alfalla, John Greifer, and Mary Lisa Madell.

…”to celebrate those efforts that rise above the ordinary…”
—Former Secretary Edward Shafer
animal care
a new start
for ned

By Hope Sinkavitch

On November 7, Animal Care confiscated a circus elephant named Ned from a Florida-based animal owner and donated him to The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee.

When confiscated, Ned was severely underweight—by as much as 1 ton. Thanks to the confiscation by Animal Care and the efforts of The Elephant Sanctuary—which now owns Ned and oversees his care—his health is showing signs of improvement.

Under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), Animal Care’s authority to confiscate animals is limited to those situations in which the agency has determined that an animal is suffering and action is not taken, or will not be taken, to alleviate its condition.

“In this particular case, we knew that confiscation was the right thing to do at that time,” says Dr. Denise Sofranko, Animal Care’s field specialist for elephants.

Confiscating and relocating a large elephant takes a lot of logistical planning and requires a well-orchestrated and detailed plan.

When confiscation is warranted, Animal Care personnel in the field and in the region begin developing a plan. They closely coordinate their efforts with the agency’s Investigative Enforcement Services (IES), USDA’s Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and with others outside the agency.

IES also arranges for security to make certain that the confiscation goes smoothly, and confers closely with OGC on any legal issues.

While animal welfare efforts are often complicated, Ned’s confiscation went very well due to the preparations by Animal Care and the many others involved.

“This was a great team effort on the part of all those involved. Everyone really came together to make Ned’s confiscation a smooth and successful operation, which I’m so thankful for,” says Sofranko.

Confiscating and relocating a large elephant takes a lot of logistical planning and requires a well-orchestrated and detailed plan.

2008 CFC campaign wrap up

By John Scott

APHIS employees pledged generously and organized numerous events for the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) this year. CFC campaign areas nationwide recently wrapped up their activities. Current reports estimate a total of $1.68 million raised by USDA for the CFC’s National Capital Area Campaign; agency headquarters employees contributed an estimated $162,000 to campaign efforts.

Due to economic conditions, CFC campaign areas throughout the country faced a challenging year, but national organizers are already making plans for the 2009 CFC campaign. Many charitable organizations continue to feel the financial pinch, so while this year’s CFC efforts may have ended, there are still many opportunities to support organizations in your area.

“We hope that agency employees can continue to find ways throughout the year to give what they can—either with donations or by volunteering their time,” said Marilyn Holland, Chair for APHIS’ 2008 CFC Campaign. “Any help, especially now, means a lot.”
Your new LincPass ID card will eventually be more than just a key for getting into agency worksites. It will also be necessary for accessing your work computer.

Instead of entering a password when prompted by a network logon screen, employees will need to insert their LincPass ID card into card readers installed on their computer and enter a PIN number.

By requiring employees to use both ID cards and PIN numbers to access agency computers, APHIS—like other Federal agencies—is boosting the security of its computer resources.

It’s called two-factor authentication, which means it will take two things—the ID you have and the PIN number you know—to get into your work computer.

For a detailed overview of how LincPass cards, card readers, and computers will work together, check out the How to Use Your LincPass guide by clicking on the link: http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/training/downloads/hspd_HowToUseYourLincPass.pdf

Employee enrollment for the new LincPass ID cards continues to progress, with approximately 53 percent of agency employees now having the new cards. As this work continues, the APHIS information technology (IT) staff is also working to prepare laptops and desktop computers to accept the new ID cards. Among other things, this means installing card readers and software onto each employee’s computer.

The deadline for configuring all agency hardware (laptops and desktops) for two-factor authentication is October 2009. However, until USDA chooses a mandatory implementation date, employees can still access the agency computer system either by logging on with their user ID and password or by inserting their LincPass card into their card reader and entering their PIN number. Call ATAC at 877-944-8457 for assistance or with questions about your computer.
opening markets
u.s. dairy cattle
to egypt

By John Scott

APHIS’ International Services and Veterinary Services (VS) programs—working with USDA’s Foreign Agriculture Service in Cairo—have successfully restored access for U.S. dairy cattle to Egypt.

The first 2,000 head of Holstein dairy cattle were shipped in December 2008 and arrived in Egypt on January 14, 2009.

APHIS’ International Services team in Cairo expedited lengthy discussions with Egyptian veterinary officials and helped negotiate a model health certificate prepared by VS’ National Center for Import and Export.

The value of the initial shipment is estimated at $8.5 million. Additional shipments are expected to follow. If dairy market prices in Egypt proceed as anticipated, the projected value for U.S. dairy cattle exports to Egypt in 2009 is estimated at approximately $40 million.

Egypt’s market for U.S. dairy cattle had been closed since 1999 largely due to the country’s restrictions concerning enzootic bovine leukosis, or EBL.

Efforts to restore access to Egypt are part of USDA’s overall push to continue reopening markets abroad. In March 2006, APHIS-Cairo succeeded in opening the Saudi market to U.S. dairy cattle for the first time in many years. More than 19,500 head of U.S. dairy cattle have been exported to Saudi markets since then, including 4,000 cattle exported in late 2008.

Other more recent USDA successes include restoring access for various U.S. cattle to the Cayman Islands, Morocco, and Russia.

To acknowledge the volunteer spirit within the agency, Inside APHIS is again featuring a coworker in its Volunteer Spotlight series.

Employee Name: Erin Stiers, PPQ, Kansas

Volunteer Organization: Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Shawnee County, Inc.

Mission: The organization’s mission is to advocate for the best interest of children and youth involved in the court system because of child abuse or neglect. CASA volunteers provide a voice for children to facilitate informed and expedient decisions about their futures.

Volunteer Activities: Stiers is a volunteer advocate for two teenage girls in the foster care system. As a CASA volunteer, she makes sure that the children’s voices are heard by the court, and that the system does not allow them to fall through the cracks. She also serves as a mentor and positive role model.

Time Given: 10–15 hours per month.

Web Site: www.casaofshawneecounty.org or www.nationalcasa.org.

Employee E-mail: To learn more about Stiers’ volunteer efforts, contact her at Erin.N.Stiers@aphis.usda.gov.

To share information for future spotlights about an organization and your efforts, or the efforts of someone else in APHIS, please send an e-mail to: volunteerisminaphis@aphis.usda.gov.
Back in October—just a week before Halloween—the Wildlife Services (WS) Illinois office received an urgent request. The Shelby County Public Health Department needed help getting rid of an infestation of brown bats that had been plaguing the Moulton Middle School in Shelbyville. WS visited the site, where school officials estimated that a couple hundred bats were roosting in the ceilings of one of the school buildings. Local media had reported as many as 500 bats, further raising public concern.

A few bats had been seen in the school's boiler room and cafeteria. Additionally, faculty members and students had complained of a strong, foul odor coming from a classroom ceiling. School district officials received several calls from parents worried about their children's respiratory health. Calls from concerned parents prompted school and health department officials to call upon WS' expertise to supplement the steps already taken by school maintenance personnel.

While generally harmless to humans, bats do present some risk to human health as they can carry rabies. Also, the fungus that causes histoplasmosis can develop on bat droppings if they are allowed to accumulate over a long period of time.

WS State Director Scott Beckerman and his staff in Illinois inspected the building and devised a bat exclusion plan for the school maintenance staff to follow. WS advised the staff on how to properly seal up the building and provided training on how to make and employ several ex-closure devices to allow the bats to safely escape. Ex-closures work like a “roach motel” in reverse: Bats check out, but can’t check back in.

After the devices were in place, the school closed for a few days so that maintenance staff could make the necessary repairs and allow time for the bats to leave the building. No bats were hurt throughout the entire process.

Because a number of bats in the ceiling had already gone into hibernation, WS field biologists have advised school officials that it will take three to four weeks of warm weather in the spring to ensure that all the bats have left to find a new home.●
Continued from page 8

aphis gets environmental

charged with enforcing the Act’s new import declaration requirements, we’re playing a key role in protecting the environment.”

Under the Act’s new provisions, importers are required to submit a detailed import declaration for plants and plant products. The declarations must include the plant’s scientific name, the value of the importation, quantity of the plant, and name of the country from which the plant/plant product was taken.

Since the Act was signed, APHIS has been working with an interagency group to address the new legislative requirements. The group includes the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. Departments of Justice and State, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, among others.

CBP already collects some of the information required of importers and is developing an electronic system to collect the remaining data. Although the new declaration requirement took effect on December 15, 2008, enforcement of the requirement is being phased in and will begin once the electronic system is completed in spring 2009.

sustaining excellence

three earn presidential rank award

By John Scott

Each year, the President recognizes an elite group of career senior executives and senior career employees who consistently demonstrate strength, integrity, industry, and a relentless commitment to excellence.

Three of APHIS’ own were recently presented with the 2008 Presidential Rank Awards for their career accomplishments and strong leadership. APHIS’ Jere Dick, Paul Eggert, and Andrea Morgan were recognized for their sustained achievements as senior executives and for their demonstrated commitment to public service.

Jere Dick, associate deputy administrator for Veterinary Services (VS), earned the honor as USDA’s only recipient this year in the distinguished executive award category.

“I was extremely honored and humbled to receive the award,” said Dick. “This kind of award doesn’t come on any single person’s efforts. It would not have happened without the contributions of many other very talented and dedicated APHIS people around me.”

Paul Eggert, associate deputy administrator for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, was honored in the meritorious executive award category for his skills in forecasting future needs and adapting to new methods and technologies as he leads PPQ’s plant protection efforts.

Among other accomplishments, Eggert has built on the linkage between international commerce and risk-based decisionmaking, working to establish risk assessment centers in Colombia and South Africa. The centers have helped speed PPQ review of commodity export requests from these regions and enabled the program to focus on other high-priority assessments.

For her work as VS’ associate deputy administrator for regional operations, Andrea Morgan was recognized as a meritorious executive. Morgan’s efforts focused on encouraging the continuing collaboration and partnerships between USDA and its State veterinary counterparts. These partnerships form the foundation of APHIS’ animal disease response activities.

Among other achievements, the award also honored her efforts to improve cooperative agreements with States and Tribal nations to enhance live bird market surveillance for avian diseases.

rural agenda priorities

white house web site

The new White House Web site includes agenda items for the new Administration. Click on the following link to view the Administration’s priority issues concerning rural communities:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/rural/.

The items listed provide an interesting preview of the rural issues likely to receive a lot of attention in the coming months.
Typically, when most Federal employees think of Human Resources, they focus on a narrow slice of HR’s mission. Vacancy announcements, job classifications, and certificates of eligibility are the sort of words that come to mind for most of us.

While these HR products and the people who make them happen are all essential to keeping the agency moving, there’s much more going on in APHIS’ Human Resources Division (HRD).

HRD has reorganized itself to take a wider view of how it serves the agency. The result is a revitalized structure that represents an “All-Employees Approach” to HR.

[how it looks]
Many of HRD’s pieces are not new; instead, its various branches are now aligned organizationally under three main areas to better serve employees and managers throughout the span of their careers. The three areas are: Talent and Management Development; Operations and Policy; and Employee and Management Services.

Click on the button below to see how HRD’s branches are organized.

[ everybody’s business ]
HRD’s goal is to be well prepared and structured to successfully bring people onboard, to help them grow and develop, and to ensure their wellness and productivity while here.

“HR is everybody’s business,” says Andy Morgan, who contributed to HRD’s reorganization efforts while acting as division director in fall 2008. “No matter what your task or what program you work for, you’re always dealing with people issues.”

The Feds have spoken.

On November 18, 2008, a shipping container from the West African nation of Gabon arrived at the Port of Houston for entry into the United States. Filled with items from the reality television series Survivor, the container was flagged by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials for inspection.

After examining the container, they seized numerous items and designated the remaining contents for fumigation by APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine officials at the port.

The shipment, which included animal skulls, hides, feathers, infested corn, and wooden statues, posed several Federal regulatory concerns.

CBP officers found multiple items that were either prohibited or restricted entry under APHIS agricultural regulations, Federal human health and safety regulations, or the Convention on International Treaty of Endangered Species (CITES).
**new emergency preparedness and response web pages**

By John Scott

APHIS recently rolled out two new sets of web pages concerning the agency’s emergency preparedness and response activities. One set of web pages provides information for external agency stakeholders, while the other set specifically targets agency employees.

“We created the pages to be a ‘one-stop shopping’ site for employees or stakeholders,” says Policy and Program Development’s (PPD) Beth Gaston, who worked on the project with PPD’s Dawn Ragione.

“A lot of information about the agency’s role in emergencies is available, but agency leaders wanted to tie the information from all the units together,” says Gaston.

The Web pages consolidate the emergency response tools and contact information for agency programs and emergency support functions.

**[for employee eyes]**

For employees, the internal web pages detail how emergency response activities are organized and provide information about personnel deployment during emergencies. The pages also offer links with health and safety and training information, including links to training modules and an overview of the Incident Command System program.

The site is intended to grow and evolve; information will be added to meet employee and agency informational needs. Additional items—including several guides currently under development by the APHIS Emergency Management Leadership Council—will be added when finalized.

Employees are encouraged to access the pages on the APHIS intranet at: http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/emergency_info/.

**[for stakeholders]**

For agency stakeholders, the new externally focused Web pages centralize APHIS emergency-related information in one place.

The pages provide a good referral site or information source, and can be helpful in communicating with agency stakeholders.

They describe APHIS’ role in all-hazards emergencies (such as hurricanes or other natural disasters); provide links to pages in agency program areas; and offer useful tools, information, and contacts.

The pages are navigable from the APHIS homepage by following the “Emergency Preparedness and Response” link on the left, or they can be found at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/emergency_response/.

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Have you tried video conferencing?

APHIS work units are using it now more than ever before.

In the next issue of Inside APHIS, we’ll talk more about this growing technology. We’ll cover the basics of video conferencing, along with examples of how some APHIS units are using it and some of the potential benefits.

We’ll also fill you in on where to turn for more details and how to schedule a video conference.

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**video conferencing basics**

**next issue**

**Go Outside (inside)** Click to visit the employee intranet page.

**Go Outside** Click to visit the stakeholder internet page.

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John Scott, Editor  
(301) 734-4897  
inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov

Photo sources: S. Bauer, CBP-Houston Seaport, A. Eaglin, The Elephant Sanctuary, B. Hollander, M. Lowman, USDA, USDA-ARS, USFWS.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments. For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
What is your background?
New England born and raised. I was educated at Michigan State University in East Lansing, (Go Spartans!!), where I received both a BS and DVM. I graduated with a DVM in 1975. I worked in mixed animal practice two-and-a-half years and then joined Veterinary Services (VS) as a field veterinary medical officer (VMO) in upstate New York. Notable tidbit: Mr. Phil Marriott hired me!

How long have you been with APHIS?
I started with APHIS-VS in the summer of 1977 as a section VMO in upstate New York. I began my career working primarily on cattle brucellosis, as the State and country was experiencing a resurgence of bovine brucellosis at this point in time. I also worked a fair portion of my time on our export program, operating an export facility out of Newburg, New York, where the New York Animal Import Center is now located. It was a great time and a wonderful experience.

Most memorable APHIS experience?
Undoubtedly, leading the VS team in the taking of two flocks of Vermont sheep that were found affected with an undifferentiated form of a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE). It took every ounce of organizational skills, patience, team work, and interagency cooperation and people skills to complete.

Priorities for the coming months?
Working with colleagues on the current contagious equine metritis outbreak; NAIS program implementation and improvement; enhancing bovine spongiform encephalopathy surveillance in selected New England States; and breaking in a new associate regional director for the eastern region of VS @!.

Accomplishment most proud of?
Convincing my wonderful wife Mary Ellen to marry me 35 years ago; raising a happy and healthy family; and getting my two children through college so they have a good education, an appreciation of what life has to offer them, and respect for all God’s creatures great and small, including all of us.

Favorite meal?
Pot roast, carrots, and potatoes, and a few ice cold Miller beers!

Guilty pleasure?
College basketball marathon, specifically attending the Big East Basketball tournament at Madison Square Garden.

Favorite movie?
The Sting with Paul Newman and Robert Redford.

Hobbies?
Avid woodworker. I make Queen Anne style furniture.

Last book read?
German Boy by Wolfgang E. Samuel

Special Event Calendar
February
National Black History Month. Watch your e-mail for local events and programs.
Mandatory training for all employees, “USDA Information Systems Security Awareness,” deadline February 16. See Aglearn or contact your program’s Information Systems Security Manager.
Employee Assistance Program (EAP) seminar, February 11, Riverdale, Maryland. Watch e-mail for more information from the Work Life Wellness Committee.

March
National Women’s History Month. Organizers are preparing events now.
Central Plant Board Annual Meeting, March 1–5, Des Moines, Iowa.

April
Eastern Plant Board Annual Meeting, April 6–9, Portland, Maine.
Take Your Child to Work Day, April 23, Riverdale, Maryland.
National APHIS Safety and Health Conference, April 27–May 1, Portland, Oregon. Watch your e-mail for more information.
On November 6, 2008, APHIS hosted its Tenth Annual Administrator’s Civil Rights Award Ceremony. The award celebrates the accomplishments of agency employees who have excelled at providing equal opportunity to those seeking employment or to employees already in Federal service.

At the ceremony, Administrator Cindy Smith had high praise for this year’s recipients.

“They have shown a true commitment and enthusiasm for fostering equal opportunity and diversity in the workplace,” said Smith. “Their work to support and promote civil rights makes APHIS a better place to work.”

Recipients for this year’s awards came from many of the agency’s different programs. Awardees are listed below by program area.

Congratulations, All!

Click on the program area subheads for a quick summary of each recipient’s accomplishments.

Marketing and Regulatory Programs - Business Services
- Trang (Ashley) Dinh
- Howard Price

Plant Protection and Quarantine
- The Miami Inspection Station
- The Eastern Region EEO/CR Partnership Committee

Policy and Program Development
- Matina Sawicki

Veterinary Services
- Andrea Morgan
- Carol Belzer
- Bruce Carter
- VS Tennessee Area Group

Wildlife Services
- Scott Healey
- Thurman Booth
- Robert Wilgin

[inside]
APHIS

question of the day

[your results]
We had 42 coworkers respond to the following question: How many hours a month do you volunteer to outside organizations?

As always, a big thanks to everyone who responded to our last question of the day.

[next question please]
Beyond your APHIS career, what is your connection to farming?

Select all that apply.

- I have family who farm, or who have farmed in the past.
- I grew up in a farming community.
- I keep livestock/horses/poultry, or have in the past.
- I raise crops, or have in the past.
- I’m connected as a consumer of farm products.

Follow the link to participate in the poll: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ic8WU65JE3F_2bSeHmjuwEA_3d_3d. Participation is voluntary and confidential.

To suggest future questions, please e-mail: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov.

40.5% 26.2% 14.3% 11.9% 7.1%
20+ hours 16-20 hours 11-15 hours 5-10 hours don’t volunteer

[inside]
The Atlas of Transboundary Animal Diseases may not climb to the top of any popular best-seller list, but, in veterinary circles, it will fill a critical need by helping to combat significant animal diseases.

The atlas is a publication under joint development by APHIS and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). When completed, it will serve as a concise illustrated guide for recognizing approximately 30 significant transboundary animal diseases in the field. The value and usefulness of having such a field diagnostic tool and educational publication are immeasurable.

The atlas will replace an older OIE publication, the Illustrated Manual for the Recognition and Diagnosis of Certain Animal Diseases, which was last printed in 1988. APHIS and its partnering organizations plan to distribute it internationally and provide it to participants in the domestic foreign animal disease (FAD) training courses.

Liz Clark, Veterinary Service’s laboratory training specialist at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center, is very enthusiastic about the project and the images collected so far. Clark is a key figure in the FAD domestic and international courses taught on Plum Island. Since 1999, the training staff has hosted more than 200 participants from 30 countries around the world for its international transboundary animal disease course. The training staff also conducts a domestic course, training a total of 100 State, Federal, and military veterinarians each year.

“It will be great to hand this out as part of our courses,” says Clark. “We really want veterinarians to have this tool in the field—especially the images.”

When finalized, the publication’s text will be translated into other languages. The OIE has offered to translate the text into French, and the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) plans to provide the text in Spanish. Other languages, including Arabic, have also been discussed.

Source materials have come from the Plum Island image library, OIE members, international reference laboratories, and disease experts from around the world. The APHIS committee steering the project is calling on many sources internationally to meet the steep challenge of collecting disease images. Some images are from actual field cases, while others are experimental or laboratory disease images.

“We went to all of our folks in APHIS and USDA and also turned to the wider OIE network of people to gather images,” says APHIS’ Peter Fernandez, who works as Minister-Counselor at the U.S. Mission to the European Union. Fernandez is joined on the project’s committee by Liz Clark, Bill White, a senior staff veterinarian at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center, and Jason Baldwin of the VS Professional Development Staff.

The committee plans to complete the image search early in 2009 and provide a production update to the OIE in the spring.
When you look at the numbers inside Animal Care’s recent report for FY2007, they definitely tell a story. It’s a story filled with a lot of very busy Animal Care inspectors and program staff. Take a look—you’ll be impressed.

**[report highlights]**

- In FY2007, there were 9,249 facilities regulated under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), each subject to inspections.
- With 102 inspectors to carry out most of the inspections, Animal Care completed a combined total of 14,999 compliance inspections and pre-licensing/pre-registration inspections.
- In FY 2007, Animal Care found that approximately 97 percent of regulated facilities were in substantial compliance with the AWA, meaning there were no AWA violations or only minor noncompliances documented on their most recent inspection report.
- Working with the agency’s Investigative and Enforcement Services, Animal Care used its AWA authorities to remove and relocate approximately 220 animals.
- Animal Care imposed penalties totaling more than $614,000.

As the 2009 State legislative session gets underway for many States across the country, it is helpful to know some of the agricultural issues that State legislatures are likely to consider this year.

Several issues relevant to APHIS are likely to arise in statehouses this session, including animal welfare, invasive species, and biotechnology. These issues were among the subjects discussed at the State Ag and Rural Leaders (SARL) Forum held just last month in San Diego, California.

SARL is composed of the agricultural committee chairs of the 50 State legislatures. It meets annually to discuss major agricultural issues facing the States.

At this year’s SARL Forum, all eyes were on the economy and its impact on State agriculture. Several States reported FY 2009 budget decreases of 10 percent or more and made clear that cuts would be passed along to agricultural programs through hiring freezes and program reductions, among other emergency measures.

Legislators emphasized the need for Federal support to help offset this budget gap, but also suggested that increased farm inspection fees were one mechanism States could use to boost revenue in agriculture agencies.

The following items of interest to APHIS, were identified by legislators as priority issues:

- **Invasive Species:** States expressed the need for additional protections against invasive species that impact agriculture.

- **Animal Welfare:** Several States are expected to debate legislation similar in content to California’s Proposition 2 (2008)—the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act. Proposals limiting the use of battery cages and gestation crates are also expected.

- **Organics and Genetically Engineered Crops:** With the rise in popularity of organic food products, States are interested in balancing changing consumer demand with the need to produce abundant food supplies.

- **Horse Slaughter:** Many States are seeing an increase in abandoned horses and are concerned about the provision of proper care for these animals. Notably, proposed Federal legislation (H.R.503) has been introduced this session that would prohibit the interstate transport of horses destined for slaughter for human consumption.

If you have any questions regarding State legislative or regulatory activity, please contact APHIS’ State Liaisons, Hallie Zimmers and Jacob Hegeman.
When APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program combats an invasive pest, it takes the fight directly to the enemy. In its battle against the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), a serious threat to U.S. hardwood trees, PPQ took that strategy to new heights, literally, when it created the position of tree climber—a plant protection technician with acrobatic skills.

These employees climb towering hardwoods and scour them for ALB infestations. Instead of working in a cubicle, PPQ tree climbers spend their days dangling from secured lines and enjoying some of the best views a windowless office can offer.

[the need to go vertical]
Previously, PPQ conducted ALB surveys from the ground, peering into upper branches with binoculars. However, PPQ researchers quickly learned that ALB first attacks the treetops. “From the ground, we can’t detect those light infestations,” says Christine Markham, PPQ’s ALB National Program Director. “We had to find a way to get into the upper canopy.”

While battling ALB in Chicago, PPQ first tried using city bucket trucks to extend their reach. Detections increased, but the trucks had limitations, and PPQ technicians needed an even closer look. So PPQ enlisted U.S. Forest Service (USFS) smoke jumpers—already trained tree climbers—and sent them up the trees to look firsthand for ALB’s telltale signs: chew marks, exit holes, and frass (insect debris and excrement). The results were compelling. “We could detect light infestations between 60 and 65 percent of the time, versus 35 percent with ground surveys,” Markham says. Unfortunately, the smoke jumpers weren’t available during fire season, and PPQ needed year-round coverage. PPQ began hiring its own climbers in 2001 and now employs 22 climbers and supervisors in New Jersey and New York, all of them trained and certified by USFS’ National Tree Climbing Program.

[safety first and last]
Matt Roach, a supervisory tree climber in New York, knows how to tackle the tallest hardwoods. First, he assesses whether it’s safe to climb. The tree diameter must be at least 6 inches at chest level, structurally sound, and dry. If the tree meets the criteria, he’s ready to establish a climbing line, strap on a climbing harness, and begin the ascent. Roach knows many tree climbing techniques, such as the secured footlock and the hip thrust, and selects the appropriate one for each situation.

In tree climbing, safety is PPQ’s top priority. Kevin Freeman, a supervisory tree climber assigned to New Jersey, instills a safety-first mindset in his climbers. “You must always be tied with your climbing line and maintain three points of contact with hands and feet,” he says. “Each climber must also be able to perform an aerial rescue in case someone gets injured.” Despite performing acrobatics like dangling upside down while searching for infestations, no PPQ climber has received a significant injury on the job.

[the program’s future]
In 2009, Markham plans to hire more PPQ climbers to help combat Massachusetts’ ALB infestation, discovered in August 2008. She also plans to continue using contract climbers, supervised by PPQ climbers, to ensure quality performance.

“PPQ’s tree climbing program helped us to eradicate ALB in Chicago and in Hudson County, New Jersey,” she says. “This is a tool that clearly works.”
In February, Kathleen Fagerstone and Lowell Miller from Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) accepted an award for the Center’s role in developing OvoControl®, an oral contraceptive bait for Canada geese, ducks, and feral pigeons. Governor Bill Ritter presented NWRC with his 2009 Governor’s Award for Research Impact at a special reception in Colorado.

“In the late 1940s, the North American Canada goose population was estimated at 1.1 million. Today, it has increased to nearly 6 million in the United States alone, with many birds no longer migrating,” said Fagerstone, the NWRC research program manager who led the team working on OvoControl®. “With this increase has also come an increase in human-goose conflicts.”

Innolytics, LLC worked 8 years to develop OvoControl®, an oral contraceptive bait for Canada geese, ducks, and feral pigeons. It contains nicarbazin, which affects the viability of eggs by disrupting the yolk membrane and creating conditions under which the embryo cannot develop. When fed to Canada geese, ducks, and pigeons during breeding season, it reduces the hatching success of eggs. When removed from the diet, egg production and hatchability return to normal within days.

Innolytics sells OvoControl® products to private pest control operators, wildlife management agencies, and city governments. More than 25 cities and communities nationwide are using OvoControl® as a nonlethal option to help reduce overabundant populations of Canada geese, ducks, and pigeons in their communities.
Video conferencing is fast becoming the next best thing to being there. And given the current interest in conserving government dollars, the timing couldn’t be better.

As a tool, video conferencing offers an uncommon combination of costs savings and increased connectivity. Widely dispersed people can meet with greater ease and more flexibility. Video connections can also provide meeting opportunities that would otherwise be too costly or logistically difficult to consider.

**[the basics]**

In its most basic form, a video conference consists of a two-person call with participants connected by a video unit that transmits signals via the internet or phone lines. Larger scale conferences can include numerous different sites, each with a room full of people.

In recent years, the agency’s video units and capabilities have improved. Video conferences linking multiple sites are now easier, and newer agency equipment can incorporate other onscreen content, like PowerPoint presentations, during a call. New video units also offer different onscreen views, including a simultaneous display of all participating sites and other content views.

The agency currently has numerous video units located at approximately 25 APHIS sites around the country, including Ames, Fort Collins, Minneapolis, Raleigh, Riverdale, Washington, D.C., and others. Click here (PAGE 1 or PAGE 2) for a list of sites with equipment available. It also includes the point of contact for scheduling.

**[how programs are using it]**

Agency programs are using video conferencing in a growing number of ways. Some use it for one-time events like training, software demos, or special meetings. Others, like Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and Investigative and Enforcement Services, are using it for weekly staff meetings.

Some are applying the technology in new ways, such as to conduct depositions, interview job candidates, and include university partners in training opportunities.

International Services (IS) uses video conferencing to meet with foreign agriculture officials. Travel for face-to-face negotiations can be costly and sometimes too logistically difficult because of security issues. Last summer, IS and PPQ avoided such travel obstacles and met with Pakistani officials via video conference to discuss U.S. wheat exports. Working in real time, conference participants were able to reach an agreement in the fall of 2008. To date, these discussions have cleared the way for U.S. wheat shipments totaling approximately $16.6 million.

“We needed to work through some very complex issues,” said PPQ’s George Galasso. “It was essential to have face-to-face interaction and video conferencing gave us that option.”

**[what the benefits are]**

The biggest benefits are saving both time and money.

The cost savings for airfare and travel expenses can be significant. For two leadership meetings scheduled this year, PPQ’s methods development laboratories plan to substitute traditional travel with video conferencing. With these two meetings alone, they estimate

Continued on next page
video conferencing

Continued from page 2

reducing their travel costs by $30,000.

The time savings can be equally significant.
With video conferencing, employees can
regain work hours—in some cases a whole
day—that would otherwise be lost while trav-
eling to and from an event.

[how to schedule a video conference]
Agency telecommunication specialists antici-
pate making the scheduling process more
uniform throughout the agency. Until then, to
set up a video conference it's best to follow
your local worksite's procedures for reserving
a meeting room. Contact your local schedul-
ing point of contact to reserve space and
indicate then that you want to hold a video
conference.

To help your plans go smoothly, have informa-
tion about your conference available. For
example, it’s helpful to know the dates, times,
and the number of sites participating.

For more information, please contact Debbie
Aghamiri. Her telephone number is 301-851-
2480; her e-mail is Debbie.Aghamiri@aphis.
usda.gov.

“There’s always things that change,” says
APHIS’ Mary Alvarez. “And it’s usually for
the best.”

Alvarez, who works as an animal health pro-
gram assistant in Brownsville, Texas, knows a
thing or two about change in the workplace.
She’s worked for the Federal Government for
more than 60 years.

For the last 32 years, Alvarez has worked for
the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program.
The extent of the changes she has witnessed
in the workplace is remarkable. Since Alvarez
started her career in 1948, offices have
moved from manual to electric typewriters
and onward to computers. Carbon copies
have gone electronic, and posting a letter is
now mostly done just by clicking send.

In Brownsville, Alvarez prepares reports for
Veterinary Services, documenting the field
activities for the program’s tick riders. She
speaks warmly about her work and her
coworkers. “I enjoy my work. It’s a wonderful
family that I work with,” says Alvarez.

When asked what advice she would offer
her fellow APHIS employees, she says simply
to be yourself, be patient, and just keep work-
ing. “It always works out one way or another,”
she adds.

To read more about
Alvarez and her
career, visit her
employee profile in
the January/February
issue of the USDA
employee newsletter,
USDA News.
Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) recently took an online approach to tackling an online problem. With an innovative outreach strategy, LPA helped PPQ put the squeeze on online citrus sales that violate Federal quarantines.

To help PPQ reach the elusive online shopper, LPA launched the “SaveOurCitrus.org” Web site. Dubbed a microsite, it contains minimal but highly targeted and unique campaign information. Using dynamic web-based advertising to drive traffic to the microsite, LPA helped PPQ reach online shoppers with precision as never before.

**[the problem]**

PPQ had identified online citrus sales as a high-risk pathway for potentially spreading citrus greening disease—a devastating bacterial disease that destroys citrus crops and trees.

To date, citrus greening has only been detected in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. But the tiny insect that spreads the disease—the Asian citrus psyllid—has been found in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mexico, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, and Texas.

To prevent the disease’s spread, PPQ put movement restrictions in place. Most importantly, host plants cannot be shipped to other citrus-producing States and territories where the Asian citrus psyllid is not present.

These regulatory measures are effective within their traditional reach; however, PPQ was becoming increasingly troubled by how to address the threat posed by online sales—especially during the peak sale times of Thanksgiving through Christmas. The question remained: How can you intervene with online shopping?

“We need to make people aware,” said Pat Gomes, national coordinator for PPQ’s Citrus Health Response Program. “Many shoppers online don’t know they’re violating Federal quarantines.”

**[the answer]**

As it turns out, LPA was able to convert a piece of the problem into the answer PPQ was looking for. Just like the online shoppers they were hoping to reach, they tapped into the power of two popular search engines, Google and Yahoo!

Through vendors, LPA developed online advertisements and purchased sponsored links that frequently appear onscreen when someone enters keywords like “meyer lemon” into the search engines. When clicked, the advertisements redirect viewers to the SaveOurCitrus site to learn more about the disease and the risks of moving citrus.

“By design, our ads are visually interruptive and very difficult to ignore,” said LPA’s Heather Curlett. “In the first month alone, we reached an estimated 17 million individuals with our...”

*Continued on next page.*
By Donna Williams and John Scott

By now, many people throughout the agency are familiar with the APHIS Leadership Roadmap and the Leadership Development Toolkit. For employees, both are important resources for success in the workplace.

To tie into these resources and refine the agency’s available training opportunities, APHIS is redesigning its leadership and supervisory development training curricula. The new curricula will be based on the roadmap and the toolkit.

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<th>[old programs]</th>
<th>[proposed new programs]</th>
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<tr>
<td>APHIS Track 1</td>
<td>APHIS Basic Leadership Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing APHIS Team Leaders APHIS Staff Officer Training</td>
<td>APHIS Project Manager/Team Leader Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fundamentals of APHIS Human Resources Management</td>
<td>APHIS Supervisory Development Training Program</td>
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<td>• PPQ’s New Supervisor Seminar</td>
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<td>• PPQ’s Experienced Supervisor Seminar</td>
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<td>Non-Existent</td>
<td>APHIS Intermediate Leadership Development Program</td>
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<td>• APHIS Track 2</td>
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<td>• PPQ’s Leading In the 21st Century</td>
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<td>• Biotechnology Regulatory Services’ Management Development Program</td>
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By weaving these three pieces together in both message and approach, APHIS aims to provide a more robust, comprehensive, and sequential process for employees to develop their leadership skills and potential.

[in with the new]
The agency’s three training staffs—Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services’ Training and Development Branch, Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Professional Development Center, and Veterinary Service’s Professional Development Staff—are developing the new curricula. Taking this collaborative approach, the agency can maximize the talents from each training staff. Additionally, it enables the agency to create a consistent and holistic training approach for developing APHIS’ future leaders.

To develop the new curricula, the training staffs are redesigning some of APHIS’ traditional training programs and thinking anew about other added training needs. They are also integrating best practices from inside and outside the Federal Government.

Teams anticipate launching pilot training programs by the end of September 2009. Stay tuned!
Something that benefits one region may prove a detriment to another, as Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) officials have discovered in the case of the cactus moth.

In the 1920s, the cactus moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum*, was intentionally imported into Australia from its native Argentina, as a last-ditch biocontrol effort to restore vast tracts of farmland that had been literally overrun with invasive prickly pear cactus. The larvae of the cactus moth quickly proved to be a cost-effective, cactus-devouring machine, and the insect was hailed as an environmental savior. The acclaim for the moth’s appetite continued to grow as it was effectively deployed to eradicate prickly pear cactus. The fruit and edible pads (nopales) of the prickly pear are an important food source in Mexico, and ranchers in the southwest United States use de-thorned nopales as fodder for cattle.

USDA efforts to control the pest began in 2003. Since 2006, Mexico has contributed approximately $500,000 each year to fund a cooperative agreement with APHIS and the Agricultural Research Service to improve detection methods and test the use of sterile insect technology to control the moth. USDA scientists are also attempting to uncover natural control factors that prevent *C. cactorum* from being a major pest of cacti in its native Argentina. The overarching goal of APHIS’ cooperative effort with Mexico is to establish a barrier to the westward spread of the insect to keep it out of Mexico and the American southwest. Complete eradication in North America is not considered feasible at this time.

Last February, Mexico completed eradication efforts on the second of its two previously infested islands (Contoy and Mujeres), resulting in Mexico now being free of the pest. Control efforts in the United States are also proving successful through the widespread use of pheromone traps, sterile male moths, and the complete removal of cactus host materials wherever possible. Not long ago, the insect was spreading westward along the Gulf Coast at about 100 miles each year. The goal of the program this year is to actually move the pest eastward, by reducing its numbers in Pensacola Beach, Florida and along the Gulf shores of Alabama and by eradicating it on barrier islands in the Gulf. PPQ also conducts ongoing surveillance for the moth in western States and is prepared to spot eradicate the pest, if necessary.
question of the day

[your results]
Thanks to everyone who responded to the winter newsletter’s question of the day. We had 69 people respond to the following question: Beyond your APHIS career, what is your connection to farming? Select all that apply.

Each bar represents the percentage of respondents who identified that option as one of their connections to agriculture.

[next question please]
What kind of pet(s) do you currently own?

Check all that apply:
Dog, Cat, Fish, Bird, Small animal (hamster, mice, rabbit, etc.), Reptile, Equine, Other (fill in blank).

Click on the following link to participate in the poll: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?s=sm=jFFyNbqlypGVJLEY7lctg_3d_3d

Participation is voluntary and confidential.

legislative & public affairs
hearings and briefings
update

By Hallie Zimmers

With the kickoff of the 111th Congress in January and many State legislatures currently in session, Legislative and Public Affairs’ (LPA) Government Affairs staff is fielding a continuous stream of legislative inquiries. Many are handled by phone, but APHIS leaders are also regularly asked to attend briefings and hearings on Capitol Hill and at State capitols.

On the Federal front, John Clifford, APHIS’ chief veterinary officer, has been spending a lot of time on the Hill. In late April and early May, he appeared before committees in the House and Senate to testify about H1N1 influenza. He also represented APHIS at a May 5th hearing before the House Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry, which continues to examine whether the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) should be made mandatory.

At the State level, LPA’s Government Affairs staff has also assisted with several hearings, including one before the Iowa State Legislature. Kevin Petersburg, Veterinary Services’ area-veterinarian-in-charge in Iowa, testified about the Federal response to last summer’s flooding in that State. Additionally, LPA worked with Wildlife Services (WS) to prepare for a meeting with members of the Michigan Legislature in early May. WS explained how they work with States to help control feral hogs.

For many APHIS employees, testifying at a State legislative hearing is a new experience and the protocols are unfamiliar. The Government Affairs staff works with APHIS employees and legislative committees to coordinate the agency’s participation and prepare written remarks or presentations.

In addition to hearings, APHIS leaders have attended a number of briefings on Capitol Hill in recent weeks on topics ranging from Farm Bill implementation to NAIS and puppy protection. This high level of interest in APHIS issues is expected to continue, and LPA’s Government Affairs stands ready to assist should you receive a legislative inquiry.

Abbey Shaffer, legislative affairs specialist, is the point of contact for all Federal Congressional inquiries. She can be reached at 202-720-3474 or by e-mail at abbey.l.shaffer@aphis.usda.gov.

Jake Hegeman, APHIS national State liaison, takes the lead on State legislative inquiries. Jake can be reached at 202-690-6794 or by e-mail at jacob.hegeman@aphis.usda.gov.
What is your background?
I’m from Houma, Louisiana; I majored in Animal Science at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA, intent on a career in the field of agriculture.

How long have you been with APHIS?
In 1978, I began working for Veterinary Services (VS) in New Orleans as an Animal Health Technician, and soon transferred to Texas, where I had the opportunity to gain broader knowledge regarding various program activities.

Through a reorganization or two, the compliance function within VS evolved into what is now Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES), within which I’ve worked as a senior investigator in central Texas and as an assistant regional director in Fort Collins.

I currently live in Elgin, TX, and I’m the south central area manager with supervisory responsibilities in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.

Most memorable APHIS experience?
I have enjoyed working on many significant investigations over the years, including two for which the teams were recognized with Secretary’s Honor Awards. One of the investigations involved a company’s use of fraudulent phytosanitary certificates and the other involved interstate animal fighting ventures.

Priorities for the coming months?
My priority for the coming months will be to provide two new investigators with the training and program exposure necessary to enable each to conduct quality investigations for our clients.

Accomplishment most proud of?
I knew shortly after being hired in 1978 that my career would likely be spent with APHIS. I committed to the mission. Not every day has been a perfect day, but a well-instilled work ethic and sense of personal responsibility helped me through those less-than-special times. I’m proud to have persevered in my career with APHIS.

Last book read?
Letters from the Earth by Mark Twain.

Guilty pleasure?
Work is my guilty pleasure. I simply like my job, and when off-duty, it is difficult for me to put work aside without “dabbling” to some extent. Hobbies/vacations don’t provide me the same satisfaction as does my job.

Hobbies?
I enjoy quilting and tending to my roses, though I have (make?) little time for either.

Favorite meal?
As a Louisiana native, a lifelong favorite is shrimp-okra gumbo (the okra first smothered correctly, of course).

Favorite movie?
I have no clear favorite, but I have a disdain for movies containing violence.

Manager profile
with
Jacqueline Freeman
Area Manager, Investigative and Enforcement Services

Coming soon
Electronic Official Personnel Folders
APHIS’ Human Resources Division (HRD) and the Office of Personnel Management are working together to launch an electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) initiative.

Your eOPF is an electronic version of your Federal Personnel Folder, and it will contain all the official records required to document your Federal career. Access to your eOPF will be managed through a secure internet connection. HRD anticipates rolling out eOPFs soon. Watch your e-mail for additional information regarding accessing your eOPF.
Animal disease outbreaks can have a significant impact on the health of both the Nation’s livestock and the economy. The more serious the disease, the more essential it is for APHIS to be prepared for an outbreak. However, preparing for diseases that have not yet been found (or rarely occur) in this country poses many questions. What would be the consequences of such an outbreak? How fast would the disease spread? Which animals would be affected?

To help answer these questions, epidemiologists are turning to computers and disease-spread modeling.

**[modeling to learn]**
In January, APHIS’ Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health hosted a workshop titled “Introduction to Epidemiologic Simulation Modeling” in Fort Collins, Colorado. The training introduced 51 students to the basic principles of modeling animal disease spread and the use of the North American Animal Disease Spread Model (NAADSM).

NAADSM is used to simulate the impact of various diseases before they occur. APHIS developed the program nearly 10 years ago to answer questions regarding the need for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine in North America. The United States and Canada are using NAADSM for projects involving highly pathogenic avian influenza, pseudorabies virus, and FMD. The modeling program can propose scenarios and help us learn about the potential consequences of a disease’s introduction, the effect of measures that might be used to control an outbreak, and the potential impact of limited resources on our ability to control a disease. The program can also estimate the economic impact.

**[learning to model]**
The recent workshop combined traditional classroom instruction with interactive exercises. Participants completed computer exercises of increasing complexity—beginning with simple model development and culminating in the design and implementation of a full disease outbreak scenario. Students used NAADSM to predict disease spread and control, develop cost parameters, simulate an outbreak of FMD in cattle and swine in central California, and develop an economic and mathematic model for vector-borne diseases.

Workshop participants included APHIS staff from Veterinary Services (VS) and International Services, as well as international visitors and participants from universities and State and local government. The students’ diversity introduced global perspectives and insight to the classroom, which is important given the transboundary nature of 21st-century animal disease threats.

As part of the training, participants were provided with the modeling software so that they could return to their workplace able to apply the lessons they learned.

For information about future sessions of “Introduction to Epidemiologic Simulation Modeling,” please contact VS’ Professional Development staff at (301) 734-5750.

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**updating your beneficiary forms**
Many employees file a designation of beneficiary form and never think about it again. You should periodically review your designation of beneficiary forms to ensure they reflect your intentions and the current address information for your beneficiaries.

For more information, click on the following link: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/designation_beneficiary.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/designation_beneficiary.shtml).
Like other regulatory agencies, APHIS knows that sometimes compliance comes from holding a carrot and sometimes a stick. But the Animal Care (AC) program has also found that sometimes compliance can come from holding a workshop.

With its regular Canine Care Workshops, AC is using this third option to achieve greater compliance with the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The workshops provide informational outreach to hundreds of licensed and soon-to-be licensed commercial dog dealers.

The Canine Care Workshops offer a full day of educational presentations that run about 1 hour each. Members of AC’s Canine Care Team—as well as other local and regional speakers—cover topics such as kennel design, veterinary care, basic kennel management, and canine nutrition.

In addition to AWA licensees, other agency stakeholders attend the Canine Care Workshops. They include: attending veterinarians, animal control officers, State agriculture officials, and industry representatives. So far in fiscal year (FY) 2009, the workshops have averaged about 84 attendees, up from the FY2008 average of 60 attendees.

AC organizes the workshops annually in several locations. They co-host yearly seminars in Missouri with State agriculture officials and in Kansas with Kansas State University. The program selects other locations based on the concentration of licensees in an area and input from AC field inspectors. Other locations have included Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota.

The Canine Care Workshops offer a win-win for APHIS and AWA licensees. They provide consistent, valuable information on the AWA and its regulations and standards. Guest speakers educate commercial breeders about “best practices” so they can exceed AWA expectations. And the workshops give licensees the opportunity to meet AC personnel face-to-face and have their questions answered in an open forum.

Using workshop evaluations, AC gathers participant feedback and also suggestions for future workshop sessions. Feedback on the workshops is typically very positive. On one recent evaluation, an attendee noted, “This meeting will help to encourage us as breeders to raise the bar ourselves.”

AC staff from a recent workshop in Virginia include: (back row, left to right) Doris Hackworth (VMO), Cindy Lisle (ACI), Joe Malcolm, Cindy Neis (ACI), Tracy Bowman (AC Acting Assistant Deputy Administrator). (middle row, left to right): Gloria McFadden (VMO), Ellen Magid (SVMO), Tracy Thompson (VMO), Christine Remington (event speaker). (front row): Katy Vernon (ACI).
How can you balance your work time and your volunteer time for organizations in need? The Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program’s executive team and members of the National Plant Board’s board of directors recently found a way.

During a 3-day meeting in March, they set aside an evening to volunteer at a food bank in Frederick, Maryland. David Kaplan, PPQ assistant deputy administrator, spearheaded the effort so that he and others could contribute to the local community.

“We thought, instead of just going out to dinner together, we could do something more worthwhile,” Kaplan said.

He contacted the food bank and signed up their group of 18 to help out. The group purchased groceries to donate and then set about their work. Together, they stocked shelves, filled bags, and sorted donated food.

“Everybody just found something to do without having to be directed, and it was neat to see people form little groups to get the job done,” said Ann Gibbs, a horticulturist with the Maine Department of Agriculture and also Eastern Plant Board president.

The group’s helping hands were kept busy during their evening shift, as 35 families came in to pick up food.

Sarah McAleavy, director of the food bank, said demand for food has increased dramatically. The food bank now serves 800 families and distributes 23,000 cans of food each month. She was overjoyed to get the group of volunteers for the night. “It really shows the community that everybody cares,” McAleavy said.

Kaplan sees this venture as more than a one-time activity. He and others would like to do similar things at future meetings.

“Most of us have some experience volunteering—whether through our church or in other ways. But it was fun to do this with friends in our professional life,” Friisoe said.
To acknowledge the volunteer spirit within the agency, Inside APHIS is again featuring a coworker in its Volunteer Spotlight series.

Employee Name: Antonio Garcia, PPQ Hawaii.


Volunteer Activities: For Hawaii’s EOA, Garcia provides elders with counseling on the State health insurance program. For the VA, he counsels veterans and assists with registering and filing disability claims. Volunteering with the AARP, Garcia also recruits other volunteers and assists seniors (and others) to prepare tax returns.

Time Given: Hawaii’s EOA, 25 hours per month; VA, 80 hours per month; AARP, 40 hours per month during tax season and 80 hours during pre-tax season.


AARP—www.aarp.org/foundation.

Employee E-mail: To learn more about Garcia’s volunteer efforts, contact him at Antonio.S.Garcia@aphis.usda.gov.

Send volunteer spotlight suggestions to: volunteerisminaphis@aphis.usda.gov.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack visited APHIS headquarters in Riverdale, Maryland, on April 30 to speak at a public meeting hosted by the agency’s Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program. BRS held the public meeting to gather input on the proposed revisions to its “340” regulations concerning genetically engineered organisms. While in Riverdale, Secretary Vilsack also toured the APHIS Emergency Operations Center. (photos by A. Eaglin)
Plant Protection & Quarantine

Stopping Hoppers in North Dakota

By Vivian Keller

A crop duster full of insecticide was once the only choice for keeping outbreaks of hungry grasshoppers from ravaging North Dakota rangeland. But for several years now, an innovative program developed by APHIS’ Grasshopper Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Project has been combining aggressive scouting, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and high-tech spray rigs to do a solid job on terra firma—and winning support from ranchers and Federal partners alike.

Grasshoppers have been a challenge for the Federal Government since the U.S. Entomological Commission was established in 1877, after a legendary plague of Rocky Mountain locusts drove countless would-be settlers from their Great Plains homesteads. More than a century later, APHIS’ Rangeland Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Suppression Program helps 17 States manage hopper populations through surveys, research efforts such as the IPM Project, technical assistance and, if needed, chemical treatments. In States such as North Dakota various factors, including an intricate patchwork of Federal and private lands, can make aerial spraying of large areas financially and politically difficult. The ATV approach not only targets much smaller tracts but also, says Program Manager Charlie Brown, reduces the frequency and severity of outbreaks.

The concept is simple: identify small “hot spots” where young hopper populations threaten to grow out of control, rather than

Continued on next page

PPQ Technician Jim Jeske demonstrates program techniques using an ATV outfitted with a spray rig to hit grasshopper hot spots. (photo by D. Hirsch)
wait to eradicate hordes of adults over many thousands of acres. “This is an effort to step on the spark before the prairie fire starts,” says North Dakota’s State Plant Health Director, Dave Hirsch.

Since 2001, his office’s grasshopper scouts have headed into the Badlands just after Memorial Day to identify suspected hot spots (which can also be reported by the ranchers themselves). Hirsch then provides affected ranchers with any requested technical support such as spraying guidance, equipment loans, and advice on using diflubenzuron, which prevents young grasshoppers from developing new exoskeletons as they grow.

Hirsch encourages ranchers, who generally take care of the infestations themselves, to use reduced area agent treatments (RAATS): spraying only alternating swaths of land, so that up to half of the target area is untreated. Moving constantly, the area’s grasshopper population succumbs to the chemical or to natural predators. RAATS was initially a hard sell during outreach workshops, says Hirsch, but as Little Missouri Grazing Association President Bruce Bowman notes, “since there is less chemical applied, you get more bang for the buck.”

For the Forest Service, which manages most of North Dakota’s Federal lands, the reduced pesticide use is good news. “This program’s been working sweet since it began,” says Robin Nieto, a U.S. Forest Service rangeland management specialist.

This year’s cool spring weather has Hirsch’s scouts out a little later than usual, and a few hot spots are popping up on North Dakota’s grasshopper outbreak map. But it is a far cry from days gone by, when clouds of hoppers were said to eat everything but the mortgage. And with the ATV program firmly in place, Dave Hirsch aims to keep it that way.

For agency employees who have served in the military, remember to make your military deposit to receive retirement credit.

For more information, click on the following link: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/post_1956_military_duty.shtml.

There you can find out more about important points to consider—including when to make your deposit and the payroll deduction option.
aphis emergency management and you

By Jim Barrett

In early May, APHIS announced the release of its Emergency Mobilization Guide and posted it as an employee resource on the agency’s Emergency Preparedness and Response intranet page. The guide provides information about the roles, rights, and responsibilities of agency employees during times of emergency mobilization.

In addition to completing required Incident Command System (ICS) training, employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the new guide to better understand the roles that they may be asked to fill—as well as the agency’s plans for responding to emergencies and deploying personnel.

[the emergency mobilization process]
As the guide indicates, the first APHIS employees to respond to an emergency are those qualified volunteers who have the skills and knowledge to perform the required work. If a given crisis continues, APHIS may need to mobilize additional employees to respond. Under an agency declaration of “total mobility,” all APHIS employees are considered available to assist unless they have obtained an approved exemption.

The Emergency Mobilization Guide and ICS courses (ICS 100 and ICS 200) are each important pieces in developing a prepared agency workforce. And preparation is vital in an emergency according to Robert Green, the newly appointed director for APHIS’ Emergency Management Safety and Security Division.

“You never know when emergencies will take place,” says Green. “If you prepare for the situation, you will be ready to do the right thing instinctively.”

[rising to the challenge]
Mobilization experiences can enrich your professional development. When you are mobilized, your work tasks can range widely—from field work, to helping with multiagency coordination at a command center, to supporting State and local recovery efforts. Whether you end up on the frontlines or in a support role, the experience can be an exciting and rewarding opportunity to learn how APHIS conducts disaster response and recovery.

“Expect anything, be flexible, and realize that many people are also new and that everyone is trying to help,” suggests Animal Care’s Jeanie Lin, who was mobilized to Baton Rouge for Hurricane Gustav last September. Lin was part of a team that supported pet and service animal issues by coordinating the efforts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Louisiana State officials, and the Louisiana State Animal Response Team.

By taking the time to review the Emergency Mobilization Guide, you’re helping yourself and the agency stay at the ready to respond to animal and plant health emergencies—and to the increasing number of other emergencies with which APHIS is asked to assist.
On February 12, 2009, the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birth, Secretary Vilsack broke ground at USDA’s Whitten Building in Washington, D.C., to inaugurate “The People's Garden.” The garden was so named to reflect the fact that Lincoln established USDA in 1862 as “The People's Department.” USDA’s People’s Garden is designed to teach by example how to nurture, maintain, and protect a healthy landscape. It will help to illustrate the many ways USDA works to provide a sustainable, safe, and nutritious food supply, as well as to protect and preserve the landscape where that food is produced. The produce harvested is being donated to the D.C. Central Kitchen, which offers job training in culinary and food service skills to homeless people in the Washington area.

The Secretary has also issued a challenge to USDA employees throughout the world to embrace the spirit of volunteerism and create similar sustainable landscapes at their workplaces and in their local communities. Beyond vegetable gardens, such landscapes might include rain and pollinator gardens, green roofs, native planting sites, bioswales, children’s gardens, or memorial walks.

Hearing the Secretary's challenge, APHIS volunteers in Fort Collins collected donations early this spring from fellow employees to purchase and plant a cherry tree in a local community garden space called the Garden of Eatin’. Fruit and produce from the community garden are donated to the Food Bank of Larimer County.

In another effort, volunteers at APHIS headquarters in Riverdale took on the Secretary’s challenge in June by installing a mini-garden in the large concrete planters at the back entrance of the building. Additional work is now underway to transform a 1,200 square-foot section of lawn at headquarters into a food garden. Produce from the garden will be donated to a rehabilitation center run by the Salvation Army that feeds 150 people daily.

If you are interested in developing some form of People’s Garden at your worksite, please contact Jonathan Jones at (301) 734-5038. Jonathan is the designated coordinator of APHIS’ overall response to the Secretary’s initiative. More information about the People’s Garden initiative, including the Secretary’s recent telecast urging USDA employees to get involved, is available at www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden.

Volunteers (left to right) Gary Smith, Jonathan Jones, Diana Hoffman, and Joan Sills help start the People's Garden at APHIS headquarters. (photo by A. Eaglin)
Animal Care

Posting Inspection Reports Online

By Alex Speir

If you ask the agency’s Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office what documents were most requested last year, the answer would unequivocally be Animal Care’s Animal Welfare Act (AWA) inspection reports. In fact, for the past several years, the FOIA staff has received more than 800 requests annually for Animal Care reports and related program documents.

But all that’s changing. Why, you ask? Because as of May 2009, Animal Care has changed its policy and begun posting many of its inspection reports online. FOIA records already show a decrease in the monthly tally of new requests received by the agency. The June 2009 figure for overall requests received by APHIS dropped about 45 percent.

“Putting the reports online is a change that moves the agency toward greater openness and transparency,” said Andy Morgan, Animal Care’s associate deputy administrator. “We expect the program’s FOIA requests will continue to decrease.”

AWA inspection reports contain information about licensees’ and registrants’ compliance with the AWA. During inspections, Animal Care inspectors generate the reports to notify a licensee or registrant if anything needs to be improved to meet the agency’s requirements.

Animal Care’s new online database of inspection reports is updated monthly, and staff continue to add older reports. So far the database contains about 45,700 reports concerning mostly exhibitors and breeders. Currently, the online reports date back approximately three years. Animal Care anticipates adding reports for research facilities, Federal facilities, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs facilities to its online resources soon.

While certainly one goal of the new policy is to reduce the agency FOIA burden, there’s more driving the recent change. Animal Care also aims to increase agency transparency and to provide the public it serves with as much information as possible about its AWA enforcement activities.

Animal Care

Focusing on Nonlethal Methods

By Brie Lang

In May, Wildlife Services hired Michael Marlow to fill its newly created resource management specialist (RMS) position. The position was developed to work with WS operations and research efforts, and with producers and other organizations, on a wide variety of nonlethal wildlife damage management methods.

Marlow’s new role supports Wildlife Services’ priorities of protecting livestock from predation, of using an integrated, or multifaceted, management approach, and of promoting the use of nonlethal methods as appropriate.

Marlow will develop best management practices, work with LPA to develop informational resources, and communicate about advancements, research, and the needs of producers and WS. Focusing on nonlethal methods, he will be a resource for WS employees, livestock producers, industry groups, and the public.

Marlow joined the Oklahoma WS program in 1996 and most recently served there as a wildlife disease biologist. He holds a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Ecology from Oklahoma State University and has taught wildlife damage management techniques classes at his alma mater. Marlow will be working out of the APHIS Western Region Office in Fort Collins, Colorado.
If you are like most employees, you probably think of AgLearn as that Web site we go to for mandatory online training. You may not have spent much time on AgLearn looking for anything more. But AgLearn now offers a wealth of other educational resources—including an extensive online book collection, available free to all employees.

A recent e-mail from AgLearn managers boasts that the learning site now has more than 12,000 book titles available online. When you log in through your “Learner Login” and select the “Key Resources: Books/Videos/Etc.” tab, you will see icons for the three book collections: Business Pro, ITPro, and Office Essentials.

Each icon takes you to a “Books24x7” interface and a collection of full-length books organized by topic areas. After you’ve reached the Books24x7 screen, it’s like a trip to the library. You can use the “Browse Topics” pull-down menu on the right side of your screen to select topic areas and click on the small yellow triangles to navigate to more specific topics and book selections.

If you’ve ever been nagged by a troublesome software problem, visit the Office Topics or IT and Technical Topics collections for complete reference books like Word 2007 for Dummies, PowerPoint 2007 Bible, and The Visibooks Guide to Excel 2007. The collection also includes books on Adobe products and general computing.

For agency leaders and managers—or those who plan to be—the Business Topic collection is rich with books on foundational business skills, project management, change management, and much more.

So whether you are looking to tackle a specific software problem, improve your management skills, or just freshen your thinking about leadership challenges, you should log in to AgLearn and check out the many books that are literally just a couple clicks away.

The employee performance rating cycle ends September 30, 2009. Agency supervisors and managers should complete their appraisals for all employees—including new hires, reassignments, promotions, details, or temporary promotions (for more than 120 days)—by that date. As a reminder, appraisals should be based on employee performance plans that have been in place for no less than 90 days.

Additional information on performance management and performance appraisal is available online at http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/performance_management/performance_appraisals.shtml. Items posted include forms, directives, and a helpful performance discussion guide for both employees and supervisors.

Please contact Gwen Montgomery at (301) 734-6341 or Carmen Queen-Hines at (301) 734-5579 to request additional information or if you have questions.
In the sea of cubicles that prevail at APHIS and in other modern workspaces, annoying sounds and distractions come from all directions. The steady crunch of a neighbor’s corn chips. The rattle of a keyboard pounded by a nearby typist obviously unfamiliar with the touch method. Loud personal conversations on cell phones. The snipping of finger nails. An overabundance of perfume or cologne wafting over the wall of a neighboring cube. Clearly, some people need a basic primer in workplace etiquette. As Laura Parks of the Administrative Services Division reminded Riverdale employees in a recent e-mail: “Each of us has a responsibility to ensure that our actions are appropriate for the location as well as [for] who may observe them.”

Ask around the office, and you’ll find that many people are quick to share their list of cubicle offenses. Laura Sickles, an agency management analyst, keeps a list of common cubicle violations hanging in her workspace. Number one on her pet peeve list: people who play music without earphones or a headset.

“You would think that me as a musician wouldn’t mind this,” Sickles said. “But when a bunch of people have a bunch of different stations on—and especially the talk shows—it can get rather distracting.”

Among some of Riverdale’s Plant Protection and Quarantine staff, discussion of workplace pet peeves invariably concerns the volume and topics of their colleagues’ conversations.

“The main breach of cube etiquette for me is conversations among neighboring coworkers over cubicle walls and loud rap sessions in neighboring cubicles,” said one PPQ staffer. “These discussions are irritating when they continue for extended periods of time or throughout the day. They make it extremely difficult to concentrate.”

Another staffer agreed. “The discussion of highly personal medical issues should be done on a personal cell phone out of the cubes,” he said. “I know that appointments need to be made, but I really have no interest in hearing when a co-worker needs to have warts removed.”

This particular staffer asked to remain anonymous, so as not to embarrass his colleagues. But all cube dwellers should be warned that not everyone who overhears your conversation may be so considerate.

“I think eavesdropping and then telling everyone what you heard is my biggest pet peeve,” said Rachel Iadicicco, a regulatory analyst with the Policy and Program Development staff. “In a cube environment, you’re going to hear things your neighbors say, even if you aren’t actively listening. But taking those conversations and spreading them around is a no-no in my book. Oh, and throwing smelly trash away in your cube is another annoyance. Take it to the lounge to dispose of it.”
For most people, the disposal of animal carcasses is not a common topic for conversation. But for some of our coworkers in Veterinary Services (VS), the issue is highly engaging—they spend a good deal of time talking about it and working on solutions. During natural disasters and disease outbreaks, carcass disposal presents a series of challenges that can affect animal and human health, as well as the environment.

[many factors]
Lori Miller, an environmental engineer with VS’ National Center for Animal Health and Emergency Management, is one of those in the agency looking at the many challenges of large-scale carcass disposal.

“The question of how to handle biomass—the dead animals—can get very complicated,” Miller said.

There are numerous factors concerning carcass disposal that can make the difference between a straightforward situation and an enormously difficult one.

The risk of pathogens is one of those factors. If the situation involves diseased or exposed animals, responders need options that don’t risk spreading the disease.

Disposing of carcasses onsite is the best way to contain pathogens. “The first choice is always to keep animals onsite if at all possible,” said Miller.

But this option can raise difficulties of its own. Will onsite processing raise groundwater issues related to the pathogen? Will composting inactivate the pathogen or, as with BSE, is the infectious agent more persistent? Can processing make the pathogen airborne and how close are other susceptible neighboring herds or flocks? The list goes on.

Add to this the human factors. Can people be infected? What precautions are necessary to prevent people from spreading the pathogen? Foot-and-mouth disease, for example, is easily spread via contaminated articles, such as shoes, clothing, and vehicles.

[the options]
After sorting through the variables and logistics of a specific situation, responders are often left with several common options for handling the carcasses/biomass.

Composting
Composting requires a commitment of time, as well as the space necessary to layer the carcasses/biomass with other materials to promote decomposition and generate the heat needed to inactivate pathogens. It’s often used for poultry, but less so for larger animals.

Burial
Like composting, burial requires space—either onsite or at landfills. Due to soil and groundwater issues, this option is not suitable for all geographic areas.

Incineration
As a disposal method, burning carcasses has been used for a long time. Newer technology and equipment have improved its efficiency, but large amounts of fuel...
Did you know that Veterinary Services’ efforts to safeguard sheep from diseases like scrapie and foot-and-mouth help protect a U.S. sheep population that reaches into the millions?

According to figures recently released by USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the total U.S. sheep and lamb inventory is estimated at 7.05 million head as of July 1, 2009.

Statistics for 2008 show Texas to be the top ranked State for total sheep and lamb population with approximately 960,000 head. The remaining top five States in order are: California, Wyoming, Colorado, and South Dakota.

And in case you were wondering about how many sheep “hair cuts” happen in a year’s time, here’s the answer. NASS estimates that approximately 4,657,000 sheep were shorn in 2007.

are required to reduce carcasses to ash. Additionally, the discharge of air pollutants can raise concerns regarding incineration.

Rendering
Rendering is the process of converting carcasses into protein meal, tallow (fat), and water. Depending on the situation, meal and tallow may be reclaimed. However, in certain disease situations, this may not be possible and commercial renderers may even be unwilling to process animals and risk contaminating their facilities.

When choosing a disposal method, responders must weigh each situation’s unique factors, including the overall volume of biomass to be disposed. There are few, if any, “one-size-fits-all” options. For example, from a resource perspective (e.g., space, equipment, personnel, materials), it’s a far different task to compost 100,000 chickens weighing 3 pounds each versus the same number of cattle weighing more than 1,000 pounds each.

Continued from page 8

Miller and others in VS participate in two international working groups that focus on the latest animal disposal tools, information, and research efforts. One—a quadrilateral group—draws upon expertise specifically from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. The other—APHIS’ Carcass Disposal Working Group—has grown over time into an active resource for current journal articles and as a vehicle for its members to confer with other experts in the field and share questions and solutions. A separate VS technical team also addresses specific questions raised by responders.

In addition to these efforts, an extensive inter-agency subcommittee within the President’s National Science and Technology Council is currently working to identify animal disposal research gaps and any additional needs of the National Veterinary Stockpile related to animal disposal. Because there are so many potential variables, officials want to make sure there are good options available that can effectively handle the full range of scenarios requiring high-volume biomass disposal.

Click image to learn more about Veterinary Services’ efforts to combat sheep diseases.
Wildlife Services’ (WS) employees cover a lot of ground. They protect U.S. crops and help control animal diseases. They reduce wildlife hazards at airports and conduct wildlife research. And they safeguard both livestock and endangered wildlife species from predators. They do all this and more. Did you know that they also share their wildlife management expertise and tools in other countries? Here are two examples of their work in Africa.

**[rabies work in Nigeria]**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is an integral partner in WS’ rabies efforts. In recent years, the CDC developed a diagnostic field test that WS’ National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) now uses to enhance its U.S. wildlife rabies surveillance. The test—known as the direct rapid immunohistochemistry test (DRIT)—provides results in approximately one hour and can be performed with as little as a light microscope, chemical reagents, and a brainstem sample. It has the potential to significantly improve rabies surveillance in countries where diagnostic resources are limited.

In 2008, WS rabies wildlife biologist Jordona Kirby accompanied a CDC microbiologist to Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, to provide DRIT training to veterinarians, professors, graduate students, and public health officials. The university’s Department of Veterinary Surgery and Medicine hosted a week-long national conference for public health officials and veterinarians. During the conference, Kirby also gave a presentation about the oral rabies vaccine and its potential for use with dogs, since canine rabies is endemic throughout Nigeria.

“Being part of this effort was extremely rewarding,” said Kirby. “With this project we truly helped jumpstart more effective rabies surveillance and management strategies in Nigeria.”

**[capture and sample efforts in Zambia]**

More recently, two WS scientists from the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, Colorado—Mike Dunbar and Are Berentsen—travelled to Zambia, Africa, in May 2009 to assist with research efforts on the African lion and African wild dog. Both species are having difficulties maintaining their numbers in southern Africa because of encroaching human populations, poaching, over-harvesting, and disease. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources has listed the African wild dog as endangered and the African lion as vulnerable.

Dunbar and Berentsen were invited by the government’s Zambian Wildlife Authority and the African Wild Dog Conservation Trust of Australia, a non-profit research organization and Zambian-registered trust.

The two were asked to assist because of their expertise in wildlife immobilization, radio telemetry, animal disease, and wildlife health. Together, they assisted with the capture and handling, deployment of radio-collars, as well as collection of biological samples from the animals.

“It was a genuine honor to assist a developing country in the conservation of a critically endangered species such as the African wild dog,” said Berentsen.

Little is known about the health of these species in Zambia. The research goal is to better understand the movements, habitat use, and interaction of these species with one another—and with the spotted hyena and domestic dogs in nearby villages. By evaluating biological samples, the scientists will determine the health status of the species and their exposure to select disease agents like rabies, distemper, parvovirus, and a number of blood and intestinal parasites.
eight weeks
as an
aphis intern

By Alex Speir

Editor’s Note: Inside APHIS recently invited Alex Speir to provide his thoughts about his internship with APHIS. Speir joined the agency’s Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) staff this summer through his participation in the Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS) program.

When I first heard what LPA’s Executive Communications staff does, it seemed relatively straightforward. The process of responding to agency correspondence sounds simple: you contact sources, draft an answer to the concerns in the incoming letter, and incorporate changes to your draft as suggested by your editor. I soon realized I was mistaken.

Trying to understand the seemingly infinite number of APHIS offices and programs—which are known primarily by their acronyms—is only the first step. You also need to know what questions to ask to get all the pertinent information, how to integrate the material into an appropriate response, and how to effectively communicate with your editor.

In addition to interning 40 hours a week with APHIS, I attended two classes at American University, where I learned about Federal American Indian policy and about ways to share my Tribal experiences with others. I have shared my experiences with fellow WINS interns and with every part of the agency with which I interacted. Recently, my fellow WINS-ers and I gave presentations on our Tribal cultures. At the end of the session, we fielded questions on Tribal life and history. Few feelings are more powerful than that of helping other people learn more about the world in which we live.

My time with APHIS has been fantastic. I have gone to countless meetings, met a multitude of people, and made great friends. But what I am most thankful for is learning how much APHIS’ work touches my life. I now realize that many things I take for granted—like protection from rabid animals, the safety of our plant health, and the welfare of animals—are all things in which APHIS plays a major role. I even learned that the safety of our Nation’s cattle, including those on my family’s cattle ranch, is overseen by APHIS.

My eight weeks at APHIS are over, and I have greatly enjoyed my time here with the agency’s many programs. I cannot express the depth of my gratitude to all the people who made this internship possible. And I’m grateful for the people who, among other things, made it (theoretically) possible to begin letters with phrases like, “As an experienced goose culler....”

In other areas of Africa, some scientists believe that certain diseases in African wildlife may be a result of wildlife contact with diseased village dogs. “If this is the case, biologists may be able to break the transmission of diseases to wildlife by focusing on and treating the domestic dogs,” said Dunbar. Scientists plan also to sample village dogs to understand the possible paths of disease transmission.

Although Dunbar and Berentsen have returned to Colorado, cooperating researchers in Zambia continue to collect samples. After sufficient samples have been collected, they will be sent under special permits to USDA for analysis. The end goal is to develop recommendations to assist Zambian officials in developing conservation management plans. Both Dunbar and Berentsen hope to return and continue this important research firsthand.
APHIS’ Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program is participating in an innovative pilot project to coordinate risk-assessment efforts with our neighboring North American countries.

The pilot project focuses on the current challenge of developing and following a coordinated timeframe for completing a risk assessment. In the future, it will also focus on the challenge of coordinating the principle elements of a risk assessment that can be agreed upon by all three countries and that would also allow each country to fulfill its own domestic regulatory obligations.

Under the pilot project, the United States, Canada, and Mexico are first working to synchronize their respective assessments of a single drought-resistant corn variety developed by Monsanto. Each country is performing its own assessment to fulfill its domestic obligations, and the goal is to coordinate the completion date for each as closely as possible.

“One of the major benefits of this pilot is that it helps us better understand the risks that are being evaluated by each of the three countries and how we can scientifically bring these into closer alignment in North America,” said Beverly Simmons, BRS associate deputy administrator.

In the long view, by better coordinating both timing and principle risk elements assessed, the three countries may develop a process that allows for better overall coordination of regulatory decisions concerning biotechnology products.

**[the importance of communication]**

BRS’ current pilot project grew out of an existing U.S.-Canadian bilateral agreement concerning the data elements to be reviewed as part of the risk assessment process. The ongoing pilot project requires a lot of communication between the technical staff in each country. BRS meets frequently via phone conferences with its counterparts in Canada and Mexico.

Additionally, the project’s progress depends heavily on Monsanto enabling open information sharing about its product among the three countries involved. During separate and less-synchronized country risk assessments, biotechnology developers are traditionally more guarded in order to protect proprietary product information.

**[potential benefits]**

While BRS and its partners are only piloting the one product assessment for now, the project does provide a glimpse into how a coordinated or “synchronous” review process could produce benefits for regulators, developers, and producers alike. A synchronous process would enable North American markets to move approved products without the delays currently caused by the staggered timing of each country’s review process.

Additionally, a more coordinated review process could help prevent potential trade interruptions and crises caused by no-risk, low-level presence events. For example, consider this hypothetical scenario: The United States has approved a product and Canada is still 6 months away from approving that same product. Under current conditions, a detection of low levels of that product in a U.S. export to Canada could create havoc in the marketplace—even if Canada’s approval was imminent and without question. In such a scenario, even with science ultimately on your side, bad timing can cause significant economic damage for markets and producers.

Under the conditions of the pilot project, both countries would coordinate their approval of the product, avoiding this potentially damaging situation.

As BRS and its partners continue work on the pilot project, they are focusing carefully on learning as much as they can in the event that all three countries agree to further develop a synchronized risk assessment process.
development plan

resources for you

By John Scott

Imagine this: You are preparing to meet with your supervisor, and she asks you to complete a development plan for your meeting. What do you do? Thankfully, there are resources available to help you understand what a development plan is and how to create one.

Your development plan is the document that you and your supervisor create to outline your goals, list your learning experiences, and record your progress. Previously, the agency used the terms “individual development plan” (IDP) and “learning contract” for this document. Generally, learning contracts were viewed as more employee-initiated and IDPs as more supervisor-initiated. Often the two terms were used interchangeably.

To prevent confusion and get everyone on the same page, the agency is now simply using the term “development plan” to refer to this document.


Currently, APHIS programs are using both a paper version and an AgLearn version of development plans. Check with your supervisor for guidance on which he or she prefers.

The advantage of creating your development plan in AgLearn is that your completed activities are recorded in your learning history. You and your supervisor can then easily review your accomplishments over a period of time longer than the typical yearly review cycle. For step-by-step instructions on creating a development plan in AgLearn, click on the following link: http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/training/downloads/Instructions_for_AgLearn_IDP.pdf.

If you need further assistance with AgLearn, please contact your program’s AgLearn representative. And, if you have other questions, please contact the APHIS Training and Development Branch at (301) 734-4949.

manager profile

with gerald rushin

Staff Veterinary Medical Officer, Animal Care

What is your background?
I was born and raised in Akron, Ohio. I graduated from Michigan State University in 1995 with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, and I also received a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Akron in 2004.

How long have you been with APHIS?
This is my second time working for APHIS. As a Saul T. Wilson, Jr., Scholarship recipient, I started working for Veterinary Services in Michigan and Ohio in 1995 as a field veterinary medical officer (VMO), which allowed me to gain experience in dealing with the public. Upon leaving APHIS, I attended law school then worked as a lobbyist for the American Veterinary Medical Association and as a VMO/policy analyst for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration/Center for Veterinary Medicine before returning to APHIS in 2009, this time as a staff VMO for the Animal Care program.

Most memorable APHIS experience?
Becoming one of the first recipients of the Saul T. Wilson, Jr., Scholarship.

Priorities for the coming months?
Continue contributing to APHIS’ mission.

Accomplishment most proud of?
Having a balanced life with both my family and career.

Last book read?
Who Moved My Cheese? by Spencer Johnson.

Guilty pleasure?
Watching TV.

Hobbies?
Running and playing basketball.

Favorite meal?
Seafood and pizza.

Favorite movie?
Any action movie.
Inside APHIS sends out kudos to the latest coworker featured in our series of Volunteer Spotlights: Judy Pasek.

The spotlight is to recognize individual efforts and to acknowledge and promote the volunteer spirit that is part of our agency community.

**Employee Name:** Judy Pasek, PPQ, Fort Collins, Colorado

**Volunteer Organizations:** City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program and Poudre Wilderness Volunteers

**Volunteer Activities:** As a Certified Master Naturalist, Pasek leads nature programs and field trips to any of about 40 natural areas managed by the City of Fort Collins. She enjoys sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm for outdoor subjects with school groups, scouts, day campers, alumni groups, and the general public.

As a Poudre Wilderness Volunteer, Pasek conducts trail patrols where she answers visitors’ questions and explains regulations and stewardship principles. Among other things, she also removes litter and illegal campfire rings and reports on trail usage and maintenance needs. In addition, she helps with weed committee activities, most often hand pulling noxious weeds from trailside and campsite areas.

**Time Given:** Hours vary seasonally, but Pasek averages about 25 hours per year as a Master Naturalist and about 120 hours per year as a Poudre Wilderness Volunteer.

**Organization Web Sites:** Fort Collins Natural Areas Program: [http://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/volunteers.php](http://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/volunteers.php)

Poudre Wilderness Volunteers: [http://www.poudrewildernessvolunteers.com](http://www.poudrewildernessvolunteers.com)

**Employee E-mail:** To learn more about her volunteer efforts, contact Pasek by e-mail at Judith.E.Pasek@aphis.usda.gov.

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**question of the day**

What kind of pet(s) do you currently own?

- Dogs: 69%
- Cats: 49%
- Fish: 13%
- Birds: 9%
- Small animals: 9%
- Reptiles: 15%
- Equine: 21%
- Other: 2%

[Your results]

Thanks to those of you who responded to the spring newsletter’s question of the day. We had 72 people respond to the following question: What kind of pet(s) do you currently own?

Here’s how the numbers break down. Each bar represents the percentage of respondents who indicated that they have that kind of pet. Participants were asked to select all that apply.

“Other” responses provided included cows, ferrets, goats, chickens, and “peeves.”

[next question please]

How do you think Government health and retirement benefits compare with the private sector?

- Government benefits are better.
- The same.
- Private sector benefits are better.

Click on the following link to participate in the poll: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=rlj6zzti8jtwmm_2f7_2fktoA_3d_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=rlj6zzti8jtwmm_2f7_2fktoA_3d_3d).

Participation is voluntary and confidential.

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**Next Issue**

**How sharp are your tree climbing skills?**

Maybe it’s been a while since you last scaled a tree. Not so for PPQ’s Jackie Beebe.

Beebe recently put her skills to the test and participated in the 2009 International Tree Climbing Championship hosted by the International Society of Arboriculture.

In our next issue, read about Beebe’s experience at the championship and learn about tree climbing competition events.
On July 9, 2009, the House of Representa-
tives passed its version of the Agriculture
appropriations bill for fiscal year (FY) 2010.
The House bill provides $881,019,000 for
APHIS activities, which represents an increase
of $4,344,000 above the FY 2009 appropria-
tion and an increase of $8,596,000 above the
President’s FY 2010 budget request. Some of
the changes for APHIS programs include:

- An increase of $3 million to strengthen
  the implementation of the 5-year Cattle
  Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP)
- An increase of $8.27 million for the Citrus
  Health Response Program (CHRP)
- An increase of $15.10 million for the
  Asian Long-horned Beetle (ALB) program
- Elimination of all National Animal Iden-
tification System (NAIS) funding ($14.6
  million requested for FY 2010) until USDA
  finishes its NAIS listening sessions and
  provides details as to how it will imple-
  ment an improved animal ID system

On August 4, 2009, the Senate passed its
version of the Agriculture appropriations
bill for FY 2010. The Senate bill provides
$909,394,000, an increase of $32,719,000
above the FY 2009 appropriation and an
increase of $36,971,000 above the Presi-
dent’s FY 2010 budget request. Some of the
changes for APHIS programs include:

- An increase of $3 million to strengthen
  the implementation of the 5-year CFTEP
- An increase of $10 million for the CHRP
- An increase of $10 million for the ALB
  program
- An increase of $2 million for the Bovine
  Tuberculosis program
- An increase of $5 million for the Emerald
  Ash Borer program
- A reduction of NAIS funding from $14.6
  million to $7.3 million, which may only
  be used for ongoing activities and pur-
  poses relating to proposed rulemaking
  for the program

After Congress returns from its August
recess, House and Senate appropriators
will go to conference (i.e., work out the
differences in their respective bills) to formu-
late a final bill that will be sent back through
the House and Senate for final approval.
Once the House and Senate approve a final
bill, they will then send it to the President for
final authorization.
Beginning this fall, APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) program is working with the U.S. Air Force to prevent bird strikes at two U.S. airbases in the Middle East: Joint Base Balad in Iraq and Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan. Each base will have a dedicated WS biologist onsite to address day-to-day hazards caused by wildlife, including birds.

Under a 12-month agreement with the Air Force, WS will have a total of 6 biologists rotating through the bases with each employee spending 4 months onsite. The first rotation began on November 9 with Keel Price (New Mexico, district supervisor) and Chris Bowser (North Carolina, airport wildlife biologist) now onsite. Carl Voglewede (Indiana), Aaron Spencer (Illinois), Galen Truan (Nebraska), and Todd Grimm (Idaho) will follow in subsequent rotations. Because of the location, the biologists serving at the airbases will receive detailed safety briefings and may earn various allowances and pay differentials, in addition to their regular salary.

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While deployed, the WS biologists will also be working on a year-long wildlife hazard assessment to provide both bases with comprehensive reports on the types of wildlife species in the area and steps that can be taken to minimize wildlife presence and reduce strikes.

The U.S. Air Force Central Command contacted WS earlier this year in response to growing concerns about bird strikes at both bases. While no injuries have been reported, the strikes have been costly. In 2007, a single...
2009 administrator’s civil rights awards

By John Scott

On October 20, APHIS hosted its Eleventh Annual Administrator’s Civil Rights Award Ceremony at the agency’s headquarters.

Speaking to a room filled with honorees and audience members, Administrator Cindy Smith praised the accomplishments of this year’s recipients. “The managers, supervisors, and employees we honor today help form the fabric of this agency’s core beliefs. They embody our commitment and enthusiasm for ensuring and fostering equal opportunity and diversity in the workplace,” said Smith.

The Administrator’s Civil Rights Award pays tribute to agency employees who have excelled at providing equal opportunity to those seeking employment or to employees already in Federal service.

During her remarks, Smith spoke about the value of diversity quoting poet and author Maya Angelou, who wrote, “…in diversity there is beauty and there is strength. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color; equal in importance no matter their texture.”

This year’s honorees represent nearly every agency program and come from numerous workplaces throughout the country—including Arizona, North Carolina, New York, Maryland, Michigan, Washington, D.C., as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Honorees are listed below by program area.

[biotechnology regulatory services]
D’Ann Clayton, Charles Hall, Emily Pullins

[legislative and public affairs]
The LPA Group: Felicia Stepney, Abbey Shaffer, and Deb Hodge

[marketing and regulatory programs business services]
Ricardo Garcia

[plant protection and quarantine]
Tessie Acosta-Williams
PPQ Eastern Region EEO Advisory Committee
Emergency and Domestic Programs Group
PPQ Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands EEO Civil Rights Advisory Committee

[veterinary services]
Tara Woyton

[wildlife services]
David Bergman

bird-strike prevention

Continued from page 1

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This year’s honorees represent nearly every agency program and come from numerous workplaces throughout the country—including Arizona, North Carolina, New York, Maryland, Michigan, Washington, D.C., as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Working with the military is nothing new for WS. Last year, WS personnel worked at more than 760 airports nationwide, including 81 military bases.

Interestingly, the airbases in Iraq and Afghanistan are dealing with some of the same species that cause problems at airports in the United States. The base in Iraq has mallard ducks and gulls, and the Afghanistan base has problems caused by European starlings—an invasive species here in the United States. European starlings were causal factors in two wildlife/aviation accidents that resulted in the greatest loss of life for both civil and military aviation. The bases also have some unique challenges caused by raptors and falcons unique to the Middle East landscape.

“It’s going to be different, but in some respects it’s also the same,” says Mike Begier, National Coordinator for WS’ Airport Wildlife Hazards Program. “Regardless of the species, our biologists can provide recommendations to alter habitat and remove dangerous species in order to reduce strikes, save money, and potentially save lives.”

bird strike at Bagram Airbase cost the Air Force more than $1 million in repairs.
When Animal Care officials confiscated three lions with obvious neurological problems from a Texas exhibitor on July 10, it was no simple task. After immobilizing each animal— including a nearly 450-pound lion named Jaz— there was still the matter of getting them into a climate-controlled truck, 50 yards away.

“We had seven people carrying each lion on a canvas stretcher in 100 degree heat,” said Animal Care big cat specialist Laurie Gage. The truck could not get closer, due to obstructions.

Gage, along with other APHIS personnel and volunteers from a nearby zoo, moved the three animals to a Texas animal sanctuary, where they joined another lion and two tigers that had been confiscated from the same exhibitor’s facility on March 22. The previously emaciated large cats are now showing significant signs of improvement, and those with neurological disorders have also shown improvement. One tiger, named Amol, gained approximately 100 pounds in five weeks.

Animal confiscations are an action of last resort, used only in cases where the agency believes that an animal is suffering and that action has not been taken, or will not be taken, to alleviate its condition. The agency’s authority to confiscate animals is specifically stated in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). And, said Gage, Animal Care is ready and able to confiscate animals whenever necessary.

Based in California, Gage spends much of her time providing assistance to APHIS inspectors, facility attending veterinarians, and AWA licensees around the country. In addition, she gives presentations at veterinary conferences to spread the word about nutritional problems unique to large cats.

Certain health problems in big cat cubs can develop due to a calcium deficient diet, resulting in a condition called metabolic bone disease. This disease can cause fractures of fragile bones and is seen all too frequently in cubs that are hand-reared by people without the expertise or knowledge of how to properly care for young, growing animals.

“Most good veterinarians are aware of the problem, but often do not realize how much calcium in the diet it takes to correct the problem or prevent it,” Gage said.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that their big cats receive proper care, but Animal Care officials hope their collaborative education efforts will reduce the need for future confiscations.

Since her confiscation, Sheila has responded well to her new diet and gained weight.
Agency employees nationwide are again tapping the power of their workplace community. Together, they are making donations and participating in local events that contribute to this year’s Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

Although the theme “The Compassion of Individuals. The Power of Community” is specific to CFC’s National Capital Area (CFCNCA) campaign, the sentiment applies globally. When combined, the power of individual donations has the ability to make a big difference to individuals and organizations in need.

[what CFC offers others]
Bi-weekly payroll deductions translate into powerful and tangible benefits.

A $2 bi-weekly donation can provide ten warm blankets for the needy. A donation of $10 per pay period can provide free education sessions to caregivers and families of persons with dementia. And a $25 bi-weekly donation can serve up 260 meals for the homeless in your community.

[what CFC offers you]
With thousands of approved charities, CFC offers you personal choice concerning where to direct your donations. You choose where and what to give.

CFC also offers collective strength. By joining with others in your workplace to give, your impact in the community can be greater.

And CFC gives you maximum value for your donated dollars. CFC keeps costs low so fewer dollars are used to run the campaign and more money goes directly to charities. The CFCNCA limits its overhead to just 8 percent. Plus, this year’s campaign is “greener” than ever before, with greater reliance on the Internet and significantly reduced printing and reproduction costs.

[more information]
To learn more about CFC and how to give, contact your program unit keyworker. In the D.C. area, you can visit http://www.cfcnca.org/. To locate other campaign areas around the country, visit http://www.opm.gov/cfc/SearchLocator.asp.

Benefits Open Season runs from November 9 through December 14, 2009. This is your annual opportunity to:

- change your enrollment in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program
- change your enrollment in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program
- enroll in the Federal Flexible Spending Accounts for health care and/or dependent care for 2010

For more information about Benefits Open Season, visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/open_season.shtml.
APHIS tree climber Jackie Beebe knows exactly what she wants to do on the weekends: climb more trees. But on her own time, Beebe climbs competitively. In June she ranked first for women in the 2009 Tree Climbing Championship of the International Society of Arboriculture’s (ISA) New York chapter. She quickly admits she was the only woman to compete, but her victory qualified her for the next level in July—ISA’s 2009 International Tree Climbing Championship in Providence, RI.

“I first heard about these competitions from other climbers in our New York Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) program,” Beebe says. APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program has been battling ALB—a major threat to America’s hardwoods—in New York since 1996, and Beebe has been in the fight since 2007, scouring trees for signs of infestation. “When I first competed in 2008, I was very green and disqualified, but the experience made me better, more confident, quicker, and safer,” she says.

She was happy to meet three female tree climbers from PPQ’s Massachusetts ALB program at the 2008 competition and a fourth climber in 2009. But the gender divide narrowed considerably at the international championship. While seeing more than 2 dozen women competing thrilled Beebe, these were some of the best tree climbers in the world. She had to go head-to-head against them as she climbed rain-slicked trees in high winds.

In ISA tree climbing championships, climbers—who must be ISA-certified arborists—break into small groups and compete in five events: the throw line (used to establish a climbing line), head-to-head footlock, belayed speed climb, aerial rescue, and work climb.

“In the throw line event, you throw a bean bag attached to a nylon string over a limb as many times as you can for 6 minutes,” Beebe says. “You earn more points if you attach a climbing line to the string and pull it over.”

Being 5’ 1” and 100 pounds can hinder Beebe in a number of events, especially the head-to-head footlock, where height definitely helps. Fueled by a $500 prize, competitors race up a climbing line that they wrap around their feet and lock before reaching as high as possible to grab the line, hold on, and slide their feet higher before repeating the cycle.

“When all the climbers get to the top, they high-five each other,” Beebe says.

The belayed speed climb also favors taller contenders. Competitors pull themselves up a climbing line hand-over-hand as another climber holds the line securely below for safety. Once at the treetop, the climbers ring a bell.

Competitors with strong upper bodies have a major edge in the aerial rescue. Climbers must bring safely to the ground a 150-pound dummy suspended high in a towering tree. “Women have 7 minutes to do it,” Beebe says, “but I’m not sure if any did it in that time.”

One event, however, does reward the light and nimble: the work climb. Climbers ascend a tree with five bells they must hit; some are on the tree’s left and right extremes. For the limb-walk portion, a weight sensor under the branch triggers a buzzer if it senses an unsafe weight. “I always do fantastic because I don’t

Continued on next page
manager profile with karen sliter

Associate Deputy Administrator, International Services

[what is your background?]
I grew up in a suburban community in Ohio and spent a year as a Fulbright Scholar in Germany prior to attending veterinary school at the Ohio State University. I was in sport horse practice prior to joining APHIS.

[how long have you been with APHIS?]
I joined APHIS in 1992, working under John Clifford in Michigan. I then joined International Services (IS) and served in Mexico, Austria, and Chile prior to returning to D.C.

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
On my first overseas trip doing ostrich inspections in Namibia, we drove up a 75-mile driveway on Thanksgiving Day, and our two jeeps and my suitcase were stolen from our “high security” hotel in Windhoek. Not an auspicious start to a Foreign Service career! Although I thought I’d never be allowed overseas again, I was assigned to Mexico City in 1996. I married my boyfriend David, packed up 2 horses, 5 cats, and 1 dog, and headed off to start one of the greatest careers in the world.

[priorities for the coming months?]
My top priority is supporting our new IS Deputy Administrator Ron Hicks with further refining IS’ role in fulfilling Cindy Smith’s vision of creating a global APHIS. My other ongoing priorities are taking care of our people and maintaining work/family balance.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
Every day I try to be the best parent and human being I can, to have a positive influence on others and the environment, and to be a productive employee for APHIS.

[last book read?]
Total Freedom by J. Krishnamurti.

[guilty pleasure?]
No guilt-only pleasure! And everything in balance. Playing with my baby, riding my horse, sharing a cup of coffee with a friend, eating chocolate, taking my daughters to lunch, smelling the smell of fall, doing nothing!

[favorite meal?]
Any meal with a friend.

[favorite movie?]
Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi because of the wonderful Indian cultural influences.

[hobbies?]
My favorite hobby is being with my children: Katrina (10), Jessica (7), Jacqueline (5), and Stephanie (8 months). I practice yoga/meditation daily and I ride international level dressage. I read philosophical books about life, I sing (to myself), and I attend opera performances as often as possible.

up in the trees
Continued from page 5

weigh very much,” Beebe says. “I can jump on the limb, and the buzzer doesn’t go off.”

How did she do overall? “I did better than I expected and hope to do better next year,” she says. “I scored 20 out of 200 points, making me one of the bottom five competitors. But it was a huge learning experience. What hooked me wasn’t the competition, anyway—it was the camaraderie.”

Despite her current love of all things arboreal, Beebe wasn’t born with a passion for the great outdoors. She warmed to it on the way to earning a master’s degree in environmental science. “I wasn’t an outdoors kid at all,” she says. “I spent my time reading Nancy Drew books and would say, ‘Ick, I don’t want to get dirty!’.”

Now Beebe, who recently transferred to Massachusetts, can’t get enough of it and hopes to tie her ISA involvement even closer to work. “I want to see how PPQ can work with ISA to get the message out, reaching a bigger base of people about invasive pests,” she says.

Special thanks to PPQ’s Chris Kachmar for shooting video at the ISA competition.
Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program Deputy Administrator Rebecca Bech recently honored this year’s recipients of the program’s Safeguarding Awards. The annual award series showcases individual and team efforts that excel at advancing PPQ’s mission to protect U.S. agriculture and plant resources.

The program’s award series has three distinct categories: the Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Award, the Outstanding Achievement Award, and the Promising Practices Award.

PPQ received numerous nominations for this year’s awards. “As usual, it was very hard to select our winners,” said Bech. “We got submissions from many high-performing groups inAPHIS, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and from multi-agency teams.”

[deputy administrator’s safeguarding awards]

PPQ’s National Plant Protection Laboratory Approval Program, based in Raleigh, NC, and Beltsville, MD, was recognized for its successful efforts to provide reliable molecular-based diagnostics for PPQ. The staff expanded the diagnostic capabilities for both internal and external laboratories, creating a more diversified network to meet its increasing workload and to handle emergency response demands.

PPQ also presented the Deputy Administrator’s Safeguarding Award to the Florida Fruit Fly Strike Team for creating a cadre of trained strike teams to respond to pest emergencies. The initiative was a collaborative project, partnering PPQ units and Florida’s Division of Plant Industry. With the additional trained strike teams, PPQ is better prepared for responding to multiple emergency pest detections.

CBP’s Brownsville Pest Risk Assessment Committee earned honors for its multi-agency activities targeting rail pathways. After detecting a high percentage of non-compliant railcars, the group performed outreach and extensive refresher training for stakeholders and cooperators in the United States and Mexico.

[outstanding achievement awards]

In the Outstanding Achievement Award category, PPQ honored Dewey Murray for his work with the rangeland grasshopper program on tribal lands from 2003 to 2008. As PPQ’s domestic program coordinator in Arizona, his efforts enabled the program to protect the natural resources of the San Carlos Apache Nation. Murray’s success required persistence, extensive planning, and a proactive approach to building stakeholder trust.

CBP’s Port of Seattle Advanced Targeting Unit also earned an award for its wood packing material targeting activities. The CBP unit developed national targeting criteria to detect fraudulent wood packing material. With this initiative, CBP intercepted high numbers of previously rejected or re-exported shipments at several ports. The effort resulted in multiple pest interceptions and a $3.3 million penalty for regulatory violations.

[promising practices awards]

In this award category, PPQ honored CBP’s Anti-Terrorism Contraband Enforcement Team in Eagle Pass, TX, as a working model that illustrates the value of including agriculture specialists on special enforcement teams. The team added an agriculture specialist.

Continued on next page
Ever since *Homo erectus* first sharpened a stone to cut through an animal hide, humans have sought to make their daily tasks physically easier and more efficient. Today, these same principles remain the driving force behind the modern science of ergonomics—and behind Ginger Dorsey’s painstaking efforts to provide APHIS employees with a more comfortable and productive experience at work.

As the head of APHIS’ ergonomics program for the past 7 years, Dorsey is committed to “fitting the job to the employee,” one workspace at a time.

Ergonomically speaking, APHIS workers are an unusually diverse group. Some peer into microscopes for a living, while others inspect apples, tag swine, or climb trees. Each job has distinctive stresses: An office director answering dozens of e-mails a day might be straining her wrists, while a researcher collecting samples for chronic wasting disease could experience surprisingly intense hand and lower back strain. Dorsey, an industrial hygienist and certified industrial ergonomist, meticulously evaluates the physical causes of an employee’s work-related issues, as well as the potential that a work environment and habits pose for future stress. Often, changes as simple as a height-adjusted monitor, a broader chair seat, an adjustment in posture, or even a small footrest can make a significant difference.

“Ginger helped me understand that I needed a writing surface much lower than most people’s,” says one of her clients. “I never would have thought of that.”

To accommodate demand, Dorsey, who is based at APHIS headquarters in Riverdale, spends 40 percent of her time on the road, examining worksites and workstations from Raleigh, NC, to Pocatello, ID. Most of the roughly 225 employees she assists each year are experiencing problems before they meet her—mostly back, neck, and wrist strain. The rest are taking a proactive approach to preventing work-related physical issues from arising in the first place.

Regrettably, says Dorsey, many employees do not feel entitled to ask for help, even if they are in pain. That is an attitude she would like to change. “People are here to do a job,” she says. “But it’s not part of their job to be in discomfort. I can help with that.”

Ginger Dorsey offers ergonomic consultations in person and by telephone on request. She can be reached at Ginger.E.Dorsey@aphis.usda.gov; telephone 301-734-6138.

Continued from page 7

**safeguarding awards**

To its ranks, bringing greater experience concerning agricultural products to the team and an increased focus on potential agricultural threats.

PPQ’s Western Region Developmental Assignment Program also earned a Promising Practice Award. Based in Fort Collins, CO, this employee development program is designed to identify specific goals and 30-day detail opportunities for managers and supervisors. The program broadens participants’ exposure to regional operations and helps the agency create possible options for addressing succession planning needs and challenges.
Just like people, swine get the flu sometimes—and so it was not much of a surprise that recently, USDA confirmed the presence of the 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza virus in some Minnesota and Indiana swine.

The good news is that APHIS, working in conjunction with other Federal agencies and State partners, is not only helping swine producers prevent and, if necessary, contain infections in their herds. It is also aggressively spreading the word to the public that the clinical signs of the virus appear to be mild in swine, and that the virus cannot be contracted by eating pork.

A recent influx from fiscal year 2009 supplemental funding for 2009 H1N1 influenza issues is supporting APHIS in this mission. In August, APHIS received $25.75 million, which will be used for surveillance activities, outreach to industry, and expediting licensing of any new swine vaccines. The money will also cover purchases of human antivirals and personal protective equipment for animal health officials through APHIS’ National Veterinary Stockpile program.

Among the 2009 H1N1 influenza initiatives receiving some of these funds is APHIS’ National Surveillance Plan for Swine Influenza. In July 2008, staff from APHIS’ Veterinary Services (VS) program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention initiated a joint effort to create this voluntary influenza surveillance pilot program. Its major goals: to identify novel influenza strains that could threaten human and animal health, and to improve information sharing on human and swine infections.

The program, launched in May 2009, reflects current concerns by focusing largely on surveillance for 2009 H1N1 influenza in the U.S. swine population. Producers are advised to have animal health professionals take swabs from suspect animals and submit them to a participating National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratory for analysis. And it has yielded results: the incidence of 2009 H1N1 in Indiana was confirmed through this program.

APHIS has also worked with Federal agency partners and the States to formulate guidelines ensuring that infected swine may move freely in commerce once they recover from their illness, much as they would with many other common diseases.

Prevention is the best medicine, of course, and APHIS has actively promoted the swift development of a 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine for swine. Since August, the agency has made master seed viruses for the virus available to several interested veterinary biologics manufacturers, so they could produce approved vaccine more rapidly. A monovalent vaccine is expected soon. For APHIS, and for the many animal health professionals and producers potentially affected by the virus, that will be a welcome holiday gift indeed.
If you’ve ever worked in the field, you’ve probably experienced the gut-wrenching despair that accompanies a computer freeze that cannot be remedied with a simple Ctrl-Alt-Delete key combination. Or worse yet, your computer displayed the “blue screen of death,” resulting in a desk-pounding, polysyllabic flurry of expletives.

In the past, depending on the severity of the crashes and glitches, such workstation failures would sentence users to days or weeks without their computers because support often had to be provided by IT professionals in person. But in October 2006, Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Eastern Region Information Technology (IT) Group introduced the Universal Imaging Utility (UIU) and remote provisioning procedures to APHIS—and revolutionized computer support throughout the agency.

“Ninety-nine percent of all the support we provide is now conducted remotely,” says Joe Rodriguez, IT resource manager for PPQ-Eastern Region. “We were able to cut the fat from the old support paradigm that required extensive travel and onsite support. Now, we can restore most failed workstations in 30 minutes to an hour, as well as deploy computer images or remotely install applications.”

Rodriguez estimates UIU saves the region nearly $800,000 in travel and shipping costs, alone, over the 3-year cycle. Earlier this year, Rodriguez’s staff developed scripts and remotely deployed McAfee Endpoint Encryption software to about 1,500 workstations, saving APHIS nearly $1 million.

These optimized, efficient solutions garnered national recognition for Rodriguez’s staff when PPQ-Eastern Region’s IT Group was awarded the distinction of finalists for Technical Excellence at the 2009 Government Customer Support Excellence Awards in Alexandria, VA.

Plant Protection & Quarantine Group Earns National Recognition

By Nolan Lemon

LPA’s Gary Roush looks on as Associate Administrator Kevin Shea and Administrator Cindy Smith plant broccoli in the Riverdale People’s Garden. Outfitted with gloves and trowel, Smith and Shea took part in the garden’s official dedication on September 22.
Online communications are becoming increasingly important for many organizations, including APHIS. Both APHIS and the Department recognize that to effectively communicate and conduct agency business, the agency will need to use new online tools that are often referred to as Web 2.0 or social media tools.

These new tools have great potential; however, as with other public or external agency communication efforts, there are rules of the road that employees need to be aware of and to follow.

APHIS’ Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) and Information Technology Division (ITD) are working together to ensure that the agency establishes processes to address communications guidelines and IT security risks before implementing Web 2.0 or social media tools. In the meantime, some of these tools are now accessible for employees to view online content.

**[accessible social media tools]**
Current, YouTube, Flickr, and Twitter are accessible at work; however, employees are expected to follow agency guidelines (see next page) and use appropriate judgment regarding use of these resources in the workplace. And, as with any public information or external agency communications, using any of these tools to promote APHIS or program content to the public must be approved in advance by LPA.

Most people are familiar with YouTube, but you may be less familiar with other tools like Flickr and Twitter. Flickr is a site that allows organizations and individuals to share photos online. Twitter is a service that enables users to send text-based messages up to 140 characters—called tweets—to subscribers or followers.

To glimpse Flickr and Twitter in action, visit the agency’s recently revamped Beetlebuster Web site at http://www.beetlebusters.info/. The outreach campaign Web site uses these online tools to help spread the word about Asian longhorned beetle.

**[important YouTube questions]**
What can I view, and what can I post? It’s important to know the answers to both questions.

“Social media” refers to media designed to circulate through social interaction, typically using highly accessible electronic tools/techniques to both share and create content.

The term “Web 2.0” is often used interchangeably with “social media.” Web 2.0 collectively refers to or is associated with interactive information-sharing tools. Web 2.0 can broadly refer to tools that include social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), video-sharing sites (e.g., YouTube), wikis, blogs, and more.

Web 2.0 and social media tools tap the human need for social interaction and can transform how information travels. That means transitioning from a broadcast media model where information is transmitted from one to many to a social media model where information is disseminated from many to many.
web 2.0
social media

Employee use of YouTube is limited to: monitoring video postings on topics relevant to APHIS (i.e., public concern over light brown apple moth eradication activities); and, notifying LPA of postings of interest that may require an official agency response. Employees should not use YouTube for personal entertainment during work hours on government-issued equipment. Like other inappropriate Internet usage at work, doing so may be cause for disciplinary action.

Requests by employees to post videos or comments to videos must be reviewed and approved by LPA officials, who will contact USDA’s Office of Communications (OC) for final authorization. Currently, OC is finalizing its guidance on agency usage of YouTube, including standards for appropriate content posting and usage. The agency will circulate these standards as soon as they are available.

The communications policies and guidelines for Web 2.0 and social media tools are the same as those that apply to any public or external communications and the use of the Internet. These include:

- APHIS Communications Guidelines issued yearly by APHIS Administrator. Look for an updated version in your e-mail soon.
- Privacy Act of 1974.
- Information provided via USDA’s FY 2010 Information Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior course.

Social media tools have tremendous potential to expand APHIS’ outreach and engagement with the public. The agency fully supports the proper use of these tools; however, employees must be sure to follow existing APHIS and USDA information security, privacy, and communications policies.

[guidelines and policies]

where do I check in before communicating via Web 2.0?

Employees seeking to use any of the approved social media tools to communicate publicly about agency policies or activities should contact LPA’s Public Affairs Office for the necessary approvals. You can contact Ed Curlett, Public Affairs Director, at (301) 734-3256 or via e-mail at ed.c.curlett@aphis.usda.gov.
Protection of human health and safety is part of the Wildlife Services program mission. In June an Idaho Wildlife Services pilot found a new way to protect health, resulting in a major drug bust.

While flying, the pilot observed suspicious agricultural activity in the Boise National Forest and provided information and GPS coordinates to law enforcement. The Joint Drug Enforcement Task Force kept the area under observation. A mid-August raid, one week before anticipated harvest, netted 2 arrests and 4,700 marijuana plants. Surveillance of another suspect led officers to two additional operations.

The estimated value of marijuana seized at the three sites is more than $50 million. "To fly safely, our WS pilots constantly maintain situational awareness," said Idaho State Director Mark Collinge. "Here, that contributed to the war on drugs and helped make our public lands safer."

Law enforcement officials report that drug cartels increasingly grow drugs in remote locations, littering such areas with irrigation piping, contaminating them with excessive fertilizer and pesticides, and poaching wildlife. Raids on growing operations often start with public tips.

By Carol Bannerman

Our many thanks to those who participated and responded to our last newsletter question of the day. We had 37 people answer the following question: How do you think Government health and retirement benefits compare with the private sector?

Here's how the numbers break down.

How do you think Government health and retirement benefits compare with the private sector?

- 51% govt' benefits better
- 19% the same
- 30% private sector benefits better

Government, businesses, and schools have busily prepared for this year's highly publicized flu season. For many offices and schools, these preparations have included planning for absences and providing information to help individuals stay healthy.

"How has the flu season affected you at work?" (check all that apply)
- I've been ill with flu and have missed work.
- I've missed work to care for a family member with flu.
- I've helped fill in for coworkers absent due to flu.
- I haven't been affected by flu at all.

Click on the following link to participate in the poll: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YM2K6WJ. As always, participation is voluntary and confidential.

Do you know who your GovTrip program Federal Agency Travel Administrators (FATAs) are and what they can do for you?

Your program's FATAs are your local source of information for questions concerning GovTrip and Government travel.
To acknowledge and promote the volunteer spirit that is part of our agency community, *Inside APHIS* is again featuring an agency coworker in our series of Volunteer Spotlights.

**Employee Name:** Joanne Munno, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services, Washington, D.C.

**Volunteer Organizations:** Oldies But Goodies (OBG) Cocker Spaniel Rescue (CFC #27768) and the Alexandria Community Services Board.

**Organizations’ Missions:** OBG is a no-kill animal rescue network of about 200 volunteers who foster spaniels and spaniel mixes that have been seized by animal control officers for abuse/neglect, turned in as strays, picked up from puppy mills that have closed down, or that are scheduled for destruction at public shelters. The organization pays their medical bills and provides a home environment and social training while locating a permanent family match.

The Alexandria Community Services Board offers acute and emergency mental health services 24 hours a day to 4,300 residents, including residential and substance abuse programs.

**Volunteer Activities:** For OBG, Munno fosters dogs, interviews foster and adoption applicants, and evaluates applicants’ homes. She also prepares letters acknowledging donations and is the intake coordinator for dogs surrendered to OBG by their owners.

For the community services board, Munno serves as a representative payee for citizens with acute mental illnesses that leave them unable to handle financial matters. Munno receives their Supplemental Security Income checks, makes the necessary bill payments on their behalf, and attends annual eligibility hearings at the Social Security Administration in their place.

**Time Given:** Munno averages about 25 hours per month with OBG and about 5 hours per month with the community services board.

**Organization Web Sites:** www.cockerspaniel-rescue.com and www.alexandriava.gov

**Employee E-mail:** To learn more about her volunteer efforts, contact Munno by e-mail at joanne.l.munno@aphis.usda.gov.

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**Did you know** that the Mediterranean Fruit Fly Preventive Release Program in California releases just over 250 million sterile male Medflies each week? Or that the Florida program releases 80 million per week?

The California release is part of the cooperative, $15 million program run by APHIS and the State’s Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, protects 616 square miles. Both programs inundate an area with sterile male Medflies to reduce the chance that female flies find a fertile male with which to mate successfully. As a result, the Medfly population declines over time.

Only males survive in the programs’ mass production process in Hawaii and Guatemala. They are marked with a fluorescent pink dye during the pupal stage and are irradiated before being sent to California and Florida for release. Under ultraviolet light, the dyed males are easy to differentiate from wild flies in survey traps.

Medflies are housefly-sized natives of the Mediterranean area and Africa that have spread their wings to most tropical and subtropical areas of the world. In its lifetime, each female Medfly may lay more than 300 eggs—deposited in the skin of fruit. Fertilized eggs hatch into larvae, which feed inside the fruit pulp. In the United States, the Medfly is a threat to 250 plants, including peaches, pears, plums, apples, apricots, avocados, citrus, cherries, figs, grapes, guavas, kumquats, loquats, nectarines, peppers, persimmons, tomatoes, and several nuts.

The $3 million Florida program, in cooperation with the State’s Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, protects 616 square miles. Both programs inundate an area with sterile male Medflies to reduce the chance that female flies find a fertile male with which to mate successfully. As a result, the Medfly population declines over time.

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aphis holds inaugural nasda-aphis forum

By Hallie Zimmers

On September 29, APHIS hosted the first joint forum with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) in Worcester, MA. Focusing on the issue of invasive forest pests, the NASDA–APHIS Forum brought together more than 60 representatives from State agriculture and natural resource agencies, APHIS, and the U.S. Forest Service. Representatives from 27 States and 1 territory took part in the event.

The concept for the joint NASDA forum was announced earlier this year by Administrator Cindy Smith as a new venue for State and Federal partners to discuss topics of mutual importance in a dedicated setting. For the first forum, the issue of invasive forest pests was selected based on input received from States over the summer. Worcester was selected as a meeting location because it is at the center of the cooperative Asian long-horned beetle (ALB) eradication project that is currently carried out by APHIS and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

The Forum was kicked off with a welcome from Cindy Smith and featured opening remarks from Massachusetts DCR Commissioner Rick Sullivan, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Commissioner Scott Soares, APHIS Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine Rebecca Bech, and Rob Mangold, the Director of Forest Health Programs for the U.S. Forest Service. Following an overview of the ALB eradication project, the group spent the remainder of the morning touring the ALB eradication project. The tour included stops focusing on wood disposal, tree surveying and replanting, as well as a driving tour of some of the neighborhoods most heavily impacted by ALB.

The afternoon session featured a facilitated discussion to identify opportunities for State-Federal collaboration and prioritize key issues underlying the invasive forest pest issue. Recognizing the range of new regulatory scenarios presented by invasive pests, the meeting provided a chance for input from agriculture and natural resource officials to discuss where collaboration between State and Federal partners is strong and where it can be enhanced.

The top three priority issues identified by the group were: the need for enhanced collaboration between State and Federal agencies to increase public awareness about invasive pests, the need for a national firewood strategy, and the need for more integrated approaches to pest issues.

Two NASDA-APHIS forums on different topics are expected in 2010.●

agency calendar

december
Fundamentals of APHIS Human Resource Management (FAHRM) Course registration deadline December 31; class runs May 17–21 in Ames, IA. Contact Dale Short via e-mail at dale.g.short@aphis.usda.gov for more information and additional course dates.

Benefits Open Season runs from November 9 through December 14, 2009.

january

John Scott, Editor (301) 734-4897 inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov

Photo sources: APHIS, ARS, Cindy Digesualdo, Anson Eaglin, Jim Fosse, Chris Kachmar, and David Pyburn.

Video: Chris Kachmar
Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments. For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
As Haiti struggles to recover in the aftermath of the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that rocked the country on January 12, countries and individuals around the world are providing humanitarian and economic aid for relief efforts. APHIS is doing its part to help by pledging personnel, equipment, and advisory support.

The earthquake destroyed homes and buildings, left an estimated one million homeless, and crippled essential services and rescue aid. Sixteen APHIS employees—one Foreign Service officer and 15 Foreign Service nationals (FSNs)—working in Haiti felt the quake’s devastating force. Fortunately, APHIS personnel and their immediate family members have all been located and continue to remain safe after the disaster.

Almost all have suffered damage to or destruction of their homes, lost possessions, and have had limited access to food and water. Most are sheltering in tents, and only two of the FSNs have houses that are repairable. Joe Vorgetts, APHIS’ sole U.S. citizen employee stationed in Haiti prior to the quake, has secured housing provided via the U.S. Embassy.

(IS) attaché to Haiti, Vorgetts remained in Haiti, despite an original decision by the U.S. Embassy to evacuate him. Though conditions are less than ideal, these employees continue to carry out the APHIS mission.

IS Senior Attaché for the Caribbean and Central America, John Shaw, says APHIS’ work in Haiti began long before the earthquake struck.

“As an agency, we are well positioned to put the resources we have at hand into relief efforts and strengthen our programs in the country,” says Shaw.
Immediate focus areas include human health and safety and animal and plant disease concerns. Veterinary Services (VS) is coordinating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to streamline import policies for pets being evacuated to the United States. The agency’s Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program is training military personnel to inspect and certify cargo and vehicles to ensure returning equipment is free from potentially pest- and disease-harboring soil. As part of the initial response, the Federal Emergency Management Agency also activated APHIS Emergency Support Function (ESF) 11 personnel to take part in the response planning for several contingencies.

IS personnel, the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, and the InterAmerican Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture are stabilizing and plan to continue ongoing animal and plant health control and disease eradication programs.

Haiti’s mango preclearance program was temporarily suspended because inspectors were unable to reach damaged treatment facilities. The program ensures mangoes imported to the United States are free from fruit fly larvae and other pests and expedites the trading process. Nearly 500,000 Haitians depend upon mango exports for their livelihood, and sales represent a significant portion of the country’s trade with the United States.

PPQ and IS officials, along with the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, are working to restart mango efforts and the damaged facilities in time for the spring mango crop. Officials project an early April start for the export season. Strengthening these programs provides stability to all levels of Haitian society and protects American agriculture as well. As Shaw notes, APHIS is working to reestablish the traditional cooperative agriculture programs and looking toward Haiti’s future.

“Our focus now is not on the displacement caused by the earthquake, but to reestablish continuity of our pre-earthquake operations, absorb the damages, and make our programs, and Haiti as a whole, stronger,” says Shaw.

If you would like to assist our FSNs in Haiti, you can make a donation through an account established at the Agriculture Federal Credit Union. To contribute, please make your check payable to “The APHIS Employee Relief Fund” with “For Deposit Only to Account #779943” written on the reverse side. Donations are not tax deductible.

Employees in the Washington, D.C., and Riverdale, MD, complexes may deposit donations directly at the credit union. Those wishing to contribute from other locations may mail a check to the Agriculture Federal Credit Union at P.O. Box 3419, Alexandria, VA 22302.

For more information and comments, please login to the APHIS portal at http://my.aphis.usda.gov and visit Cindy Smith’s blog entry on the Administrator’s portal page.
Cartoon-favorite Yogi Bear is known for his antics to outsmart Ranger Smith and sneak off with a tasty “pick-a-nic” basket. Based on recent research by Wildlife Services (WS), real-world black bears may have developed a taste of a different kind.

Black bears are one of the most adaptable of nature’s large omnivores. They regularly raid human sources of food, such as trash cans, bird feeders, and campgrounds. But do these bears selectively seek certain food resources or just take advantage of random opportunities?

To find an answer, Stewart Breck, a researcher at WS’ National Wildlife Research Center, studied black bears to determine whether they foraged selectively for human food sources—particularly with respect to food found in cars. Working with collaborators at Yosemite National Park, Breck found that from 2001 to 2007 bears broke into 908 vehicles at the park. Every year, minivans represented the most or the second most number of vehicles broken into. Minivan break-ins were more than four times higher than expected based on the availability of different vehicle models.

Breck and others hypothesize that the black bears selected minivans over other car models in an effort to maximize caloric gain and minimize costs. In short, they seemed to have targeted vehicles with a higher probability of payoff. So why are minivans more desirable?

“It is possible that minivans are more likely to emit food odors regardless of whether they contain food or not,” said Breck. “Minivans are designed for families with children, and small children are notorious for spilling food and drinks while riding in cars.”

Breck notes other potential reasons why bears in the park selected minivans. Minivan owners may be more prone to leaving large caches of food in their vehicles because they have the space. Minivans may also be easier to break into than other vehicles. And, the data could just reflect the foraging decisions of a few individual black bears that have developed a learned behavior for breaking into minivans.

Breck plans to continue working with park officials to develop management strategies. These may include increasing education efforts focused on vehicles with small children, increasing the enforcement of food storage regulations in the park, and managing select problem bears.
The 2009 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) began last fall amidst one of the most challenging economic periods of our lifetimes.

While there was little doubt that many Americans are in need of help, considerable uncertainty existed about whether Federal employees would contribute as generously as in the past during this period of widespread financial “belt-tightening.”

Just a few short months later, we can all take great pride in knowing that both APHIS and USDA as a whole came together through CFC to help those in need like never before.

To illustrate, APHIS employees in the Washington, D.C./Metro Area established a new standard for giving, donating more than $205,000, while USDA’s national capital area campaign established a new record with over $2,044,000 in collections.

Total national figures for CFC contributions will not be available until May 2010. Nevertheless, thanks to APHIS employees across the country, the 2009 CFC will be remembered as both a great success and a source of pride for everyone involved.

As the coordinator for APHIS’ 2009 CFC in the Washington, D.C./Metro Area, I want to extend my personal thanks to everyone—in the national capital area and beyond—who contributed to this year’s campaign.

With your generous donations of money and of time and energy to organize and conduct fundraisers, you truly made this year’s campaign a success to remember.

Your eOPF is an electronic version of your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) and contains the records required to document your Federal career. The Human Resources Division (HRD)—in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management—is providing access to all employees as part of a government-wide initiative.

If you haven’t registered yet to access your eOPF, consider doing it today. Registration materials, an instructional tutorial, and frequently asked questions are available at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/systems/eopf/index.shtml. You must have a valid eAuthentication ID and password to register.

If you have questions, please contact the HRD processing team member for your program area. A list of team members can be found at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/processing_prog_assignments.pdf.
It was a special shipment to begin with: 20 saplings, direct descendents of the magnificent “Anne Frank” horse chestnut tree, coming from Amsterdam to be planted as symbols of tolerance at the White House, the World Trade Center memorial, and 9 other locations across America.

For Jose Ceballos and his postentry quarantine program (PEQ) staff in Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), though, there was an added twist—keeping a disease that’s devastating Europe’s horse chestnuts from crossing onto U.S. soil. But thanks to a little PEQ ingenuity, the United States has joined a growing community of other nations in raising the tree’s youthful progeny.

The “Anne Frank” chestnut tree, lauded in Frank’s writings for its beauty, stands outside the building housing the legendary Secret Annex, where the teenage diarist and her family hid from Hitler’s Nazis for more than 2 years. In 2005, with moths infesting its leaves and fungus damaging its trunk, local horticulturists determined that the 150-year-old tree would not survive long.

In response, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam launched a living tribute to Frank’s memory: It has been giving seedlings and saplings germinated from the tree’s chestnuts to schools, parks, and other institutions throughout Europe and as far afield as Japan, Israel, and Argentina.

After identifying 11 U.S. sites to receive saplings, the Anne Frank Center USA—a U.S. partner organization to the Anne Frank House—called PPQ last fall to inquire about importing them. However, what should have been a routine matter was complicated by a Europe-wide plague of bleeding canker disease that had infected 30 percent of the Netherlands’ horse chestnuts alone.

In fact, APHIS was at the time assessing an order that would severely restrict imports of horse chestnut plants from all countries except Canada.

“It was,” says Ceballos, “a very challenging situation,” complicated by bleeding canker’s tendency to manifest itself slowly. But PEQ consultations with U.S. and European plant pathologists, and with recipient institutions, yielded a plan for putting most of the saplings in an extended 3-year quarantine at APHIS’ Plant Germplasm Quarantine Program (PGQC) facility in Beltsville, MD.

After Dutch authorities confirmed that no canker appeared present in the original tree or the saplings, the latter arrived at the Linden, NJ, plant inspection station on December 21, 2009. The Federal Order on horse chestnut imports went into effect just a few weeks later.

Special dispensation has been granted to certain recipients able to quarantine their saplings according to APHIS and State guidelines and approval.

One sapling went upon arrival to Sonoma State University in California; three more leave soon for the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis and, ultimately, its Anne Frank Peace Park. The rest of the 1-to-2-foot-long saplings are in cold storage at the PGQC Beltsville facility, and will emerge this spring to a greenhouse regimen of fertilizer, water, and spraying. APHIS’ Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory stands ready to deal with any trees showing signs of infection. But if all goes well, PGQC’s small charges will each grow into a tall, proud testament to the spirit of the girl brave enough to write, “I don’t think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains.”
[what is your background?]
I grew up in the small hamlet of Chippewa Bay, NY, along a stretch of the St. Lawrence River known as the 1000 Islands. Winters were long and cold, summers short and sweet, with Ontario always in view across the river. The area is a mosaic of dairy farms, small towns, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and forests. It’s no surprise that I developed a strong interest in forestry and wildlife. After a stint in the Army in the late 1960s, I received degrees in forestry and wildlife, culminating in a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology and management from Rutgers University.

[priorities for the coming months?]
My highest priorities include collaborations to enhance our ability to control rabies in wildlife and free-roaming dogs that interface with wildlife. These include: advancing our 2010 operational goal to collaborate in field trials for new oral rabies vaccines; working closely with Canadian and U.S. colleagues on studies comparing the field performance of two oral rabies vaccines for raccoons; and facilitating captive trials for the immunocontraceptive Gonacon™ vaccine in free-roaming dogs in Mexico.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
I am most proud of having been involved with WS’ Rabies Management Program—from the early 1990s to the present. I continue to derive my energy from the passion and dedication shown by our cooperators, the WS workforce, and the agency for our efforts.

[guilty pleasure?]
Chocolate, but I don’t often feel that guilty about it.

[favorite meal?]
Anything that includes the word fish. The best is an outdoor meal of freshly caught smallmouth bass from the St. Lawrence with family and friends that is cooked over a wood fire, accompanied by tossed salad, salt potatoes, and French toast topped with real maple syrup for dessert.

[last book read?]
Uranium: War, Energy and the Rock that Shaped the World by Tom Zoellner.

[favorite movie?]
Forrest Gump

[hobbies?]
Fishing, duck hunting, golf, guitar, oil and water painting, reading (mostly nonfiction), geography—maps of all types, cross-country skiing, kayaking, and decoy carving.
The labels claimed they could do just about anything. Put your horse in good spirits. Cure influenza in your poultry. Ward off cholera in your hogs. Whatever the livestock, whatever the problem, “animal powders”—widely used by farmers in the 1800s and 1900s—promised to fix it.

Today, these animal powders are curious pieces of history, artifacts from a bygone era. Historical collections of such products, like those on display at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum in Alexandria, VA, provide an interesting glimpse into the past.

The museum’s collection of vintage animal powders reminds us of a time when farmers put their trust in these products and in the entrepreneurs who manufactured and sold them with virtually any health claim they wanted.

Thankfully, for the sake of U.S. animal health and producers, those days of unproven health claims are long gone. And today, APHIS plays an important role in ensuring the safety and quality of veterinary products: The agency’s Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB) enforces the Virus Serum Toxin Act (VSTA).

Under the watchful eyes of CVB, the agency oversees VSTA regulations to ensure that all veterinary biologics—which include animal vaccines and diagnostic kits—that are licensed for sale and use in the United States are pure, safe, potent, and effective. In short, CVB makes sure that veterinary biologics live up to the claims on their labeling. In complementary fashion, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates the manufacture and distribution of drugs and food additives to be given to animals.

Today, the wildly ambitious claims of vintage animal powders like those at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum strike us as almost humorous. However, as products of an era before the enactment of consumer protection laws like the VSTA, the potential consequences of the false assurances were anything but laughable.

“All of the great consumer protection laws—including the VSTA—came about because of unscrupulous things,” says Linda Schlater, who heads CVB’s Agent Biosecurity and Reference Management section and who has previously taught veterinary history at Iowa State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine.

As history shows, the damage from unsupported product claims could be significant when left unchecked.

In the early 1900s, Stonebraker’s Hog Powders promised, “Hogs will never contract cholera if these powders are used faithfully.” Others made similar claims and manufactured serum to sell to hog farmers with the promise that it would make hogs immune to the devastating virus. When so-called hog cholera antiserum didn’t work, farmers were furious. Not only were many of them financially ruined, it’s also likely that the false assurances of such products fueled epidemics.

Like the labels on vintage animal powders, stories like this highlight the two-fold value of CVB’s efforts in enforcing the VSTA. CVB employees not only ensure the safety of veterinary biological products, they also make sure that products do what manufacturers say they will do.
on the move
planning pays off for ames employees

By John Scott

It’s hard to imagine a workplace move more difficult than the one completed last fall by APHIS employees at the National Center for Animal Health (NCAH) campus in Ames, IA. As they prepared for their move to a new 550,000-square-foot complex, employees had to manage far more than just the contents of their cubicles.

The more than 700 employees—a mixture of personnel from the agency’s National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL), the Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), and USDA’s Agricultural Research Service—had some tough logistical challenges. They had to relocate numerous laboratories, as well as multiple pieces of finely calibrated equipment, inventories of infectious and diagnostic materials, and collections of secured files containing confidential business information. Amid this, employees also had to maintain rigorous ISO laboratory accreditation standards. If it sounds like a lifetime’s worth of listmaking to you, then you’re beginning to get the picture.

The move took many hands and a lot of planning. Beth Lautner, director of NVSL, credits employees for the successful move. “It was an employee-led effort,” said Lautner. “People just stepped up to do what needed to be done.”

Part of a USDA modernization effort more than 10 years in the making, the new complex includes administrative and laboratory support offices, warehouse space, laboratory facilities, and a technologically advanced infrastructure that meets national needs for animal health research, diagnosis, and product evaluation.

Tom Bunn, director of NVSL’s Diagnostic Bacteriology Laboratory and APHIS’ program representative for the modernization effort, chaired the Ames move committee. Like Lautner, he was impressed by how employees managed the move. “We had coordinators for each area. And, at the lab and unit level, they just took ownership of the move,” said Bunn.

With so many people and things to coordinate, it was difficult to make sure the pieces came together in a way that minimized any downtime. NVSL stayed operational during the entire move. “It went very well—we didn’t have to call a single customer because of a delay,” said Bev Schmitt, director of NVSL’s Diagnostic Virology Laboratory. Moving Schmitt’s laboratory, which operates at biosecurity level-3, required careful preparations to account for the decontamination of equipment and the handling of potentially infectious materials.

During the move, CVB was able to ensure that market releases of veterinary biological products to manufacturers occurred without a drop in service. In addition, the CVB laboratory was able to follow its planned, phased approach to bring the new laboratories up to full operation in a matter of weeks while minimizing any disruptions to its stakeholders.

Lori Anderson, one of three administrative officers with the NCAH, says that there were a lot of details to juggle—from office furniture to laundry hampers—but in the end, she admits the move was “sort of fun.”

“It was exciting to work on something so long and to see it all come together,” said Anderson. For more information about NVSL and CVB, please visit the following links:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/lab_info_services/
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/vet_biologics/
What started off in 2003 as a donated Federal Emergency Management Agency RV trailer souped up to support plant health emergency operations has been replaced by a new, state-of-the-art, deployable response unit. The DRU (“drew”), as it’s called, is the brainchild of APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program.

In the making for about 2 years, the DRU provides mobile work facilities and communications connectivity to support agency emergency operations. More than just simple convenience, the DRU provides a workspace option that can handle emergencies where other options simply may not exist.

“I first got the idea for a deployable unit from U.S. Customs Service vehicles that I was used to seeing on the southern border when stationed in Nogales, Arizona, in 2003,” said Andrew Wilds, national emergency management officer for PPQ’s Emergency and Domestic Programs.

“Many of the areas where we find ourselves responding to emergencies and conducting special operations are areas that lack reliable communication infrastructure. The DRU solves that problem by carrying its communication backbone with it.”

According to Wilds, who used his personal tools and talents to configure the first generation trailer (used from 2003 through 2006), the new DRU builds on the success of its predecessor. The previous unit was used for outreach and special operations in Maine, including providing support to a PPQ firewood blitz at an interstate visitor's center. The unit also supported citrus huanglongbing emergency response and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance special operations in Florida and the plum pox virus response in New York.

Hopes for the new DRU are high, particularly with regard to supporting Incident Command System (ICS) response situations and assisting with plant pest survey work. “The DRU can easily accommodate ten people seated at workstations in the fore section and two additional people at the lab counters in the aft section. There is room for an additional six to eight people seated around a conference table. Survey personnel are able to operate out of a 12- by 17-foot tent that travels with the unit.

“We expect that we will routinely support around 70 people over the course of a given PPQ response,” said Wilds.

The new DRU debuted to APHIS personnel during the Eastern Region Emergency Preparedness Fair held in Raleigh, NC, in September 2009. Approximately 115 employees toured the vehicle and learned about the unit’s fully networked workspace and its robust Geographic Information System, which is able to produce maps up to 42 inches in height.

In October, the DRU debuted to States during an ICS full-scale exercise that involved Georgia, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, Virginia, and West Virginia. According to Wilds, reaction to the DRU has been extremely supportive. Many States have pursued similar initiatives, but with units that focus on first-responder emergency safety. “The idea

Continued on next page
APHIS has teamed up with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to create a free online tool that helps farmers and producers get an idea of where they can improve safety and security in their food production process.

This risk assessment tool, called Agriculture CARVER + Shock, was originally developed by the U.S. military to identify areas that might be vulnerable to attack. The FDA and APHIS worked with Sandia National Laboratories to adapt the model to the food and agriculture sector to evaluate potential vulnerabilities in the supply chains of different foods and food processes.

“This assessment tool helps the producer understand how someone intending to disrupt agriculture might think,” said Stephen Sundlof, director of the FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. “Producers can easily identify weak spots in their operation and receive practical advice on countermeasures they can put in place.”

APHIS Administrator Cindy Smith agrees that the online tool is a valuable new resource for producers. “Being prepared is a tremendous asset. Farmers can now see firsthand what they can do to protect themselves and U.S. agriculture.”

Farms of all sizes can benefit from the tool, and it serves the needs of both livestock and crop producers alike. Agency employees are encouraged to share information about the tool with producers.

When using the online tool, producers are asked to answer a series of questions about each component of their production process. None of the information provided by producers is retained by either FDA or APHIS.

Based on the answers provided, Agriculture CARVER generates scores for the different components of a producer’s production process and recommends specific risk-mitigation measures. Recommendations might include upgrades or enhancements to physical security, revisions to process operations, or changes in personnel practices.

Feedback from users indicates that so far the tool has been downloaded by more than 200 users, including produce companies, fruit and nut growers, dairy farmers, poultry and egg producers, trade associations, State departments of agriculture and health, universities, government contractors, and other Federal agencies.

For more information and to access the free software, visit: http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/CARVER.

By Jim Barrett

Continued from page 9

emergency response vehicle

that we are specifically configured for an ‘Ag health’ response seemed comforting to them,” Wilds said.

According to PPQ leadership, the DRU will be used for emergency responses, preparedness exercises, and for outreach at Ag expos throughout the year. As an APHIS asset, the DRU is available for use APHIS-wide. When not in active status, the DRU will be maintained at a North Carolina Department of Agriculture facility and poised for deployment.
The President submitted his fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget to Congress on February 1. It proposes an APHIS budget appropriation of about $875 million—approximately $870 million for salaries and expenses and about $5 million for buildings and facilities. The total is a net decrease of about $37 million compared to FY 2010.

In general, the budget proposes reallocating resources from programs that have achieved success (e.g., cotton pests and screwworm) and from those for which progress in eradication is currently not deemed feasible (e.g., emerald ash borer) to direct dollars toward efforts where success in eradication may be feasible (e.g., Asian longhorned beetle in Massachusetts). The budget also proposes the elimination of all congressional earmarks and reductions assuming increased cooperator cost-share. Highlights include:

- Increase of $900,000 for the overseas technical and trade operations program to partially offset the increased salary costs associated with the Foreign Service Pay Modernization Initiative that Congress recently passed and funding to coordinate technical assistance and training in developing countries to strengthen their regulatory capacity.
- Reduction of $7.53 million for the screwworm program to convert the sterile fly rearing facility in Mexico to a back-up facility and shift operations to the new Panama facility to maintain the barrier at the Darien Gap between Central and South America.
- Increase of $8.85 million for the animal disease traceability program focused on preventing the entry and spread of animal diseases in the United States and strengthening our ability to rapidly respond to animal diseases.
- Reduction of $8 million for the avian influenza program due to the efficient use of resources, a greater knowledge of the virus, completion of one-time investments, and an assessment of the international situation.
- Reduction of $14.41 million for the cotton pests program based on the projected eradication of boll weevil in FY 2010 and of pink bollworm by FY 2012.
- Increase of $10 million for the light brown apple moth program to develop and implement the sterile insect technique and conduct survey and regulatory activities.
- Increase of $17.5 million for the Asian longhorned beetle program to conduct treatments, tree removal and replanting, and outreach activities in Massachusetts.
- Reduction of $20 million for the emerald ash borer program for which APHIS will use carryover funding to continue activities at the FY 2010 level.
- Reduction of $1 million for the bovine tuberculosis program due to decreased indemnity needs.
- Increase of $2 million for the Wildlife Services employee safety improvement program.
- Increase of $391,000 for the horse protection program to increase oversight at horse shows and continue foreign substance surveillance sampling.
- Increase of $5.77 million for the Biotechnology Regulatory Services program to address the expanding workload and increasing complexities related to permitting and notification applications, risk assessment and regulatory challenges associated with emerging technologies, and the need to strengthen its safeguarding.
- Increase of $3.83 million for recurring utility costs related to the relocation to the new National Centers for Animal Health facilities.
Did you know that during fiscal year 2009, the Wildlife Services (WS) program distributed about 6.5 million oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits in 15 States to prevent raccoon rabies from gaining a broader geographic footprint in North America?

Since 1995, WS has worked cooperatively with local, State, and Federal governments, universities, and other partners to combat raccoons by distributing ORV baits—on foot and by aircraft—in targeted areas.

While raccoon vaccination is the largest of WS’ efforts to fight the disease in terrestrial (i.e., land-based) animals, the program also has targeted canine rabies in coyotes and a unique variant in grey foxes. After the program’s work in Texas, reports of canine raccoons fell from 100+ cases a year to just 2 cases between 2000 and 2004, leading to the 2007 declaration that the United States is free of canine rabies under World Health Organization criteria.

If left untreated, rabies is always fatal, making it a serious public health concern. The costs associated with the detection, prevention, and control of raccoons in the United States are estimated to exceed $300 million per year.

To learn more about WS’ National Rabies Management Program, click on the following link to visit the program’s Web site: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml.

APHIS is now on Twitter. The agency kicked off the new year by joining the social networking service and is putting this new tool to use in spreading the agency’s news and information.

If you’re unfamiliar with Twitter, think of it as a Web-based news ticker. Those who choose to “follow” APHIS on Twitter receive short messages—called tweets—that are put out by the agency. All tweets are limited to 140 characters or less, so they’re typically to the point and usually provide a link for followers to get more details.

You don’t need to be a member of Twitter to follow APHIS’ posts. Just visit and bookmark the following Web page: http://www.twitter.com/APHISgov. If you already use Twitter, you can follow agency tweets @APHISgov.

We encourage you to share our Twitter address and Web link with coworkers and agency stakeholders who have an interest in APHIS activities.

At this point, APHIS is primarily using Twitter to share news release links, but the social media tool could also prove extremely useful during animal and plant disease outbreaks or natural disasters. In emergency situations, APHIS could use Twitter to post updates about agency efforts or to provide information about our operating status.

If you have suggestions or ideas about information you would like to see APHIS share through Twitter, please contact Jim Barrett in Legislative and Public Affairs at 301-734-6405 or by e-mail at jim.barrett@aphis.usda.gov.

By John Scott
Here are two easy tips for handling e-mail attachments. Follow each tip routinely, and you can prevent the size of your Lotus Notes database from getting out of control.

**[tip 1]**
When you forward or respond to e-mails that have attachments, be sure to select the without attachment(s) options that are available. Otherwise, every time you reply to or forward an e-mail with an attached file (or multiple files), Lotus Notes will make a new copy of the file(s) to go with the new e-mail.

**[bonus tip]**
After the file is saved and your screen view returns to the incoming email, Lotus Notes automatically inserts text indicating that an attached file has been deleted. For your future reference, you can edit this text to also indicate where you saved the file. This additional step can make it easier to locate files later and save you time.

**[tip 2]**
Use the “Save and Delete” or the “Save and Delete All” options to save attached files and get them out of your in-box. You can save attached files to your local hard drive or file server. Right-click on the file you want to save in the incoming e-mail, select “save and delete,” and follow the prompts to save it to the location you want.

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**question of the day**
How has the flu season affected you at work? (check all that apply)

- 73.3% Not affected
- 10% Been ill and missed work
- 16.7% Missed work to care for ill family member
- 6.7% Filled in for coworker ill with flu

**[your results]**
As always, our many thanks to those who participated and responded to our last issue’s question of the day: “How has the flu season affected you at work?” Here’s how your coworkers responded.

**[next question please]**
Is it a goal of yours to work for APHIS in a leadership role—as a supervisor, manager, or other?

- Yes, I would like to have a leadership position.
- No, I am not interested in a leadership role.
- I am undecided about my career goals with APHIS.
- I currently have a leadership position in APHIS.

Click on the following link to participate in the poll: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/insideaphisquestionoftheday.

As always, participation is voluntary and confidential.
To log in to the APHIS portal, click on the following link: http://my.aphis.usda.gov

When you log in, you will be redirected to your eAuthentication login. Enter your eAuthentication ID and password and click “Login.”

If it’s your first time accessing the portal, you will also be prompted to enter your APHIS e-mail credentials. Be sure to use your user “short name” when entering your user ID.

For questions about logging in, contact your local IT representative or call ATAC: U.S. customers, (877) 944-8457; international customers, (919) 855-7888.

In November 2009, President Obama signed an Executive Order launching the Veterans Employment Initiative for the Executive Branch. For Federal agencies, the initiative underscores the importance of recruiting and training veterans and aims to increase veteran employment within the Executive Branch.

The agency’s Veterans Hiring and Employment web pages are a good place to start looking for more information about veterans hiring. There you will find a Veterans Hiring Guide, which offers a helpful overview of available hiring authorities. The site also includes contact information for Human Resources staffing specialists who serve your program and can answer questions.
Volunteer Spotlight: Employees Earn President’s Volunteer Service Award

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program employees Wayne Burnett and Tony Román, along with Veterinary Services’ (VS) John Wiemers, were recently honored by Secretary Vilsack for their extraordinary volunteer efforts outside of the workplace. Burnett, Román, and Wiemers are recipients of the President’s Volunteer Service Award and each ranked in the top 100 of USDA’s volunteers based on hours donated.

Volunteer Service Awards are issued by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation to recognize the best in American spirit, and to encourage all Americans to improve their communities through volunteer service and civic participation. Awards are given to individuals, families, and groups that have demonstrated an outstanding level of service as measured by their total number of hours volunteered—either for a 12-month period or during a lifetime of service.

At a January 20 reception for D.C. area recipients, Secretary Vilsack met with USDA awardees. Of APHIS’ three recipients, unfortunately Román was the only one able to attend. Vilsack visited with awardees at the reception and spoke with each about their volunteer service.

In recognition of Burnett, Román, and Wiemers, we want to feature each in the newsletter’s Volunteer Spotlight. Román and Wiemers are highlighted in this issue, and Burnett will be featured in our next issue.

Employee Name/Program/work location:
John Wiemers, Senior Staff Veterinarian, VS Galesburg, IL

Volunteer Organizations:
- Historic Ellisville Restoration Organization (HERO)
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Organizations’ Missions:
- HERO is a nonprofit organization with a goal to restore and utilize historic structures in the town of Ellisville, IL, (population 103) to increase the tourism potential of a struggling community.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) is very involved with local welfare service, humanitarian aid, community emergency response plans, and other forms of community service.

Volunteer Activities:
- With HERO, Wiemers provides hands-on work in restoring historic buildings and participates in numerous annual fundraising events. To date, the group has renovated an opera house and harness shop and is working on the community’s old post office and general store.
- As a church volunteer, Wiemers sees himself as no different from many church members who are also USDA employees. In describing his efforts, he pays tribute to those who also volunteer without seeking reward or recognition.
- Wiemers has been active in local church leadership positions and works with families struggling with financial, emotional, and physical difficulties. This year he also organized an emergency preparedness fair in his county and is working with families researching their family roots.

Continued on next page
As a member of HERO for the last 3 years, Wiemers donates about 100 hours a year for fundraising and restoration work. He donates approximately 800 hours per year to his church.

Organizational Web Sites: http://lds.org/

E-mail: john.f.wiemers@aphis.usda.gov

**Volunteer Activities:** As a volunteer firefighter/rescuer and emergency medical technician (EMT), Román responds to incidents, including house fires, automobile collisions, emergency medical calls, and service calls from citizens. He also participates in public awareness events, training sessions, fundraising activities, school career days, and other RVFD events.

**Time Given:** Román has volunteered with RVFD for 9 years and gives about 900 hours a year.

Organizational Web Site: http://www.rvfd.org

E-mail: Juan.A.Roman@aphis.usda.gov

April

So…You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor? Registration deadline is April 2 for course in Raleigh, NC, on April 27–28; registration deadline is April 9 for course in Columbus, OH, on May 4–5. For more information, contact April Jackson or Will Bostwick by e-mail.

Free Office Ergonomics Seminar offered by the APHIS Ergonomics Program every 2nd Wednesday of the month. Available in Riverdale, MD, and via videoconferencing and webinars. Contact Ginger Dorsey by e-mail for additional information.

APHIS Earth Day Environmental Fair, April 22, 11:00 a.m to 2:00 p.m in Riverdale, MD, Conference Center.

**Employee Name/Program/work location:** Juan A. (Tony) Román, Assistant Trade Director, PPQ

**Volunteer Organization:** Rockville Volunteer Fire Department (RVFD)

**Organization Mission:** RVFD has more than 200 members and operates four stations that serve the fire/rescue needs of 250,000 local citizens and the wider community of Maryland’s Montgomery County.
When the news broke in April that the number of U.S. honey bee hives had plunged over the winter by more than 30 percent for the fourth straight year, the clamor for an explanation resounded nationwide—and APHIS was more than ready to help out.

Launched in May, the agency’s National Honey Bee Pest and Disease Survey, conducted with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), could provide important new clues about why honey bees are having such a hard time these days.

Apis mellifera is said to have come to America in 1622 with Virginia’s early colonists. It has been a hardy migrant, surviving steep population declines in the 1880s and 1930s, as well as an onslaught of Varroa and tracheal mites in the 1980s that decimated the country’s feral population.

Currently, America’s managed hives are a mainstay of the agricultural landscape, producing honey and providing pollination for more than 100 types of crops, from almonds to apples. Even the White House has a hive, to pollinate First Lady Michelle Obama’s organic garden.

But the health of these little laborers remains precarious, according to Robyn Rose, national program manager for honey bees in APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program. Part of the problem is colony collapse disorder (CCD), a little-understood phenomenon that leads colonies of bees to
disappear as dramatically and completely as the settlers at Roanoke. Poor nutrition, disease, the stresses of being shipped to fields and orchards, pesticides, and perhaps climate change are also issues—and possible root causes of CCD itself.

APHIS has been busy with a number of bee issues in recent years: apart from regulating trade in honey bees and their pollen, it has been working with Hawaii to control outbreaks of Varroa mite, and examining whether insecticide used to kill Asian longhorned beetles is adversely affecting bees. The agency has also pushed for a national bee survey since 1999, when PPQ senior entomologist Wayne Wehling began talking to ARS—USDA’s lead agency for honey bee research—about the issue.

Wehling and fellow PPQ entomologist Colin Stewart worked with ARS on a small pilot survey as far back as 2005. The current limited national survey was finally mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill. With Rose as APHIS’ lead, the survey involves 13 States and takes a holistic view of the situation by determining what kinds of diseases, parasites, and pathogens are, and are not, affecting America’s honey bees—particularly Tropilaelaps, an exotic parasitic mite found in Asia but not in the United States.

Under APHIS’ direction, apiary inspectors in each surveyed State are collecting samples from 25 apiaries per State. The survey’s elaborate protocols call for three distinct samples from eight separate hives per apiary: a “brimming ¼ cup” of live bees funneled into a mailable box; bottled bees drenched in alcohol; and leavings from each hive’s screens, which may have captured various pests and toxins. ARS’ sample analysis will provide much-needed baseline data on what the real problems, homegrown or foreign, might be.

So far, the survey is going well. One rural post office balked at sending live bees; some inspectors have sent too many. But these are small hiccups to Rose, whose mission is, she notes wryly, “to protect this invasive species.” With any luck, the National Honey Bee Pest and Disease Survey may help USDA’s scientists determine how to do just that in the years ahead.

Veterinary Services (VS) is on a roll.

All four participants in VS’ 2009 Summer Veterinary Career Pathways Internship Program have been accepted into veterinary school this coming fall. The Pathways intern program provides opportunities for pre-veterinary students in underrepresented minority groups to gain practical experience in the veterinary medical profession. The goal overall is to increase students’ chances of acceptance into veterinary medical colleges.

Congratulations to VS and to the 2009 Pathways interns: Ranette Goodwyn (Virginia-Maryland Regional, College of Veterinary Medicine), Jareca Giles (North Carolina State University, College of Veterinary Medicine), Vivek Kamath, and Dawn Dixon-Lewis (both University of Tennessee, College of Veterinary Medicine).
new employee tool

up the chain

By Jacob Hegeman

Because agency employees rely increasingly on Web 2.0 technologies, APHIS has developed a new collaboration tool that allows for greater online exchange of employee ideas.

Launched July 13, Up the Chain is a new site that allows APHIS senior leaders to post questions or concepts regarding the agency’s strategic direction. APHIS employees can review, comment about, and even vote on which items should be carefully considered by senior leaders.

In conjunction with Up the Chain, APHIS has also created a public site called Tell APHIS that offers similar functionality for all stakeholders.

Up the Chain provides employees and senior leaders with key features and benefits:

• Employees can post feedback or ideas and see the feedback of others
• Employees can vote on other employee ideas
• Senior leaders can ask focused questions and gather informal feedback and input from employees prior to pursuing new policies or programs
• Employees and leaders can see feedback on multiple topics at one time
• Employees and leaders benefit from increased transparency

For the site’s launch, the first topic is “stakeholder engagement in APHIS.” The following series of questions are posed: As APHIS continues with efforts to build bridges to all stakeholders—both those who support and disagree with agency decisions, policies, and regulations—what strategies should we pursue? What is already working well? What challenges will employees across APHIS face? What new training or skill sets will you need?

The Up the Chain page can be accessed via the APHIS portal, https://my.aphis.usda.gov/wps/myportal/, or at http://aphideas.usda.gov/UptheChain

Visit the site often to share your thoughts and see what others are saying. New topics will be introduced frequently.

photos from the field

Click Camera to See Photos

Send Your Photos for Next Issue
Give others the chance to step outside their day and into yours. We’re still accepting photos.

Send photos by e-mail with a brief caption to: inside.aphis@aphis.usda.gov


Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments. For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
Summer heat can be dangerous. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to excessive heat resulted in 8,015 deaths in the United States between 1979 and 1999. You can help guard yourself against heat-related illnesses by observing the following tips for staying safe while working under the summer sun.

• Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to rehydrate! By the time you feel thirsty, you’ve already dehydrated. Aid your body’s cooling process by drinking plenty of non-alcoholic, unsweetened fluids throughout the day, at 15-minute intervals. Avoid very cold drinks because they can cause stomach cramps.

• Try to rest periodically in shaded areas. Plan your most strenuous activity for either the early morning or late evening, when ultraviolet (UV) rays are not as strong.

• Wear light weight, loose, light-colored clothing, and a wide-brimmed hat or sunglasses for greater protection against the sun. They also work to keep you cooler.

• Use sunscreen that protects against UV rays with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Sunscreen lotions prevent overexposure to UV rays that can lead to sun damage, sun burns and possibly skin cancer.

Heat-related illnesses can range from minor heat cramps to severe or even fatal heat stroke, but these conditions all have one thing in common: They can be easily prevented. Routinely following these tips can help you stay safe and make your workday a little easier.

Congratulations to APHIS’ Rebecca Bech, Michael Gregoire, Gregory Parham, and Kevin Shea who have each earned a 2009 Presidential Rank Award. The awards recognize career senior executives who sustain accomplishments over an extended period of time, demonstrating strength, integrity, industry, and a relentless commitment to public service. For each of the agency recipients, their strides in improving APHIS have focused on making internal processes more efficient as well as on placing greater emphasis on stakeholder and public interest and input.

“Through their exceeding levels of commitment to APHIS and this agency’s mission, these four individuals have undoubtedly demonstrated how deserving they are of this prestigious award,” said Cindy Smith, APHIS Administrator.
Last fall, we ran an article about Wildlife Services (WS) launching work at two U.S. airbases in the Middle East: Joint Base Balad in Iraq and Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan. The article appeared just as the first rotation of wildlife biologists was starting its work to address wildlife hazards at the airbases’ runways. In July, the program dispatched the final two-person team, for a total of six biologists. Candidates for the 2010–11 rotation are being sought.

While overseas, these employees’ lives and their work have been very different from their usual experiences here in the States. To illustrate, we thought it best to simply share their own words with you. Here’s a sampling of what they’ve sent home to APHIS in e-mails and reports.

**11/22/09—Keel Price**
WS wildlife biologist in Afghanistan, writing to Chris Bowser, wildlife biologist in Iraq

“It feels good to be back in the field again, I can’t wipe the smile off my face.

I made a deal with a guy camped over by the dump to use his cooking fire to boil traps in return for giving him jackal meat. I still need space to work and store equipment. I found an old Russian munitions bunker at end of the runway that is usable. I just have to clear one more hurdle to claim it as my own. It needs to be checked for mines and a nod from the CO.

I got some traps set today. There is lots of jackal sign here. Biggest problem is thousands of Mynas. They feed on weed seeds and roost mostly on base. They seem to cross the field some in the mornings and at dusk. I’m badly in need of some grain for pre-baiting and some DRC-1339.

I set up transect points last week but have to skip one point for a few weeks... [someone on base complained] about getting too close to his de-mining operation. Everyone thinks I’m suicidal because I get off the hard pack and pavement but I came here to work and that is exactly what I’m going to do…”

**11/27/09—Keel Price**
Writing to Mike Begier, WS national coordinator for Airport Wildlife Hazards Program, Washington, D.C.

“Sorry, the call didn’t work out. Friday is my must-do survey day. The truck wouldn’t hardly run, I was stuck in the mud and spent a couple of hours digging out. Just one of those days. I did trap a couple of jackals and shot another with the AF shotgun. Took one of a pair, unfortunately it was the male.

The mynas line Disney Street by the thousands at night and now they are in 3 hangars right on the flight line. If I could get that hazing light, I think I could move those from the AOA. I’m told that the mynas’ [sic] cross the runway frequently but haven’t observed very much of that myself. There are just so many mynas that controlling the population by some percentage should reduce the risk by a similar percentage... perhaps if we dropped those [the mynas] in the hangar area instead of moving them it might be a good idea. I have no idea if I can get...
The worst day in the field is better than the best day at the office.

is 17 and the jackals just keep trickling in. I’m up to 30 now.

mess hall, don’t assume it will be there again. When it’s there, fill finding a simple birthday card. When you see something at the

Someone needs to send me baking soda. Believe it or not there is

One trip to the quartermaster laundry and you won’t recognize them.

a starling-style trap fabricated. The mynas are very communal and

12/04/09—Keel Price

Wing Safety Office to Ali Air base.... Their

biggest issue is the open garbage burn

Wing Safety Office to Ali Air base.... Their

impress the guys with some 300 yard

4/4/10—Galen Truan
Wildlife Biologist, Monthly Report from Iraq

“On the 20th I flew with personnel of the Wing Safety Office to Ali Air base.... Their biggest issue is the open garbage burn pit and waste water lagoons located at the end of one of their runways.... it attracts several species of gulls that flock to them every morning.... The personnel in the Safety Office have been doing a pretty good job at trying to disperse the birds, but they have been limited by what equipment they have used.... the shotguns they are using are short barreled combat shotguns with cylinder bore barrels that are on loan from the Army.... I recom-
Since February 2010, U.S. State Department reports out of Northern Mexico have been harrowing narratives, chronicling eastward-expanding drug cartel violence. This violence has taken increasingly different and unpredictable forms: gunfights, grenade attacks, and carjackings to name just a few. The violence was particularly acute in Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa, both port cities on the other side of the Rio Grande from Texas.

At both locations, APHIS employees regularly crossed the border, traveling around 15–18 miles into Mexico, to inspect livestock coming into the United States. In Reynosa and the surrounding areas, APHIS personnel—many of them Mexican citizens working for USDA—also carried out decades-long pest work to protect U.S. citrus from the Mexican fruit fly (Mexfly).

Fortunately, no APHIS employees have been injured in the escalating violence. But some have experienced frightening encounters.

In one instance, suspected drug traffickers dressed as police stopped two employees at a road block and pointed guns through their window at another approaching vehicle. In another instance, suspected traffickers reportedly detained and robbed two employees of their radios and identification.

Working in concert with State Department regional security officers and USDA’s Homeland Security Office, personnel with APHIS Security, Veterinary Services (VS), and International Services (IS) began evaluations to assess employee security at Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo.

“We couldn’t determine a safe method to resume operations,” says Mark Davidson, associate director of VS’ Western Region. So on March 29th, APHIS suspended all livestock inspections in Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa. The State Department ordered all field work around Reynosa to stop, including IS and Plant Protection and Quarantine Mexfly suppression and eradication efforts.

“There are a lot of dangerous parts of the world that APHIS is in—the difference in Mexico is that it’s very random and dynamic,” says IS Senior Attaché Darya Chehrezad, whose work with APHIS took him to countries like Afghanistan and Colombia before he settled into his current post in Mexico City.

“In Mexico, so much of U.S. production is counting on us to maintain a barrier and mitigate risks of pests moving north,” he says. But while there isn’t, as Chehrezad puts it, “room for a trade hiccup on the border,” when it comes to APHIS employees, there is no question: “Their security is our paramount concern.”

Chehrezad also points out that APHIS is “very good at being a creative agency,” and recent activities in Pharr, TX, on the other side of the Rio Grande from Reynosa, illustrate that.

“In Mexico, we had the facilities to hold 2,000 head of cattle; here it’s 200,” says Roberto Garcia, a VS port veterinarian now overseeing activities at a temporary livestock inspection site in Pharr. “Coordination is key, and deadlines become especially important,” Garcia says. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
aphis adjusts work in mexico

Continued from page 7

and Hidalgo County employees, as well as employees with USDA’s Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP), helped make the historic San Juan Plantation site typically used for CFTEP activities operational as a U.S. port of entry.

The first cattle shipment arrived at the site on May 13. Inspectors found a live tick, so the shipment was rejected and returned to Mexico the same day.

A second cattle shipment passed inspection—meaning, among other things, a visual inspection for ticks or illness and a review of identification and tuberculosis-testing paperwork—and went on to its U.S. destination, all on the same day because cattle can’t be held overnight at the temporary site. (Mexican authorities had provided overnight security at the Reynosa facility.)

A temporary inspection site is now up and running in Laredo, too, with VS staff rotating as needed between Pharr and Laredo, around 150 miles apart.

As for Mexfly efforts, APHIS is continuing the aerial release of sterile fruit flies, but all field work—fumigating fruit trees and trapping to monitor pest populations—remains at a standstill in and around Reynosa. Many of the employees who did such work are now either staying in the laboratory, or taking temporary assignments in the mango and avocado programs in other border areas like Tijuana.

To assess USDA employee security across Northern Mexico, APHIS and State Department personnel have now visited all 11 ports where livestock enter, as well as an Agricultural Marketing Service office in Nogales, Sonora, and are evaluating the results.

“It’s a fluid situation that requires continuous and ongoing monitoring into the foreseeable future,” says Davidson.

Grab your camera and get to work! APHIS will be calling soon for your best work photos. Watch your e-mail for more details.

To enter the contest, employees will be asked to submit photos showing the many places we work and the many things that we do as an agency.

Winning photos will be selected quarterly. Select photos will be displayed in the APHIS Administrator’s conference room at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C.
[what is your background?]
I was born and raised near Waterloo, IL, a small farming community just south of St. Louis, MO. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Southern Illinois University–Carbondale. Over the past 20 years I have had the opportunity to work for various State and Federal agencies throughout the Eastern and Southeastern United States, primarily in positions related to wildlife ecology and management.

[how long have you been with APHIS?]
I began my APHIS career in 1993 working on migratory bird issues with Wildlife Service’s (WS) National Wildlife Research Center in Starkville, MS, and continued to work on wildlife damage management issues until transferring to Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) in 2008. I currently serve as Assistant Director for BRS’ Environmental Risk Analysis Program in Riverdale, MD.

I have worked extensively on meeting program needs in relation to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for BRS and WS. Working on NEPA issues for these two APHIS programs has allowed me to gain valuable experience working on both the operational and regulatory aspects of APHIS.

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Department of Interior rule changes associated with Canada geese and double-crested cormorants.

[priorities for the coming months?]
My top priority is to fully integrate BRS’ newly established Office of National Environmental Policy Act. My other priority is to ensure program resources are being used effectively and efficiently to accomplish our mission and to meet the expectations of the public we serve.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
Proud parent of three boys.

[hobbies?]
Vegetable gardening, camping, and hunting.

[favorite meal?]
Southern fried catfish, french fries, hush puppies, and cole slaw.

[guilty pleasure?]
Waffles with vanilla ice cream.

[favorite movie?]
Cinderella Man

[last book read?]
Home Town by Tracie Kidder
Dogs have a longstanding reputation as man’s best friend. But, if the success of the agency’s Plant Protection and Quarantine program (PPQ) continues, dogs may soon become known as invasive snails’ biggest foe.

In March, PPQ debuted canine teams trained to detect snails and slugs in the natural environment. The teams trained by PPQ have long been used at ports and mail facilities, but almost always indoors. This marks the first time teams have targeted snails and worked in outdoor settings, such as shipping container facilities and rail yards.

So far, the teams—comprised of three dogs and four handlers—have worked at several sites located in Florida, Michigan, New York, Puerto Rico, Texas, Washington, and elsewhere.

The goal varies by site: At some, it’s about detection, while at others it’s about eradication or a possible delimiting survey to understand the scope of a known localized snail population.

The teams’ inaugural project at the Port of Tacoma, WA, was aimed at supporting the existing vineyard snail eradication program. Two teams—each with one dog and one handler—came in after a treatment cycle for a week-long delimiting survey. Other port activities include ongoing habitat modification and molluscid applications.

Invasive terrestrial snails pose several risks to agriculture, including damage to crops and nursery stock and fouling of farm equipment. In Tacoma, there’s concern about potential spread to nearby grain production where the snail’s natural massing behavior would gum up farm machinery, hindering harvests and rendering crops unmarketable.

Canine team evaluations are completed routinely after each site visit, and so far they have all been very positive. “The teams have been an incredible tool, a great aid to us,” says APHIS’ National Program Manager for Mollusks, Andrea Simao, who receives the evaluations from worksite coordinators.

Comparing traditional visual detection efforts conducted by people to the work of the canine teams, Kristian Rondeau, western region program manager, puts it succinctly. “The dogs are just better at it,” says Rondeau. “Imagine people walking a 15-acre site, looking for snails that are only 12 millimeters big.”

Lisa Beckett, assistant director at USDA’s National Detector Dog Training Center in Newnan, GA, says that the scent-association training for snails is similar to the other training regimens at the center. But, in the field, the snail sniffing has introduced novel challenges.

Continued on next page
Did you know that APHIS has been at the forefront of the Federal Government’s eRulemaking Initiative and in 2005 became one of the first four Federal agencies to implement the Federal Docket Management System and its public face, Regulations.gov?

On average, Federal agencies and departments issue nearly 8,000 regulations per year. In the past, if members of the public were interested in commenting on a regulation, they would first need to know the sponsoring agency and when the regulation would be published.

They would then review the rule and its supporting documents in an agency’s reading room—an actual, physical room with paper copies on file for review. Commenters would submit their input through comment processes specific to each agency.

Today, using Regulations.gov, the public can review and submit comments on proposed rules and regulations and read supporting documentation from anywhere. And they do!

More than 300 agencies are now using Regulations.gov, and APHIS routinely ranks in the top five in terms of the number of comments submitted through that Web site.

The ranking, as of July 26, lists APHIS second in terms of total comments, ahead of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The Agency’s request for comments on its draft environmental impact statement for glyphosate-tolerant alfalfa continues to hold this year’s top spot for comments generated by a single action—with a total of 13,664 comments received.

Continued from page 10

Because the teams work outdoors, handlers face new distractions, such as the sight and scent of other small animals. Also, handlers and dogs navigate varying terrain and thick vegetation, which can tire the dogs much more quickly. To adjust, teams take frequent breaks. The program is also exploring larger dog breeds that would be more flexible in different outdoor situations.

Beckett has been pleased by the dogs’ performance and occasionally surprised by their ability to adapt in unanticipated ways. To illustrate, she mentions how quickly some dogs instinctively learned to target cool, moist areas to search for snails. During a project, one dog even discovered a small, concealed drain pipe along an outbuilding that had attracted snails.

“It’s been exciting,” says Brian Kopper, eastern regional program manager, as he talks about the canine teams’ performance so far. “Wherever they go, it creates a lot of energy. They add a new level of confidence to our survey work.”
training to excel overseas

By John Scott

This summer, the agency kicked-off its latest round of training to help APHIS employees excel while working overseas.

Now in its fourth offering, the APHIS International Training Program—developed by International Services and the Training and Development Branch—takes about 6 months to complete and offers employees insights into putting their best professional foot forward while abroad.

“It’s one of the best courses APHIS offers,” says Jerry Freier, who completed the program in March 2010 and works as a spatial epidemiology team leader for Veterinary Services’ Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health. “I’d certainly recommend it for people working internationally or with negotiations,” says Freier, adding that the program has also improved his day-to-day interactions working here in the States.

The training program covers three main areas: security and safety, negotiations in international settings, and cultural awareness—particularly in key international regions like Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

The security and safety content focuses largely on aiding employees in meeting State Department requirements, understanding how to work with U.S. embassies, avoiding missteps while working overseas, and recognizing potential security/surveillance concerns.

The negotiation portion of the course covers strategies for successful negotiations and the international and cultural dynamics that influence negotiation efforts.

The final piece, cultural awareness, teaches employees to be aware of the different cultural contexts they may be working in. For the agency, raising employees’ cultural awareness means that they can more effectively meet APHIS’ mission while abroad—whether to advance a technical point, correct miscommunications, or open new doors for U.S. products.

Among other tools the program uses to aid in this lesson is a Website—www.globesmart.com. Globesmart helps students assess themselves around six key dimensions or values that influence the way different people and cultures interact, communicate, and conduct business.

After a self-assessment, you can use the Website to compare your profile’s findings around these key areas with those typical of other cultures/countries. For example, you can see where you fall on the continuum of “direct” to “indirect” in your approach to completing tasks and communicating. You can then compare yourself to the values common in other specific countries.

Based on your profile and information about other countries, the site also offers advice for improving the success of your interactions.

“I wouldn’t travel anywhere without checking in with Globesmart,” says Freier who regularly uses the site’s resources.

[course content]

[understanding yourself in context]
In this issue, we recognize the volunteer efforts of the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program’s Wayne Burnett. Burnett—along with the agency’s Tracy Bowman, Juan (Tony) Román and John Wiemers—is a recipient of the President’s Volunteer Service Award.

Employees earn the award for their commitment to strengthening our Nation and making a difference through volunteer service. Earning his award at the bronze level, Burnett was recognized at a recent agency ceremony for volunteering nearly 250 hours a year.

**Employee Name/Program/work location:**
Wayne Burnett, APHIS Exotic Fruit Fly Director, Riverdale, MD

**Volunteer Organizations:**
Boy Scouts of America

The Frogwatch USA program with the Howard County Maryland Department of Recreation and Parks, sponsored by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

**Organizations’ Missions:**
The mission of the Boy Scouts of America and Troop 361 is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. The mission of the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks is to provide opportunities to pursue safe and enjoyable leisure activities in balance with the protection and conservation of natural resources.

**Volunteer Activities:**
As an adult leader with the Boy Scouts of America, Burnett is Committee Chairman for Troop 361 in Columbia, MD. The troop has over 60 scouts, ranging in age from 10 to 17. Burnett participates as an adult leader at summer camps, including high adventure camps involving climbing and other activities. This summer he will be escorting a group of Troop 361 scouts on a camp in the Florida Keys which will include snorkeling, sailing, and deep-sea fishing.

As a volunteer with the Frogwatch USA program, Burnett helps monitor local frog and toad populations. FrogWatch USA is a public participatory science program that allows individuals and families to learn about the wetlands in their communities and help conserve amphibians by reporting the calls of local frogs and toads.

**Time Given:**
225–250 hours per year, of which the vast majority is devoted to scouting activities, with about 10–15 hours for Frogwatch.

**Organization Web Sites:**
http://www.troop361.org/
http://www.co.ho.md.us/RAP/
http://www.aza.org/frogwatch/

**E-mail:**
Wayne.D.Burnett@aphis.usda.gov

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**training to excel**

The Website is available to employees agency-wide and can provide helpful tips, information, and insights even for those not enrolled in the training program.

**more information**
The APHIS International Training Program is typically limited to 25 participants, who are nominated by their respective program’s deputy administrator. When selecting enrollees, the agency prioritizes employees involved with international efforts and those with some international experience.

For more information about the upcoming sessions and future offerings, please contact Will Bostwick by e-mail at william.s.bostwick@aphis.usda.gov or Kathy Trickey at kathy.trickey@aphis.usda.gov.
Our thanks to those who participated and responded to the last newsletter’s question of the day: “Is it a goal of yours to work for APHIS in a leadership role—as a supervisor, manager, or other?”

Here’s how your coworkers responded.

Is it a goal of yours to work for APHIS in a leadership role—as a supervisor, manager or other?

- 58.3% would like a leadership position
- 20.8% not interested in leadership position
- 10.4% undecided about career goals
- 10.4% currently have leadership position

How safe do you feel in your workplace?

- I feel very safe in my workplace.
- I feel fairly safe in my workplace.
- I do not feel safe in my workplace.
- I do not really think about the safety of my workplace.

Optional: Provide information about where you work (i.e., State, City/Town, and Office/Unit)

Click on the following link to participate in the poll:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/aphisquestionoftheday

As always, participation is voluntary and confidential.

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Reasonable Accommodations Training; this instructor-led training course is an alternative to completing the mandatory civil rights training (e.g., ADA Amendments Act of 2008) through AgLearn. For more information, contact Sherri Sirotkin by e-mail at sherri.sirotkin@aphis.usda.gov.

August 10 at 9:00 a.m. Riverdale (for supervisors) Training room 1
August 10 at 1:00 p.m. Riverdale (employees) Training room 1

August 24 at 1:00 p.m. Webinar (supervisors)
August 25 at 1:00 p.m. Webinar (employees)

September 13 at 9:00 a.m. Ft. Collins (supervisors) WRO-Maroon Bells, Building B
September 13 at 1:00 p.m. Ft. Collins (supervisors) WRO-Maroon Bells, Building B
September 14 at 9:00 a.m. Ft. Collins (employees) WRO-Castle Peak, Building B
September 14 at 1:00 p.m. Ft. Collins (employees) WRO-Maroon Bells, Building B
September 15 at 9:00 a.m. Ft. Collins (supervisors) NWRC
September 15 at 1:00 p.m. Ft. Collins (employees) NWRC
September 16 at 9:00 a.m. Ft. Collins (supervisors) WRO-Maroon Bells, Building B
September 16 at 1:00 p.m. Ft. Collins (employees) WRO-Maroon Bells, Building B

Incident Command System training courses are available to employees throughout the year. For a current schedule, visit http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/training/incident_command_system_program.shtml
On Veterans Day, America paid tribute to the countless Americans who have served with honor in the U.S. Armed Forces, abroad and at home. And Paul Ijams, the officer in charge of APHIS' National Plant Germplasm Inspection Station (NPGIS) in Beltsville, MD, made a special contribution to the cause this year—by helping soil from U.S. military cemeteries and battlefields around the world become part of a living memorial to Congressional Medal of Honor (CMOH) recipients.

NPGIS was one of the key participants in a unique project recently completed by the Smithsonian Institution. The project began 3 years ago as a gleam in the eye of Brett McNish, a supervisory horticulturist for the Smithsonian's gardens and avid history buff, and his friend Todd Price, the director of Wagner Farm in Illinois. Their idea: to plant a memorial oak tree just outside the National Museum of American History (NMAH) in Washington, D.C., and then to enhance its dedication ceremony by collecting soils from sites of American military significance at home and abroad. The larger concept, said McNish, was to connect the Smithsonian's grounds with its exhibitions—in this case, NMAH's The Price of Freedom: Americans at War, which examines how wars have shaped American history and transformed society.

Earlier this year, McNish contacted Ijams, who directed him to Plant Protection and International Services:

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By Vivian Keller

aphis salutes soldiers’ tree at smithsonian

with its exhibitions—in this case, NMAH's The Price of Freedom: Americans at War, which examines how wars have shaped American history and transformed society.

Paul Ijams looks over soil samples and documentation at the National Plant Germplasm Inspection Station in Beltsville, MD.

Continued on next page
soldiers’ tree

Continued from page 1

Quarantine’s permit office to approve the soil imports he needed for the project. Subse-

quently, groundskeepers with the American Battle Monuments Commission, which
 maintains U.S. military cemeteries abroad, U.S. Department of State staffers, and others
 worldwide began collecting soil samples.

Ultimately, soil from more than a dozen cem-

eteries and battlefields representing the span
 of U.S. military involvement abroad—from
 Mexico, Iwo Jima, France (Norman-
 dy), and General George S. Patton’s
 grave in Luxembourg to Vietnam, Afghanistan,
 and Iraq—made its way to Beltsville.

Each small shipment of soil arrived in a small
 opaque white container, which Ijams promptly
 baked at 250 degrees Fahrenheit for about 2
 hours in NPGIS’ oven. The sterilized soil then
 went to McNish, for a November 10 ceremony
 attended by active duty servicemen, U.S.
 Government VIPs, Smithsonian staff, the pres-
 ident of the CMOH Foundation, and others.
 Sixteen veterans poured the Beltsville soils, as
 well as soil from Revolutionary and Civil War
 battle sites, into a wheelbarrow, where they
 were mixed together by CMOH recipient Brian
 Thacker and spread at the base of the tree by
 all the audience’s veterans—a symbol of the
 military’s unity of purpose and commitment.

In a final blessing for the tree, Thacker said he
 hoped that in 100 years “it will not have seen
 all the trials and tribulations we’ve seen…that
 it is a more peaceful century.”

McNish called the experience “exhilarating.”
 And Ijams, who attended the ceremony with
 his daughter, was delighted to have been
 involved. “This was certainly something differ-
 ent for us,” he said. “It’s pretty exciting to be
 a part of it.”

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C. Smith, A. Tasker (PPQ), USDA, K. Wehner (WS).
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On October 7, APHIS hosted its first annual Supervisor of the Year award ceremony in Riverdale, MD. The event honored each of the APHIS program nominees and announced Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Arthur Berlowitz as this year’s recipient of the agency-level award.

Berlowitz is the officer in charge at PPQ’s South San Francisco Plant Inspection Station. There, he manages a highly diverse staff of 18 people—notably all of whom nominated him for this year’s award. To hear more about Berlowitz’s accomplishments, click HERE to view Associate Administrator Kevin Smith’s remarks from the award ceremony.

In addition to Berlowitz, other program nominees for the 2010 award were: Joseph Nelson (Animal Care), Thomas Sim (Biotechnology Regulatory Services), John Shaw (International Services), Felicia Stepney (Legislative and Public Affairs), Jacqueline Freeman (Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services), Stephen O’Neill (Policy and Program Development), Byron Rippke (Veterinary Services), and Tyler Campbell (Wildlife Services).

Each of the agency nominees had earlier received supervisor awards within their respective programs, where they were recognized for their exemplary leadership, their commitment to fostering employee excellence, and their contributions to the Secretary’s cultural transformation initiative.

As part of the agency award ceremony, Berlowitz and other nominees participated in a brief panel discussion and responded to questions regarding their insights as agency supervisors.

I jumped at the chance to volunteer to coordinate APHIS’ Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) activities in the Washington area this year. I definitely had enough work to do already, but CFC is important to me. Volunteering was a way for me to focus on something positive. Every day, we hear stories about families who struggle as our economy recovers. We witness the impacts of environmental disasters and war. It’s rarer to hear stories about people who work to better themselves, their families, and their communities. For me, that’s what CFC is about. CFC is, of course, about charity. But charity is abstract. CFC means giving real dollars to real organizations that do real things for our communities.

I’ve talked to several CFC charities this year—every one of them has told me how even a single CFC dollar allows them to deliver critical programs and services. A single dollar feeds real families in our neighborhoods. A dollar helps a homeless child off the streets. For the organizations in this year’s Catalogue of Caring, CFC has real, tangible meaning. That’s why I chose to volunteer my time for CFC and that’s why I’ll donate my money.

Whether you’re in the D.C. area or within one of the many other CFC campaign areas throughout the country, I ask each of you to go online or fill out a pledge form to give to the CFC. You don’t have to give a lot to make a positive difference in your community.
As part of APHIS’ ongoing effort to prepare for damaging animal disease outbreaks, Veterinary Services (VS) recently sponsored an extensive series of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) tabletop exercises. Hosted by 16 different National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories throughout the United States, the series began in May and ran through September.

The objectives of the exercises were to closely examine early-, mid-, and late-response activities related to a theoretical FMD disease outbreak. Participants included approximately 400 animal health professionals from Federal, State, and international governments, universities, and industry. Each exercise began with a foreign animal disease investigation, progressed through the confirmation and spread of FMD, and concluded with outbreak recovery and efforts to demonstrate disease freedom.

[lessons learned]
A previous tabletop exercise series in 2008 for avian influenza helped improve NAHLN laboratories’ overall ability to respond to foreign animal diseases. With the recent FMD exercises, VS anticipates again building upon its efforts with lessons learned.

Each laboratory participating in the FMD series will receive an individualized after-action report; a final summary report with recommendations based on the findings from each exercise in the series will also be provided to all participants.

VS has already identified several preliminary themes for improvement:

- Increase understanding on various facets of the response process, including foreign animal disease reporting procedures and policies, roles, and responsibilities.
- Provide laboratory and field personnel with information on decision points and timelines, and for the validation and use of diagnostic technologies.
- Provide laboratory and field personnel with additional information on resources available during an outbreak.

The NAHLN program staff would like to thank all who collaborated in the development and delivery as well as all who participated in the exercises. Partnerships are essential as we work together to safeguard animal health.

More information on the FMD Tabletop Exercises will be posted in early 2011 to the NAHLN Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahln/. For up-to-date information, consider subscribing to the NAHLN’s quarterly newsletter, The NAHLN Quarterly. To subscribe, e-mail Jill Brown at jill.m.brown@aphis.usda.gov.

Lanny Pace, NAHLN laboratory director of Mississippi State University’s Veterinary Research & Diagnostic Laboratory, listens to discussions at the FMD exercise at Murray State University, Hopkinsville, KY.
In his message for the 62nd Secretary’s Annual Honor Awards, Secretary Tom Vilsack praised USDA employees, noting, “By any measure, USDA employees make enormous contributions to the good of our Nation.”

At the ceremony in August, APHIS employees showed themselves worthy of the Secretary’s words and praise, earning a total of three Honor Awards for their work.

[H1N1 coordination group]
The H1N1 Coordination Group, led by APHIS’ Lisa Ferguson and Jonathan Zack, earned recognition for its efforts in developing a flexible, interagency-sanctioned and risk-measured approach for finding H1N1 virus in swine.


Other group members included employees with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[pennsylvania plum pox eradication project team]
Led by APHIS’ Donald Albright, this team coordinated response efforts leading to the eradication of plum pox virus in Pennsylvania in 2009. As a highly collaborative effort, team members included APHIS employees, growers, industry, and State and university officials. Plum pox is a devastating viral disease of stone fruit that appeared in the United States for the first time in Pennsylvania in 1999.

APHIS team members were: Christopher Ball, Thomas Chanelli, Gary Clement, Laurene Levy, Bill Swartz, and Mafalda Weldon.

[emergency support function 11 team]
Under the National Response Framework there are 15 Emergency Support Functions, or ESFs, that guide how our Government works with State, Tribal, and local governments, as well as the private sector, during emergencies.

ESF 11 focuses on the protection of agriculture and natural resources, and APHIS’ Emergency Management Safety and Security Division (EMSSD) is the designated national ESF 11 coordinator.

The ESF 11 team, led by Ronald Walton, earned its Honor Award for its efforts to prepare for and respond to numerous crises involving ESF 11—from the earthquake in Haiti to flooding in North Dakota and ice storms in New England.


Additional team members included employees with USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service and the Food Safety and Inspection Service.
hungry pests

web site targets
(un)wanted pests

By John Scott

In communications, it’s often best to keep it simple. Straightforward. Focused.

The agency’s Web site, “Hungry Pests: They’re Here and They’re Hungry!” heeds this advice. Without clutter, the site provides information about some of our Nation’s most (un)wanted invasive pests.

In addition to its easily navigable links about each pest, the site includes images to help identify pests, clear steps for people to take in support of pest control efforts, and information on how to report suspected sightings.

The site also features an interactive U.S. Pest Tracker map so that you can see at a glance what pests threaten or are under active quarantine in any given State and its counties.

As both an APHIS employee and a resident in your home State, you should visit the site to see what pests may be lurking in your area.

[expanding web site reach]

Originally designed to educate the general public in California about invasive agricultural pests, APHIS retooled and relaunched the site in August to target a national audience and to include forest pests such as the Asian longhorned beetle and emerald ash borer.

Like its predecessor, the retooled site will be supported by a slate of dynamic television/radio ads and public service announcements that steer the public to the Web. Clips from the previous campaign are posted on the current site.

Contracts for a new ad campaign to promote the Web site should be finalized soon, with the ads likely to begin running in the spring.

Together, Legislative and Public Affairs and the Plant Protection and Quarantine program plan to concentrate campaign outreach efforts in 12 States selected because of their higher risk for invasive pest introductions or spread.

The 12 States are: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington.
Did you know? to safeguard the thousands of dogs and other warm-blooded animals flying to, from, and between U.S. airports annually, APHIS carried out 795 airport inspections in fiscal year 2010?

Animal Care (AC) inspector Chad Moore’s beat includes Chicago O’Hare International, a high-traffic hub where some 55 airlines and ground transport operators are registered as animal shippers under the Animal Welfare Act.

Animal jet-setters fly the big airlines and also via transporters like UPS and FedEx, keeping AC inspectors like Moore very busy. He carries out some 100 airport inspections every year.

It’s mostly dogs that take to the skies, shipped as pets or by dealers; however, other animals take wing as well. Many cats and the occasional monkey, tiger, and remarkably even marine mammal sometimes travel by air.

In 2008, Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium began upgrading its facility. During the project, Moore and other AC inspectors monitored the move of three beluga whales and two Pacific white-sided dolphins. Because of the extent of the work, and the specialty of their housing, the marine mammals were flown 1,000 miles to Connecticut’s Mystic Aquarium.

The move, which was a year in the works, involved a dozen zoo handlers hoisting animals via hammocks into specifically-designed containers. Next, with partially-submerged handlers and police in tow, the belugas and dolphins were whisked to O’Hare and smoothly loaded aboard a FedEx cargo plane.

“They were in hammocks and they were just as comfortable as they could be,” said Moore. “It was great.” ●

ATAC Celebrates 10-Year Anniversary

Launched in July 2000, ATAC started originally with a staff of nine. Today, ATAC’s staff of 16 processes approximately 5,800 incidents monthly that are then worked by the various APHIS IT personnel using the APHIS Remedy Incident Management system. In addition, ATAC technicians resolve, on average, 3,700 incidents each month for APHIS and non-APHIS customers.

See if you recognize any of ATAC’s original cast in this photo. Most are still part of APHIS’ IT community. Click the photo to see the names of those shown. ●
The incoming requests may differ, but often they begin with the same rising sense of panic.

“I’ve been asked to host a group of trade visitors from Canada, and I don’t know what to do!”

“Italy’s chief veterinary officer is bringing a delegation to learn about our role in biotechnology. And they want to tour USDA’s Beltsville labs. How can I do all that?”

Thankfully, there’s no need for panic. The APHIS Visitor’s Program is here to help.

The APHIS Visitor’s Program is available to facilitate such meeting requests and to maintain a comprehensive log of APHIS activities related to agency meetings with international visitors, representatives, embassy officials, and delegations.

The program operates from its office at APHIS’ headquarters in Riverdale, MD. At any given time, the small but experienced staff may be coordinating 20 or more meetings between APHIS personnel and foreign visitors.

[more than coffee and name tags]
Sometimes people first encounter the visitor center staff face-to-face as they set up a meeting’s greeting table with coffee, refreshments, and name tags. However, rest assured that their role in meeting planning started way before that morning’s coffee prep.

In the month leading up to the meeting, the staff has already prepared a full log of information about the visit, including the names, biographies, contact information, and passport details on each of the visitors. They have also called program representatives to discuss how the visit can advance the agency’s goals.

Additionally, they have consulted with the APHIS Trade Support Staff and contacted the International Services’ representative in the visitors’ home country to obtain advice based on specific knowledge about the region. And, they have researched which USDA or other Federal agencies may have a stake in the outcome of the visit.

For meetings in Riverdale, the visitor’s center staff also coordinates room preparations, including preferred seating arrangements, audio/visual equipment, and telephone lines for conference calls.

[protocols and presents]
To serve employees in Riverdale and agency field locations, the Visitor’s Program is always available to consult with about important protocols for meetings with foreign visitors. Trust them—these details matter. For example, they can describe the preferred room layout for negotiations with high-level Chinese delegations. They can explain how best to greet visiting groups from Muslim countries.

Additionally, the visitor’s center staff is a valuable resource for explaining permitted expenses for meals/events, and they can suggest appropriate gifts as gestures of welcome for visitors.

[contact information]
APHIS Visitor’s Center Program
http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/is/tcb/visitors_center/
phone: 301-734-7607
e-mail: itrcbrequests@aphis.usda.gov
question of the day

[your results]
Our thanks to everyone who participated and responded to the last newsletter’s question of the day: “How safe do you feel in your workplace?”

Here’s how your coworkers responded:

How safe do you feel in your workplace?

- 58.7% feel very safe in the workplace
- 28.6% feel fairly safe in the workplace
- 6.3% do not feel safe in the workplace
- 6.3% do not think about safety in the workplace

[next question please]
As we near the holiday season, many of us will be challenged with even busier home and work schedules. Given this, we thought it a good time to ask the following question:

How would you rate yourself at keeping a healthy work/life balance?

- I do a good job of keeping a healthy work/life balance.
- I do a fair job of keeping a healthy work/life balance.
- I have a difficult time keeping a healthy work/life balance.
- I have an unhealthy work/life balance.

Click on the following link to participate in the poll: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/aphisquestionoftheday

Go Outside
[inside]

aphis senior leaders conference

By Scott Moore

APHIS has numerous priorities to juggle. While its primary mission is to protect American agriculture, the agency is also duty-bound to serve its customers. And, all the while, it must also effectively engage with agency employees, balance its resources and costs, and coordinate with departmental officials and political appointees.

With the goal of better juggling these tasks and improving the implementation of the agency’s mission, APHIS recently held a 2-day Senior Leaders Conference in Gaithersburg, MD. About 75 leaders from throughout the agency gathered in late October to discuss how best to address the agency’s mission in light of the Obama Administration’s priorities, the Secretary’s Cultural Transformation initiative, and current fiscal and political challenges.

During the gathering, Administrator Cindy Smith referred to the agency as a “well-oiled machine.” And throughout the conference, Smith and APHIS leaders also talked about the value of innovation.

Picking up on this theme, Patricia Douglass, State plant health director for Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, said the conference focused on “being creative in how we interpret and implement the spirit of our regulations and about building relationships of all types in positive, constructive ways.”

[change and innovation]
Guest keynote speaker Ken Miller spoke about the importance of change and innovation. Author of We Don’t Make Widgets: Overcoming the Myths That Keep Government from Radically Improving, Miller advised APHIS leaders to change their thinking. To cut costs and become more customer-focused, Miller said the agency must understand that change and innovation are an essential part of today’s government. As Miller noted, government agencies often need to “straighten the pipes” to make things run more efficiently.

Continued on next page
**Manager Profile**

**with**

**Helene Wright**

**State Plant Health Director, California Plant Protection and Quarantine**

**What is your background?**
I started with USDA as a grain inspector in 1976—joined APHIS in 1978. I circled the country a couple of times in various positions and eventually came back to Sacramento—the city where I grew up!

**How long have you been with APHIS?**
32 years—this is amazing to me. I thought I would try working at USDA for a year at most, but just stayed on. The longer I stayed, the better it got!

**Most memorable APHIS experience?**
Working out of a cherry picker to find/verify gypsy moth egg masses in Illinois.

**Priorities for the coming months?**
Getting a little more balance in my life. It has been a hectic summer, and I have been in the office way too much...

**Accomplishment most proud of?**
Surviving, and usually thriving, in the midst of all that is going on in California. It’s a good thing I’m a “chaos junkie”...

**Hobbies?**
When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping!

**Favorite meal?**
Great pasta—portabella raviolis are the best!

**Guilty pleasure?**
Chocolate—I try for moderation, but sometimes you just have to indulge yourself a bit.

**Favorite movie?**
It’s been too long since I actually sat down to watch a movie... And, I’m not fond of theaters. All I seem to find are overpriced tickets, sticky floors, and usually bad sound.

**Last book read?**
*Truck, A Love Story* by Michael Perry.
It’s good light reading, but is filled with life lessons.

**Senior Leaders Conference**

Continued from page 9

Gary Greene, director of the Moscamed (Medfly) Program for International Services in Guatemala City, echoed the conference’s message regarding innovation. Greene said the brainstorming sessions showed that the Administrator “…is open to new ideas and looking for increased innovation from APHIS employees.”

Rick Hill, director of the Center for Veterinary Biologics in Ames, IA, praised the meeting for encouraging leaders to work collaboratively with colleagues in different mission areas or geographic locations. Hill pointed out that just as APHIS reaches across boundaries—to other countries and to Federal and State agencies—so must employees be open to collaborations within the agency.

“Building relationships across APHIS is critical to our respective and collective missions,” Hill said. “These meetings allowed leaders to discuss and learn that our units and staffs are facing similar challenges and opportunities.”

The result, Hill said, will be better decisions and strategic actions—and a renewed sense of purpose.
Did you know that the largest single airlift of horses into the United States just took place in Kentucky?

More than 800 equines traveled from abroad for the World Equestrian Games in September and October. Added to that number were a significant number of horses that arrived from other U.S. States and Canada. Altogether, there were more than a thousand horses whose health APHIS and its cooperators kept a watchful eye on.

The World Equestrian Games event is the equine equivalent of the Olympics. And like the Olympics, it occurs just every 4 years. This year was the first time that it was held in the United States. As the host State, Kentucky tackled the task of preparing for the massive influx of horses, athletes, and fans from 58 countries worldwide.

APHIS Veterinary Services’ National Center for Import and Export (NCIE) prepared for the Games for more than 5 years leading up to the event, collaborating with numerous State and industry partners throughout the process.

With so many horses in one place at one time, it was vital for APHIS to come up with effective plans to prevent the spread of equine disease and keep American horses safe and healthy while the Games were underway.

To safely accommodate the influx of horses, NCIE officials set up a temporary facility at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) that could handle the quarantine of 450 or so horses arriving from Europe and the Middle East. There, the horses were monitored for 42 hours before being released to compete in Kentucky. The CVG facility was managed primarily by the Games veterinary staff with assistance from APHIS and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

Horses arriving from other countries were held for a short time at regular USDA ports of entry like Miami, Los Angeles, and New York. Event organizers and veterinarians also conducted tick suppression activities and performed regular veterinary check-ups on horses throughout the event.

“This was a once-in-a-lifetime event, and it was an absolutely phenomenal experience. The logistics involved to move roughly 500 horses internationally was a feat in itself,” said Rob Southall, APHIS Kentucky area veterinarian in charge.

For more information about the World Equestrian Games, visit the event Web site at: http://www.alltechfeigames.com/
For this year’s APHIS Administrator’s Award, Cindy Smith awarded four groups and two individual agency employees with honors for their work.

The Administrator’s Award is presented each year in recognition of collaboration, creativity, and outstanding contributions to the APHIS mission. This year’s award recipients are:

[aphis labor relations, plant protection and quarantine, and national association of agricultural employees]

Together, these group members achieved the “Most Improved” labor-management relationship government-wide. With a new team of labor, management, and union representatives, they collaborated to develop a productive relationship that serves the needs of both the agency and employees.

Group members include: Rebecca Bech, Elizabeth Blackwood, Sarah Rehberg, Peter Brownell III, Ronald Dale, Paul Eggert, Jody Feliciano, Craig Kellogg, Frank King, Michael Lidsky, Kristen Luurs, Robi Maple, Carlos Martinez, Anthony Nakamura, Michael Randall, Norma Rosario, Sherry Sanderson, and James Triebwasser.

[veterinary services, management support]

Group members earned their award for creating comprehensive workforce planning, recruitment and scholar programs. Their efforts resulted in improving the program’s efficiencies and effectiveness in planning, attracting, and providing scholarly opportunities for current and future Veterinary Services employees.

Group members include: Inez Hockaday, Thomas Scott, Eileen Cramer, LaWanda Thomas, and Pamela McDonagh.

[plant protection and quarantine, western cereal leaf beetle team]

This team was recognized for its sustained, diversified teamwork that resulted in successfully using biological control for the cereal leaf beetle. Their efforts reduced pesticide use and increased integrated crop protection for grain farmers throughout the West.

Group members include: Diana Roberts, Gary Adams, Gary Brown, Clinton Campbell, Glenn Harruff, Mark Hitchcox, Joe Merenz, Steve Miller, Mitch Nelson, Colin Park, David Prokrym, Bruce Shambaugh, Juan Alvarez, Ben Simko, Barry Bai, George Hoffman, Kathleen Johnson, Sujaya Roa, Helmuth Rogg, Richard Worth, Dan Bean, Colleen Jan-dreau, David Bragg, Mike Klaus, Terry Miller, Keith Pike, Hector Carcano, Patty Denke, Lloyd Dosdall, Edward Evans, Jay Karen, David Reed, William Roltsch, Darrin Wala, and Bryon Quebbeman.

[animal care, emergency program, saving pets saves lives]

Animal Care’s Emergency Program earned its group award for its actions in developing an effective national policy to safeguard people and their pets during disasters. The program’s efforts advance recognition at the national, State, and local level that supporting animal safety and well-being during disasters is a significant factor in ensuring the safety and well-being of people.

Group members included: Allan Hogue, Kevin Dennison, Kay Carter-Corker, Jeannie Lin, Nicole Parran-Harrell, Anneliese McCann, Vaughan Langman, Debra Sime, Tracy Thompson, Beverly Hicks, Tami Howard, Nancy Ellifrit, Gregory Gaj.

Continued on next page
aphis fills leadership positions

By John Scott

Over the summer, APHIS completed its selection for two key agency positions. The move established Joanne Munno as deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS) and Gregory Parham as APHIS associate administrator. Congratulations to both!

[Joanne Munno]
As deputy administrator for MRPBS, Munno manages the offices that provide human resource management, financial management, and administrative services to support APHIS—as well as USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service and the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. MRPBS also provides other support services to APHIS, including information technology management, emergency management, and investigative services.

Prior to her selection, Munno served as MRPBS’ acting deputy administrator and as the program’s associate deputy administrator from 2001 to 2010. Before joining APHIS, she was the Chief of the Procurement Operations Division for the USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

Munno holds a bachelor of science degree from the University of Maryland, and she has earned six USDA Secretary Honor Awards. Outside of APHIS, she is active in animal rescue work and volunteers for the City of Alexandria in a program serving mentally disabled citizens.

[Gregory Parham]
As APHIS associate administrator, Parham works closely with program heads to provide leadership and direction in science, while focusing special attention on international and trade activities.

Prior to his appointment, Parham had served as acting associate administrator for APHIS since November and as deputy administrator for MRPBS for the previous 2 years.

He began his Federal career in 1980 with the Centers for Disease Control and joined USDA in 1982, working with several USDA agencies before coming to APHIS in March 2006 as the agency’s chief information officer.

Parham holds a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins University in administrative science and doctoral and bachelor’s degrees from the Ohio State University in veterinary medicine and microbiology.

administrator’s awards

Continued from page 12

[Brett Dunlap, Wildlife Services]
Dunlap received an award for his exemplary beaver damage management program accomplishments. He has demonstrated strong leadership in developing cost-effective, collaborative projects to protect multiple resources throughout Tennessee and Kentucky.

[James Wettestad, Veterinary Services, Center for Veterinary Biologics]
Wettestad was honored for his actions in assisting an injured coworker. With compassion and a level-headed approach, Wettestad aided an employee who was severely burned at work.
His actions—both before and after the arrival of paramedics—demonstrated his exemplary skill as a trained agency emergency responder.
volunteer spotlight
tracy bowman

In this issue, we recognize the volunteer efforts of APHIS’ Tracy Bowman, the last of our featured agency recipients of the President’s Volunteer Service Award.

Employees earn the award for their commitment to strengthening our Nation and making a difference through volunteer service.

[employee name and program]
Tracy Bowman, Policy and Program Development, on detail to Biotechnology Regulatory Services as acting director, policy coordination programs

[volunteer organization]
Fidos For Freedom

[organization mission]
To increase the quality of life for people living in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan community through the provision and use of specially trained hearing dogs, service dogs, and therapy dogs.

[volunteer activities]
Bowman serves on the Fidos Board of Directors and has since 2002. She has raised puppies for the organization’s assistance dog program and currently serves as an assistance dog trainer to teach dogs in training more advanced skills. In this capacity, she works with Fidos’ clients once they have been matched with their future dog partner and helps the team learn to work together at home, at work, and in the places they typically go. Bowman also has two dogs of her own—they are both Fidos-certified therapy dogs. She and her dogs visit patients in health care settings to bring joy and affection to people who need it the most.

[time given]
Most every week, you can find Bowman at Fidos on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings helping clients learn to work with dogs in training or training with her own dogs. The dogs in training live at “Chez Bowman,” and she often spends 5-10 minutes working with them on obedience skills like a down stay or some more specialized skill, such as taking clothes out of the dryer and dropping them in a basket. Last year, she spent more than 850 hours doing one of the many things that help make a small nonprofit like Fidos succeed and thrive.

[organization web sites]
www.fidosforfreedom.org

[e-mail]
Tracy.L.Bowman@aphis.usda.gov ⊗

agency calendar

december
CFC Fundraiser Event Schedule for Riverdale, MD; Click HERE.

Federal Benefits Open Season; November 8 through December 13; annual opportunity to elect or change your enrollment in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, elect or change your enrollment in the Federal Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), or enroll in the Federal Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) for health care and/or dependent care in 2011. Visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/open_season.shtml for the latest information.

2010 Perspectives on Employment of Persons with Disabilities Conference (co-sponsored by USDA); December 8–10; Hyatt Regency, Bethesda, MD.

71st Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference; December 12–15; Minneapolis, MN.
aphis and partners send fmd vaccine to south korea

By Joelle Hayden

In late January, APHIS—along with its counterparts in Canada and Mexico—moved forward with the joint decision to provide 2.5 million doses of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine to the Republic of Korea.

The first batch of 1.25 million vaccines was shipped to South Korea on February 2, and the remaining vaccines were sent the following week.

The Republic of Korea has been battling an FMD outbreak since November 2010. Initially, the country addressed the outbreak with widespread culling measures; it has since transitioned the response to vaccination efforts that target the country’s approximately 13 million cloven-hoofed livestock.

These efforts took on increased urgency leading up to the Lunar New Year—a holiday that generates a period of increased foot traffic across the country and risked further spread of the disease.

Continued on next page
animal care
on the fast track with the center for animal welfare

By Steven Patrick

Last fall, Sarah Conant, the new chief of the Animal Health and Welfare Enforcement Branch for APHIS’ Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) program, sat in a training room in Kansas City, MO. Before her, speaking, were the directors for Animal Care’s (AC) Eastern and Western Regions. Around her, sat many of the agency’s investigators and inspectors from IES and AC, including a host of new hires.

To an outside observer, the meeting would have appeared quite ordinary; however, the September gathering—coordinated by AC’s newly christened Center for Animal Welfare—was rather remarkable. It was the first time that AC and IES staffs had gathered together for joint, formal training since they had split into separate programs in the late 1980s.

[a busy start]
The new Center for Animal Welfare opened last fall in Kansas City, and it was established to—among other things—create this kind of training opportunity. Already off to a busy start, the center will play a central role in AC’s efforts to build collaborative connections, improve regulatory practices, and reach beyond its traditional enforcement role to develop outreach, training, and educational activities.

Since opening, the center has already begun tackling challenges related to AC’s collaboration with outside stakeholders—providing a venue for the program to develop unity in its practices, its guidance, and in its work with a variety of others closely involved with animal welfare issues.

In December, the center hosted representatives from more than two dozen States and tribes for a forum aimed at improving Federal-State coordination and authority-sharing in dealing with problematic dog breeders. And this spring, the center is addressing still another hot topic on the animal welfare front—tuberculosis in elephants—by bringing together scientific experts, the regulated community, and other stakeholders to discuss current science and research on this issue.

[a busy future]
If these initiatives sound ambitious for a facility that’s been operational for less than 6 months, the Center for Animal Welfare is just getting started.

Page 2 of 16
center for animal welfare

Continued from page 2

you haven't heard anything yet. Ongoing and
till to come are its efforts to provide leadership
on, and current information about, the
latest in animal welfare science and technol-
yy; to analyze the efficacy of our agency's
animal care-related policy choices; and to
probe the crossroads where science and
policy meet.

“This center has been a long time coming,”
said the center’s director, Nora Wineland.
“There has long been a need for a place
where the science of animal care can be
explored. We feel that we can be that place
where people go to find out the latest re-
search in this emerging field.”

To help carry out its goals, the center has
drafted a team of top animal care experts with
specialties ranging from exotic animals to
kennels. The experts will be available to provide
best-practices advice not only to agency and
other Federal government staff, but also to
stakeholders, States, and other countries,
with the ultimate goal of becoming recognized
as a collaborating center for the World Organiz-
ation for Animal Health.

“We’re looking to have an international role
as far as getting the current science out there
and helping other countries with their animal
welfare standards,” said Wineland.

Other plans underway, or on the center’s
drawing board, include pre-licensing activi-
ties and ongoing trainings for those regulated
under the Animal Welfare Act and Horse
Protection Act; an industry-driven initiative
aimed at ensuring the best possible canine
care standards; advising the committees
that monitor protocols on animals used in
research; and working with universities and
others to support, and sometimes fund,
new animal welfare-related research and
other efforts. ●

free LifeCare® kits available

The Work Life Wellness program wants to remind employees that they can order FREE LifeCare® resource kits designed to help them with their personal wellness and with their parenting and adult care responsibilities. Five different care kits are available.

- The Be Well Kit—includes pedometer, waist measuring tape, nutritional card, Mayo Clinic book, list of exercises, healthy eating educational guides, and more.
- The Prenatal Kit—includes bib, diaper/bottle bag, and free full editions of Dr. Spock’s Baby and Child Care, 8th Edition; Mayo Clinic: Guide to Healthy Pregnancy; and Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs.
- The Child Safety Kit—includes night light, travel first-aid kit, Choosing Age Appropriate Toys guide, and Car Seat Safety Tips.
- The College Kit—includes an emergency whistle key chain with light, screwdriver set, sewing and manicure kit, and guides on healthy eating, budgeting, and safety.
- The Adult Caregiver’s Kit—includes pill organizer, medical information storage kit, full edition of The Complete ElderCare Planner, and Avoiding Caregiver Burnout guide.

Call 1-800-222-0364 (or 1-888-262-7848 for TDD/TYY service) to request one of the free kits or to discuss your needs with a specialist. For more information about each kit, visit the APHIS Work Life Wellness Intranet Web page: http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wlw/ton_free_kits.shtml
Nora Wineland, Director
Dr. Nora Wineland, DVM, MS, DACVP, serves as the director of the Center for Animal Welfare. She received her DVM from Michigan State University in 1984, and shortly thereafter, began her career in APHIS’ Veterinary Services program as a veterinary medical officer in Ohio. After 3 years in the field, Wineland joined APHIS’ Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health, which explore and analyze animal health and related agricultural issues to facilitate informed decision-making in government and industry. In 1993, she completed an MS degree in epidemiology at Colorado State University. From 1995 to 2008, Wineland served as the director of the National Animal Health Monitoring System program, which conducts national livestock and poultry health and management studies in the United States. In 2009, she coordinated the VS 2015 initiative, which guided APHIS’ Veterinary Services program in making changes to better meet animal health needs by the year 2016. She may be reached by telephone at 816-926-2150 or by email at noraw.wineland@aphis.usda.gov.

Laurie Gage, Big Cat and Marine Mammal Specialist
Dr. Laurie Gage, DVM, DACVM, has been the big cat field specialist and marine mammal advisor for APHIS’ Animal Care program for almost 7 years. She also assists the National Marine Fisheries Service with their programs relating to the Marine Mammal Stranding Network. She is a lecturer at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and also a consultant for the Veterinary Information Network. Before working for USDA, Gage was the director of veterinary services for Six Flags Marine World for 23 years and concurrently the director of veterinary services for The Marine Mammal Center in Marin, CA, for 14 of those years. She also has been a consulting veterinarian for the Oregon Tiger Sanctuary, Safari World in Bangkok, Thailand, and for the Coyote Point Museum in San Mateo, CA, as well as a staff veterinarian for the Los Angeles Zoo. She may be reached by telephone at 707-251-5523 or by email at laurie.j.gage@aphis.usda.gov.

Gary Goldberg, Primate Specialist
Dr. Gary Goldberg, DVM, DACLAM, LATg, received his DVM from Cornell University in 1976. He brings to USDA his experience in private practice, academics, uniformed services, and the pharmaceutical industry. He practiced small/exotic animal and emergency medicine for 9 years prior to two residencies in veterinary anesthesiology and laboratory animal medicine. He served as assistant professor of comparative clinical anesthesiology and chief of experimental surgery at Columbia University, Lieutenant Commander at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Major at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute and William Beaumont Army Medical Center. He has also worked at Massachusetts General Hospital, Charles River Laboratories, and Novartis Pharmaceuticals. He may be reached by telephone at 508-791-1459 or by email at gary.p.goldberg@aphis.usda.gov.

Vaughan Langman, Biophysicist
Dr. Vaughan Langman conducts research in the areas of biophysics (thermal comfort zones, insulation, acclimatization, and solar absorption) and gas analysis (CO2, C2, CO, and N2) for APHIS. He also conducts biophysics training for veterinary medical officers and Animal Care inspectors. He holds a PhD in thermoregulation and the behavior of giraffes. Langman has served as a research fellow at Harvard University and as a professor at the University of Nairobi’s Department of Veterinary Medicine, at Wellesley College, and at Louisiana State University. He has also worked as a game warden in Kenya, East Africa, and been a trustee with the Kenya Wildlife Trust. Langman has conducted research on African and Indian elephants, giraffe, black rhinoceros, reindeer, wolves, coyotes, dogs, and killer whales. He is fluent in Swahili. He may be reached by telephone at 970-652-1140 or by email at vaughan.l.langman@aphis.usda.gov.

Craig Mabray, Kennel Specialist
Dr. Craig Mabray, MS, DVM, is a graduate of Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. He has extensive veterinary practice experience (more than 20 years) predominantly in a small animal setting, both as an owner/operator and as a corporate veterinarian with a major company. He served on the New Mexico Board of Veterinary Medicine for 4 years, including 16 months as the board’s inspector. Before joining the APHIS Animal Care program in 2010, he served as the chief of veterinary services for the City of Albuquerque Animal Welfare Department’s municipal animal shelter. He is based at the Center for Animal Welfare in Kansas City, MO. He may be reached by telephone at 816-926-2150 or by email at craig.m.mabray@aphis.usda.gov.

Denise Sofranko, Elephant Specialist
Dr. Denise Sofranko graduated from Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1985. She also holds a Master of Science degree in Journalism and Mass Communication. After receiving her DVM, she co-owned and managed a large animal veterinary practice in Manitoba, Canada. She started her career with APHIS in 1988 as a member of the Public Veterinary Practice Career program in Ohio and then worked for 4 years with APHIS Veterinary Services’ veterinary accreditation program. Before joining the APHIS Animal Care program in 1997, she took a position with the Governmental Relations Division for the American Veterinary Medical Association as a media specialist and congressional liaison. After joining Animal Care, she served as an inspector in New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado and became one of Animal Care’s first field specialists. She may be reached by telephone at 970-894-7478 or by email at denise.m.sofranko@aphis.usda.gov.
plant protection & quarantine
weaving a solution

By Alyn Kiel

Sometimes we all have a little trouble seeing beyond our own to-do lists, and we forget how APHIS truly affects the lives of others.

If you need a reminder, just consider how our agency recently worked with a small group of basket weavers from Rwanda.

The Rwanda Basket Company provides training and tools to weavers and helps open overseas markets for their woven baskets, trivets, and other items. The company’s efforts ensure a better profit for its 400 weavers and their 3,000 dependents. The money earned provides education and improves conditions for those living in one of Africa’s poorest countries.

Unfortunately, this past fall when a shipment arrived at the Seattle port of entry, inspectors found an actionable fungus, *Phyllachora* sp., on the dried grasses used to make the baskets.

The baskets were rejected, and the importers—U.S. partners with the Rwanda Basket Company—were faced with only two options: re-export to Rwanda or destroy the baskets. At the time, no treatments to mitigate the fungus were listed in the treatment manuals.

When Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) personnel in Seattle learned about the mission of the Rwanda Basket Company, and the financial impact that losing such a large shipment during the holiday season would have, they sprang into action.

Gayle van de Kerckhove, a PPQ plant pathologist, worked to identify a treatment option. She and others in PPQ determined that moist heat treatment at a certain temperature would be sufficient to mitigate the pest risk without harming the baskets.

PPQ’s efforts to assist took significant cooperation between its research, headquarters, and operations staffs. Because of the practical and relevant research by the program’s Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, the excellent customer service by its Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support staff, and the initiative of PPQ’s employees in the field, the program was able to successfully address the plant health risk and weave a solution to this challenging situation.

The baskets were treated in Seattle using the specified moist heat treatment and released just in time for sale across the United States. The new treatment option is now being used for additional handicrafts that, otherwise, may not have been cleared for importation.

The Rwanda Basket Company is a program of Rwanda Partners, a nonprofit organization dedicated to poverty reduction and reconciliation in Rwanda. You can learn more about the Rwanda Basket Company at http://www.rwandabaskets.com/.
Dear USDA Team,

On behalf of the staff and weavers of Rwanda Basket Co., we just wanted to thank you for going the extra distance in working out a treatment solution for our baskets. We are thankful for your good help.

Sincerely,
Greg Stone

Sometimes we all feel that we're going beyond our own responsibilities to help others. How APHIS truly did so recently illustrates the agency's commitment to customer service.

If you need a reminder of the importance of proper plant health management, look no further than the program to treat baskets from Rwanda. APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) mission was tasked with the critical mission of ensuring that the baskets did not carry pests into the United States.

The Rwanda Basket Company (RBC) received training and tools to improve their basket-making skills, broaden their overseas market, and increase sales of trivets, and other decorations. Their efforts ensure a better livelihood for the weavers and their 3,000.000 neighbors in Rwanda, who have been experiencing poor conditions for those living in one of Africa's poorest countries.

Unfortunately, this past fall when a shipment arrived at the Seattle port of entry, inspectors found an actionable fungus, Phyllachora sp., on the dried grasses used to make the baskets.

The baskets were rejected, and the importers—U.S. partners with the Rwanda Basket Company—were faced with only two options: one was to treat the baskets, and the other was to return the baskets to Rwanda. For the importers, it was a certain temperature would be sufficient to mitigate the pest risk without harming the baskets. PPQ's efforts to assist took significant cooperation between its research, headquarters, and operations staffs. Because of the practical and relevant research by the program's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, the excellent customer service by its Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support staff, and the initiative of PPQ's employees in the field, the program was able to successfully address the plant health risk and weave a solution to this challenging situation.

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You can learn more about the Rwanda Basket Company at http://www.rwandabaskets.com.
a conversation with MRPBS’ new ombudsman: julie cooper

By John Scott

Inside APHIS recently had a chance to sit down with Julie Cooper, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services’ (MRPBS) ombudsman, to chat about her newly established role and what it means for employees.

Inside APHIS: Julie, last November, the deputy administrator for MRPBS, Joanne Munno, added a new ombudsman role and announced that you would take on the task. I always thought an ombudsman helped people outside an organization with issues. How is your role different from that?

Julie: You are right... typically an ombudsman is someone who serves as an intermediary between an organization and an outside customer. In our case, we put a different spin on it and added an “internal” focus to it.

My role as an internal ombudsman is to help APHIS employees navigate through MRPBS when they need assistance with administrative issues.

Inside APHIS: You said you’re there to help employees with administrative issues... does this mean employees should come to you first?

Julie: No. Employees should still work through their regular service providers and use established procedures first. They should contact me if, after going through the routine avenues, they feel they either didn’t receive a reasonable explanation as to why a certain process or procedure can’t be used to meet their needs or if they weren’t provided an appropriate alternative solution.

Inside APHIS: Are there other times that employees can (or should) contact you?

Julie: Sure. Sometimes employees just don’t know where to go for assistance in the first place. While I don’t have all the answers, I can direct employees to the appropriate service provider to address their questions or concerns.

Inside APHIS: That’s good; it’s helpful to get pointed in the right direction. What if an employee has a concern about something outside of MRPBS—can you help them?

Julie: I’ll do my best to help them identify the office or location where their concern can be addressed.

Inside APHIS: Well, that makes sense. How can employees contact you?

Julie: Employees have four ways to contact me. They can call me, email me, drop by my office, or send something to me through the mail—either chain mail or postal.

When we set up this office, we knew it was really important that employees have a direct connection to me, so I’ll give you my email address—not an anonymous mailbox. Same with my phone number. Will you post all my information at the end of this article?

Inside APHIS: Absolutely! Thanks for your time today.

contact information:

julie.f.cooper@aphis.usda.gov
301-734-7742
Room 2A-02E
4700 River Road, Unit 80
Riverdale, MD 20737
wildlife services

employee volunteers with wounded warrior project

By Keel Price and John Scott

Combining his love of the outdoors and his wildlife tracking skills, Wildlife Services’ (WS) Brandon Jones found a way to serve those who have served our country. Through his volunteer efforts, Jones helped reunite wounded U.S. Army veteran Alroy Billman of Farmington, NM, with his love of hunting.

This past fall, Jones—a WS technician in New Mexico—donated three guided deer hunts to Wounded Warrior Project, a nonprofit organization that conducts programs and outreach to help injured service men and women of this generation.

Jones took Billman on a guided deer hunt in New Mexico. Billman had last hunted in 2004 prior to his deployment to Iraq with the 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment (Iowa National Guard), “Ironman” Battalion. In 2006, while on patrol in Anbar Province, he was severely wounded by an improvised explosive device (IED). Billman lost his right arm above the elbow when the IED detonated below his patrol vehicle.

According to Jones, Billman was very pleased to return to deer hunting and didn’t get much sleep the night before. On the first morning of their hunt, the pair met with success. In a steep and rocky area, they spotted a mule deer buck and stalked him to within about 300 yards.

For the shot, Billman raised his rifle to his left shoulder, a newly learned skill as he had been right-handed before his injury. After waiting for a few deer to clear out, Billman brought the buck down with a single shot from a distance of more than 200 yards.

“It was real rewarding to be out there,” said Jones. “He took a good shot.”

Billman, who is Navajo, later shared meat from the hunt with others in his clan. And he had especially kind words for his WS hunting partner: Billman said that he “…had a friend for life.”

agency calendar

***Continued on next page***

April

- Fundamentals of APHIS Human Resource Management (FAHRM) training registration due April 1 for upcoming class in Kansas City, MO, on May 16-19
- Agricultural Emergency Response Training (AgERT) course; April 3-8; held at FEMA’s Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, AL; for more information, contact Gordon Harman at (256) 231-5632 or robert.g.harman@aphis.usda.gov
- So You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor training; April 5-6; Ames, IA; registration deadline March 31; for additional course information and application details, contact Todd Szadzoff at (612) 336-3304 or todd.szadzoff@aphis.usda.gov
- APHIS Ergonomics Program’s Laboratory Ergonomics Webinar; April 13, 1:00-2:00 p.m. EST; contact Ginger Dorsey for more details at (301) 436-3165 or ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov. Other upcoming Webinars include: Office Ergonomics, Driving Ergonomics, and Manual Material Handling
**Did you know**

Did you know that two APHIS employees are currently featured in an online video campaign promoting Federal employment and the value of Federal service?

Veterinary Services’ (VS) Kate Bowers and Wildlife Services’ (WS) Chris Bowser star in separate videos produced by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as part of its video series, “Feds Unscripted.”

The video series targets two main goals in reaching out to the general public. For potential future employees, it highlights the interesting variety of Federal employment opportunities. And for U.S. taxpayers, the series illustrates the value of what they’re getting for their tax dollars.

In the videos, Kate Bowers, a veterinary medical officer, and Chris Bowser, a wildlife biologist, both talk unscripted about their day-to-day work and their chosen professions. Speaking in their own words and from their own workplaces, they each show the passion, commitment, and energy that many Federal employees bring to their work.

“I love what I do….I feel with my position, I’m able to treat the whole herd of the United States,” says Bowers in the video as she stands amidst sheep in a livestock stall. Her video was shot in Pennsylvania at the New Holland Sales Stables—the largest livestock market in the Northeast.

Although Bowser admitted to feeling a little nervous on camera at first, he says he enjoyed the chance to talk about WS and his work: “I want people to understand how diverse our work is—we do control work, research, and field work.”

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**Agency Calendar**

**April (cont’d)**

Bring Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day; April 28; contact your national APHIS or local Work Life Wellness representative to see if and when activities are planned for your work location; [http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wl/h/contacts.shtml](http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/wl/h/contacts.shtml)

Employees’ Mid-Year Progress Reviews due April 30

**May**

National Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month; watch your email for local events

FAH-FIM training registration due May 2 for upcoming class in Ames, IA, on July 18-22

AgERT course; May 15-20; see April listing above for details

FAH-FIM training course; May 16-19; Kansas City, MO

**June**

So You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor training; June 7-8; Raleigh, NC; registration deadline May 27; for additional course information and application details, please contact Todd Sazdoff at (612) 336-3304 or todd.sazdoff@aphis.usda.gov

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plant protection & quarantine
united front yields hope for grapes

By Larry Hawkins

Each spring brings with it a promise of hope and renewal. This year APHIS and its cooperators hope that it also brings the beginning of the end for the European grapevine moth (EGVM), Lobesia botrana.

The pest, found in parts of California's grape-growing regions since 2009, threatens the State's $3.9 billion grape industry. However, a united eradication effort by APHIS, California agriculture officials, and grape producers in 2010 seems to be yielding positive results.

Detection counts for EGVM soared into 2010 with numbers in the hundreds of thousands but went out at year's end with just a whispering few. Now, the Federal-State-industry team waits to see if 2011 will be the year of EGVM's defeat in California.

[the pest and the plan]
EGVM, which impacts both table and wine grapes, undergoes four life cycle stages. The moths first lay eggs on new growth and flowers, then hatch as larvae to burrow and feed within grape berries, mature as pupae within grape clusters, and finally, emerge as adults to seek mates and start the process over again, with up to three life cycles per year.

The damage EGVM leaves behind is extensive. It destroys the fruit, making grape berries unmarketable, and exposes the plant to further damage from fungal infection and rot.

Following detections of EGVM in late 2009, growers, agriculture officials, and scientists implemented a well-designed plan for the 2010 grape season. The plan was a cooperative venture, involving many players—each with its own role to contribute.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFa) and county agriculture departments launched an aggressive detection trapping program to determine the extent of the EGVM infestation. APHIS, CDFa, and University of California scientists gathered information on treatment strategies and provided growers with a plan of action. Grower organizations banded together to provide treatment of abandoned vineyards. Agriculture officials imposed movement restrictions to prevent the artificial movement of EGVM, keeping trading partners informed and preserving essential trade markets for the grape industry. Growers, agriculture officials, and scientists met continuously throughout the growing and harvest season to focus on eliminating EGVM.

[keep the strategy going]
After initial successes in suppressing the pest to very low numbers, growers, regulators, and scientists now embark on an aggressive trapping program in 2011 that they hope will find few or no EGVM. APHIS recently provided over $16.9 million to support the program's detection and regulatory work.

"This funding is very timely as we prepare to deploy traps to capture the first flight of the EGVM when they emerge from dormancy," said Bob Atkins, president of the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association. "The timing of the announcement of this critical funding is a testament to the teamwork of our Federal partners, including APHIS, OMB, and the California congressional delegation."

Increased trapping for 2011 with negative trapping results could prove that EGVM is gone and pave the way for removing regulatory restrictions. But making deregulation a reality will require negative trapping results throughout a period equal to three life cycles of the pest. Growers are feeling the pressure to keep the winning strategy going with continued treatment and sound production practices.
[your results]

Our thanks to everyone who participated and responded to the last newsletter’s question of the day: “How would you rate yourself in keeping a healthy work/life balance?”

Here’s how your coworkers responded:

42.9% good job of keeping healthy work/life balance
21.4% fair job of keeping healthy work/life balance
21.4% difficult time keeping healthy work/life balance
14.3% unhealthy work/life balance

[Project Clean Sweep]

By Kimberly Hardy

Is your desk a mess? Are you having trouble finding documents? Does being “FOIAed” scare you?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, a records clean sweep day may be just what you need. A records clean sweep day is a work day specifically set aside for sorting, sitting, storing, and trashing—as appropriate—those records and other materials that have accumulated in your office.

Scheduling a clean sweep is more than just tidying up; it’s about responsible records management. And, as Federal employees, records management is part of our jobs. It’s everyone’s responsibility.

[Save or Trash?]

According to National Archives and Records Administration’s (NARA) definition, the term “record” is pretty expansive. NARA indicates that records include “all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency... as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of the data in them.”

So, where do you begin? A good place to start is with the APHIS Information Management and Compliance (IMC) staff. APHIS Records Officer Cathy McDuffie—and others on staff—can consult with you and go over the fundamentals.

They can help identify which records you have, how long you need to keep them, how to efficiently file them, how to send records to

The APHIS IMC staff held their own records clean sweep day in mid-January, and the whole staff put aside other work to clean up their workspaces. Shown (left to right) are: Karen Stratchko, Cathy McDuffie, Lynn Kent, Kimberly Hardy, Sheniqua Harris, and Celeste Sickles.

Continued on next page
managers profile

[what is your background?]
I have a liberal arts background and a master’s degree in English literature. I had some varied experience in journalism and publishing before coming to APHIS.

[how long have you been with APHIS?]
Almost 17 years (it’s hard to believe it’s been that long).

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
I will never forget the Oklahoma City bombing, trying to come up with appropriate words to communicate about such a tragedy, and playing piano for the headquarters memorial ceremony for the employees who lost their lives. Beyond that, I will certainly remember the “cow that stole Christmas”—we were absolutely inundated with letters and email following the first detection of BSE in the United States, and it was a challenge to figure out how to manage the workload and communicate clearly about such a complicated disease.

[priorities for the coming months?]
My primary goal for the Executive Communications staff is to meet the Secretary’s timeliness goals for responding to correspondence, while continuing to maintain the high quality of our letters and other written products. I also want to continue to expand the APHIS portal and increase employee awareness of the resources the portal offers.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
Building a fabulous staff of talented employees who are highly motivated and really care about their work promoting APHIS’ mission and activities.

[hobbies?]
International travel (in the last 10 years I’ve been to London, Prague, South Africa, China, and Argentina); live music, particularly classical; reading; playing the piano.

[favorite meal?]
Dinner at a good Indian restaurant, or my mother’s cooking!

[guilty pleasure?]
I’ve been known to watch some “reality” TV while enjoying a glass of red wine.

[favorite movie?]
Does the BBC production of Pride and Prejudice with Colin Firth count?

[last book read?]
A novel by Michael Cunningham and a “biography” of cancer, The Emperor of All Maladies by Siddhartha Mukherjee. I’m enjoying my new Kindle.

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Federal Records Centers, and what you can throw out. You may be surprised by how much you can trash. Many records have natural cut-off periods such as the end of the fiscal year, the end of the calendar year, or the end or closure of a project or case. After these cut-off periods can be a great time to schedule a staff records clean sweep. To contact the APHIS IMC staff, send an email to “Records.”

[mandatory training and more information]
To learn more, remember to complete the mandatory training course NAFA Records Management for Everyone through AgLearn. The deadline for completion is April 30, 2011.

For additional information and resources about records management, please visit the Records Management program’s Web pages.
wildlife services

reintroducing river otters to tribal lands

By Mike Booth

While working as a wildlife biologist for the Taos Pueblo Tribe in northern New Mexico, Darren Bruning was looking for a way to bring river otters, long departed due to unregulated trapping and degraded water systems, back to their historical habitat on tribal lands.

The idea had plenty of interest in New Mexico, backed by a coalition of conservationists, tribal representatives, and State and Federal wildlife authorities. But after more than 12 years of trying, the coalition still hadn’t been able to amass the political will or funding needed to turn the idea into reality. It wasn’t until 2007, when Bruning went to work for APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) in Washington State, that he found the perfect solution.

[no downside]

While working in Washington State, Bruning learned of several landowners who were none too appreciative of their furry river otter neighbors, whose local population had grown abundant. Sensing a possible win-win opportunity, Bruning proposed the idea of relocating some of the unwanted river otters from Washington to tribal lands in New Mexico. Using his idea and funding provided by the coalition in New Mexico, the river otter reintroduction project was ready to launch.

In late 2007, Bruning began the project’s demanding task of trapping, testing, transporting, and releasing the otters—all of which had to be completed in a 4-month period. Due to temperature and breeding cycle concerns, the project has only a narrow window of opportunity—from September to December—to complete its work each year.

By the end of 2010, WS had finished its third year of reintroductions and relocated 33 river otters into a tributary of the Rio Grande River on Taos Pueblo lands in northern New Mexico. By all accounts, the otters are thriving in areas up and downstream from Bruning’s carefully chosen release site.

“This is one of the few issues I’ve been involved with as a wildlife biologist where there is no downside,” Bruning said. “Every-one involved in New Mexico is very happy. Washington State officials are able to address complaints about otters. Washington homeowners had tolerance issues [with otters] but they didn’t want them harmed. And for Wildlife Services, we’re able to demonstrate our interest in resolving conflicts between wildlife and people.”

[stress management for otters]

Brunner goes to great lengths to minimize stress on the river otters. Human interaction is limited throughout the entire process—including during their capture, health screening by Veterinary Services’ Jack Mortensen, transport, and release.

Transporting otters more than 1,300 miles in a Chevy Suburban, or sometimes by plane, isn’t easy. And, it’s not for the talkative. Bruning keeps the inside temperature of the vehicle under 50 degrees, and he makes no noise. Sometimes this means using the air conditioner while driving through mountain passes in November, or conversing with...
basic leadership development program prepares home-grown leaders

By John Scott

To succeed, APHIS needs effective leadership at every level.

For the agency’s GS-4 through GS-6 employees, the APHIS Basic Leadership Development Program offers a new and smart way to develop individual leadership skills.

A new session of the 6-month training program begins in April 2011. The program includes a series of 10 Web seminars, online mentoring and coaching sessions, AgLearn training, and group learning projects.

The leadership program prepares participants with essential knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the agency’s succession planning needs and to achieve excellence, regardless of position.

Run as a pilot program last year, the training meshes with the goal of USDA’s Cultural Transformation Initiative to help all employees reach their full potential.

“Last year’s group was so motivated, so positive,” said agency education specialist Cindy Pericak. “They were really committed to becoming leaders and to making a career for themselves with APHIS.”

[reaching for our best]

The Basic Leadership Development Program is designed to build a cadre of “home-grown” leaders. It targets numerous competencies that are essential for leaders throughout the agency’s ranks. These include strong skills in customer service and written and oral communications. They also include personal qualities like resiliency, flexibility, integrity, and honesty.

Among other things, the program’s training sessions and workshops will help participants learn to balance work and personal life priorities, develop critical-thinking skills, write clearly and concisely, meet objectives, assess their strengths, and identify areas for self-improvement.

[for more information]

For more information regarding eligibility and training dates, please contact Cindy Pericak. Her telephone number is 919-855-7801. Her email is cynthia.m.pericak@aphis.usda.gov.

To learn more about USDA’s Cultural Transformation Initiative, visit the “Get the Big Picture” links on the Office of the Administrator’s portal pages.

river otters to tribal lands

Continued from page 11

driving companions using only a notepad and pen. Naturally, there are regular rest periods for the otters to eat and drink, but the trek is made with as few delays as possible.

Once at the release site, Bruning connects the otter transport crates to larger enclosures already positioned alongside a calm pool of water near the main stream. The river otters are released early in the morning, after receiving several meals of local fish. As Bruning and others observe from a distance, the river otters exit the enclosures and are then free to explore their new environment.

“I’ve had a front row seat to some of the most amazing river otter activity,” Bruning said. “It’s such a great project. It shows our level of expertise, dedication, and skill. It meets the needs of people and the species. It’s just tremendously fulfilling.”

Employees participating in last year’s Basic Leadership Development Program listen intently to Sharon Coursey, director of Human Resources, during a training session in Riverdale, MD.
veterinary services

teaching the art & science of appraisals

By John Scott

As Stephen Ott will tell you, appraising animals is both an art and a science. “There’s a yin and a yang to it,” says Ott, an agricultural economist and appraisal/indemnity/compensation specialist with Veterinary Services (VS).

Ott helped teach the most recent animal appraisal course to a group of 18 VS animal health technicians and animal identification coordinators. The course, which has been taught three times since 2006, is designed to prepare a cadre of VS employees throughout the country with the basic skills and techniques needed to appraise animals. The focus is on conducting small-scale appraisals, generally six or fewer animals at a time. Appraisals are important to the agency’s animal disease programs because they help determine appropriate compensation for producers whose animals are euthanized in response to disease detections.

[benefits beyond savings]

By using trained, in-house appraisers for small-scale situations, the agency can save substantial money. Private appraisers charge $100 to $150 per livestock head, plus travel expenses, to conduct small-scale appraisals. In many cases, the use of in-house appraisers can save the agency approximately $1,000 per appraisal.

There are benefits beyond dollars, too. Well-trained VS appraisers prepare organized and well-informed reports—the kind that can ably pass audits by the Department, the Office of the Inspector General, or the Government Accountability Office.

Employees who complete the agency’s course learn to prepare solid reports that meet APHIS standards and also those of the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. In contrast, Ott can recall more than once needing to return a private appraisal for revision and additional research.

In-house appraisers also help the agency build constructive relationships with producers. Course participants discuss how to build trust, resolve difficulties that arise, and create realistic producer expectations regarding the timeline to complete an appraisal and determine available indemnity.

[the makings of a good appraisal]

There are many factors to consider in preparing an appraisal. The animal’s age, weight,

breed, sex, general condition, pregnancy status, and number of lactation cycles are just a few of the factors. As an appraiser assesses an animal, he or she must also assess the current marketplace, looking at sales and identifying animals with characteristics that are as comparable as possible. With appraisals of any kind—animals, real estate, or other—the identification of comparables plays a key role in determining value.

Ott says that the heart of the appraisal is the “adjustment.” That’s where all the pieces come together. “It’s where you compare the animal that you have with the comparable animals that are going to market. And you adjust up or down based on their differences, like age or size,” says Ott.

Ultimately, an appraisal report reveals its strength or weakness based on one simple question: does it make sense? A good appraisal report doesn’t just tell you the value; it leads you to the value. It has enough information to convincingly explain its conclusions and to invite and sustain agreement.

Continued on next page
Volunteer Spotlight
Lisa Macelderry

[Employee name and program]
Lisa MacElderry
Veterinary Medical Officer, Animal Care
South Carolina

[Volunteer organization]
Camden Community Concert Band

[Organization mission]
The purpose of the band is to provide an opportunity for its members to continue to develop and use those skills which were gained during the years of formal education and to provide free public concerts for the citizens of the community.

[Volunteer activities]
I have played flute since middle school, but only played occasionally after high school. I discovered the community band world when I joined Animal Care and was transferred to Maryland, where I played in the Upper Chesapeake Community Band for 8 years.

After transferring back to South Carolina in the fall of 2003, I joined the Camden Community Concert Band. We practice on Monday nights to perform four free concerts for the public during the school year. The music is hard enough that I try to practice between rehearsals.

Many summers I also join in with the Columbia Summer Band, a group of musicians from all the local community bands who perform weekly concerts during the summer at assisted living and senior homes. Many of our band members want years or decades without playing the instruments they learned to play when they were younger. I encourage everyone to check out their local community bands and join in the fun.

[Time given]
Approximately 145 hours a year.

[Organization websites]
http://www.camdencommunityband.org/
http://boarjer.org/c-r/commotheo.shtml

[E-mail]
Lisa.K.Macelderry@aphis.usda.gov

Art & Science of Appraisals

Continued from page 13

Ott explains to students in his class that they should prepare themselves for what he good naturedly calls “The Lake Wobegon Effect”—named after radio storyteller Garrison Keillor’s fictitious town where “all the children are above average.”

“A lot of producers want to believe and will say that their cows are ‘above average,’” says Ott. A strong and well-prepared appraisal report will make sense to a producer, even when he or she may be expecting a higher appraisal value.

[For more information]
For additional information about animal appraisals—including course materials from the class—visit the Livestock Appraisal, Indemnity & Compensation Web pages.

Go Outside [inside]
Click here to visit Livestock Appraisal, Indemnity & Compensation Web pages.
world veterinary year
aphis joins the Celebration

In honor of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the first veterinary school in Lyon, France, the international veterinary community is celebrating 2011 as World Veterinary Year. To join in the celebration, APHIS plans to highlight the agency’s own diverse veterinary community throughout the year. APHIS wants to make sure all of its employees—as well as the world—know about our talented veterinary staff and the great work they do every day protecting American agriculture.

In mid-April, Administrator Gregory Parham—a veterinarian—posted a blog on the APHIS portal about the worldwide veterinary celebration. More guest blogs will be posted there in the coming months. Additionally, the agency is developing a video for posting on APHIS’ YouTube channel to highlight the message of APHIS and our veterinarians to the social media world.

APHIS is also participating in an ongoing series of World Veterinary Year blog entries on the USDA blog. Click here to visit the USDA blog and read more. We’re still looking for APHIS veterinarians to profile. If you would like to participate, contact Joelle Hayden at (301) 734-0595 or joelle.r.hayden@aphis.usda.gov.

By Joelle Hayden

[in their own words]
For World Veterinary Year, APHIS has been interviewing agency veterinarians to learn about their insights and experiences. Here’s what some of our veterinarians shared. For more details, go to the USDA blog and search “World Veterinary Year.” We’ll share more excerpts in future issues of Inside APHIS.

Why did you become a veterinarian?
“Since childhood, this is all I ever wanted to do.”
—Dr. Amy Winter, Veterinary Medical Officer, Iowa

“I always loved animals and science when I was growing up. A veterinary career seemed like a good way to combine my interests. I now get to help both animals and people every day.”
—Dr. Christyn Wood, Veterinary Medical Officer/Poultry Specialist, Pennsylvania

“Being a veterinarian runs in my family. My father is a veterinarian for USDA as well. My goal in vet school was to end up working in regulatory medicine myself.”
—Dr. Jeffrey Nelson, Veterinary Medical Officer, Iowa

Continued on next page
interview with administrator parham

By John Scott

Inside APHIS recently had the chance to sit down with APHIS Administrator Gregory Parham and speak with him about his background and the agency that he now leads.

Below are excerpts from our interview, which focused mainly on four areas: his background, the future of APHIS, leadership, and stakeholder engagement.

For the full version of this interview, you can listen to the audio clips provided. The buttons in the margin link to separate and brief audio clips, one for each topic covered during the course of our interview. You can also read the full unedited transcripts, which are available using buttons provided on the following page.

[background]

Inside APHIS: You’ve spoken about your father’s career with APHIS and its predecessor agency. Can you tell me about his job and where he worked?

Gregory Parham: My father graduated from veterinary college in 1951. So that’s 60 years ago. He immediately went into what would then have been whatever VS was called back in those days; but he was assigned to the FMD—the foot-and-mouth disease—outbreak investigation in Mexico. So he actually began his career internationally with APHIS, working on that disease in Mexico for about a year.

Inside APHIS: What was it that you learned from him about APHIS that attracted you to this kind of work?

Gregory Parham: I remember that it always seemed that he was going on some kind of training or development program. I remember him talking about Ames and the laboratories there. One of the things he learned was to be a poultry diagnostician. And I remember the first time he said that. It sounded like something that you could—who wouldn’t want to be one of those—whatever it meant, you know. He also worked internationally in Haiti, as part of the African swine fever program there. Just seeing him do a variety of different things is what I found compelling.

Inside APHIS: When did you start with APHIS? And what positions have you held with the agency here?

Gregory Parham: APHIS was the very first Federal position that I held, and that was when I was a student in veterinary college, in the—well, the late ’70s [laughs]. I was a veterinary student trainee in Florida, working on...
the brucellosis program there. I started there for a 2 ½-month stint and then went back to veterinary school and completed that, and then went to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

When I joined USDA, I went to the Food Safety and Inspection Service, in the epidemiology branch because that was my specialty training. I came to APHIS in 2008 as the chief information officer after a career all within USDA, but in different offices. And I spent about a year and a half there. And then, I took the position of deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services. And from there, Cindy asked me to become the associate administrator. And, as they say, the rest is history. In April, I became the administrator.

**Inside APHIS:** How do you think the range of positions you’ve held has shaped your understanding of APHIS?

**Gregory Parham:** I think, in particular, working in the business services arena gives you a real appreciation for some of the underpinnings for so many of our programs. Everyone thinks about the Veterinary Services, the Plant Protection and Quarantine, the Wildlife Services, the Animal Care programs, but rarely do they think about the financial, the IT, the human resource issues that underpin all of that kind of thing.

The different positions afforded me the opportunity to see the depth and breadth of the activity that the agency finds itself involved in.

**[future]**

**Inside APHIS:** What does a successful APHIS look like to you?

**Gregory Parham:** If you look on our Web site, when people apply for jobs, it says, you know, we’re an emergency response agency. So a successful APHIS is one that’s able to respond to those emergencies. But at the same time, and maybe even more importantly, it’s an agency that’s able to accomplish its work day-to-day in a way that is both—and it may sound trite—but is both efficient and effective. And I think those are increasingly going to become important, as we look at shrinkage in some of our budgets.

**Inside APHIS:** What would you say are some of APHIS’s most significant challenges coming up?

**Gregory Parham:** The most significant challenge is going to be the change in how the budget has been working. APHIS has been very fortunate to experience over the last decade an increase in appropriations. In the last—current year 2011 and at least projected for 2012—fiscal year 2012—it looks like that trend has reversed, and we are looking at declines. They aren’t declines that are fatal, by any means, but it does mean that we have to re-examine how we’re conducting our business; and it may mean some refocusing in certain areas, and similar things that we may have had the luxury of doing before, but we won’t have the luxury to do them in the future.

**Inside APHIS:** How is the agency preparing to handle these funding challenges?

**Gregory Parham:** One of the ways that we are trying to address some of this, and we’re doing it across the department, is with the early out and buyout authority—or VERA and VSIP: the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments programs. The early out [VERA] is more general. Anyone who is eligible can take that, except for a couple of excluded categories. But with the VSIP—or the buyout portion—we’re much more focused and targeted. We may have to do that again. We don’t know. But we’re certainly looking at that for fiscal year 2012. We’re already underway with that process for 2011. So we’ll see what happens.

**Inside APHIS:** Some Federal agencies may be more vulnerable to reductions than others. What kind of position do you believe APHIS is in?

**Gregory Parham:** Well, I think APHIS is in a very extraordinarily good position because no one else has the mission that we have in terms of protecting animal health and safe-
Inside APHIS: You’ve spoken previously—about other events—about your father’s fight with APHIS and as its predecessor agency. Can you tell me just a little bit about what his job was and where did he work?

Gregory Parham: All right. My father graduated from veterinary college in 1951. So that’s 60 years ago. He immediately went into what would then have been whatever VS was called back in those days, but he was assigned to the VMD—the foot and mouth disease—outbreak investigation in Mexico. So he actually began his career internationally with APHIS, working on that disease in Mexico for about a year.

Inside APHIS: And how did his career influence you and shape your personal goals, because obviously it’s part of your life, as well.

Gregory Parham: When he returned from Mexico, he moved to Ohio, and that’s where I was born. And so, growing up, I always saw the work that he did, you know. He drove a government car. And so he went off every day to do things in a four-county area within southeastern Ohio. And it was everything from sales barns to testing animals to doing just a number of things that were associated with the agency’s work at that time. What I also remember, though, is that he would take trips, periodically; and he took me on one of them one time, when he went to—I believe it was to some conference or training session in Delaware. So that was super-exotic for me, at that particular time. And that influenced me, because over the years, although I had not decided to be a veterinarian until, actually, I was well into college, you know, just remembering some of the things that he had done and that I had experienced with him made me believe that would be a fulfilling career.

Inside APHIS: What was it that you learned from him about APHIS that attracted you to this kind of work? And what has attracted you to the agency’s work sort of changed, as you’ve grown professionally?

Gregory Parham: Well, it’s interesting, because I always remember that it always seemed that he was going on some kind of training or development program—be it Ames—I remember many times him talking about Ames and the laboratories there and the offices there. And he would go out there to learn. I remember the first time he said that it sounded like, you know, something that you could—you know, who wouldn’t want to be one of those—whatever it meant, you know. And within—he also did other training. He also worked internationally, again, before his career was over, in Haiti, as part of the African swine fever program there. And so just remembering some of the you know—TB over the years, brucellosis over the years, you know—just seeing him do a variety of different things, is what I found compelling.

Inside APHIS: When did you start with APHIS? And what positions have you held with the agency here?

Gregory Parham: Actually, APHIS was the very first Federal position that I held, and that was when I was a student in veterinary college, in the—well, the late ’70s [laughs]. And so I was a veterinary student training in Florida, working on the brucellosis program there. It’s been eliminated now, you know, so—not that I take the credit for that, but certainly over the last thirty years, this has been one of the great successes in Veterinary Services was the elimination of brucellosis in much of the continental U.S. It still remains in the greater Yellowstone area. But so I started there for a two-and-a-half-month stint, if you will, and then went back to veterinary school and completed that, and then went to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. But still, you know, I know about APHIS and the kinds of things that they did. But when I originally joined USDA, I went to the Food Safety and Inspection Service, in the epidemiology branch, because that was my specialty training was in epidemiology. And so I came to APHIS in 2006 as the chief information officer after a career all within USDA, but in different offices. And I spent about a year and a half there. And then, when Bill Huddl? retired, I took the position of deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services. And from there, Cindy asked me to become the associate administrator. And, as they say, the rest is history. In April, I became the administrator.

Inside APHIS: With this—the range of positions you’ve held, what traits do you have that you think that—or that you think enabled you to succeed in each of these? Is there a thread that connects those different positions in your mind, do you think?

Gregory Parham: If there’s any thread, I think it’s one of what one might call systems thinking. And all I mean by that is that no matter what kind of environment you find yourself in, you could always think about things systematically. And that, coupled with understanding that you always have to prepare for contingencies is part of the common thread. But then, also, the training in veterinary medicine, which is one where you have to learn a lot about many different things. Prepares you to really—if you so desire—to apply that knowledge in a number of different ways.

Inside APHIS: And again, given the range of positions, how do you think that’s sort of uniquely shaping your understanding of what APHIS is and what we do?

Gregory Parham: I think, in particular, working in the business services arena gives you a real appreciation for some of the underpinnings, for so many of our programs. When we think about, you know, the safeguarding mission and all of that, we know everyone thinks about the Veterinary Services, the Plant Protection Quarantine, the Wildlife Service, the Animal Care Programs, but people also need to think about the financial, the IT, the human resource issues that underpin all of that kind of thing. And so I think, really, having done that stint as the deputy for MRPS does give you a different perspective on the work of the agency, because it’s not really programmatic, in the sense of really directly related to safeguarding. But it’s so essential in terms of the agency actually accomplishing its mission. So I think that’s one of the things that really as administrator I’ve found most helpful, you know, an understanding not only of the programmatic, but also of the administrative work of the agency.

Inside APHIS: How do you think these previous positions prepared you for the job of administrator?

Gregory Parham: Wow! Okay—

Inside APHIS: If you can prepare—[laughter]

Gregory Parham: Exactly, exactly, exactly. If one can be prepared, I think what I do is—those different positions afforded me the opportunity to see, again, the depth and breadth of the activity that the agency finds itself involved in. And in so doing, you have the opportunity to more fully understand, I believe—and also more fully engage in all the work of the agency. Because again, as administrator, you’re administrator for all the programs, all the activities, all the various functions that we serve. And so, you know, I think it is important to have a working knowledge of budget; a working knowledge of human resources; a working knowledge of IT, you know, it’s essential. I think, as we’re in our noble global mobile environment to be able to rely on those kinds of things.

m: Well, I think APHIS is in a very good position because the mission that we have in terms of animal health and safety—
Parham Interview: Future

Gregory Parham: I think, in particular, working in the business services arena gives you a real appreciation for some of the underpinnings for so many of our programs. Everyone thinks about the Veterinary Services, the Plant Protection and Quarantine, the Wildlife Services, the Animal Care programs, but there's a whole infrastructure component, as well. The business services, the financial management, the human resources, the technology services, all play a critical role in ensuring the success of our mission.

Inside APHIS: What does a successful APHIS look like to you?

Gregory Parham: A successful APHIS is one that is able to respond to the needs of the public and the needs of the stakeholders effectively and efficiently. It's one that is able to anticipate changes and challenges and adapt to them. It's one that is able to collaborate and communicate effectively with all stakeholders, including the public, industry, and other government agencies. It's one that is able to prioritize its efforts and allocate resources wisely to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Insiders APHIS: What would you say are some of APHIS' most significant challenges coming up?

Gregory Parham: One of the most significant challenges we face is the need to maintain and enhance our infrastructure. Our systems and technology are aging and require significant investment to keep them modern and secure. Additionally, the regulatory environment is constantly evolving, and we must adapt to new regulations and technologies in a timely manner.

Inside APHIS: What other changes do you see coming our way as an agency?

Gregory Parham: We will continue to see changes in the way we operate and deliver our services. This includes changes in how we gather and process data, how we communicate with the public and stakeholders, and how we manage our resources. We will also need to be prepared to respond to new and emerging challenges, such as changes in the global economy, changes in the regulatory landscape, or changes in the political environment.

Gregory Parham: The Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments programs. And those are designed to help people who want to leave us in a very targeted way—of course, the early out is more generally. Anyone who is eligible, you know, can take that, except for a couple of excluded categories. But with those, it's the buyout portion—a very much more flexible tool. And we may have to do that—so we see what will happen.

Inside APHIS: Some other agencies, as you talked about, may be more vulnerable—or susceptible to a better word to reductions than others. What kind of position do you believe APHIS is in regarding future funding?

Gregory Parham: We think APHIS is in a very good position. Again, because our mission is one that we have, in terms of—going in terms of protecting, safeguarding animal health and safeguarding plant health. No one has that mission, in terms of the welfare of animals, in the same way that we do. So I think overall funding, in terms of the future for APHIS, is solid. It's a matter of how much of that is going to be, and then the way we allocate, in terms of our mission and the way we allocate that, in terms of the way we allocate that funding, and we are looking at declines. They aren't declines that are fatal, by any means, but they are declines that we have to deal with, and we will deal with, in a very targeted way.
Parham Interview: Leadership

Inside APHIS: Recent agency training has emphasized the need for leadership traits at all levels within the organization. Why is leadership at all levels an important idea?

Gregory Parham: Leadership at all levels is an important idea, because everyone exerts some leadership, regardless of what it is that they do. And again, you know, many may not believe that’s the case, but many times folks who are in a position—regardless of what it is—it may be the best one, in terms of that particular position, to really understand what needs to be done. And part of leadership is not only knowing what needs to be done, but then also having the wherewithal to get it done. And so in terms of having leadership training at all levels is not only about knowing what to do, but how to do it, and, you know, to the point of completion. So that’s why we think it’s important at all levels to have leadership training.

Inside APHIS: How would you describe a successful leader?

Gregory Parham: A successful leader is one who knows their own strengths, but also is aware of the strengths of the team or the unit that they find themselves in, and also is willing to learn. So as they continue to advance, as they continue to advance as a leader, they are constantly learning, what the new ways, new approaches, better approaches to doing—to accomplishing their work. And I think in terms of accomplishing work, it also means in terms of managing themselves, as well as those around them.

Inside APHIS: How would you hope that employees would describe you as a leader and your leadership style?

Gregory Parham: I think I would want to be remembered as being open to various opinions, but then also reflective. That every decision is not a snap decision. Sometimes you have to think about it for a while, you know, before you’re ready to respond, or before you’re ready to recommend a particular course of action. So I would hope, again—open, reflective, and attuned to the needs of the agency. And when I say the agency, that’s the agency, both in terms of their own work, but also the agency, in terms of its relationships with others, you know—stakeholders, partners, cooperators, that kind of thing.

Inside APHIS: What advice would you give others starting down the leadership path today?

Gregory Parham: What I would say to them is that if I think it’s important to be competent in a particular area, for example, I think you need to know what you can talk about leadership competencies and all those kinds of things. But I think you really do need to concentrate in your area, but understand that it’s not just the depth of your knowledge, but it’s also the breadth.

So I would strongly encourage them to read the newspaper, know what’s going on, and also, if they’re interested in leadership, to avail themselves of some of the literature of leadership, you know, be that from one of the businesses or the business school magazines or some of the newspapers that follow that, or in today’s age, you know, a management blog or some other media that one might be able to follow. But to just make sure that they get not only a depth of knowledge, but a breadth of knowledge.

Gregory Parham: I merely do they think about the financial, the IT, the human resource issues that underpin all of that kind of thing.

The different positions afforded me the opportunity to see the depth and breadth of the activity that the agency finds itself involved in.

Future

Inside APHIS: What does a successful APHIS look like to you?

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Inside APHIS: What would you say are some of APHIS’s most significant challenges coming up?

Gregory Parham: The most significant challenge is going to be the change in how the budget has been working. APHIS has been very fortunate to experience over the last decade an increase in appropriations. In the last—current year 2011 and at least projected for 2012—fiscal year 2012—it looks like that trend has reversed, and we are looking at declines. They aren’t declines that are fatal, by any means, but it does mean that we have to re-examine how we’re conducting our business; and it may mean some retrenchment in certain areas, and similar things that we may have had the luxury of doing before, but we won’t have the luxury to do them in the future.

Inside APHIS: How is the agency prepared to handle these funding challenges?

Gregory Parham: One of the ways that we are trying to address some of this, and we’re doing it across the department, is with the early out and buyout authority—or VERA and VSIP: the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments programs. The early out (VERA) is more general. Anyone who is eligible can take that, except for a couple of excluded categories. But with the VSIP—or the buyout portion—we’re much more focused and targeted. We may have to do that again. We don’t know. But we’re certainly looking at that for fiscal year 2012. We’re already underway with that process for 2011. So we’ll see what happens.

Inside APHIS: Some Federal agencies may be more vulnerable to reductions than others. What kind of position do you believe APHIS is in?

Gregory Parham: Well, I think APHIS is in a very extraordinary good position because no one else has the mission that we have in terms of protecting animal health and safe-
Parham Interview: Stakeholder Engagement

Inside APHIS: in recent years, APHIS has increasingly emphasized building strong partnerships and engaging stakeholders. What is “stakeholder engagement,” and why is it important to APHIS and our partners? I mean, it’s important on both sides of things, so...

Gregory Parham: Right. Right. And, and again, you know, the stakeholders, cooperators, you know we are a regulatory agency and so folks are always going to be interested in. In what it is we are doing, and not only in what it is, but how it is that we are carrying out—the regulations that we promulgate. And so I think it’s important that we continue to have communications with all interested parties—be they stakeholders, be they cooperators, be they partners—not only for them to understand, but also for them to help us. To do what it is that we need to do in terms of regulations, and I say that, you know, because there are many, many times when our work can be, can be enhanced. Or certainly the reach of our work can go much beyond what we’re able to do, and I think this is going to be increasingly important as we look at budgets that, that are beginning to shrink. That’s a keen understanding of what the relationship is between us and stakeholders, and partners, and that they understand our constraints. As well as we understand what their needs are.

Inside APHIS: With regard to our State partnerships, what priorities do you have for the agency in terms of State engagement going forward?

Gregory Parham: I think for the States it’s going to be very, very important because the States are, are facing the same kind of budgets, and maybe even in many instances, even more severe than the Federal government is. So, it’s going to become even more important that we have a close alliance in terms of being able to prioritize the work that needs to be done, and how we can go about doing that. I also think that with our State partners—and I presume you’re talking about the State departments of agriculture and that kind of thing—but I also think we need to look at other State officials, if you will, in terms of seeing if we can’t, again, expand that circle of trust. To understand that there may be ways that we work collectively. To further our respective agendas.

Inside APHIS: APHIS has always had close working relationships with State agriculture agencies, and their animal and plant health divisions, are there other State agencies that you’d like to see APHIS partnering with more?

Gregory Parham: I think one of the areas that that goes to is the whole area of as we do more work in the area of, of one health. I think the State health departments, for example, the State epidemiologist. Many of the States have public health veterinarians, and so I think working with those communities as well, might be something that we can pursue in the very near future.

Gregory Parham: Well. Of course, the IT financial, the IT, that underpin all of this, that move me, that move the operations, the workflow; it is all of the IT infrastructure that underpin all of those things. The breadth of the people involved in.

Inside APHIS: How is the agency preparing to handle those funding challenges?

Gregory Parham: One of the ways that we are trying to address some of this, and we’re doing it across the department, is with the early out and buyout authority—or Vera and VSP: the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments programs. The early out (VERA) is more general. Anyone who is eligible can take that, except for a couple of excluded categories. But with the VSP— or the buyout portion—we’re much more focused and targeted. We may have to do that again. We don’t know. But we’re certainly looking at that for fiscal year 2012. We’re already underway with that process for 2011. So we’ll see what happens.

Inside APHIS: Some Federal agencies may be more vulnerable to reductions than others. What kind of position do you believe APHIS is in?

Gregory Parham: Well, I think APHIS is in a very extraordinarily good position because no one else has the mission that we have in terms of protecting animal health and safe-
guarding plant health. No one has the mission of the welfare of animals, in the same way that we do.

I had the opportunity very recently to go with some of our Wildlife Services employees over to National Airport, to see some of the work that they do. That work is vital. There is no way we will stop doing that work. And so, I do believe that we will find the mechanisms by which we will be able to continue that work in a way that’s sustained into the future.

**Inside APHIS:** What other changes do you see coming our way as an agency?

**Gregory Parham:** The Secretary has asked us collectively as a department, to begin to think about what are some of the things we might have to eliminate. And are there other things that we might continue to do, but that we could consolidate. So as we look at some of our programs, are there some that we could merge, if you will—still perform all the functions, but maybe do it in a merged kind of fashion. He also asked us about some of our office usage around the country and are there ways that we could work with each other, to maybe have less of a footprint out there.

**[leadership]**

**Inside APHIS:** Recent agency training has emphasized the need for leadership traits at all levels within the organization. Why is this important?

**Gregory Parham:** Leadership at all levels is an important idea because many times folks who are in a position—regardless of what it is—may be the best one, in terms of that particular position, to really understand what needs to be done. And part of leadership is not only knowing what needs to be done, but also having the wherewithal to get it done.

**Inside APHIS:** How would you describe a successful leader?

**Gregory Parham:** A successful leader is one who knows their own strengths, but also is aware of the strengths of the team or the unit that they find themselves in and also is willing to learn. So as they continue to advance, they are also constantly learning about new ways, new approaches, and better approaches to accomplishing their work.

**[stakeholder engagement]**

**Inside APHIS:** APHIS has increasingly emphasized building strong partnerships and engaging with stakeholders. What is “stakeholder engagement,” and why is it important to APHIS and our partners?

**Gregory Parham:** We are a regulatory agency and so folks are always going to be interested in what it is we are doing—not only in what it is, but how it is that we are carrying out. And so it’s important that we continue to have communications with all interested parties—be they stakeholders, be they cooperators, be they partners—not only for them to understand, but also for them to help us. There are many times when our work can be enhanced. Or certainly the reach of our work can go much beyond what we’re able to do, and I think this is going to be increasingly important as we look at budgets that are beginning to shrink.

**Inside APHIS:** With regard to our State partnerships, what priorities do you have for the agency in terms of State engagement going forward?

**Gregory Parham:** I think for the States it’s going to be very, very important because the States are facing the same kind of budgets, and maybe even in many instances, even more severe than the Federal government is. So, it’s going to become even more important that we have a close alliance in terms of being able to prioritize the work that needs to be done, and how we can go about doing that.
animal care
microchips are tiny tech support for AWA

By Vivian Keller

The gold standard of animal identification, a simple microchip, has reunited many a lost pet with its grateful owner. But the utility of this tiny technology doesn’t stop there. Thanks to the microchip’s multifaceted power, APHIS has new ways to protect companion animals and uphold the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

A variety of techniques to identify animals, from tags to tattoos, are still commonly used by the companion animal breeders and dealers that APHIS regulates. However, as Robert Willems, the assistant director of Animal Care’s (AC) Eastern Region, points out, “Microchips are the least obtrusive form of identification we have.”

That is the reason countries such as the United Kingdom, India, and Japan now require microchips on dogs and cats crossing their borders, to ensure the animals and their vaccination records match. Similarly, such precision ID is a boon to AC inspectors, who can more easily confirm the identity and medical status of any microchipped animals they see on inspection visits to breeders and dealers around the country.

Microchips are also proving valuable in AC’s regulation of dealers that supply research laboratories with dogs and cats—particularly random source dealers, who might unwittingly buy animals from sources that do not accurately report where the animals came from. Microchips not only can erase any doubt in situations such as these; they can also serve as robust tools that allow research facilities themselves to trace the animals they have purchased.

Those days, say AC staff, many research facilities make a point of checking a dog’s or cat’s microchip to determine for themselves whether the animals may be used legally. As Kate Zeager, a VMO in AC’s Western Region, puts it, “a research facility’s worst nightmare would be that someone’s pet would end up in research.”

Willems recalls the case of a laboratory that traced a dog with a suspicious microchip back to a pound, where its original owner had presumably abandoned it. Even though this meant that the dog had been obtained legitimately under the AWA, the laboratory would not use the animal in its research.

For those who remember Pepper—the stolen pet Dalmatian that ended up dying in a research facility in 1965, and whose story fueled public demand for what became the AWA—microchips provide additional insurance that in the 21st century, her tale will be very much a thing of the past.

find a farmers market today
Looking for some fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, fruits, baked goods, and more?
If you’re craving summer’s bounty, don’t delay—find a local farmers market.
USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service maintains an online search tool for finding local farmers markets. To visit the online search, click market search. Also, State departments of agriculture often list markets online, so look at those sites or use a Web search engine to learn more about other nearby markets, their dates, hours, and even special events. Enjoy!
plant protection & quarantine
tribute to hawaii medfly facility

By Stuart Stein

APHIS recently marked the final chapter in the history of an agency facility that played a central role in U.S. efforts to successfully eradicate the Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly). APHIS' Hawaii Fruit Fly Production Facility, which produced its first sterile Medflies in 1990, was torn down in early April 2011.

The facility was one of only two domestic facilities that reared and shipped Medflies en masse to programs using the sterile insect technique (SIT) and was essential to the technique's early use and success in the United States. The SIT—now the control technique of choice worldwide—works by distributing sterile insects in overwhelming numbers to interrupt the life cycle of the target pest. The facility's mission was to deliver a secure domestic supply of high quality, approved strains of sterile Medflies to ensure rapid response to eradication and prevention programs in the United States.

The APHIS facility regularly produced 350 million insects each week. At its peak, the 34,000 square-foot facility had approximately 50 production employees, plus 6 staff members from the agency's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST). The facility's success is especially indebted to agency employees who worked long, strenuous hours and who contributed to developing and refining APHIS’ fly-rearing and sterilization efforts. Its levels of quality control, production, and safety could only have been met through the staff's dedication, self-motivation, and adaptability. It is these qualities that serve the agency well as the facility's employees now support other programs.

APHIS’ onsite fly-rearing operations ended in 2002, and the facility's permanent employees were reassigned to other program efforts in Hawaii—including fruit fly survey work. The site still houses a separate, smaller building for sterilizing Medflies currently reared by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The Medflies, now bred by CDFA and sterilized by APHIS, are shipped to California to support the ongoing preventive release program.

The Hawaii facility holds a notable place in APHIS' history of protecting U.S. agriculture. It began at the cutting edge of fruit fly technology and control, contributing much to the technological foundation of what is commonly used today. The facility was collaboratively conceived, implemented, and supported by APHIS and multiple cooperators, including the State departments of agriculture for California and Hawaii, the agency's Administrative Services Division, CPHST, USDA's Agricultural Research Service, and the University of Hawaii. Within USDA, there were many—too numerous to mention—who were critical to bringing the facility to fruition.

The Hawaii facility's achievements in fruit fly production were earned daily through the talent and commitment of the employees who worked there.
plant protection & quarantine

tribute to hawaii

medfly facility

By Stuart Stein

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employees who worked long, strenuous hours contributed to developing APHIS’ fly-rearing and sterilization facilities. Quality control, production goals only have been met through dedication, self-motivation, and the qualities that serve the facility’s employees now.

fly-rearing operations ended in facility’s permanent employees turned to other program efforts including fruit fly survey work. They support the ongoing preventive program.

APHIS is a notable place in protecting U.S. agriculture. The cutting edge of fruit fly technology, contributing much to the foundation of what is commonly seen facility was collaboratively implemented, and supported by multiple cooperators, including the State departments of agriculture for California and Hawaii, the agency’s Administrative Services Division, CPHST, USDA’s Agricultural Research Service, and the University of Hawaii. Within USDA, there were many—too numerous to mention—who were critical to bringing the facility to fruition.

Photo sources: Animal Care, Anson Eage (LPA), George Graves (IS), Gwinn Hallberg (AC), USDA’s National Agricultural Library-Rare and Special Collections, Plant Protection & Quarantine, Kate Rappaport (PPQ), Wildlife Services.

inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
peace corps

celebrating 50 years of service

By Kristina Owens

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps. What does this mean to APHIS? Well, the agency employs more than 65 “Returned Peace Corps Volunteers,” who contribute to the agency’s mission everyday and whose personal career goals have been greatly shaped by their experiences with the Peace Corps.

For those who may not know what it means to be a Peace Corps volunteer and why this anniversary is significant, let me explain.

The Peace Corps was launched on March 1, 1961, by President Kennedy and officially recognized by Congress through legislation on September 22, 1961. During the past 50 years, there have been more than 200,000 volunteers who have served in 139 countries.

Peace Corps volunteers go overseas for more than 2 years, where they work and live in rural and often poor communities. They work on a variety of tasks, including agricultural and environmental projects. Volunteers are basically “working” 24/7, getting to know the community, identifying its needs, and helping to locate project resources. The projects are not necessarily large scale; instead, volunteers often focus on small, sustainable projects that empower communities.

[my experience]

For my Peace Corps service, I served 2 years in Bolivia, and my experience helped me identify what I want to do in my career and in my life.

In Bolivia, I worked as a Natural Resource volunteer from 2000–2002. I taught environmental education in a small community in the southern part of the country. I helped the community establish a school/community library. I also worked with the farmers on the Chirimoya fruit trees.

[serving communities]

For those of us who served as Peace Corps volunteers, many agree it helped focus our career interests. This includes, for many, choosing to work for the U.S. Government—a decision that allows us to continue serving our local and global communities. As a Federal agency, APHIS provides many opportunities to serve both.

By coincidence, an APHIS co-worker of mine, Kate Rappaport, also served in the Peace Corps—in Guatemala. We were both Spanish majors with interests in agriculture and the environment. While volunteers, we both worked on agriculture-related projects, and our experiences led us both to look for careers in agriculture. With APHIS, we now work hard to protect U.S. agriculture by developing diagnostic methods to detect plant pathogens.

APHIS employs “Returned Peace Corps Volunteers” throughout the agency’s field locations and at headquarters. Many of us chose to work for APHIS because the work we do reflects our professional interests and the value that we place upon community—especially one that is dedicated to improving not only itself, but also how it can serve others.

In honor of 50 years of the Peace Corps, I encourage you to seek out a former volunteer and ask them about their service. Find out more about the Peace Corps and this year’s anniversary events by going to the Peace Corps Web site: www.peacecorps.gov. To read stories or view photos submitted by volunteers over the years, access the Peace Corps Digital Library.

Kristina J. Owens is a plant biologist with CPHST.
Despite being detailed far from home and within earshot of mortar blasts and gunshots on an almost weekly basis, George Graves says that he would do it again.

Graves, a wildlife biologist with Wildlife Services (WS), worked a 4-month rotation at Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan. His job was to mitigate wildlife hazards to aircraft and other military property, protecting the safety of military and civilian crew members, an important job for certain. And while he was there, he accomplished another significant mission: helping the Smithsonian Institution acquire new samples of mammals and birds for scientific study.

Due to the danger associated with the region, the Smithsonian has been unable to send a team to collect vital samples to add to its collection. Graves provided the perfect solution.

"Being a wildlife biologist, I'm always seeking opportunities where the results of my work can contribute to further science and looking for ways to increase my wildlife knowledge," said Graves.

In 4 months, he was able to send approximately: 250 Libyan jirds, 100 dwarf gray hamsters, 70 house mice, 20 common shrews, 2 Indian crested porcupines, 2 short-tailed nesokia, 75 Spanish sparrows, 15 Eurasian skylarks, 3 northern wheaters, 3 black-billed magpies, and 2 common Indian toads. He caught many others, some of which the Smithsonian already had. Others—like golden jackals and spotted cats—he was unable to send due to international law prohibiting exportation of those animal species.

For the majority of wildlife threats on base, Graves was able to use nonlethal methods such as pyrotechnics to disperse birds from runways; however, for some, he needed to use lethal methods to mitigate the risk to aircraft.

"Most of the specimens were ideal candidates for scientific study, [so] it made perfect sense to salvage as many as possible..." said Graves.

He considers his assignment to Bagram Airbase to have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"I feel very fortunate to have been given this opportunity to serve our military men and women in such a role and to represent WS, APHIS, and USDA," said Graves. "The knowledge I gained is invaluable to me as a wildlife biologist, as an APHIS employee, and in my professional training."

About his detail, Graves added, "The most difficult thing wasn't dealing with the occasional rocket and mortar attacks on base from insurgents, but rather being away from home, family, and friends for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthdays."

While overseas, he learned to rely on the friends he made—mostly military members. "They became a temporary family. They are people to joke around with and share stories, your best friends, a shoulder to cry on, and someone just to talk with... I haven't forgotten the many friends I made at Bagram."

George Graves prepares samples for shipping.
Manager Profile with Jack Shere

[What is your background?]
I was born and raised in Council Bluffs, IA. I graduated from Iowa State University in 1981 with a BS in biology and chemistry with a teaching certificate. I later earned a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) in 1987 and an MA in Higher Educational Administration in 1988.

After finishing my DVM, I worked briefly in private veterinary practice in Georgia and Wisconsin.

[How long have you been with APHIS?]
I’ve been with APHIS for 21 years. I joined the agency in 1990 as part of the Public Veterinary Practice Career program. I worked for 6 months as a veterinary medical officer (VMO) in Nebraska. Then I worked as a VMO in Madison, WI, for 9 years, as an epidemiologist for 1 year, and then served as area veterinarian in charge (AVIC) for 3 years. During my time in Wisconsin, I received a joint PhD in Microbiology and Poultry Science.

From 2002-2005, I was VS’ western region assistant director. During that time, the exotic Newcastle disease (END) outbreak occurred, and I served as the area commander for VS. In May 2006, I was selected as eastern region director.

[Most memorable APHIS experience?]
Dealing with END as part of the response task force. I was impressed with everyone’s attitude and can-do spirit. In many ways, management turned it over to the field, and field folks did the work to complete the eradication. We initially worked up to 18-hour days. END was eradicated in record time. This was an accomplishment for the entire agency. They took pride in it; it demonstrated what our workforce was capable of getting done when they were challenged.

[Priorities for the coming months?]
A big priority for everyone is going to be working on APHIS’ Modernization efforts in regards to budget issues, maintaining critical mass of the workforce, and continuing to supply good customer service while incorporating the principles of Cultural Transformation.

[Accomplishment most proud of?]
I’m really proud of the work we did with END. I’m also very proud of my two boys—now men. Matthew, who is 27 years old, and Nathan, 22 years old.

[Hobbies?]
I do some woodworking, and I just started doing stained glass. I also raise holl and aquatic plants.

[Guilty pleasure?]
I like to fish. My boys and I go to Canada and fish for northern pike and walleyes—the best fishing in the world.

[Favorite meal?]
Roast, potatoes, and carrots. Mom made it, and it’s my favorite.

[Favorite movie?]
The Big Country with Charlton Heston and Gregory Peck. Beautiful scenery and a great movie about character.

[Last book read?]
Execution by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan.

New Stakeholder Registry

In June, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) launched its new Stakeholder Registry. More than 2,500 users subscribed to it within the first 5 weeks. As that number grows, PPQ is creating greater engagement and transparency with agency stakeholders.

The registry enables PPQ to provide stakeholders with information tailored to the topics selected by users. Stakeholders get what they need and how they want it, either by email or by text message. With the registry, PPQ can send updates regarding programs, manual revisions, regulatory activities, and more.

APHIS employees are encouraged to subscribe at: www.public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/subscriber/new.
Did you know that Wildlife Services’ (WS) National Wildlife Research Center is testing infrared thermography (IRT), or thermal imaging, for use in detecting rabies in mammals?

Here’s how the technology works. IRT measures radiation in the infrared wavelength range that is emitted by a surface. IRT cameras detect radiation and produce images called thermograms. Because temperature influences radiation, thermograms can be used as a tool to graphically display the surface or skin temperature of mammals.

Using IRT cameras, scientists can study the normal physiological processes of mammals and when those processes are altered, possibly due to disease or other causes. So for an animal affected with rabies, its thermogram shows its nose to be warmer than that of a healthy animal.

WS first used IRT during a captive study to determine the efficacy of a raccoon rabies vaccine. While IRT is not yet widely used for rabies detection, WS scientists are conducting a field study to examine its use and effectiveness in field conditions.

IRT has proven useful in other applications, too. For example, the Animal Care program currently uses this technology at Tennessee walking horse shows to help detect hot spots on the legs of horses—often an indicator of sorging, which is prohibited under the Horse Protection Act.

Because they can be utilized for multiple purposes, IRT cameras can be a cost-effective tool. There have been several scientific publications regarding their use in detecting foot-and-mouth disease, as well as other diseases in which fever is present.

agancy calendar

August

PPQ will host four Webinars throughout August on its revised strategic plan and shared leadership within the program. For more information, contact Jane Berkow at (301) 734-5735 or jane.t.berkow@aphis.usda.gov.

Communicating Your Personal Brand; August 23; one in a series of Webinar topics hosted by the APHIS Federal Women’s Program and conducted by Women’s Leadership Coaching, Inc. The series is designed for all early- to mid-career level employees. For more information, contact Tanika Greene at (301) 734-8153 or tanika.greene@aphis.usda.gov.

PPQ and U.S. Customs and Border Protection will hold an AQI Partnership Council Meeting; September 1-2. For more information, contact Nicole Russo at (301) 734-5242 or nicole.l.russo@aphis.usda.gov.
from the archives

word processors arrive

By John Scott

Network errors? Email problems? When things go wrong, we all mutter curses at our computers. But remember this: we haven’t always had computers at work to ease our data-crunching and our memo-writing.

Dipping into the Inside APHIS archive, we found an article from 1979 boasting of the agency’s first word processing machines joined to a shared CPU. The article offers a glimpse into an APHIS before the personal computer, when only a few offices in Washington, D.C., Minnesota, and Florida were graced by this new technology.

Heralded as “state of the art,” the system had a spacious 11-inch monitor, could delete whole paragraphs in a single keystroke, and had an archive capacity of up to 2,000 pages on magnetic disks.

Although the systems were still fresh to the agency, the article nevertheless includes several references to the impending decline of the then office mainstay: the IBM Selectric typewriter. [Note: If you are unfamiliar with typewriters or Selectrics, go to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_Selectric typewriter). Changing fonts used to be much more difficult.]

Makes you wonder what changes in office technology will occur in the next 30 years. To read the full archived article, click on the accompanying photo.

agency calendar

Continued from page 5

September

Challenges in Plant Resource Protection, a distance learning curriculum, will be offered in September by PPQ and Southern University-A&M College in Frederick, MD. For more information, contact Todd Dutton at (240) 529-0272 or todd.dutton@aphis.usda.gov.

PPQ will offer a series of Webinars throughout September on its collective bargaining agreement. For more information, contact Shanna Bradshaw at (240) 529-0247 or shanna.bradshaw@aphis.usda.gov.

United States Animal Health Association annual meeting; September 29–October 5 in Buffalo, NY.
Hold Onto That New Selectric—May Become a Collector’s Item

Pat Wine may not look like a pioneer. But a short eight months ago she was. Throughout the entire Hyattsville, Md., complex, it was just “me and the machine” for Pat and the other four secretaries on Dr. Nelson’s Cattle Diseases Staff.

Cattle Diseases was one of the first three staffs in APHIS to be outfitted with new word processing machines called Four-Phase, after the name of the vendor. Last March, with many offices overwhelmed by mounting tides of paperwork—and faced with continuing personnel ceilings—it seemed high time for APHIS to put the dynamics of office automation to the test.

So the coming thing came. Grabbed right off the assembly line, terminals were installed in Dr. Nelson’s office, several offices in Washington, D.C., and the Field Service Office in Minneapolis, Minn. Each “system,” or group of terminals wired into a central processing unit (CPU), has been expanding rapidly since the first few secretaries sat down to get acquainted with their new machines.

APHIS’ eighth word processing system is now in place at Fleming Key, Fla., ready to help monitor the health of the first set of calves received at the new Harry S Truman Animal Import Center.

“This equipment is right at the state of the art,” says Tony Kaculis of the Automated Data Systems Staff. Kaculis is the design/technology whiz behind the current word processing network. “Four-Phase was chosen primarily for its word processing and data entry capabilities, but it can serve limited data processing needs too—such as special computer needs at Fleming Key. The equipment meets the twofold requirement between large computers and smaller systems.”

“Right now we’re looking for compatible machinery that will suit the needs of the smaller agencies and district offices. As usual, there’s a problem getting equipment from different vendors to match up. But we’re working on it.”

“Should we find a system that would suit our purposes,” says Dr. Nelson, “we would consider it.”

The word processing terminal looks much like a modern typewriter, topped by a 28-character (11-inch) screen that faces the operator. The keyboard has special cod-keypad for logging in and retrieving letters, charts and other documents, according to particular office needs.

“Given the words are typed on the keyboard, they appear on the screen in whatever format the machine has been instructed to pattern them.”

Collector’s Item . . .continued

Another key feature is its archival capability. Each CPU can store up to 2,000 pages of material on magnetic discs that can be slipped into shelves and pulled out later. “We encourage archiving as much as possible to free up the working system,” says Kaculis.

The need to speed up communication under critical time constraints—such as sending documents back and forth to Fleming Key or the Field Service Office in Minneapolis—was another important reason to choose the Four-Phase system, according to the ADS staff. A specialized Bell System telephone is hooked up to each CPU. The telephone can transmit printed information at the rate of 4,000 bits per second. Translated, that means an average two-page memo can be sent to a like (or larger) piece of equipment in less than a minute.

Confidentiality is protected through the use of passwords. The telecommunications potential of an APHIS word processing network isn’t fully implemented yet, and there is much opportunity for creative and innovative use of all the equipment,” says Kaculis.

It’s only her security blanket. It’s Ford Model T Ford compared to this Cadillac. You don’t hear much talk around here anymore.”

Notwithstanding the speed and flexibility Four-Phase lends to composing and typing just about any kind of written material, the beauty of the word processors doesn’t tend to last forever. Changing fonts used to be much more difficult.

I fresh to the

IBM Selectric

typewriter. Changing fonts used to be much
different.

Rising decline

IBM Selectric

makes you wonder what changes in office

technology will occur in the next 30 years.

To read the full archived article, click on the
accompanying photo. ●
national agricultural library

treasuring ag history

By Christa Anderson

USDA has a resource that is second to none when it comes to historical archives: the National Agricultural Library's (NAL) Rare and Special Collections.

Dating back to 1509, the rare books, manuscripts, and other historical objects that make up the collections are handled only with the greatest of white-gloved care and are housed on a floor with its own air handling system. The materials richly illustrate our Nation's agricultural history in ways that administrative documents alone simply cannot.

Take, for instance, an early 1900s refrigeration railroad car. Ice blocks insulated the car, keeping its contents from spoiling on long hauls. Rare and Special Collections has a working model of the historic railroad. The intricately detailed replica is currently on loan to the National Archives and Records Administration for its show, "What's Cookin', Uncle Sam?"

Or consider the unrivaled collection of more than 250,000 nursery and seed catalogs spanning centuries and continents, their covers a vibrant kaleidoscope of color.

Or take a look at the "Mrs. Dallas" apple, the "Triumph" peach, or the "Hoskins" cherries—just a few of the fruits that teacher-turned-USDA-artist Deborah Griscom Passmore painted in meticulous detail in 1895.

Passmore is one of several artists whose work makes up the extensive USDA Pomological Watercolor Collection, invaluable not only for its precise visual recording of newly introduced cultivars of the time, but also for its representation of a scientific field—that of the scientific arts—in which women proliferated.

Also in the library are Charles Valentine Riley's papers and artifacts, which comprise one of the Rare and Special Collections' 400 manuscripts. Many of these detail historical efforts underpinning APHIS' work today. Riley, for example, is widely considered the "Father of Biological Control" for his work combating destructive pests in the American West in the 19th century. Notes, sketchbooks, correspondence—including a transcript of a letter from Charles Darwin—and photos of family and, of course, insects, chronicle his work and life. The collection also includes artifacts such as Riley's microscope and wooden printing blocks used to illustrate entomology publications he wrote and edited.

In addition, the collection contains Thomas Jefferson correspondence, which didn't come to light until 1993 when the letters were discovered enfolded in another collection. From these pages emerge the clear image of Jefferson the inventor and the prodigious experimenter with imported plants. He thanks a friend for sending him melon seed from Persia, saying that he too will disperse it among acquaintances. "It is by multiplying the good things of life that the mass of human happiness is increased," he writes.

NAL's Rare and Special Collections is open to the general public and researchers. For more information about the collection and its holdings, visit www.nal.usda.gov/speccoll.
question of the day

How do you think the growing use of telework by employees affects the agency’s work? Why?

Employee comments were overwhelmingly positive, many noting the increased productivity, better work/life balance, and more. One commented, “Telework is a win-win situation. It has the potential to save both the government and the individual employee money, time, and stress.”

On the negative side, one employee commented, “Most of the staff is gone and do not help when emergencies arise... Seems like teleworkers are skipping out on the tough issues.”

[next question please]

Mentoring is a powerful way to nurture employee success and professional growth. It can play a significant role in the agency’s cultural transformation efforts to provide all employees with the opportunity for success.

With this in mind, we ask: How would you rate your interest in establishing a mentor relationship at work, either as a mentor or mentee?

- I would be very interested.
- I might be interested but need more information.
- I’m not sure.
- I have no interest.

Click on the following link to participate in the poll and to offer your comment: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/questionofthedayforinsideaphis

As always, participation is voluntary and confidential.

[Volunteer Spotlight]

Gwynn Hallberg

For our Volunteer Spotlight series, Inside APHIS wants to recognize this issue’s featured volunteer, Gwynn Hallberg. This ongoing feature is to highlight individual efforts and acknowledge and promote the volunteer spirit that is part of our agency community.

[Employee name and program]
Gwynn Hallberg; Veterinary Medical Officer, Animal Care; Dallas, OR

[Volunteer organization]
Mustangs and MOHR (Mustangs Offering Hope and Renewal)

[Organization mission]
To provide a safe and nurturing environment that unites children with adopted mustangs to foster personal growth and development. The organization has a two-fold purpose: to rescue mustangs and to work with at-risk youth. Mustangs and MOHR has a dozen or so horses, and now also has two burros and a lamb. Many of the horses arrive with a history of abuse, neglect, or mishandling. Like many of the children who participate in the organization’s efforts, the horses are at first mistrustful, shy, and frightened. Volunteers work with the horses to restore their health and their ability to trust.

The program is free to the kids, who are often steered to the organization through the juvenile justice system, foster care programs, and through Native American substance abuse and suicide prevention programs.

[Volunteer activities]
Hallberg currently serves as vice president on the organization’s board of directors. She built and maintains the organization’s Web site and has produced promotional videos. Hallberg also used to work directly with the group’s rescued animals, helping to restore their trust in humans; however, she does less of this since she adopting three rescued mustangs of her own, which she keeps at her home barn.

[Time given]
Hallberg volunteered numerous hours to create the Mustangs and MOHR Web site and develop videos. Currently, her volunteer hours vary from 2-4 hours/week to 2-4 hours/month, plus her time networking with other rescues and people to place rescued horses.

[Organization web sites]
www.mustangsandmohr.org
Email: mustangsandmohr@me.com

[E-mail]
gwynn.m.hallberg@aphis.usda.gov

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quick tips for outlook

By Brittany Anderson

Since making the switch from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Outlook, APHIS employees have been learning the software’s ins and outs and finding new and more efficient ways to manage email. Here are three tips to help you navigate Outlook and benefit from its features.

1. If you’re having trouble finding an email group in the Outlook address book—especially one that you used previously in Lotus Notes, try this: add “APHIS” or “APHIS-” in front of the group name. For example, LPA ALL becomes APHIS-LPA ALL. During the agency address book’s migration to Outlook, “APHIS” was added to each email group’s list name.

2. To quickly find the email address of a new contact, type a portion of the person’s name in the “To” field, then press CTRL+K. This function searches Outlook’s Global Address List. If only a single address is found, it is inserted directly into your email’s “To” field. If multiple addresses are found, a list of possible matches appears for you to choose from.

3. Outlook can notify you when an email recipient has received or opened your email. Using the “Options” menu when either replying, forwarding, or sending a new email, you can request individual notifications. Here’s how:

- Open the “Options” tab
- Check the “Request a Delivery Receipt,” “Request a Read Receipt” box or both
- Send the email
- Once the email has been delivered or read, Outlook sends you an email confirmation.

aphis cost savings challenge

Visit the APHIS portal at myaphis.usda.gov and check the agency’s progress with its Cost Savings Challenge. From the portal, you can also, link to Up the Chain and offer your own cost-saving ideas and read the suggestions posted by other agency employees.
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aphis administrator’s awards

Joined onstage by USDA Under Secretary Edward Avalos, agency Administrator Gregory Parham presented APHIS Administrator’s Awards to six groups and one individual in a ceremony on September 13.

The APHIS Administrator’s Awards are presented each year in recognition of collaboration, creativity, and outstanding contributions to the APHIS mission. This year’s award recipients are described below.

[wildlife services deepwater horizon oil spill response team]

This team displayed heroism and exemplary emergency response as it worked with Federal, State, local, and private organizations to recover and capture wild animals covered with oil, and to disperse wildlife from oil-contaminated areas in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team members include: Dwight LeBlanc (Team Leader), Frank Boyd, Anthony Duffiney, Kristina Goodwin, Edwin Hartin, Richard Minnis, Dale Nolte, and Jason Suckow.

[aphis cell phone consolidation team]

Team members centralized all of the agency’s recurring shared telecommunications costs in one account. Their efforts are saving APHIS $1.7 million annually.

Team members include: Glenn Jones (Team Leader), Kristi Ewing, Kristina Frank, Arlette Nelson, Daphne O’Neal-Samuelson, Kimberly Prince, and Marva Smith.

[joint initiative to improve compliance]

This team of APHIS award recipients is part of the USDA, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Joint Initiative to Improve Compliance. Team members worked collaboratively to step up enforcement of hold orders on agricultural imports. The results were a criminal convic-

Continued on next page

APHIS members of the Joint Initiative to Improve Compliance pose with their awards.
administrator’s awards

Continued from page 1

The Biotechnology Regulation and Coexistence Group

[2010 florida medfly outbreak response team]

This response team, which includes members from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), earned honors for its outstanding efforts in eradicating the Mediterranean fruit fly in Boca Raton, FL, in 2010.


[phytosanitary issues management staff]

Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Phytosanitary Issues Management staff received an award for its efforts to help resolve plant health issues that can impede trade in U.S. plant products. Among its many accomplishments, the team negotiated new market access in China for U.S. vegetable oil; opened markets for U.S. potatoes in Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam; increased market access in Egypt for U.S. cotton; and negotiated with Australia, Canada, Mexico, and New Zealand to maintain market access for California and Pacific Northwest fruit.

Team members include: Alan Green (Team Leader), Karen Ackerman, Julie Allaga, Katha Anderson, Raymont Bady, Murali Bandla, Karen Bedigian, Jo-An Bentz-Blanco, Julie Clapp, Christian Deliss, George Galasso, Michael Guidiciopietro, John T. Jones, Nancy Klag, Judith Macias, Dennis Martin, Marie Martin, Marcus McElvain, Angela McMen-llen-Branigin, Monica Montoro, Michon Obichon, Michael Perry, Frank Salanti, Margaret Smither, Patricia Somervell, Mike Swett, Phyllis Tucker, Jeanne Van Dersal, Terrance Walls, and Ian Winborne.

[individual award: victor mastro]

Victor Mastro, director of PPQ’s Pest Survey, Detection, and Exclusion Laboratory in Buzzard’s Bay, MA, earned recognition for his leadership in finding ways to deal with the invasive species affecting U.S. forests and agriculture. Under his leadership, APHIS has developed: a pest management program that reduced populations of European grapevine moth in California by 99 percent; an Asian gypsy moth control program that reduced ship interceptions by 90 percent; tree treatments that form the basis for the Asian longhorned beetle eradication program; and a biological control program for emerald ash borer.

[biotechnology regulation and coexistence group]

This group was awarded for its decision-making role concerning several high-profile...
combined federal campaign

50 years of caring, giving, sharing

By Paula Henstridge

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) has kicked off its 50th year, continuing a tradition of caring, giving, and sharing that has impacted millions of lives in this country and throughout the world. In the 50 years since its inception, Federal employees have contributed nearly $7 billion through CFC—an astonishing track record! I am honored to serve as the APHIS CFC Coordinator for the National Capital Area this year, and I am confident that APHIS will continue the incredible history of caring and giving through CFC.

We've all watched news stories of natural disasters and personal tragedy and heaved a sigh of relief that it wasn't happening to us or someone close to us. When times are tough, it's tempting to turn our heads and hope that someone else steps up. After all, we all have financial obligations that we need to attend to, and as Federal employees, we know that we are not receiving a cost-of-living increase this year. It's tempting to say, "We've done enough; let someone else do it!" But, that's not who we are.

I've been with APHIS for 31 years, and I've chosen to stay with this organization my entire career because the mission is one I value, the work is rewarding, the people are caring, and it is a giving organization. I've never seen APHIS employees not step up when they were needed, whether they were responding to coworkers in need, a call to volunteerism, or organized efforts like the Combined Federal Campaign.

I believe in the work done by the organizations participating in the CFC and know they benefited me, my family and friends, and my community. I believe that APHIS employees are the most caring and responsive around. I believe in the power of compassion to turn lives around, and I believe, emphatically, that hope is the greatest gift of all. I encourage you to be a part of this year's campaign.

administrator’s awards

Continued from page 2

Group members include: Cindy Smith (Group Leader), Sidney Abel, Lauren Axley, Tom Bolick, James Booth, Carlyne Cockrum, Daniel Colacicco, John Cords, Barbara Fesco, Susan Golabek, Michael Gregoire, Subray Hagedo, Rick Hemdon, Neil Hoffman, Andrea Huberty, Rachel Iadicicco, James Ivy, Annalisa Jabailey, Susan Koehler, Beverly Li, Salty McCammon, Thomas Nesbitt, Sheila Novak, Kris Ramaraju, David Reinhold, Craig Roseland, Michael Schachtman, David Shipman, Beverly Simmons, Jordan Sottosanto, Rebecca Stankiewicz-Gabel, John Turner, Khamkeo Vongpaseuth, Thomas Walsh, Kenneth Waters, and Natalia Weinsetel.
modernization

project management

takes the
long-term
view

APHIS’ budgets for fiscal years 2011 and 2012 have each contained sizable reductions from previous years. And, like many other Federal agencies during these lean times, APHIS is looking at ways to cut costs in both the short and long term.

For several months now, employees across the agency have been submitting their ideas through Up the Chain in response to the APHIS Cost Savings Challenge. The agency has received many suggestions for potential short-term savings; however, long-term solutions are also needed to achieve a sustainable APHIS.

[modernization]
The APHIS Management Team (AMT) determined that the agency must modernize to implement long-term cost strategies that will help APHIS:

- bring spending in line with expected funding levels
- transition to a more efficient and sustainable organization
- achieve better results by focusing on core missions and activities
- revolutionize the way the agency operates

In short, the agency must become a leaner, lower-cost organization with a clear and certain focus on its core mission.

To begin this effort, the AMT prepared a blueprint for Modernization—titled APHIS Modernization Plan—and shared it with employees in July as part of a message from Administrator Parham posted on the Administrator’s portal page. Among other things, the plan provides background information and describes four initial modernization steps, including the formation of the Project Management Office (PMO).

[what is the project management office?]
The PMO’s main job is to analyze a wide variety of information about the agency and provide the AMT with its findings. The AMT will use these analyses as part of its decision-making process to better manage APHIS resources, eliminate redundancies, and become a more efficient organization.

Led by Project Manager Marilyn Holland, the PMO is comprised of employees from across the agency. Each PMO member brings different expertise and talents to the team, ensuring a wide variety of thoughts and ideas. Click Members to see a complete list of PMO members.

Together, the short-term cost saving ideas, the PMO’s analytical work, and the AMT’s decisions will ensure that APHIS can meet its budget challenges and continue to fulfill its mission of protecting U.S. agriculture.

Look for more information from the PMO in the weeks and months ahead.
modernization

Project management takes the long-term view

By Meghan Klingel

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Project Management Office

Marilyn Holland – Project Manager
Erik Anderson – Assistant Project Manager and Chief Analyst
Amy Spellman – APHIS Subject Matter Expert (SME)
Ron Hicks – Change Management/Labor SME
Sid Abel – Biotechnology Regulatory Services SME
Murali Bandla - Plant Protection and Quarantine SME
Matt Bromeland – Business Process Improvement SME
Ken Johnson – Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance SME
Meghan Klingel – Communications
Brian McCluskey – Veterinary Services/Region SME
Cheri Oswalt – Administrative SME
Jerry Rushin – Animal Care SME
Ken Seeley – Business Process Improvement SME
John Sinclair – Wildlife Services SME
Kathy Slaga – Workforce Planning/Human Resources SME
Amy Snyder – MRPBS/Information Technology Division SME

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Washington internships for native students

employee’s path comes full circle

By John Scott

When Kelsey Branch was invited to speak at the closing ceremony for this year’s Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS) program, she felt that her path had come full circle. Branch, who joined Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Emergency and Domestic Programs in July, had graduated from the WINS program just 2 years before.

As Branch spoke to this year’s interns, she shared the same advice she received when she began her internship. “Find the one thing you can change, and then do it. You’ve got to jump in,” says Branch.

As an intern, Branch took this advice to heart, investing herself fully in the WINS program. At the office, she jumped in, drafting invasive weed fact sheets and preparing pest reviews. In the evenings, she and other WINS interns attended 3-hour classes three times a week, participated in professional development seminars, and completed homework assignments.

The rigorous internship program run by American University (AU) revolves around three main pillars, focusing on issues of native identity, academic studies, and professional development.

“Students have experiences that can be transformative—creating their own networks that can connect them academically, professionally, and with the Federal Government,” says Amy Morill-Bijou, Assistant Dean of Experiential Education at AU. “They return home with experiences and stories that can have a ripple effect in their home communities.”

Branch agrees that the WINS schedule can be exhausting but that it offers many rewards—both professionally and culturally.

Branch, who is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation based in Shawnee, OK, grew up mostly in San Diego, CA. She reconnected with her Native American heritage during her teens when her mother traced a family line and applied for tribe membership.

During the internship, Branch talked with others about tribe cultures and traditions, and about the leadership approaches and business enterprises that sustain contemporary tribes. The experience deepened her appreciation for the diverse experiences of Native Americans.

She worked full time the following summer and then part time for PPQ during her senior year as a biology major at The College of William & Mary.

Since joining APHIS, she has worked on projects involving biocontrol, forest pests, and outreach efforts. She also continues her work with invasive weeds.

Branch’s path may have come full circle, but it also continues turning in new and interesting ways. This past summer, she supervised an intern. Describing her efforts to develop projects that would be exciting for him, Branch grows more animated and energetic. She pauses briefly to comment aloud about her own career, saying, “I wonder what’s going to be my next thing?”

[don’t forget use or lose]

December 31 is the last day to use any use or lose annual leave for 2011.
63rd annual USDA honor awards

By John Scott

At the USDA Honor Awards ceremony in September, Secretary Vilsack remarked about the importance of USDA’s service to the American public and the achievements of this year’s recipients. Vilsack commended the honorees, calling them “…the best of the best, the folks who have gone the extra mile, and that have developed ideas and thoughts that have made this a better and stronger USDA.”

Among this year’s recipients, the Secretary recognized twoAPHIS groups and six additional APHIS employees who served on other USDA teams.

[mexico/u.s. port relocation project team]

Led by Kevin Varner, Veterinary Services’ area veterinarian in charge for Texas, this team earned its award for demonstrating personal and professional excellence in keeping U.S.-Mexican cattle trade going when violence along the border threatened to shut it down. The team quickly moved import operations to new facilities in the United States. In doing so, it protected the lives of APHIS employees, ensured the safe crossing of disease-free cattle, and helped preserve vital trade.

Team members are: Kevin Varner (Team Leader), Bill Coble, Mark Davidson, Mauro Garcia, Roberto Garcia, Juan Garza, Rafael Guerrero, Nicholas Gutierrez, Darrell Haney, Timothy Hardt, Stephen Jenkins, Kelsey Johnson, Larry Jung, Joanne Mann, Armando Martinez, Jeral McCall, Kenneth Miller, Russell Noyes, Clayton Robinson, Brenda Santelman, Deborah Smith, Frankie Sullivan, and Humberto Villameal.

[the national centers for animal health green team]

Comprised entirely of volunteers from APHIS and USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS), this team received its award for accomplishments in environmental stewardship and for serving as a model to all of USDA for sustaining and enhancing the environment. With the leadership of Joel Hutcheson (APHIS) and Ami Frank (ARS), team members recycled more than 40 percent of NCAH’s non-hazardous solid waste in 2010, totaling approximately 149 tons of trash. In fiscal year 2011, the team recycled more than 112 tons of materials. Additionally, the team helped to design the USDA People’s Gardens at NCAH, including a rain garden, pollinator garden, and 15 acres of tall grass prairie.

APHIS team members are: Joel Hutcheson (Team Leader), David Atkins, Julie Brockway, Rodney Chitty, Linda Cox, Mary Fran Cloud, Wayne Douet, Heidi Eckroth, Nichole Hines, Randall Levinge, Breanne Marpe, Debra Narwold, Douglas Pedersen, Theodore Schrier, Wendy Strover, Karla Tebben, and James Wettestad.

ARS team members are: Ami Frank (Team Leader), Kevin Lykins, Leisa Mandell, Avis Pruin, and Judi Stasko.

[additional aphis honorees]

Joanne Munro, deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS); Sharon Church, an office manager with Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ); and Sarah Rehberg, a PPQ officer, earned recognition for contributions to the USDA Labor Management Forum team.

Shirley Iclee, a financial systems analyst with MRPBS, received an award for her efforts as part of USDA’s GovTrip Improvement Team. The team is credited with increasing USDA’s ability to manage travel efficiently and effectively, saving taxpayer dollars; and improving customer satisfaction.

Sharon Coursey, former head of MRBPS’ human resources division; Ron Hicks, deputy administrator of International Services; and Joanne Munro (MRPBS) earned honors for their work with USDA’s Cultural Transformation Taskforce.
**Did you know** that, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 75 percent of recently emerging infectious diseases affecting humans are diseases of animal origin? And, approximately 60 percent of all human pathogens are zoonotic, meaning that they are contagious diseases that can spread between animals and humans?

With figures like this, it’s not hard to understand why APHIS’ experience and expertise in animal health and wildlife management are important to our Nation’s efforts to protect agricultural and human health.

One quick look at a list of commonly known zoonotic diseases reaffirms this point. The list includes: bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, Lyme disease, plague, rabies, Salmonella, and West Nile virus. Many of these may sound familiar—especially if you know about the efforts of our agency’s Veterinary Services (VS) and Wildlife Services programs.

With increasing global awareness and emphasis on the connections between animal and human health, international experts and organizations—including APHIS—are working more cooperatively under a collective concept known as “One Health.” The term One Health has been defined as the collaborative effort of multiple disciplines—working locally, nationally, and globally—to attain optimal health for people, animals, and the environment.

To learn more about the concept of One Health, visit the VS 2015 Web site. Or, for those in VS, the VS 2015 One Health Initiative SharePoint site offers extensive information, as does the CDC One Health Web site.

You can also learn more about zoonotic diseases from the University of Wisconsin, School of Veterinary Medicine’s online Zoonotic Diseases Tutorial.

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**how-to update contact info in outlook**

Whether your goal is to improve workplace efficiency or simply to make sure that coworkers can reach you the next time they order out for lunch, there’s one important thing you should do today: update your contact information in Outlook.

To update your information in the USDA Address Book, click on one of the following links. You will be prompted to enter your Windows ID and password prior to reviewing and revising your information. Note: Any changes made will not be reflected in the address book for up to 24 hours.

- http://AddressBookUpdate
- http://AddressBookUpdate.we.aphis.gov
veterinary services

going the extra mile for U.S. exports

By Gary Roush

Over the past few years, Turkey and Russia have been working to build their dairy and beef herds. Both countries have looked to the U.S. market to obtain healthy, pregnant heifers that carry desirable genetics for herd breeding and development.

To help meet this surge in demand for U.S. cattle, APHIS’ Veterinary Services (VS) establishes, as needed, specially designated, temporary export inspection facilities (EIF) and ports of embarkation to supplement our Nation’s permanent export inspection facilities and ports.

For example, VS has established five temporary EIFs to support the volume of shipments out of Wilmington, DE. And 25 shipments—totaling about 17,000 head of cattle—were processed in FY 2011 through another temporary EIF in Turner, ME; these animals were then shipped out of a specially designated port in Eastport, ME.

In Texas, two recent shipments totaling about 7,000 head of cattle were processed through an EIF set up only about 100 yards from the specially designated port in Galveston.

Although the temporary EIFs create additional logistical challenges for VS, exporters, and port authorities, the economic opportunities they create for U.S. producers and exporters are significant.

Broadly, here’s how the temporary facilities operate. Producers first move pregnant heifers from their ranches/farms to export isolation facilities in various States for observation and testing for a 21- to 60-day period. Testing periods depend on the particular diseases of concern to the importing country. From there, the animals are trucked to an EIF—which may be set up right at the port or at remote locations—where APHIS veterinarians and animal technicians examine the animals for any visible signs of disease and match each animal’s identification number against those listed on the endorsed export certificate. Any diseased, injured, or misidentified animals are culled from the group being shipped. Next, the animals move to a specially designated port of embarkation to be loaded onboard a ship.

To ensure the success of shipments employing temporary facilities, the animals’ movement from site to site must be well-synchronized. VS must work in close coordination with numerous Federal agencies (Customs and Border Protection, Transportation Security Administration, Coast Guard) and port authority officials—as well as ranchers, brokers, exporters, truckers, dockworkers, and shipping companies.

export roundup

• In fiscal year 2011, the United States exported approximately 96,000 head of cattle, the majority of which went to Russia and Turkey.

• In September 2011, a shipment of 5,585 cattle exported out of Galveston set a record for the largest single shipment of cattle from a U.S. port.

• The “Ocean Drover,” which sails out of Wilmington and Galveston, can hold as many as 18,000 head of cattle on its nine decks of open-air stalls.
wildlife services

spreading rabies awareness

By Gail Keirm

Since its start in 2007, more than 150 million people from 135 countries have celebrated World Rabies Day. The event—held each year on September 28—raises awareness internationally about the impact of human and animal rabies, how easy it is to prevent, and how to eliminate the main global sources of this deadly disease.

According to the Global Alliance for Rabies Control, worldwide about 70,000 people die each year from rabies; younger populations are especially impacted, with one child dying every 10 minutes from the disease.

In addition to tweeting and writing about this year's World Rabies Day event, APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) celebrated the day by hosting a rabies fun run/walk and potluck lunch for employees, families, and friends at the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Fort Collins, CO, and several field stations. Approximately 80 people attended the event to learn about the center's rabies research, which is focused on improving oral rabies vaccine delivery and effectiveness, understanding the economic impacts of rabies, and developing new disease monitoring methods, tools, and technologies to combat the disease in wildlife.

"I truly enjoy coming to the rabies day event each year," said NWRC supervisory biologist Heather Sullivan. "It's great to spend time with colleagues and catch up on the latest developments in our fight against rabies. I enjoy sharing what I learn with my family and friends, and they are always surprised at the level of damage still caused by this disease. I'm very proud of our agency's efforts and accomplishments."

To learn more about other rabies awareness events around the world, visit the World Rabies Day Web site.

rabies vaccine testing

In an effort to reduce rabies in wildlife, WS researchers, disease biologists, and field specialists are testing the Canadian-produced ONRAB® oral rabies vaccine for use in the United States.

In a previous Canadian-U.S. border study comparing oral rabies vaccines currently used in each country, ONRAB® produced a greater than 70 percent vaccination rate in raccoons compared to a 30 percent rate for the vaccine used in the United States. The ONRAB® vaccine also had a higher rate of vaccination in skunks—a species that may help to perpetuate and maintain the virus in the environment.

If the ONRAB® bait can successfully vaccinate skunks and raccoons, as well as foxes and coyotes, it could greatly enhance the effectiveness of APHIS' oral rabies vaccination programs.
animal care
safeguarding elephant welfare

By Hope Sipocz

When you hear, “Send in the special team,” it may sound a little like football-speak—especially during this time of year. But in this case, we’re not talking football; we’re talking about elephants and the Animal Care program.

Last spring, Animal Care formed a team of highly trained and experienced APHIS veterinarians to inspect USDA-licensed, traveling elephant exhibitors across the country. The eight members of this special team are uniting their expertise to ensure that elephants at circuses and other traveling exhibitions are properly cared for and handled according to Animal Welfare Act (AWA) standards and regulations.

In addition to inspecting licensed exhibitors and educating them about regulatory compliance, the team conducts regularly scheduled conference calls to share and discuss important inspection-related information with each other. In April 2011, the team also assisted with the highly successful “Tuberculosis in Elephants: Science, Myths, and Beyond” seminar held at the APHIS Center for Animal Welfare.

Having an elephant-focused inspection team significantly enhances Animal Care’s efforts to ensure the welfare of AWA-regulated elephants. Because of the team’s ability to conduct thorough and more consistent and timely inspections, Animal Care can identify problems earlier and respond more quickly to complaints—better protecting elephants throughout the United States from mistreatment.

“This team is very dedicated and responsive to the needs of Animal Care. They have been able to do very thorough, efficient, and consistent inspections, which helps in answering complaints and in gaining compliance with licensees who travel with elephants,” says Denise Sofranko, Animal Care’s field specialist for elephants.

agency calendar

december

Annual Benefits Open Season; November 14 through December 12, 2011. During Open Season, employees can enroll in or make changes to their coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program and the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance program. Employees can also elect to participate in the Federal Flexible Spending Account program for 2012.

APHIS Riverdale Leadership Development for Project/Program Management graduation; December 1 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.; Riverdale, MD.

The following Webinars are scheduled, with registration through AgLearn: So You Think You Want to be a Supervisor, December 6; Managing Others through Transition, December 7; APHIS Mentoring Program Orientation, December 8.

Continued on next page
[what is your background?]
I grew up and attended college in Wisconsin. My first job after school was with the Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), where I worked in a field office providing administrative assistance to approximately 100 staff scientists. In December 1999, I started working for APHIS on the Leave and Compensation Team in Minneapolis. In June 2000, I moved to the Accounting Team and have remained in Finance.

[how long have you been with APHIS?]
I’ve been with APHIS for 12 years.

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
As I was recalling my experiences to answer this question, it became evident that, in all of my experiences, it was the people that I’ve worked with for the last 12 years who have made my experiences so memorable. I’ve learned so much from everyone. APHIS has so many wonderful people working within it. However, if you’re looking for one specific example, the Track II Leadership Development Program was a wonderful opportunity.

[priorities for the coming months?]
I’ll be focusing on the Financial Management Modernization Initiative (FMMI) implementation ensuring services to MRP agencies run smoothly, and starting/continuing the services that we will be performing for USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
I’m most proud of the work of our branch. My proudest moments often come when a customer calls or emails me to recognize the hard work of one of our staff members in the Financial Operations Branch.

[hobbies?]
Spending time with my family and dog (Shiloh), watching the Green Bay Packers, and traveling.

[guilty pleasure?]
NFL football—specifically, the Green Bay Packers. Go Pack!

[favorite meal?]
My mother’s potato soup.

[last book read?]
Warriors Don’t Cry by Melba Pattillo Beals.

[favorite movie?]
I don’t know that I really have a favorite, but I can still get wrapped up in The Exorcist.
question of the day

How would you rate your interest in establishing a mentor relationship at work, either as a mentor or mentee?

69.6% I would be very interested
13% I might be interested but need more information
17% I have no interest

How would you rate your interest in establishing a mentor relationship at work, either as a mentor or mentee?

We want to offer a special thanks to everyone who participated in our last issue’s question of the day. It only takes a minute to participate. We encourage everyone to add his or her voice to this issue’s new question.

In our last issue, we asked: How would you rate your interest in establishing a mentor relationship at work, either as a mentor or mentee?

Here’s how your coworkers responded:

Your results
Go Outside

AsAPHIS continues its efforts with Cost Savings, Cultural Transformation, and Modernization, agency management is using several venues for communicating information with employees and creating opportunities to exchange ideas. These include traditional approaches like email and Intranet postings, as well as more interactive options like the agency portal, Up the Chain, and “Coffee, Cookies, and Conversation” meetings.

Given the agency’s ongoing initiatives and the importance of internal communications, we ask: What source do you rely upon most for APHIS internal information?

- Email
- APHIS Intranet
- APHIS Portal
- My Manager/Supervisor
- Coworkers
- Other

Click on the following link to participate in the poll and to offer your comments: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YM2K6WJ

As always, participation is voluntary and confidential.

volunteer spotlight

Parveen Setia (center) was recognized in August by USDA for his sustained efforts in bringing people of different faiths together to reduce poverty and hunger in the United States and the rest of the world through programs that increase the availability of safe and affordable food.

He and others were presented awards at USDA’s 3rd annual Iftar dinner commemorating Ramadan and the contributions of USDA’s Muslim employees. Also shown are Faroak Sait, Director of Civil Rights, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (left) and Max Finberg, Director, USDA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (right).

employee name and program
Parveen P. Setia; Chief, Policy Analysis and Development, Policy and Program Development; Riverdale, MD

volunteer organization
Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) and Organization of South Asian Americans in Agriculture (OSAAA)

organization mission
The focus of these employee organizations is to increase awareness among members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community about various Federal programs and how to maximize their participation. The organizations work closely with USDA leadership in developing outreach activities to address the interests of Asian American and Pacific Islander Federal employees and members of the community at large.

volunteer activities
As an active member of FAPAC and OSAAA, Setia works to increase the Asian community's involvement with USDA's broad range of programs, including food safety and nutrition programs. He also works closely with the leadership of various USDA agencies to increase their understanding and develop outreach activities that address the concerns and participation of Asian American and Pacific Islander community members.

time given
Hours vary based on the needs and events, but Setia averages about 150 volunteer hours a year.

organization web sites
www.fapac.org
www.iranusa.org

The OSAAA Web site is in transition and redevelopment.

[organization web sites]
parveen.p.setia@aphis.usda.gov
wildlife services
balancing roadways and birds in oregon

By Tanya Espinosa

The struggle to manage competing priorities is a constant and familiar challenge for State and Federal agencies alike.

In Oregon, transportation officials are faced with the challenge of balancing the State’s roadwork with its obligations to protect migratory birds. As Oregon officials plan and carry out work on the State’s roadways and bridges, they must also be sure not to harm birds that are protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Oregon’s effort to meet its responsibilities to both migratory birds and the State’s transportation infrastructure has led to an interesting and effective partnership with APHIS’ Wildlife Services (WS) program.

Since 2006, WS has put its wildlife management expertise into practice and partnered with Oregon transportation officials to help manage bird species at the State’s project sites, which include bridges, roadways, and road shoulders and vegetation areas. Working together, their primary goal is to prevent birds from nesting in project areas. WS employees complete regular surveys, and under a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s permit, they also conduct nonlethal activities to remove nests and wildlife at transportation project sites slated for construction or maintenance that season.

This intergovernmental collaboration benefits both the State and WS. Oregon officials experience fewer project delays due to nesting birds, and they can operate with greater

Continued on next page
birds in Oregon

Continued from page 1

confidence that they are in compliance with Federal migratory bird provisions. In turn, WS gets the opportunity to develop new bird management techniques and learn how to better anticipate future nesting at project sites.

WS has assisted the State’s department of transportation on more than 900 projects in the past 5 years using netting, paintball guns, water cannons, kites, foam, and other tools. Program officials have also gained knowledge about the types of birds that nest on different types of bridges, the nesting tendencies of birds by region, and the best removal methods for bird species.

In 2011, the Federal Highway Administration recognized the State’s unique relationship with WS and awarded the Oregon Department of Transportation with an Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative Award for its migratory bird management and conservation strategy.

combined federal campaign
thank you

By Paula Henstridge

Although the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) continues to take paper pledges for 2011 through February 15, 2012, the National Capital Area campaign came to an end on December 31, 2011. During the campaign, APHIS employees in the Washington, D.C., area gave more than $144,000, or 77 percent of our goal.

APHIS-Riverdale held its closing ceremony on January 19, celebrating success with comments from agency Administrator Gregory Parham and Associate Administrator Kevin Shea. The audience was able to revisit the kick-off ceremony’s flash mob as Shayla Spann, director of the flash mob, was recognized as 2011’s “Most Spirited Keyworker.” In addition, organizers of Riverdale’s top two fundraising events in 2011 were recognized: Tyrese Coleman, David Pugh, Ashley Smith, and Lorna Harris for Investigative and Enforcement Services’ hot dog buffet and Marelis Sanchez and Ernest Smith for Marketing and Regulatory Program Business Services’ taco sale.

Coordinating APHIS’ efforts for the 2011 National Capital Area campaign was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. As a 32-year employee of APHIS, I have always known agency employees to be dedicated and compassionate, and this year’s campaign—in the D.C. area and throughout the country—demonstrated the truth of this belief.

In a time of uncertainty and fiscal challenges, you stepped up and gave in large ways and small, through your pledges, your participation in events, or your donation of time and effort in organizing fundraisers. Most importantly, your giving has made a difference. I thank you for the opportunity to serve as CFC coordinator at headquarters, and I thank you—my friends and coworkers everywhere—for your compassion and generosity.
The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is intended to stop the wasteful take of birds and prevent their use in commercial trade. It prohibits pursuing, hunting, taking, capturing, or killing any migratory bird, or any part, feather, nest, or egg thereof, without a permit from the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The Act covers 836 bird species and has no provision for incidental take, which means anyone can be convicted—even if the action was unknowing or unintentional.

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investigative and enforcement services
whittling backlogs and focusing enforcement

By Vivian Keller

How do you process 2,500 open investigations when you have the capacity for fewer than 1,000 a year—and more coming in every day? That was the impossible math confronting Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) Director Rob Huttenlocker last year. But Huttenlocker, his IES colleagues, and APHIS’ programs are working together to rewrite that equation in 2012. Their goal: to focus on the most serious violators of agency regulations and ensure more timely enforcement actions to boot.

For the past several years, a flood of cases for investigation has poured in to IES from APHIS sources, most notably Animal Care (AC), and from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Although the volume of cases was welcome evidence of stringent inspections, it became too large for IES’ staff to swiftly address cases, particularly the grave violations. In a time of diminishing resources, the solution was clear: work together to reduce the investigative caseload and institute more streamlined work processes.

A task force led by Huttenlocker that includes Andrea Morgan, AC; Ed Jhee, Biotechnology Regulatory Services; Mikel Tockes, CBP; Mike Watson, Plant Protection and Quarantine; and Thomas J. Myers, Veterinary Services, has already whittled the caseload down to about 1,800, in consultation with program colleagues and IES enforcement staff. Ultimately, the aim is to have IES investigating no more than 600–800 key cases at any one time. (Cases deemed less pressing will be dealt with through regulatory correspondence and other means.)

To help prioritize and thus reduce the overall number of cases referred to IES, each APHIS program has the option of using agency-wide decisionmaking criteria or developing its own by the end of FY 2012. A cross-agency team—led by Policy and Program Development’s Jan Grimes—used Decisionlens software to develop the currently available agency-wide criteria, which include factors such as the importance of the case to APHIS’ mission, enforceability, and possible political or economic impacts.

To maximize efficient enforcement of the targeted cases, IES will rely on recommendations gleaned from a Lean Six Sigma analysis conducted last year, which include more interaction between referring programs and IES on case resolution. Ultimately, IES expects to reduce the time needed to close most investigations from about 600 days to 365 days or fewer.

Huttenlocker acknowledges that this new approach may take some getting used to. However, he notes that it is consistent with the way the criminal justice system works. Because there are so many cases in the system, he says, “you have to build in some discretion and flexibility” to address serious violations quickly. Moving promptly, he adds, also helps deter future violators—a development that could free up precious extra resources for IES and APHIS’ programs alike in the years ahead.

Page 4 of 15
aphis 2011 support unit report

In a recently issued annual report, APHIS’ support units have teamed up to answer this question for their customers—the agency’s programs. Featuring brief and easy-to-read information, the APHIS Support Units 2011 Report delivers a snapshot of the work completed last year for each of the agency’s program areas.

The report also highlights the initiatives conducted by the support units—Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance, International Services, Legislative and Public Affairs, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services, and Policy and Program Development—for the agency overall.

Click here to read the APHIS Support Units 2011 Report on the APHIS portal.

Go Outside [inside]

world veterinary year
blog series celebrates
aphis veterinarians

APHIS wrapped up its series of weekly blogs for World Veterinary Year celebrated throughout 2011. If you missed the blogs, here’s a link for the tagged series on the USDA blog.

Altogether, more than 20 APHIS veterinarians lent their voices to the celebration marking the 250th anniversary of the veterinary profession. In the brief blog entries, agency veterinarians share personal experiences from their careers, talk about their work, and describe how they became interested in becoming veterinarians.

The series ably illustrates the diverse range of what it means to be an APHIS veterinarian. The blogs feature employees from throughout the agency’s programs—Animal Care, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Veterinary Services, Wildlife Services—and include veterinarians who work in varied positions throughout the United States.

Give the blogs a quick scan. Collectively, they provide an interesting introduction into the work that APHIS veterinarians do day in and day out. And, for those not needing an introduction, they offer a chance to learn a little about the people you work with.
new leadership development program for project and program managers

Effective leadership at every level is key to APHIS’ success. That’s why training like the Leadership Development Project and Program Managers (LDPM) program is so important.

Run as a pilot program in Riverdale and Raleigh last year, the LDPM program will be offered to project and program managers who are non-supervisory team leaders in two tracks: GS 7-11 and GS 12-14. While the GS 12-14 track is available now, APHIS will tailor the program to fit the needs of GS 7-11 employees in 2013.

flexible learning
Among other things, the LDPM program helps participants learn to confidently and efficiently manage projects and programs, lead from their positions regardless of supervisory status, and effectively communicate both internally and externally.

The 8-month program includes a variety of classroom sessions, Web seminars, AgLearn training, book assignments, and developmental projects, with approximately a 50-50 mix of classroom and other learning modes. The curriculum targets the competencies of decision-making, technical credibility, team building, political savvy, influencing and negotiating, and written and oral communication.

One of the program’s strengths is that participants help shape and customize their own learning process. In addition to completing the mandatory courses, they select a suite of electives based on their individual learning and developmental goals—helping to take them from where they are to where they want to be.

“It was great to be able to choose electives based on how we each work within our own programs,” said Rachel Cezar, an LDPM program graduate and veterinarian in Animal Care. “I learned a lot in the leadership program that I’ve applied to my day-to-day activities.”

affordability
By bringing the training to locations where there are large concentrations of employees, APHIS is able to save a great deal of money while offering a quality training program. To put it into numbers: the LDPM program costs $500 per person—but it would cost 3 or 4 times that amount if participants had to travel. Due to the lower cost, the agency is able to offer the opportunity to more employees. It’s a win-win situation for employees and the agency.

upcoming offerings
Currently, APHIS is reviewing the Riverdale and Raleigh pilot programs and determining future locations. Once upcoming locations are chosen, an announcement will be sent via email to employees in those areas.

For more information about the LDPM program, click here to visit the LDPM SharePoint site.

You may also contact Marilyn Miller, an APHIS education specialist, by telephone at (301) 734-0802 [VoIP (301) 851-3604] or by email at marilyn.s.miller@aphis.usda.gov.
giant african snails —oh my!

By Scott Moore

Giant snails are back! And they’re hungry!

It sounds a bit like the tagline of a horror movie. But, in reality, it’s a multi-million-dollar pest sequel of sorts, starring monstrous-sized snails attacking areas of south Florida.

The giant African snail—which can grow up to 8 inches long—is a highly destructive invasive species known to consume at least 500 types of plants. The mollusks also cause structural damage to buildings and present a public health concern because they can carry parasitic nematodes that cause meningitis in humans. When 18,000 snails infested Miami in the late 1960s and early ’70s, it took 10 years and about $1 million to eradicate them.

Unfortunately, the current infestation is even bigger.

[where and how many?]
Since the first detections in September 2011, APHIS and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) have collected and destroyed more than 34,500 snails from 14 areas. Surveys have found snails on 230 properties in Miami-Dade County.

In addition to growing large, the giant African snail is also very prolific. Each hermaphroditic snail, having mated, can produce 1,200 eggs a year. Residents say they sometimes have to carefully navigate their walkways to avoid crushing the invasive mollusks under foot.

APHIS Operations Support Officer Eduardo Varona, a liaison to the Giant African Snail program for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), says that at one site he surveyed the entire side of a building was covered with snail feces.

[snail hide-and-seek]
Many of the critters are skilled at hide-and-seek. Varona and other snail hunters have surveyed nearly 37,000 properties, searching for snails behind fence posts, in plant material and garden pots, and even in barbecue grills.

The snails may not be speedy, he says, but “it is quite amazing how they hide.”

APHIS has provided more than $4 million to battle the giant African snails. In addition to the survey, control, and regulatory work, APHIS and the State of Florida have created an extensive English-, Spanish-, and Creole-language outreach campaign. Neighborhood meetings, social networking sites, and television, radio, and billboard ads help educate the public and solicit calls to a toll-free telephone number (888-397-1517). The program has received more than 900 calls, with 12 of the 14 core area detections coming as a result of homeowners’ sightings.

“People have been happy to see us,” said PPQ State Plant Health Director Paul Hornby. “They have been very engaged and very supportive.”

Even in the winter—when the snails are less active—APHIS and State

Continued on next page
giant african snails

Continued from page 6

personnel are collecting 60 or 70 snails a day. About half of them are found dead, the result of an otherwise-safe iron phosphate molluscicide that has been applied at about 6,000 properties. Survivors are double-bagged, dunked in an alcohol solution, euthanized, and given a one-way ticket to FDAC offices in Gainesville.

[sixing the source]

David Robinson of PPQ's National Identification Services is genetically testing where the snails originated and whether they came from the same place.

While the 1960-70s pests were traced to Hawaii, the current invaders seem to have West African heritage, though one group may have come from South America.

Federal and State regulatory officials are currently investigating how these snails have made their way to South Florida. APHIS Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) officers have conducted more than 185 interviews in concert with APHIS Investigative and Enforcement Services and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service. Evidence gathered thus far has been shared with the Assistant United States Attorney.

One thing is certain: there is no chance Varona is ordering escargot at the local eatery. "No, I won't be doing that in the near future," he said.

In middle image, PPQ's Eduardo Varona (left) and Phillip Holmes of SITC search for the giant African snail near a tile walkway.

PPQ Officer Tatiana Lumbia (far right) bags another snail.

changing faces recent aphis retirees

In the last quarter of calendar year 2011, the agency said goodbye to 140 employees who retired—many at the very end of the year. We wish each of them the very best as they begin a new path in their life's journey.

The list of recent retirees spans all of the agency's programs and many of its work locations. With the departure of so many, we thought that providing a list of recent retirees would help employees keep track of the changing faces within APHIS. We plan to include similar lists in future issues of Inside APHIS.

Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.
### APHIS Retirees
#### October 1 – December 31, 2011

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Animal Care</th>
<th>Biotechnology Regulatory Services</th>
<th>International Services</th>
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<tr>
<td>Caffeine Allen, Riverdale, MD</td>
<td>Jacqueline Barnes, Riverdale, MD</td>
<td>Ronald Hicks, Washington, DC</td>
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<td>Joyce Bailey, Riverdale, MD</td>
<td>Audrey Ingram, Riverdale, MD</td>
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<td>Jill Benjamin, Riverdale, MD</td>
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<td>Daniel Jones, Granbury, TX</td>
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<td>Michael Long, Fort Collins, CO</td>
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<td>Richard Watkins, Kansas, UT</td>
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**Veterinary Services**

| Khawaja Ahmad, New York–Queens, NY                                       | Clements Berry, Florida, NC       | Karen Blank, Ames, IA  |
| Flick Braverman, Montgomery, AL                                           | William Busch, Ames, IA           |                       |
| Marlene Busick, Conyers, GA                                               | Beverly Carey, Conyers, GA        |                       |
| Cathy Christy, Riverdale, MD                                              | Carla Dixon, Ames, IA             |                       |
| Gwendolyn Fields, Topeka, KS                                              | Lydia Fouch, Austin, TX           |                       |
| Donna Fower, Raleigh, NC                                                  | Ernestine Gibbs, Riverdale, MD    |                       |
| Yvonne Griffin, Madison, WI                                               | Cheryl Hall, Riverdale, MD        |                       |
| George Hill, Fort Collins, CO                                             | Linda Ingram, Riverdale, MD       |                       |
| Fred Jaskowski, Bismarck, ND                                              | Gary Jennings, Chester, SC        |                       |
| Dawn Killher, Conyers, GA                                                 | Linda King, Raleigh, NC           |                       |
| Pamela Kran, St. Paul, MN                                                 | Teressa Lavergne, Montgomery, AL  |                       |
| Joyce Marble, Salt Lake City, UT                                          | Winnie D. May, Montgomery, AL     |                       |
| Joan Meyers, Lincoln, NE                                                  | Albert Morgan, Riverdale, MD      |                       |
| Kathy Nixons, Jefferson City, MO                                          | Kathleen O’Malley, Riverdale, MD  |                       |

**Policy and Program Development**

| Mary Cochran, Riverdale, MD                                               | Vicki Gutierrez, Riverdale, MD    | Mary Ann Russel, Riverdale, MD |
| Susanne Gallagher, Riverdale, MD                                          | Carolyn Hendricks, Minneapolis, MN| Margaret Powell, Riverdale, MD |
| Patricia McGuigan, Riverdale, MD                                          | Mary Ann Russel, Riverdale, MD    |                       |
| Michael Paranzano, Riverdale, MD                                          |                         |                       |

**Office of Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance**

| Janis Jarvis, Riverdale, MD                                               | Mark Quiring, Washington, D.C.   | Mark Quiring, Washington, D.C. |
| Gwendolyn Smith, Riverdale, MD                                            |                                   |                         |
| Janet Wintermute, Riverdale, MD                                           |                                   |                         |
| Myra Young, Washington, D.C.                                             |                                   |                         |

**Plant Protection and Quarantine**

| Helen Baba, Honolulu, HI                                                 | Betty Brown, Robbinsville, NJ     | Fred Blackwell, Jr., Sacramento, CA |
| Betty Brown, Robbinsville, NJ                                             |                                    |                                   |
| Fred Blackwell, Jr., Sacramento, CA                                      |                                    |                                   |

**Marketing and Regulatory Services Business Development**

| Edna Lax, Minneapolis, MN                                                 | Margaret Carter, Minneapolis, MN   | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |
| Adele Dixon, Minneapolis, MN                                              |                                      | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |
| Stephanie Donovan, Riverdale, MD                                          |                                      | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |
| Diane Dyer, Minneapolis, MN                                               |                                      | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |
| Susan Esse, Minneapolis, MN                                               |                                      | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |
| H. Arlene Fancher, Minneapolis, MN                                        |                                      | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |
| Terrence Fried, Minneapolis, MN                                           |                                      | Nancy Gaucher, Fort Collins, CO   |

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PPP Officer Tatiana Liambas (far right) bags another snail.

Federal and State regulatory officials are currently investigating how these snails

Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.

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business process improvement
helping the wheels turn more smoothly

By Mandi Frederick

As we make our way into the new year, many of us pause to think about the previous year's successes and goals for the year ahead. Given the sizeable budget reductions in 2011, you might think that our successes last year would be pretty modest. But, in several ways, nothing could be further from the truth.

Last year, APHIS rose to the critical challenges posed by our shrinking budget, and we streamlined many of our central processes through the Business Process Improvement (BPI) initiatives. These improvements have earned praises from the Secretary and are helping us better serve agency stakeholders.

[2011 bpi initiatives]
Early in the fiscal year, APHIS began using a variety of models—especially Lean Six Sigma, which is a formal method of examining and maximizing service delivery—to review both internal and external processes. The goal was to determine where improvements could be made.

The agency targeted several key areas for improvement: the licensing of veterinary biologics, the granting of nonregulated status to genetically engineered (GE) seeds, risk assessment and rulemaking for imports, and the agency’s enforcement process.

With the review phase over, the agency is now implementing and monitoring improvements that will dramatically expedite and improve its service delivery.

"APHIS approached this effort with the American people’s best interests in mind," said Administrator Gregory Parham. "We listened to our customers and committed to making serious changes that help to put our customers first and deliver services not only efficiently and effectively, but also as cost effectively and quickly as possible."

The agency expects to shorten the average time it takes for various business processes by between 20 and 76 percent, a change that will directly benefit our customers. For instance, by streamlining its GE petition process, APHIS anticipates reducing timelines by 13-15 months. The agency also anticipates being able to reduce its veterinary biologics licensing processes by 100 days—a 20 percent reduction.

In October 2011, APHIS shared the final 2011 BPI Report with senior USDA leadership.

Secretary Vilsack was excited about the projects and decided to feature several of them in the Department’s Customer Service Plan. According to Vilsack, the plan’s improvements “will help businesses respond more quickly to market demands, provide producers with a more responsive farm safety net, and help our customers create jobs. President Obama challenged USDA and other Federal agencies to streamline operations, and USDA is taking a big step toward answering that challenge.”

[2012 initiatives]
For 2012, the agency has identified a number of new BPI projects. These include: reviewing the inspection process used by Animal Care to help enforce the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, and improving the timeliness of environmental documentation during an animal or plant emergency.

As APHIS moves ahead with these business process improvements, 2012 looks to be a good year. By streamlining the way it operates, the agency can efficiently manage its resources and continue providing the high level of service its customers have come to expect.
manager profile

with

betty goldentyer

Eastern Regional Director
Animal Care
Raleigh, NC

[what is your background?]
After veterinary school, I was in small animal practice in Chicago for 4 years. I came to APHIS through the Public Veterinary Practice Career program in 1998. The program was run by Veterinary Services and was a great introduction to all the functions and career possibilities with APHIS.

That spring, the agency created the Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care (REAC) program, and I became the inspector in Wisconsin (my husband loved Madison). Then I did a stint in the sector office in Tampa, FL (I loved Tampa). When the regional office opened, we ended up in Raleigh (which we both love).

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
At a hearing in Key West, FL, the judge, the attorneys, the defendant, and I walked down Duval Street to visit a facility in question. We were dressed for court and surrounded by marshals who were stopping traffic and keeping people back. The tourists, in shorts and flip flops with their margaritas, watched us like it was a parade. It was surreal and, I imagine, a first for Key West.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
One thing that I’m proud of is happened last year during a trip to California. My kids (25 and 21) talked us into a zip-line trip through the redwoods. I’m not big on heights, and all my nerves were screaming “get down out of this tree,” but I’m so glad I stopped off that platform. It was incredibly beautiful and exciting, and everybody should go out there and zip.

[hobbies?]
I do traditional rug hooking. Strips of hand-dyed wool are pulled through a backing to create rugs and wall hangings. The wool fabric has beautiful color and texture, pulling the strips is very therapeutic, and there’s nothing more fun than a room full of rug hookers.

[last book read?]
I got a free download of Kim by Rudyard Kipling on my Kindle. What a great book; I wish I had read it sooner.

[favorite movie?]
How can you have just one favorite movie? Top five: The African Queen, Blues Brothers, Silverado, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Avatar.

[favorite meal?]
After a long day, a big bowl of Udon soup and some fresh rolls is perfect.

[guilty pleasure?]
NCIS LA—and no, I can’t explain it.

voip is here

The new VoIP phones—assigned to employees in Riverdale and Washington, D.C.—are now fully functional. Old phones will remain on desks through the end of February, but employees are encouraged to learn and use their new phones now.

3 tips for going VoIP
- Review the online VoIP training manual to set up your voicemail and review how the new phones work.
- Forward your old phone to your new number and leave a message on your voicemail providing the new number.
- Update your phone number in your email signature, in Outlook, and on any emergency contact lists. Click here and enter your Windows login to update your Outlook info.

If you have any problems or concerns with your new VoIP phone, contact ATAC (1-877-944-8457 or APHIS-ATAC in Outlook). •
legislative and public affairs

training helps you
find the right words

By Gail Keim

Our stakeholders and the public depend on us to give them accurate and timely information in a clear, thoughtful, and understandable way. This skill is especially important when talking to people about controversial, complex, or highly emotional issues. APHIS deals with such issues on a daily basis—whether it’s enforcing a new regulation, investigating an animal welfare concern, eradicating an invasive pest, or resolving wildlife damage.

To help you communicate more effectively, Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) provides training on approaches commonly used in risk communications. Not only does the training offer valuable tips for talking to the media, but it also helps in everyday interactions with stakeholders, collaborators, and partners.

The 2-day course, called “APHIS Risk Communications,” includes an overview of risk communication theory, message mapping, on-camera interviews, and team exercises to address realistic APHIS communication scenarios. Below are just some of the topics discussed during the training. For more information, please contact LPA at (301) 734-7793 [VoIP (301) 851-4100] or your program’s public affairs specialist.

[understand your audience—
empathy is key]

It’s common for people to believe that effective communication is just the “sharing of facts.” While facts are important, an often overlooked, yet crucial, component of effective communication is convincing your audience that you care. Empathy helps connect you to your audience, show that you understand them, and build rapport.

[map your message]

Before meeting with a reporter, stakeholder, or concerned citizen, you’ll need to prepare your message. Know what you are going to say and why. A process called “message mapping” can anticipate media and stakeholder concerns and help you to develop appropriate talking points.

[take control]

It’s easy to get distracted or thrown off topic when trying to share information. As a communicator, having message maps will help you stay focused on the points you want to share. But how do you maintain control of the topic when you are asked unrelated questions? LPA specialists show you how bridging statements are used to refocus and redirect a discussion back to what is most important, relevant, and critical.

agency calendar

February

National Black History Month.
Watch your email for local events and programs.

2012 Information Security Awareness Training; all USDA employees are required to complete the training by February 17; the course is available on AgLearn.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week; February 6 through March 3.

APHIS’ Ergonomics Program provides monthly Webinars for all USDA employees. To see the schedule for upcoming Webinars, visit the program’s Web page at www.aphis.usda.gov/mpb/emsdd/ergonomics.shtml.

March

National Women’s History Month. Organizers are preparing events now.

April

Eastern Plant Board Meeting; April 16–19; Burlington, VT.

Southern Plant Board Meeting; April 15–18; San Antonio, TX.
legislative and public affairs
training helps you
find the right words

By Gail Keim

Our stakeholders and the public depend on us to give them accurate and timely information in a clear, thoughtful, and understandable way. This skill is especially important when talking to people about controversial, complex topics. Exercises to address realistic APHIS communication scenarios. Below are just some of the topics discussed during the training. For more information, please contact LPA at (301) 734-7799 [VoIP (301) 851-4100] or your program’s public affairs specialist.

2012 training schedule

In fiscal year (FY) 2012, LPA is hosting three risk communication training sessions. Each session is free, but limited to 15–20 participants. Check with your supervisor, and then register via AgLearn.

February 1–2: Gainesville, FL
April 25–26: San Antonio, TX
July 18–19: Riverdale, MD

2012 training schedule

close

what people say about the training

“Public speaking is hard for me, but this training provided a safe environment and some good tools to help me.”
—Veterinary Services, Area Epidemiology Officer

“Very good course. I am going to recommend this for all supervisors and as a training segment for new supervisors.”
—Plant Protection and Quarantine, Project Manager

“The thing that seemed most valuable to me was the idea of taking control of the interview. I’ve heard this talked about before, but this class provided excellent, repeated examples of the value in this approach.”
—Wildlife Services, State Director

“This training was excellent! It was well-paced, very interactive, expertly team-taught, and covered material useful to any Federal employee whether they are dealing with the public, stakeholders, or colleagues. The rare opportunity to see yourself on camera was a unique and effective learning tool.”
—Plant Protection and Quarantine, Manager

what people say about the training

close

agency calendar

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2012 Information Security Awareness Training; all USDA employees are required to complete the training by February 17; the course is available on AgLearn.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week; February 6 through March 3.

APHIS’ Ergonomics Program provides monthly Webinars for all USDA employees. To see the schedule for upcoming Webinars, visit the program’s Web page at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/ems/msdr/ergonomics.shtml.

March
National Women’s History Month. Organizers are preparing events now.

April
Eastern Plant Board Meeting; April 16–19; Burlington, VT.
Southern Plant Board Meeting; April 15–18; San Antonio, TX.
volunteer spotlight

barney caton
antonio garcia
amy young

Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program employees Barney Caton, Antonio Garcia, and Amy Young — along with Wildlife Services’ Clete Powell and Veterinary Services’ Chip Wells — were each honored in 2011 for their extraordinary volunteer efforts outside of the workplace.

Caton, Young, and Powell are recipients of the President’s Volunteer Service Award; Garcia and Wells earned the Presidential Call to Service Award.

The President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation issues both awards to recognize the best in American spirit, and to encourage all Americans to improve their communities through volunteer service and civic participation.

Awards are given to individuals, families, and groups that have demonstrated an outstanding level of service as measured by their total number of hours volunteered — either during a 12-month period for the President’s Volunteer Service Award, or during a lifetime of service to earn the Presidential Call to Service Award.

In recognition of Caton, Garcia, and Young, we want to feature all three in this issue’s Volunteer Spotlight. Powell and Wells will be highlighted in our next issue.

[employee name and program]
Barney Caton, Assistant Lab Director, Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, PPQ, Raleigh, NC

[volunteer organization]
Cub Scout Pack 821, Boy Scouts of America

[organization mission]
The Cub Scouts provide a positive place where boys can enjoy safe, fun activities. Cub Scouting focuses on building character, improving physical fitness, teaching practical skills, and developing a spirit of community service.

[volunteer activities]
Caton is currently a Webelos Den Leader for Cub Scout Pack 821, based in Hillsborough, N.C., where he leads a group of seven 9 and 10 year olds. They work on rank requirements, team building, and participate in field trips and outdoor activities. For the last 5 years, Caton has also served as the Advancement Chair for the pack, collecting information on Cubs’ achievements and helping to distribute awards.

[time given]
During the school year, Caton spends a minimum of 6 hours per month preparing for or running den meetings and an additional 5+ hours per month doing Advancement Chair duties. Along with other scouting activities, his total service reaches more than 250 hours per year.

[organization web sites]

www.bsapack821.org
www.scouting.org/scoutsorce/Cub-Scouts.aspx

[employee email]
barney.p.caton@aphis.usda.gov

[employee name and program]
Antonio Garcia, PPQ Hawaii

[volunteer organization]
Hawaii’s Executive Office on Aging (EOA) and the Pacific Islands Veteran Affairs (VA) Healthcare System

[volunteer activities]
For Hawaii’s EOA, Garcia provides elders with counseling on the State health insurance

Continued on next page
question of the day

What source do you rely upon most for APHIS internal information?

In our last issue, we asked: What source do you rely upon most for APHIS internal information?

Here’s how your coworkers responded:

74% Email
7% APHIS Intranet
7% APHIS Portal
5% Manager/Supervisor
5% Coworkers
2% Other

[Organization mission]
Helping kids discover hope for life through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The program assists children with learning how to handle various issues in their lives and to become strong and effective leaders in the community.

[Volunteer activities]
Young serves as a teacher and mentor during children’s services and for the ministry’s afterschool program, which provides a place where kids can be kids in a positive and safe environment. She helps children complete homework, do Bible lessons, and discuss ways to build relationships with family and friends. Young also helps with other activities such as dance, exercise, and drama.

[Time given]
15 hours per week

[Organization web sites]
www.thecurchatbradenton.com

[Employee email]
amy.c.young@aphis.usda.gov
aphis v. the destroyer
battling khapra beetle at america’s doorstep

By Vivian Keller

It’s the destroyer (the Hindi root of its name). It’s *Trogoderma granarium*, the skin-gnawer of the granary. Above all, the tiny khapra beetle is one of the world’s most destructive invasive pests, with the potential to wreak untold havoc on American agriculture.

But major efforts by two APHIS programs—Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and International Services (IS)—are helping U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to ensure that so far, the beetle’s attempts to establish itself here have gone in vain. It’s not for lack of trying.

Last year, hundreds of would-be khapra visitors showed up on incoming cargo shipments, in onboard luggage, and even in mail shipments at U.S. ports of entry—demonstrating the adaptability and persistence that have made them an enduring presence in more than 25 countries. Able to survive for 7 years with almost no food or water and dishearteningly resistant to various pesticides, khapra beetles feed on 250 kinds of dry products, from grains and cereals to soup mix, coriander, and burlap.

[grazing destroyers]
Adly Ibrahim, the resident khapra beetle expert in PPQ’s Quarantine Policy, Analysis, and Support office, says it’s how these pests eat that makes them so destructive. Like little food critics watching their waistlines, the beetles take only a few bites from, for example, a single grain of rice before moving on to the next. “Grazing” this way, khapra beetles can ruin a full quarter of the grain contained in a single shipment or silo. Worse, 90 percent...
Khapra beetle

Continued from page 1

of the grain imports they infest cannot be fumigated, because of how the grain is packaged or loaded, and must be re-exported or destroyed.

isolated appearances
Khapra beetles have made a few isolated appearances inside U.S. borders over the years—in warehouses in Baltimore and New York City decades ago, for instance, and in a Bridgeport, CT, kitchen cabinet in 2008. Each time, they have been eradicated. However, given increasing trade and visitor volumes from countries where khapra beetles are known to occur, the need for targeted APHIS action has grown.

PPQ has taken the lead in setting and implementing APHIS’ khapra beetle policy response. Ibrahim has been providing training in khapra detection for countless CBP officials over the past few years, while PPQ entomologists help out by identifying suspicious CBP finds. Hundreds of interceptions at ports of entry nationwide have been the result. Meanwhile, New Delhi-based IS Regional Director Marc Gilkey has been working with government officials in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh to promote compliance with U.S. import standards. Last summer, Ibrahim and PPQ India Trade Director Frank Salantri traveled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and to India, where, through Gilkey, they met with the national plant protection organization (NPPO) and industries to discuss effective mitigation measures. PPQ Preclearance and Offshore Programs Director Bill Thomas and Acting Assistant Deputy Administrator Murali Bandia also met with the India NPPO.

Effective July 30, 2011, PPQ imposed quarantine restrictions on commercial and noncommercial rice imported from India, the UAE, and other countries that have the khapra beetle. In January 2012, three other commodities joined the list: safflower, chickpeas, and soybeans.

While other APHIS programs focus on policy, training, and international diplomacy, APHIS’ Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) is working with CBP on ways to best deal with quarantine violators. For instance, IES recently did a followup investigation on a broker that inadvertently allowed delivery of an infested shipment to its U.S. destination. Luckily, the shipment had been promptly retrieved and the khapra beetles dispatched in a haze of methyl bromide. The beetles may be formidable foes—but for now, they have met their match in APHIS. ●

aphis celebrates 40th anniversary

As USDA celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, APHIS is also recognizing another key milestone as the agency turns 40.

To celebrate the anniversary, the agency is hosting an event on May 18th at 1:30 p.m. in the Riverdale Conference Center. APHIS offices in Ames, Fort Collins, and Raleigh will join the celebration via video conference.

The story of APHIS’ past 40 years is rich with achievement and features a lengthy cast of dedicated employees. This year, we encourage you to learn about our shared history and to join in the celebration of who we are and what we can accomplish together in the future. The agency will be sharing a commemorative publication, videos, and more to honor APHIS’ many accomplishments and the employees who make them happen.
invasive species awareness

By John Scott

All last month, APHIS trumpeted the issue of invasive species—shining a bright light on these invasive villains, the significant damage they cause, and how they can spread.

Many people may have heard about individual invasive species—like nutria or the Asian longhorned beetle—but most are unaware of the collective economic toll these pests can take.

The National Invasive Species Council estimates the annual economic damage in crop losses caused by invasive plant pests alone to be in the $2–3 billion range.

And, in an article published in Bioscience (January 2000), Cornell University scientists estimate that, “The approximately 50,000 nonindigenous species in the United States cause major environmental damage and losses totaling approximately $137 billion per year.”

[spread the word, not the pests]

Activities that many Americans engage in daily—travel, tourism, and trade—have made it easier for invasive pests to spread. And, they have increased the challenges that APHIS and others face in trying to reduce the risks.

To combat the threat of invasive species, it has become increasingly important to raise public awareness, teach people what preventive actions they can take, and partner with agency stakeholders to share this information with as broad an audience as possible.

[what you can do]

To make the most of the agency’s recent informational efforts, we encourage you to find ways to share the links, blog posts, videos, fact sheets, and other materials with your local agency partners, stakeholders, and members of the public.

Here’s some of what’s available:

- A reinvented Hungry Pests Web site
- New online videos featuring “Vin Vasive”
- Messages on the USDA blog about people who helped discover new invasive pests and what preventive steps others can take
- A top-pests-of-concern gallery on the APHIS homepage

recent aphis retirees

During the first quarter of the year, 12 employees retired from among our ranks in APHIS. We want to congratulate each and wish them all good health, close friends, and happy days ahead.

Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.

We plan to include similar lists in future issues of the newsletter. We hope these lists help you keep track of changes throughout the agency.
invasive species awareness

By John Scott

related topics in this issue

- feral swine and wildlife services
- feral swine and veterinary services
- khapra beetle
- new “vin vasive” on the hungry pest web site

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APHIS Retirees
January – March 2012

Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services
Carol Porter The Woodlands, TX

Plant Protection and Quarantine
John Dabrier North Webster, IN
Donna Fernandes Worcester, MA
Barbara Holske OTIS AFB, MA
Charles Randel Olney, TX
Ian Stewart Denver, CO
Gary Timmons Hawthorne, CA

Veterinary Services
Fred Ahlta Mesick, MI
Katie Blunk Reno, NV
Lucious Chieves Ames, IA
Venaye McGlashan Pomaria, SC

Wildlife Services
Janice Allen Okemos, MI

recent aphis retirees

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animal care

quick response saves
dog’s life

During a recent routine kennel inspection, Animal Care inspector AnnMarie Houser found a 9-year-old female dog lying very still on the floor of its enclosure. The dog was not moving or barking like all of its other kennel mates.

Upon closer look, Houser could see that the dog’s tongue was sticking out of her mouth, and it was dry, cold, and gray in color. Her gums were completely white, her breathing was fast and shallow, and she was cool to the touch despite the 80-degree environment. Her body was lifeless and limp, and there was loose, bloody stool under her tail.

[making the call]

Houser contacted the kennel’s daily caretaker, who said that the dog had appeared fine in the morning and had not been sick at all. Next, Houser called the kennel’s licensee and advised him to take the dog immediately to its attending veterinarian. Facilities that are licensed by APHIS under the Animal Welfare Act are required to have either a veterinarian on staff or an established attending veterinarian on record.

Three hours later, Houser called the licensee back to check on the dog’s status. The kennel’s veterinarian suspected the dog had contracted an intestinal infection and prescribed a medication that was administered immediately. Thankfully, the animal was responding favorably.

When Houser re-inspected the kennel 3 days later, the dog was much improved and running back and forth in her cage. Her tongue was pink, and her body temperature was back to normal.

“I was thrilled,” said Houser. “She was outside bouncing around. The fact that she was alive is a miracle.”

The licensee said that if it wasn’t for Houser’s thorough inspection and quick action, the dog would have died because he wouldn’t have checked on the dogs again until that evening—when it would have likely been too late.

[teamwork pays off]

In this situation, timing was critical, but so was teamwork. Houser observed a life-and-death situation and was adamant with the licensee, who in turn immediately followed through on the inspector’s advice and obtained veterinary care for the ill dog.

During a more recent inspection—4 months after the dog’s illness—Houser again visited the facility and learned that the dog was well enough to have given birth to a healthy pair of pups.

“Animal welfare is at the heart of everything we do in this program, and it shows in many ways,” said Betty Goldentyer, director of Animal Care’s Eastern Region.

“It was AnnMarie’s dedication, along with this licensee’s responsiveness, that made all the difference for this dog.”

Animal Care inspector AnnMarie Houser and friend.
13th annual administrator’s civil rights awards ceremony

By John Scott

On March 1, APHIS hosted its annual Administrator’s Civil Rights Award Ceremony to honor employees who exemplify the agency’s commitment to ensuring and fostering equal opportunity and diversity in the workplace.

During the event, Administrator Gregory Parham recognized individual and group award recipients and reaffirmed the value that APHIS places on equality. “We’re committed to equality because it’s unequivocally the right thing to do,” said Parham. “We see the great value in creating a positive work environment and in delivering programs fairly to both our employees and stakeholders.”

As Parham honored this year’s award recipients, he likewise acknowledged employees agencywide for their contributions to APHIS’ efforts throughout the year.

“I appreciate your involvement in planning and attending the many educational and awareness programs,” said Parham, who also praised employees’ deep support for student and internship programs like the AgDiscovery program, the 1890 National Scholars Program, the Washington Internships for Native Students, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities program.

To close, Parham quoted the inspirational challenge spoken by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater parson of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”

[2011 award recipients]
Honorees are listed here by category of award. Click on each category to read more.

[manager/supervisor category]
• William Pitt, Wildlife Services
• Brett Dunlap, Wildlife Services
• Jessica Mathalingappa, International Services

[civil rights program achievement category]
• Animal Care’s Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Committee

[group category]
• Veterinary Services South Carolina Area Office
• APHIS Eastern Region Office Tenant Committee
• San Juan Work Unit One and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands employees

[employee category]
• Timothy Deveau, Veterinary Services
• Doris Olander, Veterinary Services
• Aissha Hernandez, Plant Protection and Quarantine

APHIS’ Ergonomics Program provides monthly Webinars for all USDA employees. To see the schedule for upcoming Webinars, visit the program’s Web page at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/emssd/ergonomics.shtml. For more information, call (301) 436-3165.
13th annual administrator’s manager/ supervisor category

William Pitt is a supervisory research wildlife biologist for Wildlife Services in Hawaii, where he has worked to develop the skills of his employees at all levels and to recognize their achievements. He has made strides in creating internship opportunities in the field of wildlife for minority students from the University of Hawaii and local schools. Pitt also taught classes at elementary and intermediate schools to provide students with positive classroom experiences in science and natural history.

Brett Dunlap is Wildlife Services’ State Director in Tennessee and Kentucky. Dunlap created a Diversity and Recruitment Committee to help ensure the diversity of applicants for employment opportunities. He also worked to support the career advancement of underrepresented employees. Dunlap is an enthusiastic supporter of training and special assignments to develop employee skills and improve employee motivation. In addition, Dunlap conducted numerous outreach efforts through schools, universities, and fairs to promote civil rights and employment opportunities.

Jessica Mahalingappa is International Services’ Assistant Director of the APHIS International Technical and Regulatory Capacity Building (ITRCB) Center. She was recognized for her ability to lead by example in ways that create a climate of inclusion and collaboration for Center visitors and employees. Mahalingappa motivates employees through direct encouragement and assistance in developing their full potential. She dedicates time to each of her employees to create challenging and meaningful individual development plans. This past year, Mahalingappa also rewrote ITRCB position descriptions, working closely with Human Resources to provide career ladder opportunities for employee advancement.

“I appreciate your involvement in planning and attending the many educational and awareness programs,” said Parham, who also praised employees’ deep support for student internship programs like the AgDiscovery Program, the 1890 National Scholars Program, the Washington Internships for Native Students, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities program.

In closing Parham quoted the inspirational challenge spoken by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”

2011 award recipients] are listed here by category award. Click on each category to read more.

[manager/ supervisor category]
William Pitt, Wildlife Services
Brett Dunlap, Wildlife Services
Jessica Mahalingappa, International Services

[civil rights program achievement category]
- Animal Care’s Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Committee

[group category]
- Veterinary Services South Carolina Area Office
- APHIS Eastern Region Office Tenant Committee
- San Juan Work Unit One and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (STIC) in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands employees

[employee category]
- Timothy Devreau, Veterinary Services
- Doris Olander, Veterinary Services
- Alisha Hernandez, Plant Protection and Quarantine.

[ergonomics program]
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Animal Care’s Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Committee — working with Human Resources — created the Animal Care Student Externship Program to create learning opportunities for students nationwide. Additionally, with USDA’s Cultural Transformation initiative in mind, committee members went above and beyond to reach out to Animal Care employees across the United States to raise awareness of special emphasis months for each of the federally recognized special emphasis program areas. Committee members are: Dawn Barksdale, Thomasina Barney, Rachel Cezar, Steven Drlica, Kim Duffiney, Gary Goldberg, Dianne Herbert, Earnest Johnson, Yvette Joyner, Joe Kovach, Cindy Rhodes, Debra Sime, Randall Wagner, and Takeyia Williams.

“[group category]
- Veterinary Services South Carolina Area Office
- APHIS Eastern Region Office Tenant Committee
- San Juan Work Unit One and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SI TC) in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands employees

[employee category]
- Timothy Deveau, Veterinary Services
- Doris Olander, Veterinary Services
- Aissha Hernandez, Plant Protection and Quarantine

[ergonomics program]
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Veterinary Services South Carolina Area Office contributed to agency civil rights and equal opportunity efforts in a number of ways. Veterinary Services employees in the office were active in the planning and coordination of AgDiscovery events and participated in instructional sessions. Office members also took part in informal mentoring opportunities and visited with local agriculture-related interest groups, and leaders of under-represented groups. To foster teamwork and increase awareness of APHIS efforts, the office also collectively participated in many recruitment and outreach activities, focusing on providing stakeholders with available resources and information at local and State fairs as well as career fairs.

APHIS Eastern Region Office Tenant Committee was recognized for its commitment and dedication to broadening the staff’s knowledge and understanding of different cultures. For many of its special emphasis program events in 2011, the committee actively recruited event participation from employees with diverse backgrounds to facilitate forums for sharing experiences and to create a climate of inclusion in the workplace. Committee members are: Allen Boyer (WS), Gina Brunson (MRFBS), April Crosland (MRFBS), Sharon Crowly (VS), Samantha Hairston (BRS), Dianne Hoffman (PPQ), Cynthia Jordan (PPQ), Gary Meek (MRFBS), Jonni Meek (AC), and Cheryl Reed (MRFBS).

San Juan Work Unit One and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands Employees. To reach out to their local community and encourage youth education, this group developed the first-ever USDA Volunteer Summer Camp program. The camp hosted 12 students from 4 local high schools for a 2-week long program. The program provided students with learning opportunities, including trips to laboratories, museums, an air traffic control area, and botanical gardens. Alisha Hernandez and Norma Rosario accepted the award on behalf of the group.

As Parham honored this year’s award recipients, he likewise acknowledged employees agencywide for their contributions to APHIS’ efforts throughout the year.

“I appreciate your involvement in planning and attending the many educational and awareness programs,” said Parham, who also praised employees’ deep support for student

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13th annual administrator’s civil rights awards ceremony

By John Scott

On March 10, Administrator Gregory Parham held a ceremony to celebrate the agency’s efforts to foster an inclusive work environment in the wake of the George Floyd case.

Timothy Deveau is a veterinary medical officer in Wisconsin, and he was recognized for his efforts in administering veterinary vaccines for tribal communities in the State. In previous years, Veterinary Services’ Wisconsin office voluntarily administered vaccines, but reductions in staffing have made continuing that service difficult. Deveau responded by taking the task on himself, coordinating, scheduling, and administering vaccines; last year he vaccinated more than 200 dogs and cats during four different clinics on tribal lands. In addition, Deveau regularly represents his office at Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council meetings, where he provides updates on APHIS activities, consults with attending members, and learns about other outreach opportunities.

Doris Olander is a veterinary medical officer in Wisconsin, and she was recognized for her consistent contributions to and the value she places on equal opportunity. Olander is active in Veterinary Services’ outreach and recruitment efforts. For the second year, she was invited to participate in the “Expanding Your Horizons” Conference, which provides young women with information on and encourages their interest in the career fields of math, science, and engineering. Olander ran interactive sessions at the conference that included a discussion of APHIS and USDA, her chosen career path, and a scrapie case study. She also presented a wet-lab where participants could practice collecting samples for scrapie testing.

Aisha Hernandez is the program support assistant for Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) in Puerto Rico. Hernandez was recognized for her ongoing interest in diversity and desire to share information about equal employment opportunity/civil rights programs to all who can benefit. After learning about the AgDiscovery program, she independently took the initiative and began the steps needed to establish the first-ever AgDiscovery program on Puerto Rico. Her efforts included contacting local private and public schools to gauge their interest, delivering presentations concerning the AgDiscovery program, and distributing informational and application materials. Because of her efforts, 15 students enrolled in the 2011 AgDiscovery Program in Puerto Rico.

Administrator Gregory Parham with (left to right) Aisha Hernandez, Norma Rosario and Associate Administrator Kevin Shea at the award ceremony.

[group category]
- Veterinary Services South Carolina Area Office
- APHIS Eastern Region Office Tenant Committee
- San Juan Work Unit One and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands employees

[employee category]
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[achievement category]
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supertracker
your path to
healthy and fit

By John Scott

Getting fit and eating better are always popular goals, especially as we near the summer months. Many of us look for healthy tips and advice to put the dark days of winter behind us and prepare for more time outdoors.

If you’re seeking something new to try, you might want to check out USDA’s new SuperTracker Web tool, a companion to the nutrition site.

SuperTracker is a free, online tool that offers a variety of features to support individual nutritional and fitness activity goals. Like the name implies, SuperTracker helps you set goals and track your eating and physical activities. As you input and track your information, you can check nutritional and caloric values, compare food choices, measure your progress, sign up for coaching tips, and more.

The food tracker piece of the Web tool has a pretty extensive nutritional database, which means you can record a wide range of foods and food combinations. To make it easier, you can also create a personalized “My Favorite Foods” list that simplifies the steps necessary to input information about the foods you are eating.

The physical activity tracker has similar options and allows you to create a “Favorite Activity” list. Using your information, the tracker estimates calories burned and provides an easy-to-read gauge of your minutes of activity for the week.

SuperTracker has a lot to offer, and if you take a few minutes to see how it works, set up your own profile, and start tracking, you just may find that your fitness goals for the approaching summer are well within your reach.

public meeting
stakeholders speaking up

On February 27, the agency hosted an open meeting for all interested stakeholders. APHIS held the meeting to talk about its budget, process improvement efforts, and modernization initiatives and to provide stakeholders with the chance to share their thoughts on partnerships and the agency’s critical services.

Click here to view the VIDEO or read the TRANSCRIPT.

About 275 people attended the meeting, participating in-person at USDA’s South Building or via live Webcast. After remarks from Administrator Gregory Parham and Associate Administrator Kevin Shea, stakeholders had an opportunity to ask questions, which were fielded by both Parham and Shea.

This meeting—along with the recent online APHIS Stakeholder Survey—are both part of the agency’s ongoing efforts to enhance stakeholder communications.

We encourage you to check out the video or transcript and to share the following stakeholder page link with other agency stakeholders: www.aphis.usda.gov/stakeholders.

Go Outside (inside) Click here to see list of stakeholders represented at the meeting.
supertracker

your path to healthy and

By John Scholten

stakeholders represented

Ag Works Solutions
American Association of Swine Veterinarians
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Horse Council
American Meat Institute
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Agriculture Alliance
Animal Health Institute
Animal Welfare Institute
Association of Veterinary Biologics Companies
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Bayer CropScience
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Citrus Mutuals
CM Government Relations
Cornerstone Government Affairs
Defenders of Wildlife
Disney’s Animal, Science and Environment
DuPont
Feld Entertainment
Food and Water Watch
Global Vet Link

Hormone Society of the United States
Law Firm of Olsson Frank Weeda
Maryland Department of Agriculture
Monsanto
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Cattlemen’s Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Pork Board
National Renderers Association
National Turkey Federation
National Zoo
O’Brien DC
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Staff for U.S. Representative Mike Ross (Arkansas)
Staff for U.S. Senator Mark Pryor (Arkansas)
U.S. Cattlemen’s Association
U.S. Grains Council
Yakabod

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Go Outside (inside)

Click here to see list of stakeholders represented at the meeting.
Congress is currently considering the President’s fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget proposal for the Executive Branch. This includes APHIS’ budget request of $765.5 million, which is $54.14 million—or about 6.6 percent—less than APHIS’ FY 2012 appropriation.

To make the most of taxpayer dollars while addressing the Nation’s budget deficit, the agency is focusing its efforts on the highest priority areas and those where we can achieve the most. APHIS has taken a hard look at agency programs and identified ways to work more efficiently in a number of areas.

For example, APHIS has pursued administrative efficiencies and made changes to operations that will save us $5.3 million in FY 2013. These changes include consolidating IT customer service support and switching telecommunications technology, as well as eliminating development funding for low-priority IT investments.

APHIS is also implementing business process improvements that will result in savings of nearly $3 million, while enabling us to better serve stakeholders and customers. These process improvements are taking place in areas such as the licensing of veterinary biologics, import and export reviews, and reviews of petitions to determine the regulatory status of genetically engineered crops.

The agency has also identified areas where a shift in methodology can save money but still allow APHIS to achieve its goals. For example, APHIS has developed several statistical and epidemiological methods to increase the efficiency of animal health surveillance—without sacrificing industry and trading partners’ confidence in our surveillance system. These changes will allow us to save approximately $9 million.

Even with these cost savings, the agency still had to make difficult reduction and elimination choices that will impact multiple programs. The President’s budget reflects APHIS’ proposal to reduce activities in areas where success is not likely—the pest or disease is simply too widespread—or where the Federal role can be smaller. The agency is approaching its choices as strategically as possible; it is working to address reductions in a way that will continue to focus on the highest priorities and those areas that pose the greatest risk to American agriculture, while maximizing our resources. This includes continuing to ask for greater contributions from our partners than we have in the past; in an era of reduced budgets, it is more important than ever that we work together to achieve our shared goals. •

strengthening administrative services

USDA’s Strengthening Service initiative is focused on finding more effective and efficient ways to deliver administrative services, while meeting cultural diversity goals and USDA budget challenges.

In early April, Administrator Parham shared information regarding this initiative and the Administrative Solutions Pillars that are part of USDA’s Blueprint for Stronger Service.

For more information, we encourage you to engage with the Administrative Solutions Project community created on USDA Connect. You can also send your feedback by email to AdministrativeSolutions@osec.usda.gov. •
aphis’ new tribal liaison
terry clark

APHIS recently selected Terry Clark as the agency’s new National Tribal Liaison. Clark, a 20-year veteran with Veterinary Services (VS), will be working closely with the agency’s programs and support units to expand our partnerships with Tribal Nations.

The newly created National Tribal Liaison position replaces the agency’s previous Native American program coordinator/delivery manager position and includes a number of expanded goals and activities.

[tribal consultations]
In addition to growing and improving our existing relationships with Tribal Nations and tribal organizations, Clark also plans to focus on strengthening agency efforts with tribal colleges and other tribal entities.

Another significant change to the position is that Clark will be tracking the agency’s tribal consultation activities. Tribal consultations are the more formalized or official interactions with Tribes and tribal representatives; these can include, for example, meetings concerning specific projects, informational outreach efforts, discussions concerning new regulations/policy, and more.

Working with program contacts, Clark will be keeping a centralized consultation record for the agency to aid with reporting information required by USDA. In addition to this record-keeping, Clark plans to gather and manage other useful information. Combined with his centralized consultation records, this pooled information will serve as a helpful and dynamic resource for sharing within APHIS so that programs can actively learn from one another. Information sharing can help identify additional outreach opportunities and also pinpoint successful approaches and efforts that could be incorporated elsewhere in the programs.

The agency recently reviewed its tribal consultation process during a previous round of business process improvement reviews. Clark will be coordinating other improvements identified during the review, such as strengthening employee training and identifying tribal.

Continued on next page

about terry clark

Terry Clark is from Robeson County, NC, and is a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. He grew up on a small sustainable farm and always had a passion for agriculture.

In 1985, he graduated from Pembroke State University with a BS degree in biochemistry. He attended Tuskegee University and earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1989.

Clark then entered private practice for about 2 years in his home county. During this time, he also operated a mobile clinic after hours and on weekends for large animal producers in the surrounding counties. He joined VS in 1991.

During the past 20 years with VS, Clark has performed a number of different jobs as a veterinary medical officer (VMO). He worked as a field VMO in Georgia and later returned to North Carolina as an epidemiologist. There, he also served as an assistant area veterinarian in charge (AVIC), an export VMO, and a director of Federal field forces during the pseudorabies eradication effort. Clark has also participated in numerous VS task forces and eradication programs. And most recently, he served for 4 years as the AVIC in North Carolina.

For the past 8 years, Clark served as VS’ National Tribal Liaison, building relations and partnerships for VS with various Tribal Nations.
manager profile
with
ruth lodder

[what is your background?]
I grew up in northern Virginia (Centreville) and graduated from William and Mary with a degree in Geology. After earning my graduate degree (also in Geology) from Syracuse University, my first “real” job was with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in the Minerals, Gems and Meteorites Department, where I ran the x-ray diffraction lab and the rock prep lab. After a detour through consulting when I worked for several of the Washington, D.C. area “Beltway Bandits”—including Booz Allen Hamilton, NUS Corp., and BDM Inc.—I became a Federal civilian employee with the U.S. Air Force at Andrews AFB. Since then, I have worked for the U.S. Department of the Interior and USDA.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
I started with APHIS in January 2012. Prior to that, I spent 2 years as the deputy chief of Emergency Programs for USDA. I have worked with APHIS staff since 2004 when we worked to expand Emergency Support Function #11 to include natural and cultural resources and historic properties.

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
Overall, the great APHIS people. APHIS has wonderful people who are dedicated to the mission. It was the primary reason I was interested in working for APHIS. So far, it has been a great choice and a wonderful experience.

[priorities in the coming months?]
Supporting all the priorities of APHIS related to emergency management, safety, and security. Those include supporting a safe and secure work environment for APHIS employees and supporting APHIS responsibilities and capabilities as an emergency response organization.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
Coordinating the Department response support to the Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010. We then built upon the lessons learned from that response to support the response to the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in 2011. We couldn’t have done any of what we did without the support and technical expertise of the entire Department working together.

[hobbies?]
Sailing, kayaking, building boats, crocheting, and making jewelry.

[last book read?]
Longitude by Dava Sobel.

[favorite movie?]
Casablanca.

[favorite meal?]
Rouladen—the way my mother made it—no pickles.

[guilty pleasure?]
Sitting on a sailboat watching the sun set.

tribal liaison
Continued from page 8
consultation points-of-contact for each of the agency’s programs.

[the best path forward]
Within APHIS, Clark plans to work cooperatively with each of the programs to build the best path forward. “Our field employees are already doing some great work with the Tribes. My goal is not to interfere, but to assist in building partnerships in areas that have not been established yet,” said Clark.

Developing and nurturing the agency’s relationships with tribal communities is important and necessary, and the need to build partnerships continues to grow.

Each of the approximately 565 federally recognized Tribes is its own Nation and has its own relationship with the U.S. Government. All of APHIS needs to be aware of this and also of our responsibility to consider the Tribes before implementing new programs or regulations.

As Federal budgets tighten, working collaboratively is mutually beneficial to APHIS and Tribes alike. It’s the most efficient way to ensure that both dollars and staff resources are focused effectively on keeping agricultural resources healthy.
feral swine
invasive as always and expanding

By Christa Anderson

There’s a reason farmers say a good fence is horse-high, bull-strong, and pig-tight. Swine are smart, persistent, and adaptable. Domestic ones can get out of their pens; feral ones can get in, wreaking havoc on crops, rooting up good pasture land, and posing disease risks to—or even preying on—livestock. And that doesn’t even address some of the ecological impacts to watersheds and native species. Combine the high reproduction rate of feral swine with people capturing and transporting them for hunts, and you’ve got a dramatically expanding feral swine population, causing upwards of $1 billion dollars in damage each year.

Although they’ve been in North America since the days of Christopher Columbus, feral swine are as much an invasive species as ever. In 1982, they were known to be in just over a dozen U.S. States. Today, they’re in 38 and include approximately 5 million animals—more than half of which are in Texas, where feral swine populations have existed but on a smaller scale than today.

[hitting critical mass]
“To borrow a physics term, we’ve reached critical mass in Texas,” says Mike Bodenchuk, Wildlife Services (WS) State Director in Texas.

“Feral swine populations became so widespread, they just started connecting. Control in a single area doesn’t have an impact on populations.” Critical mass likely happened sometime around 2007, helped along by people taking feral swine by the trailerload to different parts of the State for hunting, something that Texas law now prohibits unless the animals are transported to a fenced shooting preserve.

[doing and teaching]
Trapping, snaring, and shooting from aircraft are among the methods WS employs to capture feral swine in Texas and many other States. WS also hunts the animals at night, a practice requiring special training and equipment such as night-vision goggles. WS is working with a host of partners in Texas—Federal, State, and local—to control the feral swine population statewide. And a big part of what WS biologists do is that State is teach farmers how best to fight the problem themselves. For example, WS teaches how to build corral traps and effectively use them, or how to strategically target yearling sows—rather than the biggest animals—when removing individual swine from a herd.

Removing sow's can help slow a herd's growth. Feral swine typically have their first litter before they’re a year old. Quoting a Texas saying, Bodenchuk says dryly, “in an average litter of six, ten survive.”

State laws vary widely with respect to how feral swine are classified (e.g., as an invasive nuisance or game animal), whether their transport into or within a State is allowed, and whether or when hunting of them is allowed. In Kansas, for example, feral swine populations first became a problem in the late 1990s; in 2006, the State became one of the first to outlaw the sport hunting of feral swine, thereby removing an incentive to bring them into the State in the first place. Kansas also enlisted WS in a coordinated, statewide control effort.

“What’s important is that Kansas has been proactive,” says WS State Director for Kansas, Tom Halstead. “Kansas dealt with feral swine before they became thousands-large.” WS has successfully eliminated some feral swine populations in that State and has seen a decline in the number of feral swine.

Continued on next page
**Veterinary Services**

**Helping Restore Bighorn Sheep**

By Kim Taylor

In February, two APHIS veterinarians from Nebraska—Gary Stevens and Bill Stump—partnered with colleagues from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) and Canada's Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations, as well as many other hardy and skilled volunteers, to move 41 wild bighorn sheep from the Canadian Rockies in Alberta to northwest Nebraska. This was the latest in a multiyear effort aimed at reestablishing healthy populations of free-ranging bighorn sheep in the State.

The logistical challenges were many, as the animals first needed to be cleared for importation by Veterinary Services' (VS) National Center for Import and Export. Obtaining test results for the two major diseases of concern—bovine tuberculosis (TB) and brucellosis—would have been difficult, if not impossible, given the necessarily tight timeframes involved in the operation.

For example, with TB skin testing, a veterinarian needs to visually confirm that no reaction has occurred 3 days after the initial test. While that is certainly reasonable for livestock, the

*Continued on next page*

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**Feral Swine**

Captured there, averaging anywhere from 300 to 600 a year.

Feral swine can carry a number of diseases that are transmissible to livestock and, in some cases, people. WS' National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDP) maintains a feral swine serum archive with thousands of samples. USDA and other agencies—including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—use samples to monitor for or carry out efforts related to diseases such as swine influenza, swine brucellosis, and pseudorabies.

*Continued from page 10*

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**Veterinary Services and Wildlife Services Working Together**

Feral swine could serve as sentinels for foreign animal diseases (FADs) such as classical swine fever (CSF). Since 2006, WS has coordinated with Veterinary Services (VS) to conduct surveillance for the disease in feral swine. CSF, once called hog cholera, was last found in the United States in 1976.

In 2009, WS and VS expanded disease surveillance in feral swine to include swine brucellosis and pseudorabies (PRV). Both diseases have been eradicated in commercial swine in the United States but are endemic in feral swine, which represent the most likely risk of reintroducing the diseases into commercial herds. Disease surveillance helps identify commercial herds that are most at risk. In FY 2011, National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLLN) laboratories tested 3,161 feral swine samples for PRV and 3,165 for CSF. The National Wildlife Research Center Laboratory and the Kansas State-Federal Brucellosis Laboratory were involved with the testing of 3,137 feral swine samples for swine brucellosis in FY 2011.

*Continued on next page*
question of the day

In our last issue, we asked how the recent high number of APHIS retirees has affected the workplace.

Of those who responded to the question, here's the percentage breakdown of how they answered. In responding, participants were allowed to select all of the options that apply.

The high number of recent APHIS retirees has created...
- challenges at work
- opportunities at work
- no notable difference
- new social dynamic

bighorn sheep

Continued from page 11

bighorn sheep needed to be transported as quickly as possible following capture to their new range in Nebraska to avoid further, and possibly lethal, stress. Holding the animals in trailers to await test results was not feasible. To mitigate any disease risk, VS and Canadian officials determined that the bighorn sheep should be obtained from Alberta, where there is no history of brucellosis or TB and the animals had no contact with livestock. Additionally, VS agreed to collect blood samples and submit them for testing to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories prior to the animals crossing into the United States; the animals were also radio-collared in case there was ever a need to recover one.

The VS veterinarians have a solid, mutually-beneficial working relationship with their State colleagues, and it really helped smooth the way. Previously, NGPC had helped with the transport and depopulation of a captive elk/fallow deer herd in the State that was heavily infected with TB; the VS vets had also assisted NGPC with a joint TB surveillance project in hunter-killed deer.

On the day of the capture operation, which took place in a reclaimed mining area, there was abundant sunshine and practically no wind. While these were nearly perfect weather conditions for humans, they weren't optimal for the wild bighorn sheep who prefer cooler temperatures. To reduce stress as much as possible, the sheep were quickly hobbled and blindfolded after the capture net dropped. Canadian and Nebraska officials then evaluated and marked the animals that were going to be transported, separating out bigger rams and younger animals.

The animals that were selected for transport underwent a physical exam, which involved collecting blood and DNA samples, monitoring body temperatures, determining ages, and administering treatments for internal parasites. The volunteers who were taking temperatures had a particularly important role: when an animal's body temperature rose above acceptable levels, the exam ceased and the animal was loaded onto a trailer. Altogether, the capture and load phase of the operation took about 2 hours—a truly amazing feat, considering the complexity and logistics involved. The bighorn sheep reached their new home in Nebraska just 2 days later, and all blood tests were negative for diseases of concern. If wildlife officials decide to pursue another bighorn sheep relocation effort, VS stands ready to assist with the next "ewe haul."
volunteer spotlight
chip wells
clete powell

In this issue’s spotlight, we conclude our series in recognition of employees who earned presidential honors in 2011 for their volunteer work. Veterinary Services’ Chip Wells received the Presidential Call to Service Award, and Wildlife Services’ Clete Powell earned the President’s Volunteer Service Award. Please join us in congratulating them both.

The President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation issues both awards to recognize the best in American spirit and to encourage all Americans to improve their communities through volunteer service and civic participation.

[employee name and program]
Chip Wells, Veterinary Medical Officer, National Center for Import and Export, Veterinary Services, Riverdale, MD

[volunteer organization]
PETS-DC

[organization mission]
PETS-DC, founded in 1990, is a nonprofit organization serving the Washington, D.C. metro area and dedicated to improving the health and well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS or other disabling conditions and their companion animals.

[volunteer activities]
Wells is the volunteer executive director for PETS-DC. In addition to administrative tasks, he serves as liaison with the local veterinary community and assists clients with obtaining veterinary care, pet food, and supplies, and in-home assistance with the care of their pets.

[time given]
Wells has volunteered for PETS-DC for more than 22 years, averaging over 45 hours per month.

[organization web sites]
www.petsdc.org

[employee email]
chip.j.wells@aphis.usda.gov

[volunteer organization]
Reserve Deputy, Otero County Sheriff’s Office, Otero County, NM

[organization mission]
To support and assist the Otero County Sheriff’s Office

[volunteer activities]
Powell has volunteered as a reservist deputy for 2 years. He provides back up during routine patrols, supports sheriff staff during fairs and festivals, and assists with prisoner transport to other county and State facilities. He also helps with training new reservists.

[time given]
In addition to having completed 400 hours of training to qualify as a reservist, Powell volunteers about 40-45 hours per month as his work schedule allows.

[organization web sites]
http://co.otero.nm.us/Sheriff/sheriff.htm

[employee name and program]
Clete Powell, Biological Technician, Wildlife Services, New Mexico

[employee email]
clete.b.powell@aphis.usda.gov
**Did you know** that APHIS has put a new face on the invasive pest threat?

Meet “Vin Vasive.” He’s a mesmerizing, computer-generated creature made up of invasive pests that twitch and sometimes fly off and rejoin him.

Vin Vasive’s helping APHIS kick off its reinvigorated Hungry Pests campaign and is featured in outreach images and videos. The initiative started in April—the new month for Invasive Species Awareness. APHIS’ goals include:

- Elevating the issue of invasive pests among the public
- Educating the public about the invasive pests threat
- Increasing awareness about safe and effective solutions to combat them
- Encouraging people to learn more at HungryPests.com

Hungry Pests launched with a media tour on April 3, featuring Deputy Under Secretary Rebecca Blue as our Hungry Pests spokesperson. APHIS thoroughly updated the Hungry Pests Web site and optimized it for mobile devices, upgraded its Pest Tracker, and is creating a sister Spanish site. The agency also enhanced Facebook and Twitter integration with the Web site.

New video and radio public service announcements featuring Vin Vasive have been customized for each of the 12 States targeted in the campaign.

APHIS is unleashing a public relations push and social media blast this month, and again in the summer just before the Fourth of July. To drive traffic to the Hungry Pests site, the agency is employing search engine marketing and strategically placed media and some mobile device advertising in the target States. APHIS has also been actively collaborating with a number of States on Hungry Pests and will help them to conduct targeted stakeholder engagement with State-customizable outreach materials.

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**Agency Calendar**

**May**
- National Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Watch your email for local events and programs.
- APHIS 40th anniversary celebration, May 16th at 1:30 p.m. in the Riverdale Conference Center. APHIS offices in Ames, Fort Collins, and Raleigh will join the celebration via video conference.
- APHIS’ Center for Veterinary Biologics is participating in The Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics (ICAB) Veterinary Biologics Training Program, May 8–23, in Ames, IA. For more information, visit www.cfsph.iastate.edu/ICAB/meetings/may2012.php.
- Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High; class in Raleigh, NC, May 9–10; class in Riverdale, MD, May 17–18. Register on AgLearn or call Carol Roller at (301) 851-2892 for more information.

**July**
- 2012 Agriculture Stakeholder Conference: Pests, Pathways and Partnerships, July 17–18, Riverdale, MD; joint conference hosted by Plant Protection and Quarantine and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
plant protection and quarantine tracking system saves stakeholders valuable time

By Mike Booth

In 2005, Carl Harper’s job description read more like an accountant’s than the senior nursery inspector that he was.

Harper, who works for the University of Kentucky’s Office of the State Entomologist, recalls that much of his time was spent on cumbersome paperwork, typing up phytosanitary export certificates, sending invoices, and processing payments.

“It was a very time-consuming process with all of the oversight dealing with money,” Harper said.

But that was all before the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program developed the Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking System (PCIT)—automating the process of issuing certificates, including the collection and tracking of information for agricultural commodities exported to foreign countries. PPQ has rapidly improved the PCIT system in recent years to include, among other things, fee collection and reports.

Today, thousands of industry users and hundreds of Federal and State duty stations are actively using PCIT. In fiscal year 2011, APHIS collected and remitted more than $6 million to State and county governments.

Harper estimates that his State office spent as much as 40 hours per month on processing invoices. “Now, with the implementation of the PCIT fee collection mechanism, I spend approximately 2 to 3 hours per month,” Harper said.

[better for industry]
For industry, the PCIT system helps facilitate trade for U.S. exporters faster and more reliably than ever before. Exporters can track their applications from any location, view and print copies of applications and issued certificates, and securely pay for certificates online.

Christian Delis, deputy director with PPQ’s Phytosanitary Issues Management, heads the PCIT team and regularly hears from industry, as well as State and local government officials, who appreciate the cost and time savings. They also compliment the PCIT team’s responsiveness to suggestions.

“PPQ has made more than 1,500 changes to the PCIT system—all driven by user suggestions,” Delis said.

[from skeptic to fan]
Harper, who was initially skeptical when he heard that PPQ was creating its own system, now appreciates the freedom from burdensome accounting duties. For him, PCIT allows him to return his attention to the tasks more fitting of a nursery inspector.

“Today, more than ever, time is precious because we are asked to do more with less,” Harper said. “The implementation of PCIT has given me more time to accomplish my other job duties that didn’t go away and have only grown.”
wildlife services

nearing nutria eradication for delmarva

By Jordan Whitfield

With orange buckteeth, a rat-like tail, and a reputation for devouring marshes, the nutria doesn’t make a great first impression.

But based on its ability to turn marshlands into open water, this large rodent has earned some distinction. It has the dubious honor of being named by international conservationists as among the top 100 invasive species in the world.

[eating out]
Nutria feed on the roots of plants that hold marsh soil in place, leaving behind open areas called "eat-outs." In the Chesapeake Bay, nutria have eroded tens of thousands of acres of marsh that are essential as wildlife habitat, natural filters for contaminants, and barriers against storm surges.

Despite the nutria’s once large numbers around the Bay, Wildlife Services (WS) and its partners are making progress at reducing area nutria populations. Recent successes by the Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project—a joint effort by WS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and others—show that eradication may be possible in the right conditions.

The project focuses on the Delmarva Peninsula, which sits on the eastern side of the Bay with one side facing bay waters and the other the Atlantic Ocean. The Delmarva gets its name from the three States—Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia—that comprise its land area. WS and its partners chose the peninsula for eradication due to its low risk of reinfestation and the potential for marshland recovery once the nutria are removed.

Continued on next page

Wildlife Services and its partners have removed about 13,500 nutria from the Delmarva Peninsula.
nutria eradication

"We're hopeful that nutria swimming across the Bay from Virginia’s western shore is not likely," said USDA Project Manager Steve Kendrot. "Fourteen miles is quite a swim for a 20-pound rat."

The team has removed approximately 13,500 nutria to date and seen a dramatic decline in numbers since eradication efforts began in 2002. The expected completion date is 2015, and so far Kendrot estimates the team has removed nutria from more than 80 percent of the area.

[exponential rodents]

Introduced to the United States in 1899 for the fur trade, the nutria population multiplied quickly upon their release into the wild when the fur demand dropped. Having no natural predators and averaging five offspring per litter up to three times a year, the nutria has spread to at least 22 States.

The population at Maryland’s Blackwater Wildlife Refuge grew from less than 150 animals in 1968 to as many as 50,000 in 1998, destroying half of the refuge’s 10,000 acres of marsh. An eradication project there was declared complete in 2004, and now the focus is on restoring the marshland.

While natural calamities like floods and droughts keep the nutria population in check in its native South America, the only option for limit population growth in the United States is constant pressure through trapping.

"The only predator for nutria here is a team of trained, dedicated trappers," Kendrot said.

While it may seem like nutria are the enemy, Kendrot doesn’t like to vilify them. "It’s kind of fascinating to walk through marshes and know there’s a huge South American rodent running around," said Kendrot. "It’s surreal." And if nothing else, nutria are at least a good source of meat. Kendrot finds they taste best with a lot of seasoning or barbecued.

marketing and regulatory programs
business services
recognition of another kind

Recognition and compliments come in many forms. Sometimes they come in the form of a request for help simply because people know you’re good at what you do.

This past spring APHIS’ Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS) received just such a request. USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service asked MRPBS’ Human Resources Division (HRD) for help.

Based on an agreement reached between the two agencies, MRPBS will provide operational human resources support to NRCS’ headquarters and its Pennsylvania units. The agreement covers a 12- to 18-month period of service for human resources activities related to staffing, classification, processing, timekeeping, pay, and benefits administration.

APHIS’ HRD staff worked with NRCS to transfer the operations and officially assumed the expanded duties in early April 2012.
Veterinary Services (VS) recently shared with employees its plan for a new organizational structure that would align the program into four focused units. The restructuring effort builds upon VS’ vision for the future as discussed in a strategic document that was cooperatively developed with employees and distributed last year.

The four organizational units in the plan are:
- Surveillance, Preparedness, and Response
- Science, Technology, and Analysis
- Movement and Marketability
- Program Support Services

Among other things, the new structure is designed to enhance customer service, better leverage employee expertise, allow decision making at the lowest possible level, and streamline the program overall.

With its strategic vision and new restructuring plan, VS will continue its role in delivering many of the essential services that it has traditionally provided. The program also looks to expand its role in areas such as One Health, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of animal and human health.

[more about each unit]

Surveillance, Preparedness, and Response: This unit would focus on the broad spectrum of animal health—including One Health issues—for each of the major animal health commodity groups, consistent with the program’s budget line items. For each commodity, this unit’s functions will range from early awareness and surveillance, to the development and field implementation of animal health activities and emergency response. The unit will include a blend of both headquarters and field personnel, and policy and operational functions would be integrated to enhance flexibility, productivity, and service delivery.

Science, Technology, and Analysis: This unit would bring together VS’ science centers, including its diagnostic efforts; regulatory activities for veterinary biologies; monitoring and surveillance; and epidemiology, economics, and risk analysis. Its key strength and contribution will be to leverage and integrate the scientific expertise that is inherent throughout the VS organization.

Movement and Marketability: This unit would cover all aspects of import and export. It will incorporate import and export technical trade services; import and export field services; and services related to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). This unit would include both headquarters and field personnel.

Program Support Services: This unit would consist of key support functions—finance and strategy; information technology; management support; and writing, communications, and regulatory support.

Many details still need to be decided and approvals need to be obtained before VS implements the reorganization plan. The program anticipates making progress on the remaining details this fall and beginning to implement a new structure during fiscal year 2013.
agency developing new APHIS eFile system

By Alisa Robinson

Most agency employees are familiar with, or at least have heard of, APHIS ePermits. As its name implies, ePermits is a Web-based system that allows the public to apply for import/export permits online. Currently, three APHIS programs use the ePermits system to process and issue permits—Biototechnology and Regulatory Services (BRS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), and Veterinary Services (VS). Other Federal and State enforcement agencies (such as the U.S. Customs and Border Protection) also use ePermits to verify the validity of permits presented to them.

In addition to BRS, PPQ, and VS, other APHIS program units are involved in issuing permits of some kind. Moreover, APHIS work involves much more than simply issuing permits. Agency employees issue many other types of licenses, certificates, accreditations, and similar approvals. These types of authorizations are all processed similarly, and the agency has determined that a new, more comprehensive system is needed to manage all these common functions.

Earlier this year, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS) assembled a team of employees who are tasked with developing such a system, providing a new way for the public to obtain authorizations from the agency. The team is focused on accessing all activities related to certifications, accreditations, registrations, permits, and other licenses (CARPOL) that APHIS issues. In June, Administrator Gregory Parham met with the CARPOL Executive Steering Committee to discuss their progress and to reinforce the importance of this program to the agency.

[what’s in a name?]

The first order of business was to find a name for the new system. To help, MRPBS Deputy Administrator Joanne Munno sponsored a naming contest for APHIS employees. The grand prize was simply a mysterious gift-wrapped box filled with surprise goodies—a “Box of Stuff.” Apparently APHIS employees love surprises, because the suggestions started pouring in. The response was overwhelming, netting close to 500 names. After wading through all the great name suggestions, the CARPOL team narrowed them down to the top three names. Ms. Munno then put those top three names to APHIS employees to vote for their favorite.

[and the winner is]

The winning name, APHIS eFile, was submitted by Eric McVey, an IT customer support supervisor with the National Centers for Animal Health in Ames, IA. After winning, he received his “Box of Stuff” a couple of weeks later. McVey said opening the prize was “just like Christmas!”

In the weeks and months to come, the CARPOL team will keep you posted on the activities and progress of the APHIS eFile project. In the meantime, please take a moment to congratulate Eric McVey for his winning name suggestion.

Photo sources: M. Davidson (VS), B. Dimakides (PPQ), A. Eastin (LPA), M. Enrico (PPQ), S. Mills (PPQ), Plant Protection and Quarantine, A. Robinson (MRPBS), St. Louis Cardinals Baseball, Veterinary Services, T. Vorca (PPQ), Wildlife Services.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
plant protection and quarantine
joining the big leagues to fight emerald ash borer

By Elisa Valero

What do APHIS, a man dressed as a giant insect, and the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team have in common? All three joined together at Busch Stadium this past May to spread the word about emerald ash borer (EAB) during EAB Awareness Week.

APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and the Missouri Department of Agriculture have teamed up for years in the fight against EAB. One of the main focuses is on informing the public about the dangers of EAB and how to spot and report an infestation.

During this year’s second annual EAB Awareness Week, numerous outreach activities took place in Missouri, but PPQ State Plant Health Director Mike Brown took part in one that he’s certain to cherish for quite some time: he got the chance to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at a St. Louis Cardinals’ major league baseball game.

The Missouri Department of Agriculture has partnered with the Cardinals for previous EAB outreach efforts, but this year during EAB Awareness Week, due to scheduling conflicts, Brown was invited to fill in for State officials and take to the pitcher’s mound.

Brown—a lifelong Cardinals fan—has yet to stop grinning.

“I was probably 12 years old again,” he said when asked about the experience. “Standing on the mound was a kid’s dream come true.”

Although he pitched a ball instead of a strike, Brown still contributed a great deal to his team and city by helping to stamp out the EAB threat to Missouri ash trees. Before the game, the Cardinals organization highlighted information about EAB throughout the stadium and on the Jumbotron. Beyond the stadium, the Cardinals also regularly feature EAB information during radio broadcasts of their games, reaching an audience spanning nine States overall.

On the field, Brown was joined by Chris Pierce—a PPQ colleague and fellow baseball fan who was so eager to be a part of the event that he volunteered to dress up as the sparkling green EAB menace. Pierce handed out promotional materials and spoke with fans about how to prevent the spread of EAB.

[not just a day at the park]
The connection between EAB and baseball is not as farfetched as it may first appear. The majority of baseball bats are made from ash, this pest’s primary target. The spread of EAB impacts America’s pastime just as it does the vitality of U.S. forests and the homes, vehicles, and even the lives of those living in residential areas with dead and damaged ash trees that are susceptible to falling.

The State’s partnership with the St. Louis Cardinals is a fun—and effective—way to rally EAB awareness. In fact, many of the concerned citizens who identify and report EAB in Missouri say that they learned about EAB by attending or listening to a Cardinals baseball game.

about the bug

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an invasive pest that has been devastating ash trees in Missouri and surrounding States since first detected in 2002. Although it is unknown when and how EAB first entered the country, the insects have already killed 50–100 million ash trees and threaten the 7.5 billion remaining ash trees in North America.
joining the big leagues

EAB and how to spot and report an infestation.

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new office of civil rights, diversity, and inclusion

By John Scott

For Ken Johnson and the agency’s newly restructured Office of Civil Rights, Diversity and Inclusion (OCRDI), it’s been a busy year. It began with Johnson’s appointment as director in January and has been followed by restructuring efforts and the rollout of two new offices.

The transition is more than just a name change from Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance—or CREC—to OCRDI. The recent restructuring is designed to improve service and reflect additional responsibilities the office has taken on. The changes were driven by an APHIS civil rights management team review that began 2 years ago, USDA’s Cultural Transformation initiative, and the unification of Tribal Consultation and Tribal Outreach Programs.

The review team took a close look at, among other things, the office’s functions, its supervisory structure, and how tasks were divided among staff. Based on the team’s review, OCRDI has made several changes that will increase its performance.

One such change is that OCRDI is now better aligning staff members with focused priorities, instead of spreading staff time and energy among numerous and sometimes competing priorities. Other recent changes include giving OCRDI supervisors clearer authority, enabling them to operate more independently and with improved efficiency. Together, these changes will enable OCRDI to be more responsive and provide better service to agency employees.

[new offices]

By far, the more visible changes have been the creation of two new offices within OCRDI—the National Tribal Liaison Office and the Diversity and Inclusion Office.

Featured in the last issue of Inside APHIS (Vol. 2, 2012), the National Tribal Liaison Office is led by Terry Clark. The office combines the oversight and guidance responsibilities for tribal outreach activities with a new responsibility: tracking the agency’s tribal consultation activities. Tribal consultations are the more formalized or official interactions with tribes and tribal representatives.

OCRDI’s latest addition is the Diversity and Inclusion Office, created as an essential companion to the agency’s Office of Civil Rights. Mike Colbert, who recently accepted a position with the U.S. Department of Energy, helped establish the new office and develop implementation plans. With Colbert’s departure, Ken Johnson will oversee the Diversity and Inclusion Office until a new branch chief is selected. The office’s overall goals are largely synonymous with USDA’s Cultural Transformation initiative: to create a diverse, inclusive, and high-performance workforce where employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect and provided equitable opportunities for success.

As Samuel Betances, educational speaker and diversity expert, says about the pairing of civil rights with diversity and inclusion, “They’re like two wings on a plane.” Both are necessary.

The civil rights side is driven by law; it is reactive and focused on resolving problems or complaints. In comparison, diversity and inclusion are driven by mission success; they are proactive and focused on maximizing opportunities. For an organization to succeed in its mission and ensure equality and justice, 

Continued on next page
people’s gardens blossom and grow

By Gary Rouah

Starting from a single, small garden that USDA Secretary Vilsack established in 2009, the People’s Garden movement has expanded to more than 1,750 gardens throughout the world—including nine at APHIS locations.

As of July 2012, more than 1.3 million pounds of healthy produce from People’s Gardens have been donated to local food banks and other charitable organizations. But the gardens are about more than producing food—they’re also about building community.

The original People’s Garden on the Mall in Washington, D.C., has grown in both size and scope. It now attracts many thousands of visitors each year and frequently hosts educational demonstrations. Event topics include gardening, nutrition, and backyard environmental remediation projects such as rain barrels and green roofs.

Altogether, more than 800 organizations have partnered with USDA volunteers to create and sustain People’s Gardens in communities and schools. Last November, USDA announced grants to support 155 gardens in underserved neighborhoods across the Nation to help provide residents with access to fresh and nutritious food.

People’s Gardens share several common goals: they benefit local communities, incorporate sustainable practices, and build collaboration. Although the majority of People’s Gardens produce fruit and vegetables, they can also benefit a community in other ways, such as serving as a rain garden, children’s garden, or native plant garden.

[joining the celebration]

This year People’s Gardens also joined in to help celebrate USDA’s 150th anniversary. President Abraham Lincoln established USDA in 1862 and referred to it as “the People’s Department.” To commemorate the anniversary, USDA distributed “Abraham Lincoln” tomato seeds to all registered People’s Gardens. The Lincoln heirloom tomato variety was introduced in 1923 by the H.B. Buckbee Seed Company of Illinois to honor the State’s native son.

[Continued from page 6]

Go Outside [inside]

Click to view larger images.
people’s gardens

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“Go Outside”

Click to view larger images.

Continued from page 6

Continued on next page
people’s gardens blossom and grow

Continued from page 7

At APHIS headquarters, volunteers nurtured 200 of the special tomato seedlings, which were later distributed at APHIS’ 40th anniversary celebration in Riverdale. In addition, volunteers at the Riverdale garden—now in its fourth year of production—added a stately Lincoln scarecrow to stand guard over this year’s garden.

[gardening tips and more]
To learn more, please visit the People’s Garden Web page. There you can find links to a wide variety of gardening resources, print out healthy recipes, register a new People’s Garden, or update information about an existing one.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with the Riverdale garden, please contact Gary Poush at (301) 851-4063. Anyone interested in establishing a new People’s Garden can contact Jonathan Jones, APHIS’ national coordinator, at (301) 851-2128. Come help us grow!

APHIS People’s Garden Locations
APHIS employees have started nine gardens, including one at the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica and a new 1-acre garden in Swansea, IL.

1. Ames, IA
   Long grass prairie, rain garden
2. Carlisle, PA
   Vegetable garden
3. Costa Rica, U.S. Embassy
   Vegetable garden
4. Fort Collins, CO
   Vegetable, container garden
5. Fort Collins, CO
   Fruit orchard
6. Lake Park, FL
   Fruit and nut orchard, vegetable garden
7. Riverdale, MD
   Vegetable garden
8. Swansea, IL
   Vegetable garden
9. Topeka, KS
   Vegetable, container garden

agency calendar

August
APHIS’ Ergonomics Program provides monthly Webinars for all USDA employees. To see the schedule for upcoming Webinars, visit the program’s Web page at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/emssd/ergonomics.shtml. For more information, call (301) 436-3165.

September
National Hispanic Heritage Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

Building, Maintaining, and Repairing Trust Webinar, September 11. Visit AgLearn for more information.

Using Social Media Webinar, September 13. Visit AgLearn for more information.

Hiring Managers: Understanding the Value of Military Veterans to Your Organization & Reinventing Diversity; September 24, Ames, IA, 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. (CT). For more information, contact Fontella Worrell at (301) 851-4186 or fontella.d.worrell@aphis.usda.gov.

APHIS Safety and Health Fair, September 26, Riverdale Conference Center, Riverdale, MD, 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. •

Check out Tom Varco and Sean Mills’ garden in Swansea, IL, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BenchmarkGarden.

facebook
from the aphis archives

By John Scott

Sometimes it seems like there's a new challenge every day at work, new information to track, or new technology to learn. As you often hear, change seems to be the only constant.

However, a recent look through APHIS' photo collections in Riverdale shows that—in some respects—the more things change, the more they stay the same.

One photo collection features a series of images taken in the spring of 1926 of the "Federal Horticultural Board" inspection staff in Philadelphia, PA. Despite the difference in work attire and the elapse of more than 80 years ago, there are several things that still seem familiar.

For example, much like APHIS today keeps an eye out for certain commodities during particular times of year—i.e. firewood during camping season, citrus during the holidays, etc.—so too did our colleagues before us. One photo (above) shows inspectors closely examining shamrocks arriving from Ireland as St. Patrick's Day approached in March 1926.

And for all you Plant Protection and Quarantine employees who have scoured shipment manifests looking for "irregularities," there's some small consolation in knowing that others before you have faced the same challenge.

The image below features the following handwritten caption:

"C.G. Albrecht, Max Kisliuk Jr., W.W. Chapman — Examining case from Italy — Manifested as 'onions' but found to contain Cipolline, Pear & Fig stocks, Grapevines & quantity of dirt. Phila. Entry - 12225 - April 6, 1926."

 Doesn't it make you wonder where today's work photos will show up 100 years from now? ●

recent aphis retirees

In the second quarter of the year, APHIS saw 101 employees retire from among its ranks. We congratulate each of the newly retired and wish them all the best as they enter their post-APHIS years.

Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.

We plan to include similar lists in future issues of the newsletter. We hope that they will help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency. ●
APHIS Retirees
April – June 2012

Animal Care
Henry Baughman, Jr., Benton, AR
Raymond Flynn, Fort Collins, CO

Biotechnology Regulatory Services
John Cordts, Riverdale, MD

International Services
Guadalupe Rocha, Brownsville, TX
Thomas Schissel, Pretoria, SF

Office of the Administrator
Neri Mwallimu, Washington, D.C.

Plant Protection and Quarantine
Roger Allen, Haines City, FL
Jesus Alvarado, Honolulu, HI
John Arcery, New York-Queens, NY
Alex Belano, Riverdale, MD
Wayne Burnett, Riverdale, MD
Anthony Campo, Albany, NY
Gary Clement, Raleigh, NC
Lorena Collins, Avon Park, FL
Richard Conant, Tuscaloosa, AL
Eneida Cordero, Carolina, PR
Floyd Crim, Palmetto, FL
Edward Cusano, Mobile, AL
Nordis Duffel, Mount Dora, FL
Barbara Eaton, Olney, TX
James Epperson, Greer, SC
Julie Fazio, Edinburg, TX
Rolando Garza, Clemson, SC
William Glenn, Raleigh, NC
Gordon Gorth, Hilo, HI
Melvin Higuchi, Prospect, KY
Sharon Ishikawa, Hilo, HI
Delwin Itto, Mission, TX
William Jones, Raleigh, NC
Edward Jones, Jr., Riverdale, MD
Nancy Klad, Riverdale, MD
C. Mann, Romulus, MI
James Manor, Jr., Harlingen, TX
Sherry McFall, Oakland, CA
Neil Mendel, Riverside, MD
Deborah Miller, Honolulu, HI
Douglas Miyashiro, Riverdale, MD
Cornelia Mueller, Palmetto, FL
Thomas Nelson, Mission, TX
Juan Ochoa, Mission, TX
Raymond Pank, Sacramento, CA
Carolyn Pizzo, Sacramento, CA
Lawrence Prinzbach, Gulfport, MS
Constancia Ramos, Miami, FL
Ricardo Rauseo, San Jose, CA
Melvin Robles, Palmetto, FL
Agustin Rodriguez Torres, Aguacilla, PR
Leslie Rubin, Riverdale, MD
Amedeo Ruggiero, Atlanta, GA
Aleida Ruiz Aulet, Punta, PR
Michael Shuman, Topeka, KS
Donald Smith, Sarasota, FL
Michael Stefan, Raleigh, NC
Mike Swett, Riverdale, MD
Shigeru Tanaka, Waimanalo, HI
Lorraine Treiber, Honolulu, HI
Jeanne Vandersal, Riverdale, MD
Michael Ward, Riverdale, MD
James Webber, Jessup, MD
James Wehry, Stockton, CA
Donna West, Riverdale, MD

Veterinary Services
Jeanne Bates, Austin, TX
Patrick Berger, Chiple, FL
Anthony Carfuzzi, Sr., Newburgh, NY
Wayne Chandler, Okeechobee, FL
Gary Chun, Alamo, CA
Margaret Collard, Baton Rouge, LA
Michael Duggan, Austin, TX
Kathryn Evansen, Bismarck, ND
Robert Good, Annapolis, MD
Robert Griffith, Tempe, AZ
Roy Isham, Crossville, TN
Ralph Jarboe, Ames, IA

Wildlife Services
Arthur Crowe, Casper, WY
James Flanagan, Nichols, SC
Carol Fuconow, Fort Collins, CO
David Hayes, Billings, MT
Don Higgins, Concord, NH
Andrew McKinney, Gillette, WY
Laurie Paulik, Fort Collins, CO
Michael Peterson, Ten Sleep, WY
Peter Savarie, Fort Collins, CO

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Manager Profile
with
Mark Davidson

[What is your background?]
I am an Auburn graduate (War Eagle!) and spent a couple of years in large animal practice in Alabama and Minnesota-Iowa before joining USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) in 1990. While with APHIS, I have been a field veterinary medical officer in Minnesota, an area veterinarian in charge in Minnesota and Tennessee, and an associate regional director in the Western Region. I became the director of the Western Region in December 2011.

[How long have you been with APHIS?]
I joined APHIS in 1988 after spending a year and a half with FSIS.

[Most memorable APHIS experience?]
It really is hard to pick a single experience as I have been very lucky to work with great people over the years and see the remarkable things that can be accomplished when given a challenge. Probably the two most rewarding experiences were the eradication of exotic Newcastle disease in the southwest and the recent work on the U.S.-Mexican border to ensure the safety of our employees while finding solutions to maintain trade.

[Priorities in the coming months?]
My primary focus will be on the planning and implementation of Veterinary Services' new organizational structure. This is a critical step for us as we ensure our organization can meet the animal health needs of today and the future.

[Accomplishment most proud of?]
I am very proud to enjoy life with my wife Marnie and our kids Kendall and Ryan.

[Hobbies?]
I enjoy spending time with my family whenever I can. These days, we spend most of our time at baseball and lacrosse games. When we get the chance, we also enjoy camping, riding ATVs, and hunting.

[Favorite movie?]
Most of my movie choices are driven by the kids these days. I did see an interesting movie Salmon Fishing in the Yemen on a flight back from Riverdale recently. The movie had some interesting leadership concepts in the story, which included implementing a vision, leading with the heart, and the critical role of stakeholder engagement.

[Last book read?]
Play Baseball The Ripken Way by Cal Ripken, Jr.

[Favorite meal?]
I enjoy a good ribeye steak with a baked potato and sautéed mushrooms.

[Guilty pleasure?]
Chocolate! I get this from my Mom.
aphis teamwork brings speedy transfer

By David Sacks

3G speed is fast, but so is APHIS.

Employees from Veterinary Services (VS) and Animal Care (AC) recently worked together for a different kind of 3G speed: to move three giraffes—Gerald, Genny, and Gisera—to a new home. Together, VS and AC helped with plans to quickly transfer the giraffes from Canada to a U.S. facility better able to take care of them.

In late 2011, as the cold was settling in, a Canadian zoo was experiencing financial difficulties and urgently needed to move all of its animals. Its three giraffes, in particular, would not have survived the winter since the zoo could no longer heat the animals’ barn or provide an adequate diet.

[need for speed]
APHIS responded with speed. Langston Hull, a veterinary medical officer with VS’ National Center for Import and Export, reached out to his colleagues to set the wheels in motion. The group obtained all the needed approvals and permits and also addressed disease mitigation requirements.

“Because of the extreme animal welfare concerns, we were able to push this through rapidly,” Hull said.

With all of the paperwork in place, Hull and the others worked with the receiving facility, the San Diego Zoo, to make the transfer as seamless as possible. On moving day, the giraffes seemed eager to move to their new home; they loaded onto the transport truck without any problems. The male of the group, Gerald, however, became ill and died during transit. Because of an underlying health condition that was unknown at the time, the trip was too much for him.

[sadness turns to joy]
With Gerald’s death, there was sadness on both sides of the border, however, zoo officials later discovered that one of the females had been impregnated by Gerald prior to the transfer. His offspring, a female calf named Marcie, was later born at the San Diego Zoo. She, along with Genny and Gisera, has successfully integrated into the sizeable giraffe herd there.

“This whole operation stands out to me because it was such a tangible outcome,” Hull said. “We did good here.”

A number of APHIS employees played key roles in the effort, including: Joyce Bowling-Heyward, Gary Brickler, Michael Carter, Debra Donch, Arnold Gertonson, Charles Hench, Betzaida Lopez, Peter Merrill, Alecia Naugle, LeeAnn Thomas, David Weigel, and Ted Williams of VS; and Kay Carter-Corker, Chester Gipson, Andy Morgan, and Tracy Thompson of AC.

“it took a lot of work by a lot of people in a short period of time. We all came together. And when that calf came along, it made us feel even better,” Hull said.

As for the giraffes themselves, they continue to thrive in their new surroundings. They are happy and healthy—and a good bit warmer. “They’re Southern California girls now,” Hull said.
Editor’s Note: Calvin Campbell is an APHIS retiree. Here, Campbell recounts his pioneering work with computer databases to aid with U.S. animal health management.

In 1969, APHIS sent me to graduate school at the University of California-Davis. There, I earned a master’s degree in preventive veterinary medicine and also took a couple of courses in computer technology.

Soon after I arrived back in New Mexico, we started testing several big cattle herds for brucellosis. As State epidemiologist, it was one of my jobs to assess whether the testing—along with quarantine and removal—was eliminating the disease from the herds and to recommend courses of action. I was swamped with data about tests and about the animals moving on and off ranches. Up to this point, no one had considered evaluating data using automated machinery. It was all done by manual lists and tables.

Now, you have to consider what computer technology was like in the early 1970s. Computer programming was a complex process that involved years of careful analysis and planning, thousands of lines of custom written code, dozens of programmers, and lots of money. It was reserved for only the most complex calculations and tasks.

[punch cards and bins]
Most data was entered into computers by means of 80-column cards with punched holes that represented text and numeric data. Cards were assembled into stacks that were sorted by machines into various bins by hand-wired boards that determined which cards were dropped into which bin. A lot of data keeping was done strictly with card stacks which generated report lists and never involved a real computer.

Veterinary Services (VS) was doing some of this for tasks such as accounting at headquarters, but that was it. So, I went to the U.S. Forest Service and asked them if I could have time on their card sorting machines after hours. With their agreement, I was able to punch herd and animal test data onto cards, wire the boards, run the sorting machines, and print my reports.

It sounds like a very simple thing, but no one in Veterinary Services had ever done this before. It enabled me to more rapidly analyze problems and make recommendations.

[right person, right time, right place]
As you look back on life, you recognize certain turning points. This was one of them. I was one of maybe ten veterinarians in USDA who expressed any interest at all in using computers. And, by chance, I was doing it in a State that had the largest computer system in the world at Los Alamos. I was the right person, at the right time, in the right place.

Two years later, Los Alamos offered the use of a brand new program called System 2000. It was a database management system that did not require programming languages like Cobol to use; instead, you entered data directly onto a computer through remote terminals.

With access to computers at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratories (LASL), I was assigned the task of developing a database that could handle all the animal testing data from New Mexico. Up to this point, I really had no intention of becoming a computer expert. I was content to let the computer jocks push the buttons.

Continued on next page
In the last newsletter, we asked employees, “Do you plant a garden?”

Of those who responded to the question, here’s the percentage breakdown of how they answered. In responding, participants were encouraged to select all of the options that apply.

**Do you plant a garden?**

- vegetable garden: 77.2%
- flower garden: 73.7%
- herb garden: 61.4%
- other: 21.1%

Under the “other” category, some employees noted that their gardening includes various berry plantings, grapes, and Christmas trees. One employee claimed proud ownership of “a fine collection of weeds.”

**[next question please]**

On the one hand, a career in the Federal Government can be rewarding and offer unique and challenging opportunities for professional development; on the other hand, Federal employees face tightening budgets and difficult public perception problems.

Given these competing factors, we ask:

*Would you recommend a Federal career to a family member or friend?*

- Yes, I would recommend pursuing a Federal career.
- I’m not sure if I would recommend pursuing a Federal career.
- No, I would not recommend pursuing a Federal career.

Click here to take part in the poll:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YM2K6WJ

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

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**Early Days**

Continued from page 12

I spent a good part of the 1970s developing and refining a prototype computerized database management system to handle disease and animal movement data within New Mexico. I had the latest terminal equipment and access to the big mainframe computers at Los Alamos; however, by today’s standard it was pretty primitive. We entered data through dumb terminals in Albuquerque, and I was assigned a 10 MB disk pack that was mounted in a drive about the size of a washing machine. And, I was strictly limited on the amount of computer time I could use.

In those days, working on computers was a strange interest for a veterinarian. I was pretty much considered an oddball by my peers. Over time, that changed.

**[from mainframes to PCs]**

Based on my work in New Mexico, in 1980 I was assigned to develop a project for VS that would put all animal-related testing and transportation data on computers. The new system was to be run at a large computer center that USDA owned in Ft. Collins, CO.

I was assigned four veterinarians and several Forest Service programmers. I was to be the interface between the center and the Cattle Diseases staff in Washington, D.C. The early database design phase went well, but in 1981, the purchase of a large mainframe computer stalled.

Personal computers were becoming quite powerful, and it appeared that the need for a large, very expensive mainframe computer was not the best way to go. By the end of 1981, the whole mainframe concept was abandoned, and the project was reworked to use new software and local servers. I exited the project in 1985 to become a regional epidemiologist. I continued to work in developing computer science projects until I retired in 1993.

During the years in Ft. Collins, I published several technical papers on computer technology and epidemiology, and I’ve been cited as a pioneer for the computer technology used today. I think that’s valid—it certainly was fun. And, on a personal note, I have to say that none of this early work would have been possible without the cooperation of LASL and the encouragement of Bob Pyles, former APHIS area veterinarian in charge in New Mexico. They all went out on a limb to support the ideas of a young and untried veterinarian.
volunteer spotlight

barbara demaideris

[employee name and program]
Barbara Demaideris, Supervisory Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer,
Asian Longhorned Beetle Program,
Amityville, NY

[volunteer organizations]
Habitat for Humanity Suffolk County and
Habitat for Humanity Global Village

[organization mission]
Habitat for Humanity is an ecumenical Christian partnership of concerned people working together with others who live in substandard housing or who cannot find adequate housing within their means.

[volunteer activities]
Demaideris helps build affordable housing for families in Suffolk County, Long Island. She participates in projects run by the Habitat for Humanity Suffolk organization’s Women Build program, which builds houses using female work crews.

With the Women Build program, Demaideris has raised walls; worked on landscaping projects; and installed roofing, insulation,

and sheetrock. While in Bali with Habitat for Humanity Global Village, she worked with concrete block, mortar, and cement. She also created rebar posts to reinforce cement posts, poured foundation, built walls, and poured cement flooring.

[time given]
Demaideris first got involved with Habitat in 2010 and has given more than 128 hours of service as a volunteer. Her first volunteer project was a Women Build wall-raising for a single mom and her two children. “I was immediately hooked. Working with Habitat for Humanity is a very rewarding experience,” says Demaideris.

The following summer she traveled with a Global Women Build crew to Bali, Indonesia. It was a 2-week volunteer trip to build a home for a widow living in the Gitgit mountain area of Bali.

“It was a very humbling experience for us all,” says Demaideris. She worked alongside the widow and her family and 25 other volunteers, 8 hours a day.

Demaideris is excited to continue her efforts with Habitat for Humanity and is planning for her next trip, a volunteer project in India.

[organization web site]
www.habitat.org

[employee email]
barbara.a.demaideris@aphis.usda.gov •

training reminder

Stopping Discrimination on the Bases of Age & Religion

REQUIRED training to be completed by August 31.

Visit AgLearn for more information and to complete online course.
Did you know that a favorite summertime recreational activity—the campfire—can play a significant role in the spread of harmful forest pests in the United States?

According to information collected and published by Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) in the Risk Assessment of the Movement of Firewood within the United States, the movement of firewood by campers can be a big problem.

During the initial spread of emerald ash borer infestations in the northeast, 75 percent of new infestations were found in campgrounds or parks. Detection sites included campgrounds in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and West Virginia.

Many campers don’t think about the potential risk of taking wood with them. Surveys from the west and the northeast indicate that up to 57 percent of campers may bring firewood from home, often travelling 100 to 200 miles and crossing State lines.

PPQ’s risk assessment features other compelling information highlighting the potential risks.

- Firewood is often made from diseased, insect-ridden, or killed trees with limited curing or drying time, and people often camp during the summer and early fall when insects or other pests are most active.
- The Kansas Department of Agriculture found that firewood for retail sale in Kansas came from as far as California and New York, and, although many of the bundles were labeled as “dried,” after being placed in boxes for a period of weeks, a third produced adult longhorned and bark beetles.
- Research conducted at 13 national parks in the western United States estimates that 330,000 campers (RVs, trailers, tents) move firewood into just those parks every year. The total number of campers bringing firewood into all national parks could easily reach into the millions.

[what you can do]
First, you can follow the advice, “Buy local. Burn local!” when you and your family go camping. Or, if you bring firewood, always make sure that it has been properly treated—kiln dried—prior to moving. Visit APHIS’ Hungry Pests Website, especially the links targeting outdoor enthusiasts, for more details.

Second, get more informed and help others do the same. Share the Hungry Pests site with others. Read the full PPQ assessment regarding firewood.

View and share links to informative videos on YouTube, such as:

- Seven Ways to Leave Pests Behind
- Don’t Spread Pests
- Super Rangers and the Legions of Bugs

By John Scott
plant protection and quarantine

sniffing out ALB
one tree at a time

By Mandi Frederick

When I see my pet Labrador retriever jump with fear when the air conditioner kicks on or struggle to find the dog treat I just dropped under his nose, I never think to myself, “What an elite hunter. Such keen instinct and sense of smell.” But then again, my dog wasn't trained by USDA.

Unlike my pet, the dogs that graduate from USDA's National Detector Dog Training Center have finely honed their natural instincts for the hunt.

Since April 2011, APHIS has been training a select team of Labradors and beagles to sniff out the frass of Asian longhorned beetles (ALB). Frass is material that beetles produce as they chew their way from the inside of a tree and emerge on the outside.

“We look for dogs that are highly food motivated, social, and can adapt easily to new situations. Labs are known for their ability to search large areas by detecting scents in the air. And because beagles are hounds, they’re methodical trackers that efficiently sniff the frass on the ground,” says Monica Errico, a training specialist at the Center in Newnan, GA.

[training for scents]
Each member of the four dog team—RJ, Blaze, Thunder, and Merlin—went through 5 weeks of intensive scent association training where they learned how to respond to the presence of ALB. Using positive reinforcement, including treats and praise from the handlers, the team quickly learned their job. After scent training, the dogs moved on to field application training where they began using the skills they’ve learned to hunt down beetles.

“We use them in a variety of different types of applications,” says Errico. “Residential areas, wooded lots, around firewood. Each environment poses new challenges. In residential neighborhoods there are domestic animals and in wooded lots there are wild animals, and the dogs have to be able to focus in on the frass.”

[sniffing the unseen]
Despite these challenges, the dogs have an impressive track record. During their first survey in Massachusetts, the dogs found ALB-infested trees where the signs of infestation would have made detection from ground surveys extremely difficult. Climbers had to ascend into the canopies—a 45-foot height—to confirm what the dogs had smelled from below. While in Ohio this summer, the dogs were able to once again use their keen sense of smell to locate positive trees.

In addition to the important work the team does detecting ALB, they also play a significant outreach role. “People love to meet the dogs. Everyone knows the breeds, and they get very excited to see the dogs and pet them. They act as ambassadors for USDA and help us raise awareness of the ALB eradication mission,” says Errico.

The team is still relatively new, and Errico and her colleagues continue to explore the variety of different ways that the dogs can be used to sniff out ALB and increase the program’s visibility. But one thing is for sure: these dogs have earned their treats.
April 21, 2016

Re: FOIA Request 2016-APHIS-02598

This reply is in response to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request you submitted to this office on February 29, 2016, seeking the following:

- A digital/electronic copy of each of the APHIS employee newsletters produced during calendar years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office conducted a search of its electronic files on March 4, 2016 and located records responsive to your request. After a review of the records, we've determined that they can be fully released to you.

Although no records were withheld or denied, you still have the right to appeal our response. If you choose to appeal, your appeal must be in writing and received within 45 days from the date on this letter. Please send appeal to:

Administrator
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Ag Box 3401
Washington, DC 20250-3401

If you choose to Appeal, please refer to tracking number 2016-APHIS-02598-F in your appeal letter and add the phase "FOIA APPEAL" to the front of the envelope. To assist the Administrator in reviewing your appeal, provide specific reasons why you believe modification of the determination is warranted.

If you have any questions pertaining to this response, please contact Terry Henson at (301) 851-4086.

Sincerely,

Tonya G. Woods
Director
Freedom of Information & Privacy Act
Legislative and Public Affairs

Enclosure (PDF File)
On January 10, APHIS hosted its third annual Supervisor of the Year Award Ceremony (VIDEO) in Riverdale, MD. During the event, the agency honored six outstanding supervisors with awards and recognized the role of APHIS supervisors as cornerstone positions essential to APHIS’ success. Other APHIS offices—Fort Collins, CO; Kona, HI; Minneapolis, MN; and Raleigh, NC—joined the ceremony by video teleconference.

Of the six program award recipients, Michelle Wenberg of Policy and Program Development (PPD) was recognized as the 2012 APHIS Supervisor of the Year. Wenberg is chief of the agency’s Budget and Program Analysis Staff. Her nomination represented a combined pool of the agency’s smaller programs: Biotechnology Regulatory Services; the Office of Civil Rights, Diversity and Inclusion; International Services; Legislative and Public Affairs; and PPD.

Acting Administrator Kevin Shea said choosing one person out of such an exceptional group was a difficult task, but Wenberg’s nomination stood out due to many examples of her sincere desire to develop and encourage employees.

The individual program award winners are:

- Peter (Rick) Kirsten, an Animal Care supervisory animal care specialist based in Michigan.
- Katherine Stoddard, a facilities manager for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services in Raleigh, NC.
- Kaipo Ng, a supervisory Plant Protection and Quarantine officer at Kona International Airport in Hawaii.
- Michael Kornreich, Veterinary Services’ area veterinarian in charge for Pennsylvania and New Jersey.
- Phillip Mastrangelo, Wildlife Services State director for North and South Dakota.
students blaze career paths through agdiscovery

By Vivian Keller

It’s a long way from the glitter of Miami to the friendly streets and fields of Ames, IA. But for Ashli Jay, a participant in the AgDiscovery program sponsored by APHIS and Iowa State University (ISU) in 2010, it’s been a road happily traveled. The girl who was told in high school she was “too skinny and too small” to be a veterinarian for farm animals is now a sophomore studying animal sciences at ISU—and recently wrapped up a stint at the university’s beef teaching farm.

Better yet: since July 2012, Jay has been working part time in the salmonella laboratory at APHIS’ National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL). “I don’t know where I’d be if I hadn’t gone to AgDiscovery,” says Jay. “It’s made a huge impact on me.”

[changing lives]
Jay is just one of many students across America whose lives and futures have been changed forever by APHIS’ AgDiscovery outreach program. Designed to help middle and high school students learn about careers in plant and animal science, wildlife management, and agribusiness, AgDiscovery began in 2002 with 12 students. It started as a collaboration between APHIS and Alcorn State University in Mississippi and has steadily grown.

In summer 2013, nearly 250 students will participate in AgDiscovery. APHIS programs will fund 17 schools that will host AgDiscovery’s 2–4 week boarding sessions, featuring a mix of lectures, hands-on workshops, and field trips, many led by APHIS personnel.

Eleven of the host schools are 1890 land grant universities, including Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), where sophomore Nohely Gonzalez is in pre-vet studies.

“My grandfather told me to pick [a profession] that will help the world,” says Gonzalez, a participant in FAMU’s 2009 AgDiscovery program. Gonzalez’s “aha” moment came during a hands-on session at the university’s research farm, when she reached deep inside a pregnant cow. She’d always thought she wanted to be a vet, she says—feeling the head of the cow’s unborn calf made her certain.

Continued on next page
Talking to a zookeeper, she learned that she could work with big cats in the field. “I never even knew this was an option [before AgDiscovery],” says Thomas. “I thought, wow, that is what I want to do!”

[building new skills]
Training in leadership skills, learning to work in a group, and interacting with a culturally diverse group of students are among the many AgDiscovery perks cited by participants—as is making lasting contacts.

Sarah Bloomer is currently a North Carolina State University (NCSU) freshman considering a future as a veterinarian with a corporation or—as a result of two AgDiscovery summers at NCSU and FAMU—with USDA inspecting animals at the border. She met NCSU sophomores Thomas Privott (natural resources/political science major) and Jake Thompson (plant biology/English lit major) through the NCSU 2010 program. Bloomer and Thompson both now urge students at their former high schools to consider participating. “I talk about AgDiscovery all the time,” says Bloomer.

As for Ashli Jay, things continue to go well in Ames. She has always wanted to work for USDA, she says, and loves her job at NVSL. In fact, she’s starting to think that a laboratory job might ultimately be a better fit for her than a life tending farm animals. “It can get cold out there in the winter!” she says.

Whatever she decides, AgDiscovery has helped the girl who once asked “Iowa, now where is that?” find her place in the world: in the heart of America’s Midwest, in agriculture.

[finding unexpected paths]
Sometimes AgDiscovery leads participants down unexpected paths. Taylor Thomas, a freshman wildlife conservation major at the University of Delaware, initially thought she’d work with farm animals or in a zoo. But she realized during her 2010 AgDiscovery program at Kentucky State University that tending to domesticated animals was “a little too routine.” She found her calling on a behind-the-scenes field trip to an Ohio zoo.
Among the animals most people associate with agriculture, ornamental fish don’t typically top the list. But, in Florida, the ornamental fish industry is an important economic engine that supplies most of the United States with aquarium fish, and it has a large number of international exports as well. Even in this underpublicized niche market, APHIS is there to protect American agriculture.

Kathleen Hartman, an aquatic epidemiologist with APHIS’ Veterinary Services program, is based in Ruskin, FL, and specializes in ornamental fish. Hartman feels that every day is an opportunity to represent APHIS to the public, prevent the spread of aquatic diseases, and support the ornamental fish industry.

“The word is out that APHIS is here to help, and people in the industry circulate my phone number. I receive phone calls from all over,” Hartman said. “Recently, I got a call from someone in Texas who wanted to ship fish to Israel.”

Facilitating exports and inspecting imports are just some of Hartman’s primary duties. She helps exporters understand and meet international regulations and works with accredited veterinarians so they can endorse export certificates. She also conducts site visits for producers who participate voluntarily in an APHIS program to assist exporters; the program helps exporters meet the guidelines for veterinary oversight that some importing countries require. At the port of Tampa, Hartman inspects fish and shipping documents, searching for signs of spring viremia of carp (SVC) virus. SVC is a contagious viral disease that affects a number of aquatic species and, due to its infectious nature, must be reported to the World Organization for Animal Health when cases are found.

**[fish schooling]**

“Outreach and education are important factors in disease prevention,” Hartman said. It starts with the training she provides for APHIS’ aquaculture liaisons—veterinary medical officers who learn about general and area-specific aquaculture disease concerns. Hartman also helped create aquaculture modules for USDA’s National Veterinary Accreditation Program.

Because Hartman’s office is within the University of Florida’s Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory, occasionally she can also be found behind a lectern, teaching programs on aquaculture diseases and biosecurity to producers, veterinarians, and vet students.

“This is a unique position with plenty of opportunities,” Hartman said. “There are opportunities to reach out, tell people where the program is going, lend marketability to our U.S.-produced fish, and help our exporters remain competitive in a global marketplace.”

For more information on APHIS’ aquaculture program, go to: [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/aquaculture/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/aquaculture/).
If you ask about his recent speech and tour at Tuskegee University, Acting Administrator Kevin Shea will readily tell you that it was a memorable and inspiring experience—one that reaffirms the importance of building connections, working with underserved farmers, and honoring the history of those who have made strides for disadvantaged farmers and African-Americans.

“We need to serve all of U.S. agriculture,” said Shea. “It’s important that we maintain our relations with Tuskegee; continuing that powerful and historic relationship benefits APHIS, the university, and minority farmers.”

Shea traveled to Tuskegee University in Alabama to address the 70th Annual Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC) on December 4. Founded in 1942, PAWC’s mission is to promote equal opportunity and equitable access to scientific information and technology for sustainable development of agricultural communities and natural resources.

Shea spoke to the audience about the AgDiscovery program at Tuskegee and the wide range of scholarships and internships that APHIS has in place to foster diversity and attract minority students to careers in agriculture. Among them is the Saul T. Wilson Scholarship, whose namesake retired from APHIS in 1989 and is currently professor emeritus at Tuskegee’s International Center for Tropical Animal Health. Wilson was instrumental in the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease from Mexico in the early 1950s.

Shea also updated PAWC attendees on a number of the cooperative agreements APHIS has in place with 1890s Land Grant Universities and other nonprofit groups to serve small and minority farmers and ranchers in the United States. APHIS has several cooperative agreements with Tuskegee, including one supporting efforts related to animal and plant health capacity building in Africa.

[rich in accomplishments, past and present]

For Shea, the trip to Tuskegee was also a rewarding learning experience. As he visited with attendees and members of the university community, they highlighted some of Tuskegee’s many accomplishments.

• Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine has educated more than 70 percent of all African-American veterinarians.

• Much of the statistical modeling used for the 2005 Harvard Risk Assessment of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was conducted at Tuskegee’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, which is led by Dr. Tsegaye Habtemariam. The risk assessment has been used since 2001 to evaluate the effects of BSE mitigations implemented by USDA and the Food and Drug Administration.

• Tuskegee’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health is the only program in the United States where animal health and human health disciplines are interlinked under one college that programmatically emphasizes the One Health: One Medicine approach.

[through the lens of history]

Shea also enjoyed the opportunity to tour Tuskegee’s campus, seeing the graves of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. He also visited the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. The site’s exhibits chronicle the exploits and achievements of the Tuskegee Airmen, who during World War II had to train separately from white pilots in order to serve their country.

Continued on next page
speed and cooperation combat dog fighting

By Robert Willems

The dogs looked “beat-up” when they landed at the Indianapolis International Airport. That’s how U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials described them.

The two pit bulls had just arrived on a plane coming from the Dominican Republic, and they needed veterinary care. Their injuries, however, immediately aroused suspicion. They appeared to be fighting dogs, but CBP officers were initially uncertain about what to do or who had jurisdiction.

After making a number of calls, airport officials contacted APHIS’ Veterinary Services office in Indianapolis and spoke with Frank Wilson, the area veterinarian in charge for Indiana. Realizing that this might involve an Animal Welfare Act violation, Wilson reached out to his colleagues in Animal Care (AC). He called Rick Kirsten, an AC field supervisor, to ask for advice. That turned out to be a wise decision.

“This didn’t smell right to CBP,” Kirsten said. “Seeing the dogs’ wounds and their condition, I had a reasonable suspicion that it might be a dog-fighting venture.”

Kirsten and CBP officials relayed information to Agent Chris Golightly with USDA’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in Indiana. Golightly looked into the situation and quickly discovered that the dogs had been sent to a kennel in Muncie, IN. He contacted Muncie Police Department personnel, who investigated the situation and determined that the animals were indeed fighting dogs.

Police officers subsequently raided the kennel and confiscated 25 dogs, including the two from the Dominican Republic. The dogs were sent to several shelters for proper care. Officers also arrested kennel owner Rahsaan Ahmad Johnson.

On November 5, a Circuit Court jury found Johnson guilty of 14 counts of possessing an animal for use in an animal fighting contest, 1 count of promoting an animal fighting contest, and 7 counts of cruelty to an animal.

For those, like AC officials, who are involved in animal welfare efforts, this case is notable for its speed and cooperation. Remarkably, the initial detection, kennel raid, and arrest all took place in just 1 week.

Diane Tucker, a CBP officer at the Indianapolis Airport, summed it up this way: “To me, this proves if we work as a team with other agencies, for the greater good, we will have great results.”

tuskegee

Continued from page 5

Steeped in a history that includes both the difficult and the triumphant parts of our Nation’s past—Tuskegee University today is an active and thriving campus. Yet, as Shea observes, there’s still much work to do.

“Tuskegee itself is very vibrant and energetic,” said Shea. “But, like some other rural communities, the surrounding areas still show the strain of poverty,” he added.

“APHIS does well working with many stakeholder groups. But a trip like this reminds me that we need to keep pushing to do a better job of reaching out to understand and serve the needs of disadvantaged farmers and ranchers,” said Shea.
Why is plain language important? As public servants, plain language is a fundamental part of every job we do. We can’t serve taxpayers well if they don’t know what we are saying. When we write clearly, the public can more easily understand and use the information we provide. And they can better follow what we ask them to do and what we require them to do.

Plain writing also makes good business sense for APHIS. If we craft clear documents, stakeholders submit forms with fewer errors; we have a better chance of gaining cooperation from others; and we spend less time explaining information that was unclear in the first place. Ultimately, if we don’t communicate clearly, we can’t be the premier organization that we want to be.

Writing clearly—at least for external audiences—is also required by law. Two years ago, President Obama signed the Plain Writing Act of 2010 into law. The Act requires Federal employees to use simple, easy to understand language in all new or substantially revised documents that:

- Provide information about any of our services and benefits;
- Are needed to obtain any of our benefits or services; or
- Explain how to comply with a program requirement that we administer or enforce.

[how do I write clearly?]
First of all, consider the audience for your document and your reason for writing it. Plain language does not mean writing to any particular grade level; it means crafting a document that is appropriate for the intended audience. Think about your key message—and state it clearly. Organize your document in a logical manner and use subheadings, lists, bullet points, and tables where it makes sense to do so.

Continued on next page

let me be clear: plain writing matters

By Beth Gaston

In July 2012, the Center for Plain Language issued the first report card for Federal agencies’ efforts to comply with the Plain Writing Act. USDA received the highest grade Governmentwide for our implementation of the Plain Writing Act.

“This first Plain Writing Report Card helps ensure that government agencies are following both the letter and the spirit of the Act,” said Annetta L. Cheek, chair of the Center for Plain Language. “Based on USDA’s Web site, your two reports, and the very nice online training you now have, USDA seems to be doing a better job than many other agencies.”

Plain writing is a key part of Secretary Tom Vilsack’s efforts to make USDA first in public service and effectiveness. His strong support has been an important part of USDA’s plain writing success.

The Center for Plain Language issued the report card to encourage the use of plain language in Government and business operations. One simple way to maintain our momentum with plain writing is for every USDA employee to ask “How’s my writing?” when drafting, reviewing, and finalizing documents.
census of agriculture: you can help spread the word

By John Scott

During the next few weeks, America’s farmers and ranchers will have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their communities by taking part in USDA’s Census of Agriculture. And you can help by spreading the word about the Census to producers and other agency stakeholders.

USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts the Census of Agriculture every 5 years. It captures a complete count of all U.S. farms and ranches and those who operate them.

NASS mailed out Census forms in late December 2012, and responses are due by February 4, 2013. Producers also have the option to complete their forms online.

Census data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities—from Federal, State, and local governments to agribusinesses and trade associations. Companies and cooperators can use the information to determine the locations of facilities that serve agricultural producers. In addition, legislators often use the information when shaping farm policies and programs. And, of course, APHIS can use Census data to help make informed decisions about the future of our own efforts.

For more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call 1-888-4AG-STAT (1-888-424-7828).

Please help spread the word by sharing this information and link with producers and stakeholders. When farmers and ranchers participate in the Census, they help grow the future of U.S. farms, shape farm programs, and enhance services for themselves and their communities.

plain writing

Additionally, use the active voice and say WHO DID WHAT in that order. Here’s the difference: “The soccer player kicked the ball” is active voice; “The ball was kicked by the soccer player” is passive voice.

Avoid hidden verbs. For example, use “analyze” instead of “conduct an analysis.”

Use simple terms like “start” instead of “commence.” And, avoid jargon, unnecessary technical terms, and excessive acronyms.

[where can I find more resources?]

To learn more, you can visit the following Web sites for tips, training, and information.

Federal Plain Language Web site—This extensive Web site is the official Plain

Language site. It includes:

- Links to the Plain Writing Act and related Executive Orders;
- Guidance materials to help agencies comply with the law;
- Guidelines and examples for writers and editors;
- Information about free plain language training; and
- Tips and tools related to plain language.

USDA Plain Language Web site—This site includes:

- The USDA plain writing pledge;
- Links to the USDA Plain Writing Act Compliance Report;
- Lists of useful training; and
- Tools and checklists for writers and reviewers.
aphis time capsule quietly waits

By John Scott

There it sits—a large gray industrial-looking metal cube. The APHIS time capsule patiently bides its time tucked in a corner of the agency library in Riverdale.

APHIS commissioned the capsule in 1995 as part of the dedication ceremony for the agency’s new headquarters. It was featured during the ceremony on September 13, 1995, and APHIS plans to open it on April 2, 2022, to mark the agency’s 50th anniversary.

This time capsule is no simple shoebox stuffed with leftover photos. It is a hulk of stainless steel, about 4 feet high and 4 feet wide and sealed with bolts. Despite its size and well-engineered look, it rests unnoticed by most agency employees who are likely unaware that we even have a time capsule. And even for those who once knew about it, the capsule has become a distant memory.

[where to put it?]

As the information resource manager at the APHIS library in Riverdale, Eileen Welch is the time capsule’s current host and unofficial guardian. Welch has a few guesses about its contents but can’t remember for certain all of what’s inside. Like most of the folks involved with the time capsule in its early days, though, she has one clear memory for sure: trying to figure out where to store it.

“I remember Terry Medley coming in and asking if we could find a place to keep it. Once they saw how big it was, they knew it couldn’t be kept in any of the offices,” said Welch.

[built to last]

The APHIS time capsule is not only large but obviously built to last.

The 4-foot stainless steel cube weighs several hundred pounds when empty. It’s airtight and waterproof. The top is gasket-sealed with a row of bolts running along each edge. A continuous wire passes through the head of each bolting stud and is sealed with a gasket.

Continued on next page

recent aphis retirees

APHIS had 31 employees retire in the third and fourth quarters of 2012. We congratulate each of them and wish them all the very best.

Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.

To help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency, we plan to include similar lists of new retirees in future issues of the newsletter. 

Go Outside

Click to view larger images.
Continued from page 9

bolt to ensure no tampering. And, a valve—affixed on top—reveals that the container was pressurized with special gas to preserve its contents.

Tim Roland, now director for PPQ’s Aircraft and Equipment Operations unit in Mission, TX, was part of the unit that built the capsule. He also sealed the capsule when he attended the building dedication in 1995. He remembers getting the request to build it from PPQ’s Sid Cousins (retired), who chaired the time capsule committee.

“Sid told me the particulars about the cubic feet they wanted, and I asked him if they knew what they were asking for. He double-checked and that’s what they wanted,” Roland recalled with a laugh.

“Even after it was trucked to Riverdale, they said they didn’t think it’d be that big,” said Roland, who plans on being there when the capsule is opened.

[a little bit of mystery]
So far, the capsule has been sealed for 17 years, and it will remain closed for 10 more. Not that long in the scheme of things. But apparently long enough for memories to fade and a little bit of mystery to take its place.

So it would seem that the capsule is doing its job and successfully meeting its performance standards. For now, its purpose is simply to be forgotten.

When opened, however, it will provide us with an agency history lesson and the opportunity to reflect on our priorities, the tools we use, and the ways in which we go about our work. It will be interesting to see how these things change—or don’t—in the face of time.

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time capsule

agency calendar

continued from page 9

The FY 2013 APHIS Training and Development Calendar provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

**february**
Black History Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

**march**
National Women’s History Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

**Situational Self Leadership**, March 12–13, Riverdale, MD; Visit AgLearn for more information or contact Leslie Linneman by email (leslie.a.linneman@aphis.usda.gov) or at (301) 851-2889.

**Rethinking Stress Webinar**, February 12; Visit AgLearn for more information or contact Todd Sazdoff by email (todd.sazdoff@aphis.usda.gov) or at (612) 336-3304.
[what is your background?]  
I was born in York, PA, and thought for many years that I would become a veterinarian. During high school, I worked as a kennel boy and an assistant at small animal practices in York and for a few months in Saginaw, MI. While studying as a biology major at Penn State University, I helped in physics and cell biology laboratories. I received a PhD degree in plant pathology from Penn State in 1982. After graduation, I investigated foreign plant diseases in a containment facility and collaborated for 6 years with foreign scientists working with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service at Fort Detrick, Frederick, MD.

[priorities in the coming months?]  
With PPQ’s reorganization plan, we will be consolidating the Eastern and Western Regions into one unit, Field Operations. As the executive director of Field Operations, I will be responsible for daily operations. I will be learning as much as possible about PPQ Field Operations and helping PPQ implement a “core functional workgroup” approach to doing business.

[accomplishment most proud of?]  
In the work environment, it is leading PPQ’s implementation of Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill. Many APHIS employees and members of the National Plant Board contributed time and served on teams to design a process that produced 1,000 projects. Between 2009 and 2012, these projects obligated $157 million to State departments of agriculture, university cooperators, other Federal agencies, and nonprofit and tribal organizations. This was an extremely complex effort that would not have been possible were it not for the dedication of these teams. I am very proud of the team members and feel privileged to have participated in this effort.

In the home environment, I am proud of my two sons who have permanent jobs and are happy.

[hobbies?]  
Bicycling and taking hikes in the mountains of Colorado.

[favorite movie?]  
Lord of the Rings.

[last book read?]  
The Little Drummer Girl by John le Carré (dated but still a classic for the genre, from a book swap).

[favorite meal?]  
Seafood or anything prepared well. I enjoy trying dishes prepared with different chiles and other spices.

[guilty pleasure?]  
Eating pizza, ice cream, dark chocolate (I keep a candy dish stocked in my office), or anything with salt and sugar. ●
Did you know that undergraduate women outnumber men in land-grant agriculture programs?

A national study completed in 2012 of 70 land-grant universities found that undergraduate women enrolled in agriculture programs outnumbered undergraduate men by more than 2,900 students in 2011. This study, conducted by the Food and Agricultural Education Information System, explored trends in the gender of undergraduate students enrolled in 14 agriculture academic areas at land-grant institutions from 2004 to 2011. The rise in undergraduate women in agriculture academic areas is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 2004, undergraduate men outnumbered undergraduate women by more than 1,400. By 2008, the number of undergraduate women and men enrolled in agriculture academic areas were roughly equivalent. In 2009, undergraduate women outpaced undergraduate men by 249 students. This increase continued in 2010 and 2011, with enrollment numbers for undergraduate women growing each year. In 2011, the number of undergraduate women enrolled in agriculture academic areas exceeded the number of undergraduate men enrolled by more than 2,900.

This trend corresponds with an overall rise in women farm operators. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the number of women farm operators increased nationally by 19 percent—to 1,008,943—between 2002 and 2007.

Did you know

By Lisa Hightower

whether printed as hard copy or published electronically—to LPA for clearance and production. LPA will work with you through every step of the process in bringing a publication from concept to fruition.

For more on APHIS’ publication process and key LPA contacts, please visit LPA’s recently updated Intranet page at http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/index.shtml before initiating a project.

The page contains additional links to information you will find useful, including an updated factsheet on publications, LPA guidance for determining publication needs, detailed charts on the publications process for various products, and a Government Printing Office style quick reference guide.
Statistics show that wildlife management efforts at airports have contributed to a decrease in the number of bird strikes at airports. And this is certainly good news. However, other aircraft data is pointing researchers to another growing and related challenge: the number of bird strikes occurring at or above 3,000 feet above the ground is increasing.

At this higher altitude, aircraft are generally outside the immediate benefits of wildlife management efforts at airports. Reducing the number of bird strikes at these altitudes will likely require a different approach.

To take a closer look, a team of researchers recently decided to view the problem from a new angle—the bird’s perspective.

[the bird’s eye view]

For their research, scientists with Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) teamed up with researchers from Indiana State University and Purdue University.

Using their knowledge of bird visual systems, the team devised an experiment that would test the ability of Canada geese to see aircraft with different lighting and paint schemes. Based on the team’s experiment, researchers determined that using lights to make aircraft more visible could help reduce bird strikes.

The researchers measured the response of geese to the approach of radio-controlled model aircraft: one that resembled a standard civil aircraft (approximately 9 feet in wingspan) with lights on, the same aircraft with lights off, and another radio-controlled aircraft that resembled a raptor in form and paint scheme.

Each of the experiment’s aircraft—whether lights on, lights off, or the predator-styled aircraft—elicited similar anti-predator responses from the geese, suggesting that the birds treated the aircraft as predators and sought to avoid a collision. However, one of the key findings from the experiment was that the birds responded sooner to the aircraft with lights on.

[an important next step in research]

By focusing on bird visual ecology and its influence on bird behavior, researchers are taking an important next step in reducing bird-aircraft collisions.

“Birds see so much differently than humans do,” said Bradley Blackwell of the NWRC. “So we can’t translate our own perceptual understanding to the problem of birds avoiding aircraft.”

Specifically, birds have different visual systems than humans, and this research is the first to take that fact and their natural anti-predator behavior into account.

“Because Canada geese will respond to approaching aircraft as a potential threat, the theory behind how animals respond to predators is very applicable, and we can enhance this response via lighting,” said Blackwell.

By combining research findings on the visual capabilities of Canada geese with research about responses to approaching aircraft, the scientists hope to lay the groundwork for collaborations with industry to develop new aircraft designs. These new designs could prompt birds to respond sooner, providing more time to avoid collisions midair.

The team plans to conduct further research with other bird species commonly involved in strikes to determine how they respond.

“Bird strikes have gained increased notice since the “Miracle on the Hudson,” the emergency landing of US Airways flight 1549 in 2009 after Canada geese were struck by the aircraft and ingested into the plane’s engines.

“This is only the first step,” said Blackwell. “In addition to lighting, we also want to understand how to manipulate aircraft paint schemes so that birds find them easier to detect. It’s exciting work.”
In our last newsletter, we asked employees, “Would you recommend a Federal career to a family member or friend?”

Of those who responded, here’s the percentage breakdown of how they answered.

- 62% Yes, I would recommend.
- 21% I’m not sure.
- 17% No, I would not recommend.

Several employees also offered additional comments in response to the question. One wrote, “As a second, third, and fourth career, I have found working for the Federal Government to be greatly rewarding. The ability to move throughout the Government without penalty is incomparable!”

**[next question please]**

Many people start the New Year by setting goals or making resolutions for themselves. Sometimes they make resolutions focused on their personal lives or on health and fitness goals. And, sometimes they set new goals related to work and their careers.

*Are you making a New Year’s resolution for 2013?*

- Yes, I am making a New Year’s resolution.
- Yes, I am making a New Year’s resolution specifically related to work.
- No, I am not making a New Year’s resolution.

What is your resolution? As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential. Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate!

Click here to take part in the poll: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YM2K6WJ](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YM2K6WJ)

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**Workers’ Compensation Program Changes Benefit Employees and Agency**

The agency’s Workers’ Compensation Program has made recent changes to improve its operations. Together, these improvements will benefit employees and help streamline the agency’s management of claims.

The primary purpose of the Workers’ Compensation Program is to facilitate wage replacement, medical care payments, and return-to-work efforts for agency employees who sustain compensable work injuries.

Many of the recent improvements stem from a business process improvement project conducted in 2012. The project included goals of optimizing and streamlining the Workers’ Compensation Program and reducing its cost. Additional improvements are planned for 2013 according to Tara Jones, who joined APHIS last year as the APHIS Workers’ Compensation Program manager.

**[Improving Employee Resources]**

To enhance its employee outreach, the Workers’ Compensation Program has revised its Web pages and created an employee help desk that is accessible by phone (855-804-7310) or by email at OWCPHelpDesk@aphis.usda.gov.

The revised Web pages now include helpful links to frequently asked questions, new AgLearn training for supervisors, and additional information resources for employees and supervisors.

**[Other Changes for the Better]**

APHIS’ Workers’ Compensation Program has taken other steps as well to create a more unified agency structure for processing and managing claims and to enhance supervisory engagement and understanding of the program.

Here are few of the changes:

- Agency workers’ compensation coordinators will begin using ECOMP—the U.S. Department of Labor’s online system for processing and managing claims. This electronic system will improve program efficiency and increase the speed of claims processing.
- The agency’s national program manager is conducting monthly conference calls with APHIS workers’ compensation coordinators.
sympoium highlights
“native lands, native ways”

By Gail Keirn

Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest have cared for and managed the land for thousands of years through traditional practices that are essential to many cultural customs and ceremonies. At this year’s Wildlife Society Annual Conference in Portland, OR, organizers focused on Native American conservation by hosting a half-day symposium titled Native Lands, Native Ways: Indigenous Conservation in the Northwest. Participants shared native perspectives on wildlife management, tribal politics, and modern tribal management.

The Wildlife Society’s Native People’s Wildlife Management Working Group sponsored the symposium. And APHIS was there, too. Wildlife Services (WS) and APHIS’ Native American Working Group helped coordinate the event and—along with others—provided travel and registration funding for 18 Native American students to attend.

“Wildlife Services continues to support Native American students interested in natural resource management careers by providing them with opportunities like this to meet and interact with wildlife professionals,” says Daniel Gossett, a supervisory biological science technician at WS’ National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, CO. Gossett helped organize the symposium.

“The students had the chance to share their knowledge about their native culture and to participate in discussions about wildlife management, sustainability, and natural resource conservation in the Pacific Northwest,” says Gossett.

The symposium focused on wildlife and environmental management from an indigenous perspective, with an emphasis on restoring watersheds and undamming rivers in the Pacific Northwest.

Traditionally, indigenous communities define the natural world and processes as sacred; for these communities, having dam-free rivers is essential to their cultural identity, well-being, and livelihoods. The symposium included presentations on the process and impact of undamming rivers; managing sensitive and culturally significant wildlife species on tribal lands; monitoring fish populations; managing intertribal fisheries; and understanding the legal processes and sovereignty issues that impact Native American communities in the Pacific Northwest.

For more information on the symposium or the APHIS Native American Working Group, please contact Daniel Gossett by phone, (970) 266-6284, or email at daniel.n.gossett@aphis.usda.gov.

Continued from page 14

workers’ compensation

• APHIS has developed a mandatory AgLearn module on workers’ compensation for managers and supervisors.

• The agency has incorporated language specific to workers’ compensation into the performance plans of APHIS managers and supervisors to enhance engagement and accountability.

Continued from page 14
volunteer spotlight
danielle koski and jennifer lamoreux

[employee name and program]
Danielle Koski, Biological Science Laboratory Technician, Center for Veterinary Biologics, Ames, IA

Jennifer Lamoreux, Biological Science Laboratory Technician, National Veterinary Services Laboratories, Ames, IA

[volunteer organization]
One Heart Equestrian Therapy

[organization mission]
One Heart Equestrian Therapy offers therapy to individuals demonstrating physical, cognitive, mental, or emotional limitations and special needs. The organization makes equine-oriented and domestic animal-oriented activities available in a compassionate, safe, and professional manner.

[volunteer activities]
Lamoreux began volunteering with One Heart in 2003 as a side-walker and horse leader. In 2005, she became a certified riding instructor through the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA)—now known as the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). In 2011, Lamoreux was selected as the Region 7 PATH Intl. instructor of the year.

Koski began volunteering with One Heart in 2007 as a side-walker and horse leader. In 2009, she also became a NARHA-certified riding instructor.

Both Lamoreux and Koski teach therapeutic riding classes and volunteer in other ways, where needed. Whether it be side-walking with clients during class, training therapy horses, entering client data into the computer, feeding horses, staying in touch with volunteers, scheduling clients for classes, or leading a therapy horse during class—they do it all. They are often at the One Heart stable sweeping aisles, mucking stalls, or simply organizing tack. In the last year, Lamoreux and Koski helped One Heart provide services for more than 40 clients, each of whom have their own unique challenges and goals.

Lamoreux and Koski also volunteer by helping One Heart clients participate in the Iowa Equestrian Special Olympics. They help pack up all the gear, trailer horses to the event, and take care of them at the show. They also organize riders, volunteers, and horses to make sure everyone is safe and having fun. This year, they were able to help more than 20 riders compete in over 40 events at the Special Olympics.

[time given]
One Heart rides for 6 weeks in the spring, 6 weeks in the summer, and 6 weeks in the fall. During the riding sessions, Lamoreux and Koski teach classes 3–6 hours a week and volunteer where needed for an additional 8–12 hours a week. During the summer and winter, they also give 2–6 hours a month helping organize files and taking care of horses.

[organization web site]
www.onehearthorses.org

[employee email]
danielle.m.koski@aphis.usda.gov
jennifer.a.lamoreux@aphis.usda.gov
APHIS is a global organization. Agency employees are regularly in direct contact with stakeholders and agricultural officials in other countries. Additionally, our own workforce has become increasingly diverse as employees from various cultures and heritages have joined the agency. So wouldn’t it be helpful to have a convenient and effective tool to learn about other cultures and the countries we come in contact with? Fortunately, we do. It’s called GlobeSmart®.

GlobeSmart is an online educational tool that can help improve your ability to work effectively with people from other cultures—whether they’re fellow APHIS employees or agency stakeholders. APHIS has made GlobeSmart available to all employees at no cost. To access the site, new users need only register using their work email address and set up an account and password.

The site features “Learning Paths” that provide detailed information about other countries and short activities to help improve your skills in interacting and communicating with others and successfully bridge cultural differences. The site also includes a self-assessment tool that helps you identify your work style preferences and compare them with the preferences often found in other specific countries and cultures.

The Web site offers a short introductory video explaining its features, or you can just jump in and explore the site’s content on your own.

Go Outside
Click here to visit GlobeSmart®.

By John Scott

art and agriculture competition begins

Grab your sketchbook, paintbrush, or other art gear and get started. USDA has launched its second annual Art & Agriculture Competition, and entries are due by March 30, 2013. The competition is open to all active USDA employees, full-time or part-time, and to employees on term or seasonal appointments.

To enter, employees must submit both a completed entry form and photograph of the artwork being entered. Both must be submitted through the Cultural Transformation Web site by the deadline.

All forms of art including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, textiles, and ceramics are accepted. Artwork may be in any 2-D or 3-D fine art media (not including video or craft kits). Each work of art must be submitted under one of 10 themed categories.

For more details and entry requirements, please visit USDA’s Art & Agriculture Competition Web pages.
Animal Care continues bolstering its efforts to help current USDA licensees and registrants better adhere to Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations and to make sure that individuals obtain an AWA license if they need one.

In Ohio, tips from the public and a recent partnership with a dog breeder association are helping program efforts on both fronts.

**[finding unlicensed kennels]**

In January and February, Animal Care’s Eastern Region Office received information from concerned citizens alleging that more than 100 kennels in northeastern Ohio were selling puppies to pet stores without the required USDA license. Supporting the claims, the tipsters provided health certificates and pet store sales records for the kennels in question.

In response, several Animal Care inspectors began the laborious task of researching the situation. In this predominately rural area, this meant driving to each kennel, contacting the individual responsible for the breeding operation, determining if the kennel required an AWA license, and advising the breeder of the requirements for licensing under the AWA.

After learning about Animal Care’s efforts, the Ohio Professional Dog Breeders Association (OPDBA) reached out to lend a hand. OPDBA contacted Carolyn McKinnie, a supervisory animal care specialist, and offered to help get kennels licensed.

Pairing the industry group with Animal Care is different than the traditional model of

Continued on next page
enforcing AWA licensing requirements, and Animal Care hopes this approach will help make inroads in Ohio’s rural communities. The partnership highlights the shared goal of making sure that the animals receive humane care and treatment.

[partnering to license]
Animal Care reviewed its list of kennels, worked through some procedural challenges, and then informed OPDBA of 40 kennels that likely needed Federal licensing. With this information, OPDBA is conducting meetings and coordinating an AWA licensing drive to make sure the kennels comply with the AWA. Animal Care provided OPDBA with information and license application kits to distribute.

As Animal Care receives license applications, its inspectors will conduct standard prelicense inspections to make sure that the kennels meet the Federal standards for humane care. Kennels that pass prelicense inspections will receive AWA licenses; those that do not and that continue to sell puppies will face possible legal scrutiny.

“This partnership will go a long way in reassuring the public that all commercial dog breeders must meet Animal Welfare Act standards so that their animals receive humane care and treatment,” said Elizabeth Goldentyer, director of Animal Care’s Eastern Region. “This will improve conditions for these dogs and will also allow Animal Care to reserve its scarce resources for truly problematic facilities.”

[partnering to educate]
In February, Animal Care employees again partnered with OPDBA by participating in its annual seminar and trade show. In addition to promoting AWA licensing, the Animal Care employees used the opportunity to conduct other AWA outreach with the nearly 300 people who attended.

McKinnie was joined by her Animal Care colleagues Laura Blanton, Shannon Sebera, and Jeremy Steele. They handed out license application kits and other materials, including information about how breeders can create contingency plans to protect their dogs and themselves during emergencies.

They also featured a “data logger” display at their booth. Data loggers enable users to effectively measure temperature and humidity in facilities. In Ohio, weather concerns can be an issue, especially since many kennels in the Amish and Mennonite communities operate without electricity.

Steele gave a presentation on Animal Care’s compliance program, during which he discussed the need for licensees to recognize problems in their kennels and take immediate action. His talk was well-received. Breeders also stopped by the Animal Care booth to ask questions throughout the seminar and trade show.

“All in all it was a great day,” said McKinnie. “We continue to make strides in the breeder communities in Ohio, and I’m excited about the changes in attitudes that are occurring.”

Dr. Tony Forshey, State veterinarian for Ohio, is also pleased with the partnership—especially now as the State works to develop its own commercial dog breeding regulations. He commended Animal Care for collaborating with Ohio veterinary officials, noting in particular that McKinnie sits on the State’s advisory board that is developing Ohio’s regulations.

“This has been a great opportunity for Ohio to work together with USDA,” Forshey said. “As we develop our regulations, we want them to mesh together with USDA’s.”

The goal on both the State and Federal side is for the breeders to give proper care to the dogs. Forshey said he will continue working with Animal Care to ensure that Ohio kennels achieve regulatory compliance once the State regulations take effect.
When you’re fighting an invasive pest, knowing where and how to find it is an important part of the job. The New Mexico Cooperative Feral Hog Task Force, led by Wildlife Services (WS), is using one technique to locate feral swine that takes advantage of the animals’ social nature.

In New Mexico, feral swine populations have expanded from just 2 counties to at least 17 in less than 7 years. Locating these small groups, dispersed over a 60,000 square-mile area, presents a tough challenge. With the January 2013 release of APHIS contingency funds, WS initiated a cooperative, multiagency partnership in New Mexico. The aim of the pilot project is to eliminate feral swine from key areas of the State. An important part of this effort is the expanded use of the “Judas technique” to locate invasive feral swine. The technique—so-named because of its biblical reference—uses a “betrayer” animal to locate others of its kind.

The Judas technique involves placing a radio transmitter on an animal and releasing it. The outfitted animal seeks out others. By tracking and locating the “betrayer,” biologists can then euthanize the feral swine herd—known as a sounder—that the outfitted swine has found.

WS-New Mexico has used the Judas feral swine technique for 3 years in a limited way, with one Judas sow and one to two technicians to locate it. Now, as an expanded effort, the ongoing pilot project can use several Judas sows outfitted with ear tag transmitters and has additional wildlife specialists capable of tracking them. Because boars remain solitary in general, most Judas swine are the more sociable sows, which will travel up to 8 kilometers to unite with a new sounder (swine grouping).

A combination of Judas swine, ground staff, and trail cameras proved effective during a late March aerial operation in New Mexico using a helicopter.

“In a few days of flying, we removed 56 feral swine—around 32 percent were located with the help of two Judas sows,” said WS District Supervisor Brian Archuleta.

During the effort, WS employees found that some swine would hunker down unobserved in dense vegetation. Using an improved antenna-mount on the helicopter, the team could pinpoint the Judas swines’ location; then, hovering at 20–40 feet, the helicopter’s downwash flushed the swine out.

Other projects and studies show that, as a wildlife management method, the Judas technique can substantially increase the number of invasive animals removed, decrease the cost of control efforts, and increase the types

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APHIS’ Veterinary Services (VS) helped score a major victory for American cattle producers at a recent meeting of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

More than 9 years after the first cow with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was found in the United States, the OIE voted during its general session meeting to upgrade the U.S. risk status from “controlled” to “negligible.” The May 29 announcement follows the earlier recommendation made by an OIE scientific commission to upgrade the U.S. status.

With the change, APHIS anticipates that we can overcome some of the longstanding trade barriers imposed by certain countries.

“It’s taken a lot of persistence and dedication by our technical staff to reach this point,” said VS Deputy Administrator John Clifford.

The upgraded status recognizes that there is less threat of the disease spreading among the domestic cattle herd due to USDA’s effective surveillance and control methods.

Following the announcement, Secretary Vilsack released a statement saying:

“This is a significant achievement that has been many years in the making for the United States, American beef producers and businesses, and Federal and State partners who work together to maintain a system of interlocking safeguards against BSE that protect our public and animal health. This decision demonstrates OIE’s belief that both our surveillance for, and safeguards against, BSE are strong.”

The OIE is the international body recognized by the World Trade Organization for recommending science-based standards for the safe trade in animals and animal products. OIE member nations strive to bring their own standards in line with the organization’s science-based international standards in order to control the spread of disease and keep trade markets open. OIE risk status recognition carries a great deal of weight with the international community in negotiating trade requirements and opening new markets.

Negligible risk is the lowest risk level under the OIE Code. Countries with this risk status have conducted extensive surveillance and testing in domestic cattle and have instituted all of the necessary mitigation measures to reduce the risk for BSE exposure and spread.

WS-New Mexico is evaluating the use of radio telemetry transmitters, which cost approximately $200 each. This technology could potentially save thousands of dollars in States like New Mexico where feral swine densities are low and scattered over a large geographic area.

The Judas technique has brought success in other wildlife work as well. WS evaluated this method for invasive nutria control in the Delmarva (see the Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project Web site). Additionally, the technique helped control invasive lake trout in Yellowstone National Park, and one researcher has suggested its use to help eradicate Asian carp.
2012 trade accomplishments recap

The past few years have been the best for farm exports in our Nation’s history. During fiscal years (FY) 2009 through 2012, U.S. producers generated more than $478 billion in agricultural exports. In 2012 alone, they reached $135.8 billion—the second highest total on record.

These export figures mark an historic economic achievement for our Nation’s farmers, ranchers, and agribusiness. And, for that same reason, they are notable for APHIS as well. They firmly remind us of the word “service” in our agency’s name and of our valuable role in the vitality of U.S. agriculture. Working with producers and many other partners in government and industry, APHIS consistently contributes to the success of U.S. producers and ranchers.

In FY 2012, in cooperation with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service, APHIS successfully negotiated and resolved 150 animal and plant health issues involving U.S. agricultural exports with a total estimated market value of $2 billion.

highlight

- Establishing a pilot program that led to the resumption of log exports from Virginia and South Carolina to China. This helped preserve total U.S. log exports to China, which were valued at $807.4 million in calendar year (CY) 2012.

- Concluding negotiations that allow exports to Mexico of U.S. eggs intended for processing ($45 million/year) and putting poultry exports to Kuwait and Turkey ($15 million/year) back on track after concerns about avian influenza.

During 2012, live-animal exports continued to increase. As one of many examples, exports of live swine, poultry, and horses to China totaled $60 million in CY 2012—nearly a 40-percent jump over CY 2011.

Buyers from Turkey, Russia, Canada, Mexico, Kazakhstan, and countries in South America and the Middle East also increased their imports of live cattle last year—reaching nearly 120,000 cattle in FY 2012—while new markets emerged. Turkish and Russian purchases alone during FY 2012 were valued at roughly $300 million.

2013 employee viewpoint survey

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is conducting the new 2013 Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) of Federal employees. The survey, which runs into early June, has been sent to randomly selected Federal employees. An estimated 26,000 USDA employees have been asked to participate.

If selected, you are encouraged to take part; EVS participation is confidential and completely voluntary. Survey results provide valuable information and insight for Federal agencies. OPM will provide survey results to APHIS in November 2013.

Continued on next page
2012 trade accomplishments

[keeping shipments moving]
In FY 2012, APHIS overseas personnel successfully secured the release of 324 detained shipments of U.S. agricultural products, ranging from cherries to cotton, worth more than $41 million.

Additionally, through our export certification programs, we helped prevent such issues from arising by ensuring U.S. agricultural products meet the health requirements of specific overseas markets before they arrive.

In FY 2012, we issued more than 41,500 export certificates for live animals and just over 167,000 for animal-related products.

Our automated Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking system produced a record 580,000 certificates for plant-based exports.

[tuning our systems for speed]
Under the agency’s business improvement initiatives, we shortened the average amount of time needed to develop import-related regulations by 77 days last year. We also dramatically decreased the time needed to complete risk assessments and regulatory changes for imports of plants and plant products, from an average of more than 5 years per case to an average of 597 days. That’s a reduction of nearly 71 percent.

In a related development for imports of animals and animal products, a final rule we published last year brings lists of regions recognized as free of or affected by specific diseases straight to our Web site, where they can be amended through a faster notice-based process instead of extended rulemaking.

Continued from page 5

2013 trade progress

Here are some highlights so far for 2013.

• In February, Japan agreed to permit the import of U.S. beef and beef products derived from cattle less than 30 months of age. The result: an industry-estimated $500 million in exports of U.S. beef to Japan in CY 2013.

• In February, APHIS officials reached agreement with Iraqi officials on export certification requirements for U.S. dairy cattle shipments. The annual market value is projected to be more than $60 million.

• In late February, the World Organization for Animal Health recommended that the United States’ risk classification for bovine spongiform encephalopathy be upgraded to negligible risk. If approved, the status upgrade will greatly support U.S. efforts to increase exports of beef and beef products.

• In April, APHIS announced the opening of export markets to Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia for day-old chicks and hatching eggs, increasing U.S. exports by an estimated $25 million a year.

• In April, APHIS announced the arrival of the first shipment of U.S. Anjou pears to China. U.S. pears are now available for the first time to Chinese consumers. USDA expects China to become one of the top five export destinations for U.S.-grown pears within the next two seasons.
In the first quarter of calendar year 2013, APHIS saw 33 employees retire from among its ranks. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best as they enter their post-APHIS years.

Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.

To help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency, we plan to include similar lists of new retirees in each newsletter.
By Rhonda Santos

After more than a decade, the State of New Jersey is free of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). At a ceremony held on March 14, Federal and State agriculture officials announced that the State’s long-running battle against the invasive insect is over. The beetle was first discovered in Jersey City in October 2002. State and Federal officials then found trees infested with the beetle in Carteret, Woodbridge, Linden, and Rahway.

Eradication efforts involved removing 21,981 trees from the regulated areas within Union, Middlesex, and Hudson Counties. The trees removed from Middlesex and Union Counties alone produced 15,000 tons of wood chips that were converted to 18.6 million Kilowatt-hours of electricity through a partnership with Covanta Energy Company. This was enough electricity to supply 10,300 households for 3 months. Nearly a third of the trees lost have since been replanted. Foresters replanted with a variety of non-host species, with each tree chosen specifically to meet the site requirements.

New Jersey is the second State to declare eradication from the beetle. ALB was successfully eradicated from Illinois in 2008 and from the town of Islip on Long Island, NY, in 2011. An area is declared free of ALB after all the infested trees are eliminated and surveys are negative for active signs of beetle activity or its presence.

“It took a real commitment by our Federal, State, and local partners to reach eradication in New Jersey,” said Plant Protection and Quarantine’s ALB Project Manager for New Jersey, Elisandra Sanchez.

“We should all be proud of this—I know I’m glad for PPQ and proud of all the people that have worked here as a team,” said Sanchez.

On April 5, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced the successful eradication of ALB from Canada. Eradication was recently announced for the New York City boroughs of Manhattan and Staten Island on May 14.

Continued on next page

(ALB early detection and what you can do)

Early detection is essential, and the best line of defense is you. Just as the program encourages the public to inspect their trees, APHIS employees are encouraged to do the same. The sooner an infestation is reported, the sooner the program can launch efforts to quickly contain and isolate an area from further destruction. Since ALB can attack trees in any State, millions of acres of our Nation’s hardwoods—including national forests, State parks, and neighborhood trees—are at risk.

What can you do? Take 10 minutes to check trees in your own yard and around your neighborhood. Look for the top two most concerning signs—round “exit” holes on tree trunks and branches, and the beetle itself. You can learn more at www.asianlonghornedbeetle.com.●
When Hurricane Sandy came ashore, it took down trees in three States with established Asian longhorned beetle (ALB)-regulated areas—New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts. In its wake, the hurricane left an overwhelming amount of debris material, literally overnight. With an estimated 20,000 trees downed in parks and natural areas alone, New York was hardest hit in terms of tree loss.

The hurricane created more than just a tangled mess; it presented the Cooperative New York ALB Eradication Program with a significant challenge: making sure that tree debris was handled according to State and Federal regulations to prevent the beetle’s spread.

In every ALB-affected State, regulated material—which includes potential host items like tree debris—may not be removed from quarantined areas unless accompanied by a permit authorizing that movement.

Thankfully, as part of its hurricane response, New York City began collecting all tree debris at various locations around the city. The goals were to steer its movement, to chip it, and to reuse the chipped material as mulch, landfill cover, or biofuel.

APHIS’ ALB program staff in New York worked approximately 360 staff hours on the initial regulatory response for the cleanup efforts. Through April 30, the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program issued 1,299 limited permits to move about 133,600 cubic yards of regulated material from New York City sites to approved processing facilities outside ALB-regulated areas.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of its personnel, the cooperative program eliminated the risk of the beetle’s spread to other areas. The program continues working in partnership with State and local partners on the remaining hurricane debris.

By Rhonda Santos

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**Battle of the Beetle**

With more areas winning the fight against the beetle, the ALB eradication program remains hopeful that complete eradication is possible.

In New Jersey, APHIS worked cooperatively with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, as well as each affected municipality and the citizens. ALB eradication programs continue to operate in the States of New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio.

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Plant Protection and Quarantine’s Joe Gittleman inspects chip size with contractor.
aphis hosts stakeholder meeting

By Hallie Zimmers

On April 11, APHIS hosted a packed stakeholder meeting in Washington, D.C. About 120 participants turned out to listen to Acting Administrator Kevin Shea talk about the agency’s budget; specifically, stakeholders were interested in hearing what recent funding cuts mean for APHIS’ programs and services and how we’re planning for the future. To view video from the meeting, click HERE.

In addition to the stakeholders who attended the meeting in person, another 278 participants from across the country joined the meeting via live Web cast. And agency employees tuned in to the Web cast using viewing rooms set up in Riverdale, Raleigh, Fort Collins, Minneapolis, and Ames.

To kick off the meeting, Shea spoke about Federal budget cuts, pointing out that the agency will need to make some tough decisions and prioritize program activities. Shea told stakeholders that, instead of making those decisions in a vacuum, APHIS leadership wants stakeholder insights and perspectives.

He also announced the agency’s intent to draft a new strategic plan, and he made it clear that stakeholder feedback was the first step in the process.

During his remarks, Shea later spoke about the current antiregulatory climate, acknowledging that traditional regulatory approaches can be inflexible and untimely. He noted that APHIS is looking at ways to be more flexible, responsive, and creative. As an example, he referred to Veterinary Services’ decision to stop rigidly focusing on State disease status while carrying out its brucellosis and tuberculosis programs.

Additionally, Shea talked about the need for more public-private partnerships, and he pointed to the European grapevine moth eradication program as a successful example.

Following his remarks, Shea took questions for more than an hour. Stakeholders commented on and asked about a variety of topics, including: pest and disease surveillance, exports and trade facilitation, animal welfare, invasive species, and Wildlife Services’ aquaculture and aviation programs.

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in memoriam

Since shortly before the New Year, our agency has lost several members of the APHIS family. We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

animal care
Earnest Johnson Houston, TX

marketing and regulatory programs business services
John Capehart Riverdale, MD

plant protection and quarantine
Sherry Cornwell North Charleston, SC
Kerry Bryan Albuquerque, NM
Willis Yamaguchi Kahului, HI

veterinary services
Emmanuel Mdurvwa Riverdale, MD
Maria Stephenson Newburgh, NY
John Owens Richmond, VA

wildlife services
Clint Caskey Blair, OK
Melvin Fortner Hazleton, ND
Travis Tumbleson State College, PA
Chief Financial Officer
for Marketing and
Regulatory Programs,
MRPBS

[what is your background?]
I was born in Washington, D.C., but our family moved quite a bit when I was young. My father was a Lutheran minister for a while, which included a job with Radio Voice of America. Our family lived in Africa for about a year when I was 4, while Dad scouted out locations for radio towers in Ethiopia.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
A long time! I began working for APHIS in 1978. I was a cooperative education student for 2 years, working a semester then returning to school for a semester. I enjoyed working for APHIS and stayed on after I graduated from the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
There have been many. I would say getting the opportunity to help establish the APHIS user fee programs back in the early 1990s. It was fairly early in my career, and I had the opportunity to work with the Administrator at that time, Bob Melland. I worked closely with Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) also and attended meetings with Congressional staffers and higher levels of management at the former U.S. Customs Service as APHIS worked to implement the new agricultural quarantine inspection user fees.

[priorities in the coming months?]
About a year and a half ago, APHIS switched over to using the new accounting system (the Financial Management Modernization Initiative, or FMMI) that the Department had purchased to replace the aging Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS). It has been a challenging transition for our APHIS financial and budget folks. My priority for the rest of the year is to continue to find ways to provide additional training and information to our users to help them be able to use FMMI more easily.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
No one accomplishment comes to mind. I've very much enjoyed making a career of working in APHIS. The mission is something we can all be proud of, and our employees are dedicated and are a great group of people to work with.

[hobbies?]
I enjoy anything to do with gardening… planting, pruning, weeding, and building stone walls and patios. I also enjoy practicing yoga and hiking.

[favorite movie?]
It's hard for me not to get hooked into watching Star Wars if I'm flipping channels and see it playing.

[last book read?]
I have a long commute, so I listen to books on CDs (I keep saying “books on tape,” so I date myself!). Last book was The Bucolic Plague about the trials and tribulations of two New York City dwellers who buy an old, rundown mansion in upstate New York and become goat farmers.

[favorite meal?]
It is hard to pick just one. Slow-cooked beef shortribs served over mashed potatoes or polenta with a hearty red wine is always good!

[guilty pleasure?]
Watching several back-to-back episodes of What Not To Wear.
Veterinary Services’ (VS) Colorado area office received a request last summer to inspect an export quarantine facility in northeastern Colorado for the quarantine and testing of a swine shipment bound for China. Originally, the swine were scheduled to leave from O’Hare International Airport in Chicago; however, the broker later requested approval of a temporary export inspection facility and that Denver International Airport (DIA) be approved as a temporary port of embarkation. The broker cited concerns about undue stress on the animals if they were shipped from Colorado to Illinois and then to China.

To help, VS jumped right in and started working with others on the pieces that needed to come together. The Colorado office inspected and approved the proposed temporary export inspection facility. Additionally, VS collaborated with the broker, freight forwarder, airline, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and DIA Port Authority to approve DIA as a temporary port of embarkation.

**[clean bill of health]**
To be eligible for export to China, swine must undergo a barrage of tests for 7 different pathogens prior to a 30-day isolation period. Swine are then retested for 8 separate pathogens at a minimum of 15 days into the isolation period.

VS’ Colorado office worked closely with the accredited veterinarian and facility managers to schedule testing and inspection of the animals and to coordinate the needed international health certificate.

**[barcodes and crosschecks]**
The swine were identified with barcode tags that were preloaded into Mobile Information Management software (MIMs) and scanned upon final inspection; the scan crosschecked the inspected swine against the test results list and the health certificate.

The shipment was the accredited veterinarian’s first introduction to using MIMs technology. VS personnel in Colorado have since begun working with the veterinarian to use this same technology to increase the efficiency of tuberculosis testing.

**[flying pigs]**
In late November, VS personnel in Colorado inspected the swine at the export inspection facility and were there for the aircraft inspection, the unloading of swine from the trucks, and their loading onto the aircraft at DIA.

A total of 1,051 gilts and boars departed DIA in the shipment. They had an uneventful trip despite mechanical problems with the aircraft’s ventilation unit and a delay during a layover in Anchorage, AK. VS personnel in Anchorage stepped in to monitor the animals and the aircraft’s temperature during refueling and a change of flight crew. Even with freezing temperatures, the veterinary medical officer and a representative of the shipping firm had to open and close the aircraft doors to maintain a suitable temperature for the animals.

In China, the exported U.S. swine will be used to multiply a great-grandparent herd of about 1,200 animals. After approximately 4 years of production, this herd will produce around 3 million commercial swine. The Chinese importer valued the shipment at $1.6 million.

“Overall, the entire process went smoothly. It was an exemplary collaborative effort,” said VS Western Region Director Mark Davidson.

The shipment was the first successful large animal export out of DIA for VS’ Colorado office. The support that the Colorado office received from area offices in Alaska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Ohio, and Illinois was vital to making the effort a success. ●
aphis team still driving on the transformation highway

By Alisa Robinson

Early in his administration, Secretary Vilsack challenged USDA to transform into a high-performing, customer-focused organization. APHIS accepted the challenge wholeheartedly; Agency Administrator Gregory Parham wrote an open letter to stakeholders, acknowledging customer complaints about slow approval processes for licenses and permits. He promised that the agency would make changes to many of its long-standing processes.

Following this promise, APHIS formed the Certification, Accreditation, Registration, Permitting, and Other Licensing (CARPOL) team to analyze and document the agency’s CARPOL-related processes and recommend solutions that not only meet customers’ needs, but also improve the overall delivery of APHIS products and services.

The CARPOL team focused initially on the permitting business processes in several agency units: Biotechnology Regulatory Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, and Veterinary Services. The team worked closely with those programs to carry out a thorough business process assessment of their current procedures for issuing permits.

The CARPOL team examined 20 APHIS systems and identified more than 400 processing steps as potential candidates for streamlining. Key areas for improvement included: standardizing CARPOL data and business rules, combining individual program functions into broader APHIS functions, and increasing stakeholder communication and involvement.

The CARPOL team is now turning its attention to APHIS certification and accreditation activities. A newly formed CARPOL Certifications and Accreditations Working Group has begun assessing business processes associated with certifications and accreditations. The assessment includes looking at emerging technology to better support agency employees. The group’s efforts will ultimately ensure the success of the larger CARPOL goal: helping APHIS make good on the Administrator’s promise to stakeholders.

agency calendar

june

The FY 2013 APHIS Training and Development Calendar provides updated info for agency training courses; it includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

Laboratory Ergonomics Webinar; June 12 at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. ET. Register via Aglearn.

july

The management team for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services will make a site visit to APHIS’ Minneapolis, MN, facility; July 16–18.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

august

National Plant Board Annual Meeting; August 4–8; Louisville, KY.
APHIS’ JoAnn Cruse, Stephanie Dinh, Todd Felix, Thomas Hall, and Robi Maple were honored last fall for their extraordinary volunteer efforts outside of the workplace. Each was a recipient of the President’s Volunteer Service Award. We thought it only fitting that they also be featured in the newsletter’s Volunteer Spotlight.

The President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation issues the awards to recognize the best in American spirit, and to encourage all Americans to improve their communities through volunteer service and civic participation.

Awards are given to individuals, families, and groups that have demonstrated an outstanding level of service as measured by their total number of hours volunteered during a 12-month period.

In recognition of their efforts, we are highlighting Dinh, Hall, and Maple in this issue; Cruse and Felix will be featured in the next.

**Stephanie Dinh**; Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer; San Diego, CA

**Thomas Hall**; Staff Wildlife Biologist; Wildlife Services; Fort Collins, CO

**Robi Maple**

**[volunteer organization]**
The USS Midway Museum

**[organization mission]**
The USS Midway Museum is a living tribute to the legacy of those who serve America in uniform. The museum serves as an historical and educational venue for visitors of all ages, including K–12 students who are inspired by Midway University’s acclaimed science, technology, engineering, and math education programs.

**[volunteer activities]**
Since 2010, Dinh has been a docent and an educator in the Youth Live It & Learn It education program. She also volunteers as a safety officer, providing safety monitoring while guests, staff, and other volunteers are onsite. Additionally, as an American Red Cross-certified health and safety instructor, Dinh trains and certifies other museum safety team volunteers in first aid.

**[time given]**
Dinh averages 25 hours a month and has accumulated over 1,000 hours as a volunteer.

**[organization web site]**
www.midway.org

**[employee email]**
stephanie.dinh@aphis.usda.gov

**[employee name and program]**
Thomas Hall; Staff Wildlife Biologist; Wildlife Services; Fort Collins, CO

**[volunteer organization]**
Hall volunteers with several organizations: U.S. Geological Survey, Breeding Bird Survey (BBS); Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC); Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA); and the Poudre School District Mountain Schools.

**[organization mission]**
The BBS is a long-term, large-scale, international avian monitoring program initiated in 1966 to track the status and trends of North
question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “Are you making a New Year’s resolution for 2013?”

Of those who responded, here’s the percentage breakdown of their answers.

85% I’m not making a New Year’s resolution
15% Yes, I’m making a New Year’s resolution.
0% I’m making a New Year’s resolution related to work.

A few employees offered comments about their resolutions. One wrote about setting a goal of “Getting into shape and taking better care of myself.”

Another offered a frank opinion: “New Year’s resolutions are proven to fail. They are often unrealistic and difficult to maintain. I find it better to have ‘life goals’ that can be pursued, tweaked, and celebrated daily.”

Our thanks to everyone who responded to the last issue’s question

[volunteer spotlight]

stephanie dinh, thomas hall, and robi maple

American bird populations. The BBS involves experienced birders that can identify birds by sight and song.

The Audubon Society sponsors over 2,000 CBCs worldwide that take place annually from December 14 to January 5 with tens of thousands of volunteers. Started in 1900, CBC is now the longest running citizen science survey in the world; its data provides critical information on wintering bird population trends.

Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II is a project to collect data on the distribution, abundance, habitat use, and breeding phenology of avifauna breeding in Colorado. Partners include many agencies and organizations such as USDA’s Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

Poudre School District Mountain Schools exist to support and inspire every child to think, learn, and care, and to graduate prepared to be successful in a changing world.

Hall annually averages about 50 hours for the BBS; 60 hours for the CBCs; 25 hours for the BBAs (completed 2007-2012), and 25 hours for Poudre School District.

Hall assists the Mountain Schools in the Poudre River Ecology Program and with wildlife classroom activities. He also participates in BBA efforts by recording all breeding bird activity at selected sites.

[time given]

Hall conducts three BBS routes each year. These are 25-mile routes with 50 stops where every bird seen or heard in 3 minutes is recorded; it takes about 6 hours to complete.

Hall also conducts two to three CBCs every year and is the leader for the Fort Collins CBC. CBCs are 15-mile diameter circles where volunteers count birds in a 177-square-mile area. The 2012 Fort Collins CBC had 71 volunteers and counted about 40,000 birds of 96 species. For Hall, the highlight was calling an Eastern Screech-Owl in to about 3 feet.

Hall assists the Mountain Schools in the Poudre River Ecology Program and with wildlife classroom activities. He also participates in BBA efforts by recording all breeding bird activity at selected sites.

[organization web site]

www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs
http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count
pack activities—such as food drives, fundraising, pack meetings, the Pinewood Derby, and camping trips—for around 100 Cub Scouts.

Pack 275 has collected clothing each year for the Rock Hill Children's Attention Home, which provides emergency shelter and nurturing services to abused, abandoned, and neglected children in South Carolina.

Each year, Maple's Cub Scout pack also participates in Scouting for Food, collecting donations for a local food pantry that serves needy families. In 2012, the pack collected more than 7,500 pounds of food.

Maple has volunteered more than 400 hours since becoming a leader with the Cub Scouts.

Volunteer Spotlight
Stephanie Dinh, Thomas Hall, and Robi Maple

Continued from page 15

www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org
www.palmettocouncil.org

[Employee Email] thomas.c.hall@aphis.usda.gov

[Employee Name and Program] Robi Maple; Labor Relations Specialist; Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services; Fort Mill, SC


[Organization Mission] The Boy Scouts of America mission is to serve others by helping to instill values in young people and prepare participating youth to make ethical choices during their lifetime while achieving their full potential.

[Volunteer Activities] Maple volunteers as a den leader and cubmaster. He organizes and runs weekly meetings for his Cub Scout den and organizes
At first glance, they look a little like party tents. But inside entomologist Dan Flores’ insectary cages, there’s no picnic going on. Instead, the tents are abuzz with thousands of tiny wasps. The wasps, Tamarixia radiata, are being raised as biocontrol agents to fight the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) in Texas’ Rio Grande Valley. Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Dan Flores and others at the agency’s Mission Lab facility are targeting ACP because they threaten U.S. citrus. ACP spread a damaging disease called Huanglongbing or citrus greening disease.

Since 2007, Flores has devoted a lot of attention to the beneficial wasps, studying their impact on ACP and devising ways to raise more of them to help reduce ACP populations. Flores imported the first stock of wasps in 2009 from Pakistan and began releasing wasps in 2011.

Thanks to a unique collaboration with volunteer Master Gardeners, Flores and his team have recently seen a real surge in their wasp-rearing efforts.
raising wasps to battle ACP

ACP naturally gather around the new shoots of citrus plants. Early on, Flores experimented with using greenhouse plants to rear the wasps, but the wasp yield wasn’t high enough. The potted citrus didn’t provide enough new shoots for the ACP and wasps to thrive in larger numbers.

So he began exploring field-rearing methods and developed an approach that uses insectary cages to boost the number of wasps produced.

Here’s how it works: In residential neighborhoods, Flores and his team of technicians trim a citrus tree, which triggers new growth; lemon and lime trees produce the most new shoots when trimmed. ACP in the area are naturally drawn to the new shoots to lay their eggs. As the immature ACP develop, technicians cover the tree with an insectary cage and introduce about 1,000 wasps to reproduce and feed on the ACP. Within 5 to 6 weeks, the caged wasps produce on average about 11,000 wasps per tree. Technicians remove the tent, and the beneficial wasps disperse and seek more ACP.

When the cages go up, it’s like putting up a marketing billboard.”

–Dan Flores

The RV parks are home to many “Winter Texans” who have permanent homes elsewhere but come to soak up the south Texas sun during the winter months. Among them are a fair number of Master Gardeners, who volunteer through extension offices to provide plant advice to members of the public. In addition, many of the RV parks were formerly citrus groves and still have citrus trees.

Last February, Flores and his team installed their first insectary cage using volunteers. The initial plan was to install eight in the spring and eight more this fall. But already, local interest has grown so much that they’ve installed 18 cages.

Flores expects that interest will continue to grow and even more cages will be installed to produce the wasps. Plans are already underway to introduce cages in neighboring counties.

Recent data seem to indicate that the rising number of released wasps is having a positive effect. The combined survey data for FY 2012 and FY 2013 show that an estimated 39 percent of the region’s ACP were parasitized by the beneficial wasps. Estimated figures representing just the last 8 to 9 months show an even higher rate of 66 percent.

“I just saw the numbers last week. It’s very, very exciting. I’m speechless,” Flores said.

Continued from page 1

(Above) PPQ’s Andrew Parker covers an insectary cage; (opposite), Rupert Santos examines a tented tree.
farewell for gregory parham

On August 16, APHIS hosted a small gathering to honor and say farewell to former Administrator Dr. Gregory Parham. In June, Dr. Parham was officially sworn in as USDA’s Assistant Secretary of Administration.

While Administrator, his leadership contributed greatly to APHIS accomplishments and to steadying the agency during a time in which many other Federal agencies struggled. Widely respected throughout APHIS and USDA, Dr. Parham remains much admired for his insightful management, keen intelligence, and his open and friendly manner.

‘I have known some people who were highly intelligent and some others who demonstrated extraordinary character. And I have known others who acted with tremendous compassion and decency. But I have never known anyone who had all of these qualities like Greg does. It was an honor and a privilege to serve as Greg’s associate and APHIS was lucky to have his leadership,’ said Shea.

It’s easy to find others, too, who share respect for Dr. Parham and the distinctive talent and bright outlook he brought to the Administrator’s Office.

‘Greg has an amazing ability to make his job seem easy while understanding the intricacies and challenges the rest of us face in our jobs. I feel very lucky to have worked for him and I know that each of us benefited from his leadership at APHIS,’ said Marilyn Holland, deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services.

‘Greg is a true leader,’ said John Clifford, deputy administrator for Veterinary Services. ‘He has high standards and is a very thoughtful and caring leader. He encourages risk-taking and provides the support that employees need to thrive.’

During the recent gathering, APHIS unveiled a portrait photograph of Dr. Parham. In his honor, the image is now displayed—along with the portraits of other previous agency Administrators—in APHIS’ Washington, D.C. conference room and outside of the Riverdale, MD, training suite.

By John Scott

(Above) Dr. Gregory Parham shakes hands with Administrator Kevin Shea at the portrait’s unveiling. (Opposite) Parham smiles as his image joins the ranks of other previous APHIS Administrators.
Following a recent Supreme Court decision, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has directed all Federal agencies to extend benefits to Federal employees and annuitants who have a legally married same-sex spouse. Please be aware that the enrollment deadline for such currently married employees is fast approaching.

With the decision, all legally married same-sex spouses are now considered eligible family members under a self-and-family-enrollment. The children of same-sex marriages will be treated just as those of opposite-sex marriages and will be eligible family members according to the same eligibility guidelines.

Same-sex marriages are currently recognized in 13 States and the District of Columbia. Benefits coverage is available to a legally married same-sex spouse or annuitant, regardless of the employee or annuitant’s current State of residency.

[deadline information]
USDA’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees who are already legally married have until August 26, 2013 (i.e., 60 days from June 26th date of the ruling) to make immediate changes to their Federal Employee Health Benefits enrollment. For employees more recently married—specifically, those married following the June 26th decision—the 60-day enrollment window begins on the date that the employee legally married.

In memoriam
Our agency lost several members of the APHIS family from April through June of this year. We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

Plant Protection and Quarantine
Kerry Bryan Albuquerque, NM

Veterinary Services
Susan Vogt Fort Collins, CO

Wildlife Services
Melvin Fortner Hazleton, ND
Travis Tumbleson State College, PA

For more details, including information about enrollment processes and effective dates of coverage, please view the following benefits Q&A guidance document.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Benefits Specialist for your program.
Every 5 years or so, Congress writes new agriculture policy known as the “Farm Bill.” Usually, people outside of agriculture don’t hear about the Farm Bill, but this year was different. After the U.S. Senate passed its Farm Bill in June, the House of Representatives voted down a bipartisan committee version.

[farm bill limbo]
The House was able to regroup and pass its Farm Bill in July, but the prospects for a Farm Bill in 2013 remain in limbo. The Senate bill differs from the House-passed bill, which means a select group of Senators and Representatives will need to work out the differences in a conference committee.

The agreed-upon bill must then pass the full House and Senate and be signed by the President to become effective. However, leaders in the House have not been willing to begin that process.

[what does this mean for APHIS?]
Unlike many other USDA agencies that need Congress to pass a Farm Bill so they can continue to carry out their programs, APHIS generally operates under permanent laws that don’t need to be reauthorized. However, there are a number of provisions in the not-yet-passed 2013 Farm Bills that are of interest to the agency. These involve: a provision for permanent authority to annually release funding for Section 10201 plant pest and disease projects and to increase funding to that program; a requirement that APHIS develop an alternative certification program for trichinae; codification of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network; and a provision making it illegal to attend an animal fighting event.

To view the entire list of Farm Bill provisions that may impact APHIS, visit the Congressional News page on the APHIS Portal.

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personal benefits statements go paperless

Beginning this year, your annual Personal Benefits Statement will no longer be mailed to your home. Instead, statements are now available online only.

Every year, the National Finance Center generates a Personal Benefits Statement to provide an overview of all of your Federal benefits. Previously, statements were mailed in April; now, they are available electronically through your Employee Personal Page (EPP).

To view this year’s statement, log in and visit your MyEPP page. Your MyEPP page is also available through the APHIS Portal with no additional login needed.

Please take the time to review your annual statement. It has helpful information about:

- Annual compensation
- Leave balances
- Health and life insurance
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Retirement system
- Social Security/Medicare deductions
- Dental and vision insurance
- Long-term care insurance
- Flexible spending account

Benefits amounts, such as retirement and TSP annuities and length of service dates are estimates. If you are considering retirement, please contact your Benefits Specialist.
wildlife services

using mice to tackle the brown tree snake

By Scott Moore

Look, up in the sky—it’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s a…parachuting mouse?

Over the next 16 months, up to 40,000 dead mice baited with acetaminophen will be raining down on an area of Guam around Andersen Air Force Base. It’s all part of a Wildlife Services (WS) effort to combat invasive brown tree snakes (BTS) and prevent their spread to other areas of the Pacific Rim, including Hawaii.

An estimated 1–2 million BTS live on the western Pacific island and cause significant damage. BTS cause power outages that annually result in at least $1 million in damages and lost economic productivity. Additionally, the snakes have wiped out nine native bird species, five lizard species, and two bat species on the U.S. territory—and led to other unwelcome ecologic changes on Guam. If the snakes reach Hawaii, the impact could be $2 billion per year, in addition to the damage they would inflict on the State’s native fauna and flora.

[harmful stowaways]
BTS were accidentally introduced to Guam after World War II, probably as stowaways on U.S. military cargo ships. With no natural predators, BTS have become abundant, with an estimated 20 or more per acre of jungle, among the highest snake densities ever recorded. “There really is no other place in the world with a snake problem like Guam’s,” said Daniel Vice, WS assistant State director in Hawaii, Guam, and the Pacific Islands.

WS has been conducting operations to reduce damage caused by BTS since 1993. By using dozens of personnel, canine-detector teams, snake traps, and other measures, USDA, the U.S. Departments of Defense and the Interior, and other State and local partners have removed more than 150,000 BTS, preventing the snakes’ potential spread aboard aircraft or cargo departing from Guam. As a result, no live BTS have been detected at Hawaiian ports-of-entry in nearly 20 years.

[the achilles heel]

Meanwhile, the WS National Wildlife Research Center has found the snakes’ Achilles heel: acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol™. In 2010, WS conducted a pilot project involving aerial distribution of the toxicant in the upper forest canopy where the snakes spend much of their time.

To get the snakes to take their medicine, WS puts an 80-milligram tablet inside each mouse carcass and then hand-drops the mice from a helicopter. Each mouse is fitted with a biodegradable streamer designed to snag onto branches in the dense tree canopy surrounding Andersen Air Force Base, a major cargo movement site on the northeast corner of the island.

Unlike most snakes, BTS will readily eat a dead mouse. A BTS that ingests a single acetaminophen tablet will die within about 24 hours in a humane manner similar to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Continued on next page
brown tree snake

Continued from page 6

[snake mail]

Though the BTS project comes in response to a specific request by cooperators and addresses a significant problem, the WS plan drew some negative attention.

An email campaign filled the inboxes of the APHIS Administrator's office and WS officials with tens of thousands of messages. The campaign was a reminder that APHIS programs often operate in challenging environments, where agency stakeholders bring many different perspectives to our work.

“I thought if there was anything that wouldn’t have a constituency, it would be snakes,” Administrator Kevin Shea said at an employee Town Hall meeting in April.

In the emails, people expressed concerns for the snakes and about the potential impact on other species that might ingest the acetaminophen. However, studies have shown that the plan will have minimal impact on other animals—in large part because the snakes have already wiped out most of the other species that might be at risk.

To learn more about BTS, check out the program’s BTS Web pages and “Brown Tree Snake, An Invasive Reptile” factsheet.

feds feed families 2013: time is running out

There’s still time to help feed local families this summer by participating in the 2013 Feds Feed Families campaign!

The campaign runs through August 28, and Federal employees at all locations are invited to take part. The goal is for each employee to “strive for 25” and donate 25 pounds of food or more.

To participate, place your donations in designated collection boxes at your worksite. In Riverdale, boxes are located in the lobby and in program areas throughout the building. In the field, check with your local program. You can also make donations directly to local food banks of your choice.

For a list of program contacts and other campaign information, visit the APHIS Feds Feed Families SharePoint site For information on items needed most, read this guide.

Since its start in 2009, the Feds Feed Families campaign has helped collect over 15 million pounds of food and non-perishable items. Last summer, Feds Feed Families collected more than 7.2 million pounds of food, with USDA collecting the largest number of donations. This year, we’re counting on you to help collect even more!
Did you know that raising chickens in U.S. urban environments is gaining in popularity?

To better understand this growing phenomenon, Veterinary Services’ (VS) National Animal Health Monitoring System conducted a study and issued its report *Urban Chicken Ownership in Four U.S. Cities*. Published last April, the report focuses on four U.S. metro areas: Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City.

Because urban chicken flocks are not part of the commercial poultry industry, little information is available about them. By improving our understanding of urban flocks, we can be better prepared for damaging disease outbreaks, such as avian influenza or exotic Newcastle disease.

Here are a few of the study’s highlights:

* Overall, 0.8 percent of all households owned chickens. Chickens were owned in 4.3 percent of single-family homes on 1 acre or more. For all other housing types, the percentage with chickens ranged from 0.1 percent in New York City to 1.3 percent in Miami.

* While less than 1 percent of households had chickens, nearly 4 percent of households without chickens planned to have chickens within the next 5 years, illustrating the growing acceptance of urban farming.

* Overall, about 4 out of 10 respondents were in favor of allowing chickens in their communities and would not mind if their neighbors owned chickens (44.4 and 39.3 percent, respectively). Denver had the highest percentage of respondents in favor of allowing chickens in the community (62.5 percent). In each city, younger respondents were more in favor of allowing chickens in their communities than were older respondents.

* Although over half of respondents (55.6 percent) believed that chickens in urban areas will lead to more illnesses in humans, about two-thirds of respondents in Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City and three-fourths of respondents in Denver believed that eggs from home-raised chickens are better for you than eggs purchased at a grocery store.

For more information and the complete study, click [Urban Chicken Ownership in Four U.S. Cities](#).
"chicksbook" app wins people's choice award

By Natalie Loggans

What do you get when you combine backyard chickens with NASA, APHIS, and a team of app developers from Bulgaria? The answer: an award-winning app designed to help backyard poultry farmers improve the health and productivity of their flocks.

In April, NASA held its International Space Apps Challenge for 2013. This annual event brings together international teams of volunteers to create open-source apps that address specific challenges submitted by groups and Federal agencies. For this year’s collaborative, 2-day long “code-a-thon,” more than 1,400 volunteers from around the world participated, taking on 58 different app projects that were part of the event.

And although its availability for general use is still pending, the award-winning backyard chicken app certainly captured people’s attention.

[the chicken challenge]
By far many of the event’s app projects were space related, but others—such as the APHIS-submitted Backyard Poultry Farmer project—targeted more earthly needs.

Recognizing the NASA event as a unique opportunity for innovation, Terri Gallagher—APHIS’ chief information security officer based in Fort Collins, CO—contacted alumni from her APHIS leadership development group and requested app ideas for the event.

Larry Rawson—veterinary medical officer in Hawaii and fellow alum—responded, suggesting a challenge to promote bird biosecurity. With an assist from Jennifer Bowman, who works in the chief information officer’s unit in Fort Collins, Rawson put together the proposed project’s specifications. The specifications gave developers a basic blueprint of what the app should do.

“Our vision was to encourage collective action to bring awareness of poultry management delivered to any mobile device around the globe,” said Gallagher.

“People need to know where to go and who to contact for pertinent local information on poultry husbandry and health issues. An app could also help tell them where to purchase feed and supplies, as well as local ordinances on keeping poultry in an urban setting,” added Gallagher.

[clucking call to arms]
APHIS submitted the proposed app project, and NASA accepted it, officially adding it to the list of event app challenges. By the time the event was over, 25 teams from all over the world had answered the clucking call to arms with home-grown backyard poultry apps.

During the challenge, an APHIS team of three remained on call to answer questions from, and give support to, app developers.

[people’s choice award]
In the end, not only did the APHIS poultry challenge result in some stellar chicken apps, but the chosen winner of the backyard poultry challenge—an app called ChicksBook created by a Bulgarian team—also won the overall People’s Choice award for the entire event. The award was determined by popular votes cast via Twitter.

Considering the code-a-thon’s major focus on technology and outer space, it’s notable that an app assisting poultry owners wins people’s choice award.
Climate change, pollution, habitat loss...it's easy to get discouraged when you hear about the challenging environmental issues we face today. Finding ways to prevent or reduce these impacts on our planet can seem insurmountable. But when “going green,” it's often the little things that count.

Employees at APHIS’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Fort Collins, CO, are doing their part to make the little things add up for positive change. NWRC employees have established their own “Green Team” aimed at making the workplace more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable. The Green Team has also joined forces with others in the local community and is a proud member of the City of Fort Collins’ ClimateWise program. The ClimateWise program’s goal is to make Fort Collins a world-class community through climate protection, environmental stewardship, and economic vitality. In 2011 alone, the conservation efforts of ClimateWise members saved more than $13 million and reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 149,000 tons.

For its part, the NWRC Green Team organized and led small projects such as adding recycling bins and automatic light switches to offices. In addition, the team looked at larger projects that could have more significant impact.

One such project has saved the Federal government $50,000 in annual utility costs and reduced NWRC’s annual carbon dioxide emissions by more than 450,000 pounds. Through what has been dubbed the “Boiler Tie-In Project,” NWRC put a steam line connection between two adjoining buildings on its 43-acre campus. The new connection increases energy efficiency by allowing an underutilized boiler to be used by both buildings. The boiler provides steam for laboratory washing systems and autoclaves.

“The boiler project has been a huge success,” said Melissa Warrick, NWRC’s facility manager.

Chicksbook app

practical matters of managing and caring for their birds garnered so much attention and so many votes.

“When our team heard that the People’s Choice award went to an app answering our backyard poultry challenge, we felt like we really accomplished our goal of promoting agricultural awareness,” said Gallagher.

While APHIS has no control over future development and marketing of the app, keep a bird’s eye view on your app stores. Chicksbook just might come clucking to a smart phone near you.
Continued from page 10

**going green**

operations specialist and Green Team member. “It's resulted in a 24-percent annual reduction in energy use at the NWRC facility. Given our success with this project, I know the Green Team is eager to find other innovative ways to promote environmental stewardship.”

To some, these changes may seem small. But, if others join in the effort and look for similar opportunities for improvement, our environmental future could be a whole lot brighter. To learn more, please contact Steve Greiner, chair of the NWRC Green Team at steven.j.greiner@aphis.usda.gov.

**manager profile**

with
gary washington

**APHIS Chief Information Officer**
**Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services**

**[what is your background?]**
I grew up in Washington, D.C. I served in the military for 10 years with the U.S. Air Force and spent 4 years in Europe. After leaving the military, I earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Strayer University and did some graduate work at the University of Maryland. I have 29 years of experience in information technology with the military, private sector, and Federal government—including my work at the Office of Management and Budget that I enjoyed as well.

**[how long have you been with aphis?]**
I’ve been with APHIS for 5 months.

**[most memorable APHIS experience?]**
Since I’m new to APHIS, my most memorable experience has been simply arriving here as the chief information officer. I look forward to having many memorable experiences here.

**[priorities in the coming months?]**
Ensuring APHIS information technology continues to support the APHIS mission and reaches its full potential and scope.

**[accomplishment most proud of?]**
No one accomplishment overshines the other. Leading with integrity and commitment and being a good person.

**[hobbies?]**
I love ballroom dancing and participating in the competitions. I love to go to the gym. I enjoy philosophy and the game of chess.

**[favorite movie?]**
Gladiator.

**[last book read?]**
The Leadership Muse by Linda Cureton.

**[favorite meal?]**
My favorite meal is a bone-in rib eye steak with baked potato and broccoli.

**[guilty pleasure?]**
No guilty pleasures. I like walking my dog. I enjoy being a good husband, being helpful to other people, and being a good person. I also enjoy and cherish spending time alone. And, I like good wine.
In our last issue, we asked employees, “How often do you encounter APHIS or agency issues during your non-work hours?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

One commenter added: “APHIS is everywhere. Seriously. It’s one of the fun things about working here—you can see what we’re doing in the world around us.”

Our thanks to everyone who responded to the last issue’s question.

[next question please]

As we near September 30th and the end of the FY 2013 performance cycle, agency supervisors and employees alike will soon be thinking about their upcoming performance appraisals.

Some employees look forward to annual performance appraisals and enjoy receiving feedback from supervisors about their work. Others are more neutral or don’t look forward to them at all.

Do you look forward to annual performance appraisals?

- Yes, I look forward to performance appraisals.
- I feel neutral about performance appraisals.
- No, I don’t look forward to performance appraisals.

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: www.surveymonkey.com/s/HFXTQNP

National Hispanic Heritage Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

FY 2013 APHIS Training and Development Calendar provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

Workplace Networking Webinar: September 10, with 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. (ET) start times; register via AgLearn; contact Tanya Briscoe at tanya.c.briscoe@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

Is This Safe to Lift? (Manual Materials Handling) Webinar: September 11, with 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. (ET) start times; register via AgLearn; contact Ginger Dorsey at ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

Veterinary Services’ Professional Development Staff posts an updated training calendar that features upcoming VS training opportunities and points of contact.

General Use Pesticide Workshop: September 25–26; PPQ Professional Development Center, Frederick, MD; contact Rick Etzel at (240) 529-0264 or richard.w.etzel@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

FY 2013 performance cycle ends September 30.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

Writing Up! followup course to Introduction to Plain Language; October 1 at 9:00 a.m. (ET); Riverdale, MD; register via AgLearn; contact Marilyn Miller at marilyn.s.miller@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

PPQ Employee Development Toolkit (EDT) will be available beginning October 1 on PPQ’s Professional Development Center’s Intranet site. The EDT will help PPQ employees navigate the individual development plan (IDP) process. Contact Todd Dutton at (240) 529-0272 or todd.dutton@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

Deadline for establishing FY 2014 performance plans is October 30.

National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

Deadline for submitting FY 2013 performance ratings to Human Resources is November 15.

Annual leave use/lose reminder: Annual leave subject to possible restoration must be scheduled either in writing or via WebTA by the close of pay period 23, which ends on November 30, 2013. For more information, contact Nella Roberts at (301) 851-2910.

Benefits Open Season runs from November 11, 2013, to December 9, 2013.
In this issue, we follow up on our previous spotlight, completing our feature on APHIS employees who earned the President’s Volunteer Service Award last fall.

Please join us in congratulating Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) JoAnn Cruse and Wildlife Services’ (WS) Todd Felix. Both were honored for their extraordinary volunteer efforts outside of the workplace.

[employee name and program]
JoAnn Cruse; State Plant Health Director; PPQ; Madison, WI

[volunteer organization]
Zwingli United Church of Christ and the German-American Partnership Program

[volunteer activities]
Cruse volunteers in a number of ways in her community, through her church, and with local Swiss heritage activities. In 2011, she participated in a week-long mission trip to Tennessee, where she helped repair a home damaged by flood. She also teaches Sunday school and is a member of the chime choir and senior vocal choir. In her community, she volunteers at a food pantry and as a Girl Scout leader.

Cruse and her family participate as a host family through a German student exchange program. They have hosted students for short visits and, last year, hosted a German “daughter” for half of the school year. Additionally, Cruse has played roles in theater productions—Heidi and Wilhelm Tell—related to her Swiss heritage.

[time given]
Cruse volunteered 60 hours for her church mission trip, 185 hours for the German exchange program, 137 hours for church activities, and 125 hours to ethnic theater productions, the food pantry, Girl Scouts, and school organizations.

[organization web sites]
www.goethe.de/ins/us/lp/prj/gapp/enindex.htm
http://personalpages.tds.net/~zwingli/index.html
www.swisstown.com/festivals

[employee email]
joann.m.cruse@aphis.usda.gov

[employee name and program]
Todd Felix; Wildlife Biologist; WS; Lakewood, CO

[volunteer organization]
The Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) and the American Lung Association in Colorado

[organization mission]
CMC’s mission is to connect people with the Colorado mountain experience. CMC is the premier membership organization providing human-powered mountain adventures that are safe, enjoyable, and environmentally responsible.

The mission of the American Lung Association is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Each year, the Colorado chapter runs a week-long summer camp—called “Champ Camp”—for children ages 7–14 with asthma.

[volunteer activities]
As a Certified Climbing Guide (Certified by the American Mountain Guides Association), Felix uses his knowledge and expertise to teach other CMC members to safely enjoy rock and ice climbing. Felix serves as the Chair of the technical climbing section, where he teaches and oversees all rock and ice climbing courses for the Denver group of the CMC; he instructs more than 100 students each year.

An asthmatic himself, Felix appreciates the opportunity to show kids that they need not be limited by asthma; they can still engage the outdoors and be extremely active.

Continued on next page
Each year, Felix organizes a group of 10–20 volunteers to provide 75–100 kids with a rock climbing experience at Champ Camp. The campers learn how to manage their asthma at Champ Camp, and they love the rock climbing.

Felix gives more than 300 hours of his time each year to the CMC. For the American Lung Association’s Champ Camp—a once-a-year, week-long event—Felix takes the whole week off work to provide 40+ hours of service during camp week. Before camp, he also spends many hours organizing a large group of camp volunteers.

[organization web site]
www.cmc.org

www.lung.org/associations/states/colorado/events-programs/champ-camp.html

[employee email]
todd.a.felix@aphis.usda.gov

In the second quarter of calendar year 2013, APHIS had 36 employees retire from among its ranks. We wish them all the very best as they enter their post-APHIS years.

April–June 2013

Animal Care
Lynn Bourgeois Raceland, LA
Warren Striplin Gilbert, AZ

International Services
Gary Greene Guatemala—GT

MRP Business Services
Barbara Lutz Minneapolis, MN
Daniel Reid Tulsa, OK

Plant Protection and Quarantine
Betty Bryant Raleigh, NC
Susan Doerfler McAllen, TX
Mary Douglass North Charleston, SC
Victor Harabin Raleigh, NC
John Jensen Cocoa, FL
Bruce Lewke The Hague—NL
Jacquelyn MacCagnan Fort Collins, CO
James Petit De Mange Frederick, MD
Kevin Picha Fort Collins, CO
James Stewart Wendell, NC
Rosindo Tejada Honolulu, HI

Veterinary Services
Robert Best Ames, IA
Mary Bjornsen Fort Collins, CO
Robert Breitag West Bend, WI
Terry Fultz Ames, IA
Irene Hess Fort Collins, CO
Theresa Houlihan East Lansing, MI
Susan Johnston Fort Collins, CO
Kami Lancaster East Lansing, MI
Alan Palen Newburgh, NY
James Provo Greensboro, NC
Judith Rodriguez Fort Collins, CO
Joan Sawicki Orient Point, NY
Dean Stevens, Jr. Ames, IA
April Wells Riverdale, MD
John Wilcox Shelbyville, KY

Wildlife Services
Judy Cogburn Jena, LA
Jeffrey Green Fort Collins, CO
Marie Hatter Oklahoma City, OK
Philip Robinson Fort Collins, CO
Willie Tradewell Jena, LA

To help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency, we plan to include similar lists of new retirees in each newsletter.
Build a better mousetrap, the saying goes, and the world will beat a path to your door. And anyone trying to prevent rodent damage may soon beat a path to Gary Witmer’s door.

Witmer is a wildlife research biologist and project leader at the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC). In his 22 years at APHIS, he has worked on an array of projects designed to minimize damage to forestry and agriculture, with a recent focus on native and invasive rodent species. He has designed rodent management strategies in Cuba, Kenya, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States and participated in invasive rodent eradications in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific.

His most recent work—which attracted the attention of the Smithsonian magazine blog—involves the protection of nuclear missile silos in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming from the damaging actions of Richardson’s ground squirrels. The foot-long rodents have tunneled extensively throughout the prairie States—and under the fences surrounding hundreds of underground silos that house Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles. In addition to setting off security sensors, the ground squirrels have burrowed under foundations, undermined road beds, and gnawed on cables.

Witmer, Wildlife Services’ (WS) Rachael Moulton, and former colleague Jenna Swartz

Continued on next page

WS scientists are studying Richardson’s ground squirrels to prevent damage at U.S. missile sites.
have been involved in this project for about 3 years. To figure out a solution for their military stakeholders, the WS team first had to understand the behavior of their adversaries. At deactivated launch and missile alert facilities in Montana, the researchers observed ground squirrel colonies, excavated their burrows, and studied the animals’ behavior.

“I’ve always been interested in biology,” says Witmer. “I like the applied part of what we do. I’m customer-oriented. I like helping stakeholders solve problems.”

WS captured dozens of the rodents and took them to NWRC headquarters in Fort Collins, CO. There, in a dirt-filled lab, Witmer’s team challenged the squirrels’ ability to get over, under, or through various barriers to reach a food reward. Richardson’s ground squirrels are omnivores, but Witmer says they seemed especially motivated by peanut butter, oatmeal, cantaloupe, apples, and cheese.

The researchers’ first barriers failed the squirrel-proof test. Below ground, the squirrels used their claws and teeth to tear through fabric similar to steel wool, and they squeezed through metal chain-link fencing with 1-inch mesh. Eventually, Witmer achieved success with buried metal sheets and gravel-filled trenches. “The squirrels aren’t comfortable walking on pea gravel, because it gives way, and they also can’t burrow into it because it keeps caving in,” Witmer said.

Above ground, the squirrels also easily defeated the first few barrier attempts. The researchers eventually found that polycarbonate plastic proved too slippery for the rodents to scale. The clear sheets also adhere to military security requirements that any above-ground barrier be transparent.

In November, Witmer began testing a combination of the most successful barriers at a missile silo mockup located on Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana. He is also hoping to test the effectiveness of a novel, rodenticide bait station developed by research colleagues in New Zealand.

“It’s tough to keep rodents out of anything,” Witmer says, noting that an effective barrier has “got to be very well built, because otherwise they will figure out a way to beat it.”

Click HERE to view an APHIS video on YouTube about Witmer’s research.

Photo sources: APHIS, J. Amend (VS), E. Clark (VS), A. Eaglin (LPA), C. Fall (IS), C. Franklin (PPQ), K. Law (PPQ), K. Miller (MRPBS), National Wildlife Research Center (VS), M. Palm (PPQ), M. Stephens (VS), USDA, Veterinary Services.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit: www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
Over the past several months, Administrator Kevin Shea has been meeting with employees from across agency programs to hear first-hand about their work and their challenges.

Since his appointment as Administrator in June, Shea has engaged in a series of events with employees. These include town hall meetings, field site visits, and small group listening sessions—both in person and by videoconference.

To date, Shea has traveled to Harrisburg, PA; Laredo, TX; Minneapolis, MN; Plum Island, NY; and Raleigh, NC. Using videoconference, he also sat down with employees in both Honolulu and Maui, HI.

“We had a cross section of employees participating—intermittent employees, permanent part timers, full-time technicians, officers, supervisors, and myself,” said Plant Protection and Quarantine’s Hawaii Port Director Noel Hashimoto, who participated in an August videoconference.

“We had a chance to speak and interact with Kevin which was great! And it was very interesting, engaging, and informative to hear his replies from the perspective of his position as Administrator,” added Hashimoto.

In addition to these forums, Shea continues to reach out and listen to employees through the APHIS portal. As he posts new blogs and audio messages, he routinely checks out incoming feedback and comments.

With 2014 just around the corner, he is planning additional visits to regional and field locations in the coming year. Shea plans to keep listening to employees and learning how he can support them to ensure that APHIS thrives.

In the third quarter of calendar year 2013, APHIS had 17 employees retire. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

**July–September 2013**

**Animal Care**
- Randall Ridenour, Yakima, WA
- Yvette Perez Marcano, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**International Services**
- Joan Grafton, Sanford, FL
- Pamela Meek, Raleigh, NC
- Richard Miller, Queens, NY
- David Thornton, Lanai City, HI

**Plant Protection and Quarantine**
- Leslie Personett, Maryland, NY
- David Warner, Raleigh, NC

**Veterinary Services**
- Mark Carroll, Cynthiana, KY
- Michael Greenlee, Austin, TX
- Herman Morgan, Jr., Rayne, LA
- Leslie Personett, Maryland, NY
- David Warner, Raleigh, NC

**Wildlife Services**
- Diane Benfiet, Bismarck, ND
- Kathleen Fagerstone, Fort Collins, CO
- Albert Little, La Grange, NC
- Carla Oswalt, Jackson, TN
- Kelly Parker, Caldwell, ID
- James Schmidt, II, Dragoon, AZ
alternative strategies showing results in animal care

By Christa Anderson

“Our best ideas come from the field,” says Animal Care (AC) Regional Enforcement and Compliance Specialist Laura Blanton.

In this case, the idea Blanton is talking about is an innovative pilot project called Comprehensive Compliance Analysis and Planning (CCAP). It’s proving to be a win-win-win for all involved—yielding benefits for Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulated animals, their owners, and AC inspectors alike.

The project grew out of field inspectors telling AC’s Compliance Team that some AWA licensees who have been continually cited for noncompliances would be receptive to participating in educational meetings—meaning collaborative sessions designed to share information and discuss how to troubleshoot problems.

For AC, the project is about providing educational outreach that goes well beyond simply citing noncompliant items on an inspection report.

[how it works]
CCAP works like this: after AC personnel identify a potential candidate, an agency compliance specialist reviews the facility’s 3-year history, and reaches out to explain CCAP and ask if the facility would like to participate in the educational program. If so, the facility’s regular inspector and a compliance specialist visit and spend time going over educational materials.

Next, they do a “walk-through” that serves as an educational moment. AC personnel and facility operators discuss identified problems and ask facility owners how they could not only solve them, but maintain compliance long term.

AC’s questions during CCAP site visits tend to be open-ended. As Compliance Specialist Jeremy Steele explains, no solution is one-size-fits-all. “The point is for facilities to come up with solutions that will work long term,” says Steele.

[solutions, results, and efficiency]
Under the CCAP pilot project, facilities are tailoring their own solutions, regulated animals are receiving improved treatment, and AC’s inspection process is gaining efficiency.

“We can tell (facilities) time and again what they need to fix, but if we can get them to do

In yet another example, a facility was identified for the pilot project because its compliance had steadily declined over several years. A site visit revealed a basic lack of understanding among the owner, staff, and volunteers about licensure expectations. AC’s home inspector and compliance specialist addressed this in a group setting, and the facility developed a self-inspection plan that now involves a volunteer conducting monthly inspections not only to identify noncompliances but develop ways to correct them.

The result? The facility has now undergone two routine AWA inspections with AC identifying no noncompliances.

continued on next page
For many people, a trip to the Florida Keys means clear water, relaxing beaches, and brilliant sunsets. But for the crews of Veterinary Services (VS) employees who traveled to Florida to clean up a long-retired animal import center, the Keys meant hard work, hand tools, and sore muscles.

This past spring, two separate VS crews each completed 2-week work rotations reclaiming the former Harry S Truman Animal Import Center (HSTAIC) from overgrown vegetation and years of damage.

VS closed the doors on the Harry S Truman Animal Import Center in 1999, retiring the facility after 20 years of service in protecting U.S. animal health. Located on Fleming Key—adjacent to Key West—the center had been an active 80,000 square-foot quarantine facility leased from the Navy.

At the time it closed, it was in need of costly repairs, and its value as a worksite had been supplanted by newer animal import centers located closer to international shipping ports and airports.

After closing, the 16-acre site remained mostly untended as APHIS and Navy officials intermittently discussed its maintenance needs.

[rolling up the sleeves]
Over the years, vegetation gradually overtook the grounds, and fences and structures fell into further disrepair. Vandals, wildlife, and weather compounded the damage. Early bid estimates for grounds clean-up alone came in at more than $320,000. Recent bids obtained by the Navy doubled that amount.

With the situation worsening, VS management decided to form a plan and act. To save money and return the closed facility to a more secure and maintained condition, the program chose to roll up its sleeves and do the clean-up itself using work crews of VS employees.

With its goals of keeping the project cost-effective and safe, VS had to carefully manage many logistical details. After soliciting and selecting volunteers, the program first ensured that employees were properly prepared and trained to safely handle tools and materials.
crews get busy

Continued from page 5

For the project, employees used hand tools, chainsaws, chippers, and other power equipment. Each crew included a trained safety officer and was well-supplied with the necessary safety equipment, such as eye and ear protection, foot gear, hard hats, and gloves.

Additionally, both crews included an employee certified as a pesticide applicator.

The first crew began its rotation on April 15, and the second crew followed with another 2-week shift beginning April 29. Two additional crews are tentatively scheduled to complete overlapping rotations this January.

Among other things, crews tackled clearing vegetation, repairing fences, and securing door and window access points. They also decommissioned larger equipment, such as generators and incinerators, including properly disposing of operating fluids and batteries. To date, clean-up crews have filled 30 dumpsters with debris.

“It was tough, tough work,” said Dallas Meek, VS’ team leader for the first crew onsite. “We had the highest temperatures they’ve had that time of year since the 1800s…Our crews really stepped up and worked hard,” said Meek.

[stretching the dollars]
Throughout the project, VS has worked to stretch dollars as much as possible and to maximize the agency’s savings. Based on current estimates, the program anticipates that it will save about half of what it would have cost if they had used outside contractors.

To minimize costs, VS used rental equipment and borrowed tools from other APHIS work-sites in Florida. They also limited the purchase of equipment to smaller items—like chainsaws and shears—that will be later redistributed to other agency sites.

U.S. military personnel from the Navy, Army, and Coast Guard provided assistance as well. The Naval Air Station–Key West helped coordinate accommodations for VS crews at nearly a quarter of the price compared to other local rates. The Coast Guard made dining facilities available. And, the Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School located nearby provided water and opened its mess hall to VS work crew members for lunches.

[making a good impression]
“Our crews were all about getting the job done and everyone pulled their weight. It was an impressive group,” said Melburn Stephens, VS’ team leader during the second rotation. Stephens was pleased by their progress, and apparently the crews made an impression on others as well.

“One of the best compliments came from the Commander of the Naval Station,” said Stephens. “He saw all we got done and made a point of telling us, ‘You all did a good job here.’”

(Left to right) Dan Newsom, Mel Stephens, Chip Ridky, Able Perez, Paul Smiley, Casey Mitchell, Patty Fox, Andy Esparza, Jennifer Reynolds, Heather Bissette, Randy Snyder, Barry Bell, Berto Lopez, Manny Gonzalez, A.C. Welsch. Other team members not shown here are Carla Perry Harbour and Virginia Rodriguez.
When Julie Cooper began in her role as Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services’ (MRPBS) Ombudsman, the position was brand new to APHIS. Since then, Cooper has helped many APHIS employees navigate through MRPBS when they’ve needed assistance with administrative issues.

While employees should first use established procedures and work through their regular service providers—such as their contacts in human resources, financial management, and administrative services—they can turn to Cooper in instances when additional assistance working with MRPBS is needed.

Cooper often assists employees in locating the best point of contact to address their issue.

“Sometimes employees just don’t know where to go for assistance. While I don’t have all the answers, I can direct employees to the appropriate person to address their questions or concerns,” says Cooper.

For example, she’s guided employees needing to change their designated life insurance beneficiaries and helped others who were struggling with new automated systems.

Employees can also contact Cooper if they are dissatisfied with the service received from MRPBS; this includes instances when they haven’t received a reasonable explanation about why a certain process or procedure can’t be used to meet their needs or if they weren’t provided an appropriate alternative solution.

Employees needing assistance can reach Cooper by phone at (301) 851-2873 or e-mail at julie.f.cooper@aphis.usda.gov.

In September, Administrator Kevin Shea traveled to Plum Island Animal Disease Center to tour the facility and meet with international veterinarians participating in animal disease training.

As part of its international capacity-building efforts, APHIS hosts veterinary officials from other countries at the Center. Peter Fernandez (left), International Services’ Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Alfonso Torres (right), Professor and Associate Dean for Public Policy at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, led Shea on the tour and discussed the Center’s coursework and operations. Below, Torres explains a wall chart showing clinical signs of African swine fever and classical swine fever.
Did you know that before APHIS established the Animal Care (AC) program 25 years ago, Veterinary Services (VS) enforced the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Horse Protection Act (HPA) in addition to carrying out livestock disease programs?

The advent of AC—at the time called Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care (REAC) because it included what would eventually become Investigative and Enforcement Services—meant time and people devoted exclusively to seeing the AWA and HPA tenets carried out.

Among the many significant results of creating a program dedicated to animal welfare is the decrease in the number of “random-source dealers” — meaning entities licensed under the AWA to sell dogs/cats obtained from pounds, shelters, auctions, or any person who did not breed and raise the animals on his/her premises.

In 1988, approximately 180 people held such licenses. Now, there are five AWA-licensed random-source dealers in the United States. Although many factors contributed to the decline, two high-profile cases involving AC in the 1990s successfully proved that dozens of dogs held by such dealers were actually pets that had been stolen. The dogs were returned to their owners as a result of AC’s efforts.

“You won’t find stolen dogs in research anymore,” said Robert Willems, assistant regional director of AC’s Eastern Region Office, and one of the first VS employees who volunteered to move to the new REAC program in 1988. “It wasn’t common back then, but we did find them.”

Congress passed the AWA in 1966 after national media coverage drew attention to the fact that Americans’ pets were being stolen and sold to research facilities.

By Christa Anderson

in memoriam

Our agency lost two members of the APHIS family from July through September of this year.

We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

marketing and regulatory programs business services
Gary Meek Raleigh, NC

plant protection and quarantine
David Szanyi Winter Haven, FL
It couldn’t be—or could it? At first, Dr. Osman Abdullah Barra Jobe, principal veterinary officer for the Upper River Region of the Gambia, didn’t suspect that the terrible disease killing his area’s cattle could be a scourge no Gambian farmer had seen for 40 years. But when he attended an APHIS workshop for 16 African veterinarians in Banjul on transboundary animal diseases, he saw pictures of sick cows that looked disturbingly familiar and he reconsidered.

In a decisive demonstration of the benefits of APHIS’ international capacity-building efforts, his concerns were swiftly confirmed—and help from APHIS and its international partners was on the way.

The culprit was contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP)—a highly infectious bacterial disease that attacks the respiratory systems of cattle. It is a historically dreaded affliction. USDA established the Bureau of Animal Industry in 1884 in large part to combat the disease. Although CBPP was eradicated in the United States in 1892, it still occurs in Asia, the Middle East—and Africa, where the death toll among infected animals can be as high as 80 percent.

CBPP had not been reported in Gambia since the early 1970s, so safeguards had been relaxed: sporadic surveillance eventually took the place of vaccination.

Confidence in the Gambia’s invulnerability to CBPP ran so high that when Jobe initially aired his concerns with colleagues at the Banjul workshop—conducted by staff from APHIS in collaboration with the sanitary/phytosanitary (SPS) advisor for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and USDA in early June 2012, and funded by the U.S. African Command—he met with considerable skepticism.

But Jobe persevered. Blood from affected Gambian cattle was collected and sent to neighboring Senegal’s Laboratoire National d’Elevage et de Recherches Vétérinaires (LNERT), a regional reference laboratory. In early August, tests confirmed the presence of CBPP. Subsequent investigation would reveal that cattle recently imported from Mali and Mauritania, where CBPP is endemic, had likely reintroduced the disease.

APHIS and its partners moved swiftly to help. After LNERV notified the World Organization for Animal Health of the outbreak in September, a team of experts from APHIS, USAID, and the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization visited the infected areas a month later to assess the situation and determine a response.

In November, the disease was also confirmed in Senegal, which surrounds the Gambia on Africa’s west coast and had also been CBPP-free for decades.

After consultations between the national veterinary services of both affected countries, organized by APHIS and the USAID/USDA...
Continued from page 9

SPS advisor, each launched a vaccination campaign. The countrywide campaign in the Gambia has so far immunized 250,000 “eligible” cattle—healthy animals more than 6 months old.

Seventeen times larger than its neighbor, Senegal opted for a “ring vaccination” campaign, which controls disease within a limited area and is targeting about 170,000 cattle.

Although the spring of 2013 brought reports of two new CBPP outbreaks in the same Senegalese district where the disease first appeared, no new cases have been reported since.

That is good news for West Africa’s cattle—and a triumph for APHIS’ efforts to help other countries cope with animal disease.

“This is an excellent example of tangible outcomes from capacity-building work. Direct lines of impact like this aren’t always possible to draw,” said Karen Sliter, International Services’ Regional Manager for Europe, Africa, Russia, and the Near East.

For the farmers of the Gambia and Senegal, those lines could not be clearer—or mean more.

B. Jebang, director of Gambian Central Veterinary Laboratory, examining a sick animal.

The APHIS Training and Development Calendar provides listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted competencies.

Veterinary Services’ Professional Development Staff posts an updated training calendar that features upcoming VS training opportunities and points of contact.

Workplace Networking Webinar; January 14, 10:00 a.m. to noon (ET); register via AgLearn; contact Tanya Briscoe at tanya.c.briscoe@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

Mentoring—Building Professional Networks Webinar; January 16, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (ET); register via AgLearn; contact Wendy Johnson at wendy.t.johnson@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

Effective Meetings Using Live Meeting Webinar; January 29, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. (ET); register via AgLearn; contact Mirdza Fernandez at mirdza.m.fernandez@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

February
National Black History Month. Watch your email for events and announcements.

International Services’ Cheikh Fall (left in white shirt) examining a sick animal in a Niamina Dankunku village (Central River Region).
**Manager Profile**

**with jacek taniewski**

**Director for Animal Export**
National Import Export Services, Veterinary Services (VS)

[what is your background?]
I was born and raised in small town called Suwalki in the northeastern part of Poland.

I am a 1983 graduate of the Academy of Agriculture and Technology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Olsztyn, Poland. I was in practice until my departure to the United States in the fall of 1989. I landed in New Jersey with one suitcase and $600 dollars in my pocket. For 9 years, I worked odd jobs, including gas station attendant, handyman, painter, fixer-upper, and veterinary technician.

I am single father, blessed with the challenges of raising a 17-year-old daughter.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
I started my Government career in 1998, with the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service in Russellville, AL, as the inspector in charge of the one of the largest (1.4 million pounds a day) poultry slaughter plants in the United States. I joined APHIS/VS in 2003 as the regional trade coordinator in the National Center for Import and Export. In this role, I was responsible for international negotiations with Asian and Pacific countries involving live animals and animal germplasm.

Currently, I am working as a director for animal export. I am managing VS’ Animal Export unit. I provide expertise for formulating policies, standards, regulations, and procedures for the export of live animals and germplasm from the United States.

[most memorable APHIS experience?]
Crazy trip to Russia in December of 2007 where we opened the market for U.S. cattle. I also got food poisoning during negotiations and ended up in the embassy infirmary. And later that week on my way home, I was stranded at the Moscow airport for almost 24 hours.

[priorities in the coming months?]
At work, to finish revising export regulations and to work with my coworkers on operational implementation of VS’ reorganization. In private life, I coach my daughter to be ready for college next year. I am also coaching myself to cope with her college departure.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
As a foreign graduate, I am very proud of passing the American Veterinary Medical Association Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates certification program in 1998 (while working full-time) and obtaining my license to practice veterinary medicine in the State of New Jersey.

[hobbies?]
Cooking and meat smoking.

[guilty pleasure?]
Fluffy cheesecake with strawberry topping.

[favorite movie?]
The Fifth Element and Foyle’s War

[last book read?]
Secret Wars of Mosad, by Yvonnick Denoël.

[favorite meal?]
Homemade fettuccini Alfredo with garlic and mushrooms or roasted duck with apples.
Imagine the challenges of working in a foreign country where your colleagues are spread across 2,000 miles, often in very remote locations. Add to that serious, ongoing security concerns and accompanying restrictions on travel, as well as many other complicating factors, and you will have some idea of the day-to-day realities facing more than 200 International Services (IS) employees in Mexico.

Over the last 3 years, drug cartels have been a major source of violence in the country. Keeping our employees safe is paramount and requires a great deal of collaboration with the U.S. Department of State (DOS).

Due to ongoing safety concerns, in November 2012 DOS regional security officers (RSOs) proposed significant travel restrictions on U.S. Government employees in Mexico, which would have limited most of APHIS’ trade, safeguarding, and preclearance programs.

“Our employees in Mexico help facilitate a large amount of two-way trade every year that benefits both U.S. and Mexican producers,” said Ken Miller, APHIS’ security branch chief. Recognizing the programs’ importance to Mexico and U.S. markets, Miller and IS personnel met with the RSOs to discuss alternatives that would keep employees safe and working. The meeting was a success—the RSOs modified the travel restrictions and created a “Live There, Work There” policy.

This policy recognizes that employees from the same area as their workplace are at a greatly reduced risk based on a number of factors. Some of these factors include familiarity with higher risk zones and a clear understanding of safe driving routes and emergency services in the area.

To further ensure employee security, APHIS and the RSOs continually assess threats to personnel and determine if, where, and how operations can continue. When violence increases in a given area, all parties evaluate the risk to employees, consult, and—if necessary—recommend that APHIS leadership suspend operations. Before resuming activities, APHIS security personnel and the respective RSOs re-evaluate the area’s security.

By Darya Chehrezad

“Continuous dialogue with our partners is a key piece of that effort.”

Despite the challenges they face every day, IS employees in Mexico remain resilient and dedicated to the agency’s mission. APHIS will continue doing all it possibly can to ensure that personnel remain safe, a commitment that Administrator Kevin Shea has reiterated to employees.

By Darya Chehrezad

Although they faced and overcame some early logistical obstacles, Miller, IS personnel, and RSOs Fernando Matus and Jorge Becerril traveled to Uruapan, Michoacán, and Tapachula, Chiapas in July to train employees.

“The need to keep our employees safe while they work comes above all else,” said Miller.

APHIS and the RSOs have also developed comprehensive emergency training for all Mexico-based employees. The training focuses on implementing risk mitigation strategies, procedures, and protocols and using devices such as GPS trackers and personal locator beacons, which alert APHIS, DOS, and U.S. and Mexican military in an emergency.

By Darya Chehrezad

International Services employees at the comprehensive emergency training in Uruapan.
As an APHIS employee, Veterinary Services’ Mary Stephens contributes daily to the health of U.S. agriculture. And outside of work—as a volunteer for several ag-related organizations—she contributes even more to agriculture as well as to her local community and to youth development.

Stephens was recently honored with a President’s Call to Service Award for her extraordinary volunteer efforts. She received the award in recognition of her lifetime volunteer service.

**[employee name and program]**
Mary Stephens, Animal Technician, Veterinary Services, New York

**[volunteer organization]**
Southern Shepherds 4-H Club; Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers Association; Pine Plains Future Farmers of America (FFA); Agriculture in the Classroom–Literacy Week.

**[organizations’ missions]**
4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults. Southern Shepherds’ mission is to help prepare young shepherds to be responsible adults.

Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers’ mission is to promote locally as well as American-grown lamb and wool.

The Pine Plains FFA is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

Agriculture in the Classroom–Literacy Week promotes reading and brings agriculturally themed books and resources into thousands of classrooms and libraries throughout New York State.

**[volunteer activities]**
As a 4-H leader of Southern Shepherds, Stephens has planned meetings, educational events, field trips, and fitting and showing clinics, as well as assisted with a food booth during the New York Sheep and Wool Festival.

Stephens is on the board of directors for the Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers Association and manages the sheep breed display barn at the New York Sheep and Wool Festival.

For the FFA, she has judged district and sub-district Career Development Contests and supplied lambs for educational displays.

During National Agriculture Literacy Day, Stephens visits and reads to a class of second graders.

**[time given]**
Stephens has been a 4-H leader for 11 years and given well over 3,000 hours of support to participating youth. She has been on the Sheep and Wool Growers Association board of directors since 2003, spending 2,700 hours promoting and supporting local sheep producers. As an FFA alumnus, Stephens has donated numerous hours to support the future of agriculture. She has volunteered as a reader for Agriculture in the Classroom for the past 10 years.

**[organization web sites]**
Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers Association: www.sheepandwool.com
Dutchess County-4H: www.ccedutchess.org
Agriculture in the Classroom: www.agclassroom.org/ny/programs/literacy.htm

**[employee email]**
mary.c.stephens@aphis.usda.gov
Tis’ the season to update your contact information and learn how to leave an out-of-office message for your email account and VoIP phone. Your customers, coworkers, and stakeholders will appreciate your holiday thoughtfulness when you’re out of the office!

Enjoy these quick tips with a cup of hot cider!

**[contact information—outlook/global address book]**

2. Log in using your Windows (Domain/VIP) user name and password.
3. Edit your contact information.
4. When you’re finished, click the “update” button in the bottom-right corner of the window.
5. Changes will be reflected in the USDA Global Address List within 2 to 3 days.

**[out-of-office email message]**

1. In Microsoft Outlook, select the “file” tab at the top.
2. Select the “info” tab on the left.
3. Click on the “Automatic Replies” button.
4. Select the “Send Automatic Replies” button and select your departure and return dates (if known).

**[out-of-office phone message]**

1. From your VoIP phone, press the “messages” button. You will be prompted for your passcode followed by the # key.
2. For setup options, press 4.
3. Follow the voice prompts to change your standard greeting and record a message.
4. Message tips: Say when you’ll return, if you will be checking your voicemail while you’re gone, and who to contact (with their contact information) for immediate assistance.

Questions? Call ATAC at (877) 944-8457, option 1—United States toll free, or (919) 855-7888, option 1—International. Or, email aphisremedy@aphis.usda.gov.

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**question of the day**

In our last issue, we asked employees, “Do you look forward to annual performance appraisals?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received. Our thanks to everyone who responded to the last issue’s question.

- **43.3%** I don’t look forward to performance appraisals
- **46.7%** I feel neutral about performance appraisals
- **10%** I look forward to performance appraisals

**[next question please]**

According to the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results, 54.7 percent of APHIS participants in the survey have been with APHIS for 11 or more years. The results would suggest that the agency is a workplace that employees find worthy of investing a sizeable portion of their careers.

With that in mind, we ask: How many years do you anticipate working for APHIS?

- 1–3 years
- 4–5 years
- 6–10 years
- 11–14 years
- 15–20 years
- More than 20 years

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click [HERE](#) to take part in the poll.

**For more APHIS results from the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, please visit the APHIS portal.**

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**work tip**

Updated 4/17/2017

By Mike Booth
For the past 3 years, Ken Law has served as a full-time “Ranger,” but not of the Lone, Power, or Texas variety—rather, as more of the preclearance kind.

Law and nine other ranger colleagues work for Preclearance and Offshore Programs (POP), a unit under Plant Health Programs within Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ).

In addition to a host of other offshore safeguarding activities, POP provides preclearance, certification, and treatment services overseas for approved plant-based commodities, with the goal of excluding foreign plant pests and diseases before such shipments ever arrive at a U.S. port of entry.

POP’s activities are carried out at the request of foreign entities—such as flower bulb packers in the Netherlands or citrus cooperatives in South Africa—in cooperation with the exporting country’s national plant protection organization. In return, the exporter association is required to fund all expenses incurred by POP staff assigned to carry out a particular mission.

[the work of a ranger]
Rangers take on foreign TDY assignments lasting anywhere from 2–4 months. POP also draws from a roster of qualified PPQ officers to fill assignments as needed.

The work may include monitoring overseas fumigation, hot water dip, or irradiation pest mitigation treatments; conducting joint inspections of approved fruits, vegetables, or flower bulbs at foreign facilities; and/or certifying that products and facilities meet all PPQ requirements. Commodities that have undergone treatment and/or preclearance overseas may then enter the United States with only minimal inspection upon entry, eliminating potential delays at port.

POP specialists are also sent on short-term assignments to foreign ports to certify—at a shipping company’s expense—that a vessel’s refrigeration capabilities meet all regulatory requirements for in-transit cold treatments to mitigate pest risks of agricultural cargo within the ship’s holds.

It is typically less expensive to treat a shipment of produce while in transit, and the resulting time savings ensures a longer shelf life for the product.

[the global life]
Although foreign TDY assignments often involve long hours, unpredictable lengths of stay, and unfamiliar languages, food, and accommodations, the opportunity to serve and protect American agriculture while in a foreign locale may have a certain appeal to qualified individuals with a hint of wanderlust.

As for Ken Law, he is currently wrapping up a 3-month assignment in Thailand, overseeing inspection and irradiation treatments for longans and mangosteens bound for U.S. markets. Other ranger assignments have taken him to South Africa to inspect pears and citrus, to Argentina to oversee fumigation of blueberry exports, and to Patagonia for cherry inspections, as well as to foreign ports to conduct cold treatment ship certifications.

Law is looking forward to the challenge of his next POP assignment, wherever in the world that may take him.
In a great example of preparation meeting opportunity, Claire Franklin was the first APHIS employee to take advantage of the new Federal benefits available to same-sex married couples, enrolling in a self-and-family Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) plan. Claire has been with the agency since 2002, working as a data technician for Plant Protection and Quarantine’s Citrus Health Response Program. She also serves on the Integrated Plant Health Information System Change Control Board. Prior to joining USDA, she worked for 4 years with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as an office automation specialist.

Claire met Katherine Derr, her partner, about 20 years ago as members of an eclectic band called Waking Giants; Claire was the drummer and Katherine the lead singer. Eventually, the band broke up, and the two lost touch, but after the group reunited in 2005, they became a couple.

One of their big challenges has been health insurance. Katherine works as an office manager in a private company with limited health benefits that cost $400 per month; the couple found themselves with significant medical debt that could have been avoided if they were married. “We [Federal employees] have great insurance,” says Claire, “and I wasn’t able to put her on it.” When they heard that the Supreme Court would be ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), they knew they wanted to be ready if the opportunity arose for Katherine to qualify as Claire’s family member in an FEHB plan.

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 26 that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was unconstitutional, APHIS’ Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services team immediately mobilized to notify employees that Federal benefits now extend to all employees and annuitants in a legal marriage. Thus, same-sex couples are eligible for the same benefits as opposite-sex couples.

The interpretation of the law was treated as a qualifying life event, meaning that employees already in a legal same-sex marriage had 60 days (in this case, until August 26) to enroll in or change their enrollment in the health benefits programs, including life insurance, dental and vision insurance, and long-term care.

While only a handful of APHIS employees changed benefits packages during the special open enrollment period, now all legally married employees have the same options. Same-sex marriage is now permitted in Washington, D.C., and 14 States—California, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington; however, benefits coverage applies regardless of the employee or annuitant’s State of residency. More than a dozen countries also have legalized same-sex marriages.

For more information on benefits programs and enrollment, visit MRPBS’ benefits Web pages.

Continued on next page
The idea of marrying in Washington, D.C., where same-sex marriage is legal, "just kind of came up." The couple had always talked about seeing the annual cherry blossoms, but had never done it. In the spring of 2013, Katherine announced they would finally be making that trip, "….and oh, by the way….we should get married when we’re there." That made perfect sense to Claire. In April 2013, they were married on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Claire and Katherine reside in Sarasota, FL, where same-sex marriage is expressly prohibited by the Florida Constitution. This means they are not legally married in their home State—not guaranteed hospital visitation rights or property inheritance rights, and they face other limitations. They participate in their county’s domestic partnership registry, but it is limited in scope and does not apply outside the city limits.

Still, when the Supreme Court ruling came down in June, they were ready with their D.C. marriage license, and a recent Internal Revenue Service decision means they can also file a joint tax return. “My marriage is finally treated the same as opposite-sex marriages, and I get to be equal to my straight married coworkers. This will have a tremendous impact on our lives and on my personal experience as a USDA-APHIS employee. Thank you!”

In August, the American Phytopathological Society (APS) honored Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Laurene Levy and Mary Palm with the Society’s Excellence in Regulatory Affairs and Crop Security Award. The award was in recognition of their outstanding contributions to regulatory plant pathology, crop security, and trade enhancement efforts.

The Society cited Levy and Palm’s combined efforts to prepare for and respond to significant quarantine programs such as Phytophthora ramorum, the USDA response to soybean rust, citrus greening, daylily rust, gladiolus rust, citrus black spot, plum pox virus, and Ralstonia solanacearum Race 3 Biovar 2.

APS praised Levy and Palm—along with the work of their APHIS colleagues and cooperators—for helping to ensure that the United States has the tools, training, and diagnostic systems needed to respond to significant plant disease emergencies.

For more about APS and Levy and Palm’s award, visit the Society’s Web pages.
APHIS employees work hard every day to keep U.S. agriculture healthy, productive, and profitable. Judging by the fiscal year (FY) 2013 figures and accomplishments, the efforts of APHIS and its many partners are adding up to success for U.S. producers and for the U.S. economy.

It was another record-breaking year for U.S. agricultural exports, contributing to what President Obama called in his State of the Union address “the strongest five-year stretch of farm exports in our history.”

For FY 2013, U.S. agricultural exports increased by $5 billion, bringing the total value to approximately $141 billion. For example, last year, APHIS issued nearly 113,000 certificates for animal exports and almost 174,000 certificates for animal product exports. On the plant side, we and our State and county cooperators issued more than 605,000 Federal phytosanitary certificates, with our automated system producing the vast majority—95 percent. In addition, APHIS overseas attachés worked to obtain the release of about $34 million worth of agricultural shipments detained at foreign ports.

For FY 2013, U.S. agricultural exports increased by $5 billion, bringing the total value to approximately $141 billion and supporting nearly one million U.S. jobs, all the while helping to feed the world.

APHIS played a key role in resolving 194 trade-related issues, including high-impact BSE-related issues—see page two sidebar BSE and Trade. The result is $2.7 billion in new markets opened and existing markets retained or expanded.

These accomplishments represent not only APHIS’ longstanding work to retain, open or reopen markets, but also the agency’s daily efforts to facilitate trade.

**APHIS Trade Accomplishments**

For FY 2013, U.S. agricultural exports increased by $5 billion, bringing the total value to approximately $141 billion.
[key accomplishments and more]

Here are some of the key accomplishments for FY 2013. For more details and information, read the SPS Accomplishments Report, Fiscal Year 2013.

- Reopening markets in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia for U.S. hatching eggs and day-old chicks ($20 million/year).
- Regaining access for poultry and poultry products to China, Japan, and Taiwan—valued at $529.4 million, $175.4 million, and $128.4 million, respectively. This represents significant progress in reducing avian influenza-related restrictions.
- Extending a pilot program to continue the export of logs from Virginia and South Carolina to China; addressing China’s pest-related concerns about log shipments from several other States, accounting for $578 million in exports.
- Obtaining the first-ever market access for U.S. pears to China, a market valued at $2.7 million. USDA expects China to become one of the top five export destinations for U.S. pears.

Additionally, APHIS worked with trading partners and U.S. growers to identify practical, technical solutions that would allow us to retain access to other valuable markets for U.S. crops. Examples include:

- Reaching agreements with South Korea allowing the export of U.S. cherries ($74 million/year) and the continued export of California citrus ($150 million/year).
- Gaining approval for the export of all cherry varieties to Japan, including ones produced under a systems approach that has been widely adopted in the Pacific Northwest and California ($15 million/year).
- Continuing the European grapevine moth program’s success in California.

The program’s industry-driven approach enables the continued export of U.S. grapes ($844 million/year) and protects California’s grape and tree fruit industry valued at $5.7 billion.

APHIS continues business process improvements to better ensure that U.S. importers and exporters can move at the speed of commerce. In FY 2013, the agency shortened the amount of time it takes to develop import-related regulatory actions by well over a year. APHIS also completed 22 commodity-import pest-risk analyses representing potential new market access for a total of 39 country-commodity combinations.

bse and trade

In 2013, the World Organization for Animal Health’s upgraded the United States’ bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) status to negligible risk, reinforcing for trading partners that our BSE surveillance activities and safeguards are strong.

Veterinary Service and International Services employees worked diligently over the course of 10 years to achieve the reclassification to negligible risk, and APHIS is now seeing the benefits of these efforts as it reopens valuable trade markets for U.S. producers. For example, APHIS recently restored the $25 million market in Indonesia for U.S. beef and beef products, as well as the $150 million Indonesian market for U.S. meat and bone meal.
wildlife services

snowy owl

numbers surge

By Mike Booth

This winter a sudden increase in the number of snowy owls expanded the owl’s range far and wide. Known as an “irruption,” the population surge is presenting challenges for Wildlife Services (WS) damage management efforts at airports from the Midwest to the Northeast and as far south as Florida on the eastern seaboard.

Mike Begier, national coordinator for WS’ airport wildlife hazards program, said minor irruptions are common in the northern tier of the United States and are observable as natural population fluctuations. But it has been more than 40 years since the last major irruption occurred, driving the raptors farther into the South. Some scientists believe an overabundance of food sources may have created the population boom.

And now as these territorial raptors are divvying up available hunting ground, they are coming up short. This winter, sightings of snowy owls have been reported in Arkansas, Florida, and even Bermuda. The snowy owl is the largest owl in North America and can cause major damage to aircraft. Before the irruption year, between 1990 and 2012, the Federal Aviation Administration reported 84 collisions between snowy owls and aircraft, totaling 147 hours of aircraft down time and $440,000 in damage.

WS is partnering with Project SNOWstorm to track the owls’ migration to learn more about their general movements, feeding, and habitat use. WS personnel recently assisted the project by placing GPS trackers on snowy owls at Martin State Airport near Baltimore, MD, and at the Philadelphia International Airport.

Since human health and safety is the basis for WS’ focus on this issue, the program hopes to use the collected data for collision prevention efforts at airports. Early data illustrate the magnitude of the irruption and WS’ response. During fiscal year 2013, WS managed snowy owl issues at airports in 10 States and relocated or dispersed 63 raptors. In the first half of fiscal year 2014, the program addressed issues in 19 States and relocated or dispersed 584 snowy owls. ●

For more info, see www.projectsnowstorm.org

irruption basics

- Irrupt of a natural population: to undergo a sudden upsurge in numbers especially when natural ecological balances and checks are disturbed.
- The 2013 irruption is the largest the East Coast has seen in 40–50 years.
- Snowy owls are attracted to airports because the areas typically resemble tundra habitat.
- Snowy Owl Diet: An adult may eat more than 1,600 lemmings per year and may supplement its diet with rabbits, rodents, birds, and fish.
- Size/Weight: 3.5 to 6.5 pounds, 20-28 inch body with a 4.2 to 4.8 foot wingspan.
bse and trade

Administrator Kevin Shea has made it one of his top goals to eliminate all remaining trade barriers from the first BSE detection in the United States in December 2003. For more, visit the BSE and Trade section of the Administrator’s Vision and Goals portal pages.

The $6.2 billion in exports of U.S.-origin beef and beef products during calendar year 2013 far surpasses the $3.9 figure for 2003; however, 20 trading partners still maintain BSE-related restrictions preventing the importation of all U.S. beef, beef products, and live cattle.

We will continue to work closely with our partners in USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service, as well as the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, to leverage our negligible BSE risk status and open more doors for U.S. agricultural exports.

grand opening in los angeles

On February 6, APHIS held a grand opening for its new Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station and Animal Import Center.

The facility was built to better meet import needs in the Los Angeles area and as part of the agency’s larger effort to ensure that all inspection stations are brought up to APHIS standards. With the new building, the agency also seized the opportunity to combine two Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) work units—plant inspection station and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance employees—together under one roof.

Each year, plant health safeguarding specialists inspect a large volume of plants that are mailed, carried, and shipped into the United States by brokers, travelers, and nursery owners. In fiscal year 2013, the Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station inspected over 108 million imported plants—not to mention seeds and other plant material presented for inspection.

The new facility is also home to Veterinary Services’ Animal Import Center staff, which includes veterinarians, animal health technicians, and document examiners. They supervise importation and quarantines for livestock, poultry, and zoo animals entering through Los Angeles International Airport. In addition, the VS staff handles import inspections, endorses international health certificates, conducts on-farm pre-export inspections, and supervises the export of horses, livestock, and zoo animals, as well as the export of dogs and cats to certain rabies-free countries.

[good for agriculture and the environment]

The new facility was designed and constructed to meet the agency’s work needs and also green-building certification standards (LEED Silver) that are good for the environment.

Design features include:

- Low water-use fixtures and services;
- Native landscaping;
- Laboratories and inspection rooms;
- Increased dock space to serve more trucks of all sizes (from vans to 53-foot trucks) simultaneously; and,
- Space to conduct training for partners in Customs and Border Protection (CBP), stakeholders, and other cooperators.

The grand opening of the Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station and Animal Import Center also provided an opportunity to celebrate USDA’s partnership with CBP, the California Department of Agriculture, stakeholders, and other cooperators.

Continued from page 2
this survival guide is for you

By John Scott

As APHIS employees we often wear many hats at work. We get asked to step into new projects, take on unfamiliar tasks, or to help rethink and revamp existing programs or activities.

Do any of these sound familiar?

• You’ve been asked to help justify a budget but don’t know what information to provide.
• You have a new suggestion regarding field work but aren’t sure about the environmental implications and how to learn more.
• You’re assigned to help evaluate a project’s progress but aren’t clear about first steps.

The new Survival Guide for Program Planning and Management provides valuable information on these topics—and more!

The Survival Guide offers helpful information on all facets of program and project planning. Plus, it provides useful information on the other critically important parts of your work cycle: evaluating and monitoring results.

[what’s inside]

As a resource tool, the Survival Guide meets you right where you are, and it’s organized to help with your specific needs. For example, if you’re a new or aspiring manager, the guide offers a full range of resources—comprehensively breaking down all the pieces and parts of planning, evaluating, and monitoring.

Or, if you’re a seasoned manager looking to revitalize a program and you want information specifically about performance metrics, the guide covers that too.

And, if you’re part of a new project team and your role is to lead the team through some key decision points, then the Survival Guide’s “decision support” section is for you.

Developed by APHIS’ Policy and Program Development, the Survival Guide is organized by topic and easily navigated as a reference manual. Sections contain straightforward explanations, examples, and key point summaries.

Survival Guide for Program Planning and Management

Planning
• Decision Support
• Developing Basic Program Rationale
• Strategic Planning
• Operational Planning
• Project Management Overview
• Budget as a Management Tool
• Rulemaking
• Environmental Compliance

Evaluation and Monitoring
• Performance Metrics and Measures
• Business Process Improvement
• Comprehensive Program Reviews and Monitoring
• Evidence of Review and Evaluation

Visit the Survival Guide online today!
What do Nike shoes, Gucci purses, Rolex watches and wood packaging materials (WPM) have in common? They have all been the target of counterfeit activities. And although wood pallets with counterfeit markings may not be as stylish as a Rolex, they can still be costly—especially to U.S. agriculture and natural resources.

WPM containing residual insect eggs/larvae has been responsible for many introductions of exotic forest pests—including emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle—into the United States. To prevent further spread of exotic forest pests through WPM, APHIS and fellow signatories to the International Plant Protection Convention abide by a 2002 agreement that requires all WPM—with certain specific exemptions—used in international commerce to be heat-treated or fumigated with methyl bromide.

After treatment, each piece of WPM must be stamped with a two-letter code indicating the manufacturing country, the type of treatment used, and a unique number identifying the specific WPM manufacturer (see illustration). These stamps visually indicate to port authorities worldwide that the wood used to transport an imported shipment has been treated to mitigate against forest pests.

Under Memorandums of Understanding with APHIS, the American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC) and the National Wooden Pallet and Container Association, working in collaboration with 23 accredited independent third-party agencies, monitor compliance with the program’s requirements at approximately 5,100 WPM manufacturers nationwide. The third-party agencies continually audit how much treated wood each manufacturer produces or purchases, and compare that figure against the company’s invoices for completed pallets.

Unfortunately, sometimes companies—both here and abroad—choose not to play by the rules. Some try to save money by cutting corners and shipping unmarked or fraudulently marked, untreated WPM. If incoming WPM arrives at a port unmarked, port officials have the authority to refuse entry of the entire shipment.

WPM counterfeiting can take various forms. For example, a WPM manufacturer may use its legitimate stamp to mark untreated WPM. Such a violation by a domestic manufacturer can result in the company’s suspension from the certification program for up to 180 days, along with enforcement action by APHIS. APHIS alerts its overseas counterparts whenever it finds evidence of fraudulently marked foreign WPM.

There have also been instances when a WPM manufacturer has engaged in blatant counterfeiting by stealing or forging the stamp of a legitimate stamp owner—a violation of both the Plant Protection Act and trademark law. The largest penalty to date for trademark violation resulting from WPM counterfeiting was an almost-$1 million civil judgment issued against a New York packing freight company.

Sample stamp, courtesy of Carolina Inspection Services, Inc.
In another instance, a pallet company was marking its goods using a stolen stamp taken by an employee from his previous employer. In a Texas case, a man in charge of a wholesale grocery’s shipping operations tried to save time and money by forging a copy of a legitimate stamp and using it to mark untreated pallets that moved back and forth across the border. His counterfeiting scheme was uncovered because the impression made by the bogus stamp was significantly smaller than a legitimate one; he had copied the design from a shrunken image that appeared in an advertisement.

Site content is reviewed by a team of volunteer moderators with help from a cadre of subject matter experts.

Continued from page 6

APHIS’ Investigative Enforcement Services (IES) has investigated more than 100 cases of domestic WPM fraud. IES first works to determine if there is fraudulent activity. If there is substantial evidence indicating so, IES may send the case to USDA’s Office of the General Counsel for formal administrative action. In cases with strong evidence of willful and knowing fraud, the Office of Inspector General or the Department of Justice may pursue criminal charges. A former president of ALSC was recently quoted as saying “In every case we know about, APHIS’ involvement has stopped illegal activity immediately.”
By Abbey Fretz

On February 7, President Obama signed into law the long-awaited Agricultural Act of 2014, better known as the 2014 Farm Bill. After several years of congressional debate, agencies across USDA are now focused on implementing Farm Bill programs across the country.

A number of provisions in the Farm Bill will strengthen APHIS’ core mission of protecting U.S. agricultural and natural resources by better allowing us to protect plant and animal health.

Two key Plant Protection and Quarantine programs were strengthened in the bill: The 2008 Farm Bill Section 10201 program and the National Clean Plant Health Network were combined and given additional funding. Together, these programs give APHIS extra tools—such as, research to improve plant pest identification; enhanced efforts against fruit flies; and increased study of honey bee pests and diseases—and they help strengthen our partnerships to further the agency’s mission.

The Farm Bill strengthens other APHIS programs, too. It gives Animal Care new authority that will better allow it to focus resources on those animals most at risk of being mistreated or harmed. It provides support for our new national strategy to stop feral swine from damaging agriculture and natural resources. And it codifies the National Animal Health Laboratory Network while authorizing a funding increase for the program.

The bill provides additional tools and resources to combat citrus greening and other devastating citrus diseases. This is a top priority for APHIS, and the Farm Bill gives our partner USDA agencies additional resources to dedicate to long-term research priorities to address this devastating disease.

[USDA’s implementation plan]

USDA has created a working group to develop and carry out a coordinated plan for implementation of the law. APHIS, in turn, has a working group made up of representatives of each impacted program and headed by Associate Administrator Mike Gregoire.

It is essential that we work with stakeholders as we begin thinking about how to implement our Farm Bill provisions. To that end, APHIS held two listening sessions in mid-March to begin gathering input from interested groups. We’ll also be working closely with our impacted programs to make sure we bring the same level of dedication and creative thinking to implementing the bill.

[more information]

For more information on these and all of APHIS’ Farm Bill provisions, you can visit the portal’s Congressional News–Farm Bill page. Go to the Congressional News page and select Farm Bill from the list of Legislative Topics on the left. There, you’ll find summaries of the provisions of interest to APHIS, along with the legislative language.●
Good internal communications helps keep APHIS performing at its best. That means making sure that information is shared and issues are surfaced from throughout the agency. With this in mind, the agency has recently added field representatives to the APHIS Management Team (AMT).

Previously, the AMT consisted of the APHIS administrator, the associate administrator(s), and the deputy administrators from each APHIS program area. Now, the AMT also includes five representatives for field employees. By adding field representation to the AMT, the goal is to mutually enrich both AMT leadership efforts and APHIS field operations — making certain that key information is traveling in both directions between the AMT and the field.

The current AMT field representatives are: Rebecca Bech (Plant Protection and Quarantine), Rich Chipman (Wildlife Services), Andrea Morgan (Animal Care), T.J. Myers (Veterinary Services), and Mark Prescott (International Services).

During monthly AMT meetings, the field representatives weigh in on discussions and provide perspectives from the field; plus, there’s a standing agenda item for them to introduce issues that they’ve heard about from field employees.

Employees are encouraged to contact their AMT field representative to raise questions, comments, or concerns.

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**agency calendar**

### may

National Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Watch your email for events and announcements.

**The APHIS Training and Development Calendar** provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

Veterinary Services’ Professional Development Staff posts an updated **training calendar** that features upcoming VS training opportunities and points of contact.

Boston Asian longhorned beetle eradication ceremony; May 12; Arnold Arboretum, Boston, MA; Contact Christie Bertone (christie.a.bertone@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

### june

Ergonomics Webinar: Is This Safe To Lift? (Manual Material Handling); June 11; Register via Aglearn; Contact Ginger Dorsey (ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

### july

National Plant Board Meeting, July 27–31; St. Louis MO.
Did you know that the estimated annual price tag of feral swine damage and control costs in the United States is more than $1.5 billion?

That’s a mighty big number and so is the estimated U.S. population of feral swine. There are approximately 5 million feral swine nationwide, with free-ranging populations present in at least 39 States. California, Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas have the highest populations.

The sheer number of feral swine alone makes them a formidable foe. Add to this the variety of damage they can cause and the disease risk they pose, and the situation gets even more troublesome.

Feral swine eat and destroy field crops such as corn, milo, rice, watermelon, spinach, peanuts, hay, turf, and wheat. They are also efficient predators and, given the opportunity, prey upon young livestock, other small animals, and the eggs of ground-nesting birds. The prey of these indiscriminate eaters includes threatened and endangered species.

national program set to launch

With $20 million in newly appropriated funding, APHIS is launching the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program. The program brings a national focus to the issue—strategically and collaboratively addressing the problem of feral swine more effectively than previously possible.

Wildlife Services (WS) will provide oversight to the APHIS program, with much of the funding going to WS State offices, and will develop programs to address feral swine by building State partnerships, leveraging additional resources (local, State, and Federal), and coordinating the many State partnerships for maximum impact and cost-effectiveness. WS also will conduct research to enhance feral swine activities and collect biological samples for disease detection.

APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) and International Services (IS) programs will also play roles in the national program. For example, VS will be involved with conducting disease diagnostics and managing livestock disease data, and IS will lend its expertise dealing with issues that cross U.S. borders to the north and south.

The national program’s initial focus will be to stem the leading edge of feral swine’s spread and then systematically reduce their populations. One of the primary steps will be to ensure that WS has an established an operational feral swine control program within each State where feral swine are present.

With broader partnerships, the new national program will also be better positioned to strengthen control operations in a cost-effective manner. For example, the program plans to develop and use regional teams for aerial control operations; the aerial teams can serve the needs of multiple States, decreasing financial costs.

To learn more about feral swine and APHIS’ current work, visit Wildlife Services’ feral swine page and APHIS feral swine management playlist on YouTube.
Continued from page 10

In addition, their rooting of vegetation destroys native plants, clearing the way for invasive ones to re-vegetate damaged areas.

Their wallowing activities contaminate water supplies and impact water quality. And feral swine can destroy livestock and game fences and consume livestock feed and protein supplements.

Making matters worse, feral swine have been known to carry or transmit over 30 diseases and 37 parasites that can be transmitted to livestock, people, pets, and wildlife. For U.S. livestock producers, the disease risk posed by feral swine could be costly.

If a foreign animal disease, such as classical swine fever or foot-and-mouth disease, were to enter the United States, feral swine could spread the disease to domestic swine or other susceptible animals. Such diseases would be extremely difficult to eradicate if established in feral swine populations. Another concern is the potential reintroduction of diseases—such as pseudorabies and swine brucellosis—that have previously been eradicated from U.S. livestock.
Although Gilkey’s initial request for an exemption to allow the dolphins to travel directly to Dubrovnik was rejected, he made headway on the certificate by enlisting the help of Kaman. A 22-year APHIS veteran who has negotiated health certificates for everything from oysters to giraffes, Kaman soon found herself discussing extensive lists of marine animal diseases and certifications with her Croatian and Navy counterparts. Within just a few weeks, she had worked out terms that all could agree to for what she calls “my first dolphins.”

Meantime, the port-of-entry issue was resolved after Gilkey suggested that Dubrovnik be temporarily designated a military airfield, paving the way for a nonstop dolphin flight.

The exercise went off on schedule—and swimmingly. After arriving in Dubrovnik on a Boeing C-17 Globemaster to the flash of media cameras, the dolphins quickly got down to business, searching the Adriatic for mines with Croatian and U.S. military divers and staff in tow. And the IS/VS team that helped make it possible was able to take pride in a job well done. “In a way, we were our own pod of dolphins, looking for mines in international waters,” says Gilkey. “The key was teamwork. And the result…clear sailing.”
Between October 2013 and early March 2014, a total of 80 employees retired from the agency. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

October 1, 2013–March 8, 2014
animal care
Irene Fernandez Riverdale, MD
Gary Goldberg Shrewsbury, MA
Robert Willems Raleigh, NC

biotechnology regulatory services
Levis Handley Riverdale, MD

international services
Carolyn Cohen Riverdale, MD

legislative and public affairs
Lawrence Hawkins Sacramento, CA
Bevelyn Whitfield Riverdale, MD

marketing and regulatory programs business services
Drusilla Dukart Minneapolis, MN
Leigh Eberhart Minneapolis, MN
Annette Perry Riverdale, MD
Barbara Recktenwald Lakewood, CO
Anthony Santitorno Raleigh, NC
Lissa Scott Riverdale, MD
Michael Thomas Fort Collins, CO

Plant Protection and Quarantine
Ramon Benavides Mission, TX
Dollina Brown Wilmington, NC

Susan Ellis Randolph Foster, Ill
Tom Kalaris Charles Izumi
David Kaplan Roger Lamp
Paul Larks Joanne Martin
Victor Mastro Charles McNeal, Jr.
Arthur Medeiros, Jr.
Robert Meinders
Henry Odom, Jr.
Joseph Ploski
David Renz
Linda Schepers
James Schoenholz
Michael Simon
John Stein
Paul Sugibayashi
Robert Vlasik
Dawn Wade
Randall Wilkinson

Philadelphia, PA
Phoenix, AZ
Fort Collins, CO
Hilo, HI
Riverdale, MD
Raleigh, NC
Raleigh, NC
Armitageville, NY
Otis AFB, MA
Fort Collins, CO
Kahului, HI
Frederick, MD
Phoenix, AZ
Wilmington, OH
Raleigh, NC
Raleigh, NC
Riverdale, MD
Riverdale, MD
Honolulu, HI
Mcallen, TX
Frederick, MD
Beltsville, MD

Stephen Clemmer
Sandra Copenhaver
Garry Cracraft
Teresa Dudis
Eleanor Eagly
Janice Eiffling
Eldon Halvorson
Barbara Hedberg
James Hill
Stormy Jones
Billy Kasney
Elizabeth Lussier
Daniel Martinez
Tom McLarty
Barbara Miller
Jane Mussey
Cornelis Noordermeer
Joseph Ozdiana
Carlos Soto Alberti
Ronald Uherka
Melvin Vermeesch
James Williams
Mark Wilson

Fort Collins, CO
Helena, MT
Cynthiana, KY
Delavan, IL
Ames, IA
Ames, IA
Lenmore, ND
Ames, IA
San Angelo, TX
Riverdale, MD
Fort Collins, CO
Dryden, NY
Zapata, TX
Mutual, OK
Albany, NY
Madison, WI
Lafayette, AL
Mattawan, MI
San Juan, PR
Kissimmee, FL
Port Huron, MI
Lakewood, CO
Ames, IA

policy and program development
Eva Ring

Riverdale, MD

veterinary services
John Akin
Lowell Anderson
Suzette Anderson
David Bartling
Gary Baudino
Steven Bengtson
Kevin Cassidy

Hope, AR
Des Moines, IA
Ames, IA
Fort Collins, CO
Brownsville, TX
Fort Collins, CO
Fort Collins, CO

Jerry Blue
Frank Boyd, Jr.
Richard Christian
George Cornelius
Curtis Cruse
Ronnie De Los Santos
Nancy Gaines
Mark Mayberry
William Nelson
Donald Rodriguez

Little River, SC
Auburn, AL
Waupen, WI
Albuquerque, NM
Lebeau, LA
San Antonio, TX
Athens, GA
Port Angeles, WA
Reserve, NM
Pueblo, CO •
Coming soon to a computer screen near you: The APHIS Information Technology Strategic Plan.

Roughly every 5 years, APHIS looks ahead to its tech future, mapping a course of action to manage information technology (IT) activities and deliver services to both APHIS employees and agency customers. The resulting IT Strategic Plan gives employees and those who interact with the agency—customers, partners, and stakeholders—an idea of what to expect, technology-wise.

“As technology changes and our customers expect quicker solutions and better access to information, we must continually think about what the future will bring,” said APHIS Chief Information Officer Gary Washington.

The latest IT Strategic Plan—aligned with the USDA and APHIS overall strategic plans, as well as USDA and Office of Management and Budget directives—was developed by a team that includes the agency’s IT Leadership Advisory Council. The APHIS Management Team subsequently reviewed and approved the draft strategic plan, which was shared in March with IT specialists. They, in turn, will be involved in creating an operational plan to ensure that IT projects and work actively support the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan, which is expected to be finalized this spring.

The APHIS IT Strategic Plan will have four goals:

**Enhance technology to better serve customers.**
To do this, APHIS will increase the availability of information. This includes enacting standards for data sharing and making available high-volume data (what tech types call “big data”) to support leadership decisionmaking. APHIS also is working to extend access to cloud-based services and establish an agency-wide electronic/digital signature system. In addition, the agency plans to make its interfaces more user-friendly for those on the go: increasing the use and capability of a variety of mobile applications and devices and allowing employees to deploy a virtual desktop no matter where they work.

**Unify IT service delivery and products/services.**
Unifying disparate data sources promises to increase security, deliver more timely service, and even reduce costs. Already, data housed in Minneapolis and Raleigh have been migrated to the National Information Technology Center in Kansas City, MO; data currently housed in Riverdale, Ames, and Fort Collins will be migrated by December 2014. APHIS also intends to modernize its communications strategy—integrating voice, video, and data telecomm capabilities—and expand the technical ability of USDA agencies to work within the same network and to share data.

**Secure APHIS IT data and systems.**
This includes investments in file and message encryption, and advanced cybersecurity tools that adhere to the privacy principles of USDA, APHIS, and our customers, partners, and stakeholders.

**Build an effective cadre of highly skilled IT professionals.**
To stay abreast of current issues, standards, and trends, APHIS needs to acquire, develop, and retain IT talent, and ensure that the best-equipped teams are on hand to effectively carry out business objectives.
Wildlife damage management is a discipline that is both science and art, and requires practical field experiences as well as traditional classroom study. At 21 universities throughout the country, Wildlife Services (WS) employees teach 32 courses on how to reduce the negative impacts of wildlife while conserving or enriching the positive aspects. Most of these courses incorporate field and lab activities where students either participate in or observe actual WS operations on the properties of private or governmental cooperators. In an increasingly urban and technological America, the hands-on, real-world skills taught by experienced WS specialists sometimes provide students with their first field encounters. Students often rate the courses or individual labs highly—some saying that they are the most useful that they’ve taken.

Kris Godwin, WS director in Mississippi, concluded her curriculum last fall with a field lab that is sure to make a lasting impression. It was a real blast—literally.

[Outdoor classroom] Mississippi State University (MSU), where Godwin is an adjunct professor, recently received the gift of a $1.4 million, 550-acre

Standing atop a beaver dam, Wildlife Services’ (WS) Johnny Carter (center with hard hat) shows students how to string wire to detonate charges for dam removal. WS State Director Kris Godwin (right of Carter) watches the preparations.
property near Starkville, MI. The University has developed a management plan to use the Andrews Forest and Wildlife Laboratory for a variety of learning experiences, including forestry, wildlife, and other classes. WS wildlife technician Johnny Carter will work with Misty Booth, an MSU forest supervisor, on clean-up projects and to remove beaver and their dams that negatively impact the property.

In typical WS multitasking fashion, the parcel’s management work was integrated into a class last November. Godwin, Carter, and Booth took the graduate and undergraduate students to the Andrews lab and demonstrated trapping techniques to prevent overnight beaver dam reconstruction, which is not uncommon. Although dams are sometimes manually removed with hand tools, the final demonstration was much more dramatic.

[learning is a blast]

WS has a cadre of certified specialists skilled in the safe and effective use of explosives to remove beaver dams that can cause extensive flooding—and damage—to timber, fields, and transportation infrastructure.

As the accompanying video shows, a stream’s flow can be immediately released, relieving upstream flooding, by removing a dam. Watch what happens just moments after Carter’s “Fire in the Hole” call, which has to be one of the most memorable closings to a college course ever recorded.

Similar WS cooperative teaching efforts take place in Georgia, Indiana, New York, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and other States. While some past students have joined WS after graduation, this isn’t the only potential benefit.

Regardless of whether they pursue a career in wildlife services, natural resources, or some other field, all of the participating students gain a deeper understanding about wildlife conflicts and APHIS’ efforts to manage them.

Continued from page 15

in memoriam

We lost several members of the APHIS family from October 2013 through early March of this year.

We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

plant protection and quarantine
Debra Lissau           Idaho Falls, ID
Ashima Sengupta       Riverdale, MD

veterinary services
James Earl            East Lansing, MI

wildlife services
Saidor Turman         Fort Stockton, TX
Marlyn Riggs          Enterprise, OR
Sometimes a single phone call can make a very big difference. It was the end of the work day in the Western Region office when Animal Care (AC) received such a call from a concerned lieutenant with the Las Vegas Police Department.

The lieutenant called AC to request help with an urgent situation at the Las Vegas Zoo, where there had previously been some animal welfare issues. A variety of factors had caused the zoo’s owner to close the facility the previous week, and the officer was concerned that its animals were in jeopardy. The sole caretaker—the owner—had limited resources for feed and was struggling to provide basic care to the facility’s more-than 300 animals. The situation was dire, and AC responded by immediately dispatching a team of employees to the zoo. Despite the sense of urgency of the situation, the team needed to approach the owner diplomatically. They had to find an agreeable solution that quickly addressed the animals’ immediate needs, but there was also concern that if the situation got more complicated, the delay could further harm the animals.

APHIS personnel met with the owner and were able to guide the situation toward a productive solution: They would assist the owner with the zoo’s closure and animal relocation. This strategy provided more direct overall support for the animals’ welfare than would any type of traditional enforcement action. And it provided a permanent resolution to the existing enforcement issues.

**[busy two weeks]**

With a plan in place, the APHIS team went to work tending to the facility’s collection of mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish. AC staff ensured that the animals—which ranged from flamingos, to cougar, to chimpanzees, to Gila monster, and more—received appropriate care, food, and medical attention.

In addition to providing needed care, AC tapped its extensive network of facilities and organizations to help find new homes for the animals. “We put out an all-points bulletin,” said Elizabeth Meek, AC assistant regional director.

Meek and others were impressed with the response. Zoos, sanctuaries, rescue organizations, and other Animal Welfare Act licensees from far and wide stepped up to adopt and transport the animals.

AC employees spent long hours on the phone making arrangements with the new owners. And AC regional staff worked with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other State offices to coordinate permits needed to move animals, some of which were endangered species.

With the constant buzz of activity also came attention from news media. AC staff on the ground conferred with Legislative and Public Affairs and handled the media interest, which dwindled as animals were steadily relocated.

In all, the team was onsite for nearly two weeks. AC—along with its many partners—completed the relocations by October 9. Meek credits their success to the hard work and dedication of team members and to the diverse collection of people and organizations that got involved.

“A lot of animals lived because people put their differences aside for the sake of the animals,” said Meek.
manager profile

with

wendy jin

Wendy Jin, Branch Chief
Eastern Compliance Assurance
Biotechnology Regulatory Services
Raleigh, NC

[what is your background?] I grew up in the southeast part of China; I earned my BS in biology and an MS in plant breeding from China. I graduated from Iowa State University with a PhD in plant physiology and molecular biology. I spent most of my career in industry prior to joining APHIS.

[how long have you been with aphis?] I joined APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) in 2008.

[most memorable APHIS experience?] My colleague and I delivered our first biotechnology inspection training in March 2009. I could never forget the hugs I received from field inspectors at the last day of the training before they left. It is encouraging and comforting to know that we were helpful.

[priorities in the coming months?] I am currently on my developmental detail assignment with the Office of the Deputy Administrator, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS). The work I do here in MRPBS is totally outside of my backyard, and I have absolutely enjoyed my detail so far. My priorities are to learn as much as I can and deliver the best products and services.

[accomplishment most proud of?] I have recruited a large number of employees throughout my career. To watch my staff developing themselves, learning new skills, technical or otherwise, and having the ability and confidence to take on more responsibilities.

[hobbies?] Hiking, gardening, and learning acupressure to promote wellness.

[favorite meal?] It is hard for me to pick just one. I love to eat! Seafood.

[guilty pleasure?] Watching the entire season of House of Cards when it is released.

[favorite movie?] The Shawshank Redemption

[last book read?] Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within by Robert Quinn.

Photo sources: APHIS, R.Benson, M.Booth (MSU), A.Eaglin (LPA), S. Ferreri (PA Game Commission), B.Hicks (AC), R.Olea (WS), USDA, U.S. Navy, Wildlife Services (PA).

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit: www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.

John Scott, Editor
(301) 851-4068
john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov
You may already be familiar with microchipping, branding, and tattooing as ways of identifying horses and other animals. But have you heard about Animal Care’s newest high-tech method for identifying horses?

Animal Care’s Horse Protection program is using iris scanners as part of the agency’s efforts to end horse soring—the practice of intentionally inflicting pain to horses’ limbs to accentuate their gait so they will score higher at competitions.

First used by the program in 2013, the hand-held scanners simply and accurately identify horses before they are inspected at walking horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions.

The resulting photographs—along with any prior violation records, pedigree registrations, and other information—are stored electronically in the scanner. Because no two irises are alike—not even in identical twins—the images are an accurate way to identify horses presented for inspection.

**[the benefits]**
The use of iris scanners came in response to the USDA Office of the Inspector

Continued on next page

By Tanika Whittington
Training abounds at APHIS. The agency routinely provides employees with professional development courses, offers classes through AgLearn, and coordinates mentoring opportunities with fellow colleagues. APHIS even hosts animal- and plant-related training courses for international groups visiting the United States.

However, there are some kinds of training that are less than routine and that take agency employees down a very different road. One recent training landed APHIS’ Ben Kaczmarski on such a road—a narrow, dusty road in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Kaczmarski travelled to Pakistan as a presenter for a distance learning program administered through APHIS’ International Services (IS) and USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

“On the way to class, the driver warned that the road was about to change,” said Kaczmarski, who works on the agency’s Regulatory Analysis and Development staff. “I thought he meant that we were taking a new route. He meant that we were about to go off pavement.”

For Kaczmarski—and APHIS’ Lottie Erikson, who presented a training session just prior to him—the training road in Pakistan brought other unexpected moments and opportunities as well.

**[training for a future]**

IS and FAS began the training initiative in 2011 to support Pakistan’s efforts to develop a plant health program consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) standards. Since the program’s launch, APHIS has provided three training modules: a general overview; an introduction to the WTO’s principles, standards, and terminology; and an overview of the ways in which APHIS responds to a request for market access for a new commodity. Each module includes an online training component followed by live training sessions hosted in country.

The training program offers several layered benefits to Pakistan’s agricultural efforts. It helps build relations between Pakistan’s agricultural and technical staffs and between Pakistan officials and APHIS—as well as other U.S. partners. And by putting the...
regulatory training into action, Pakistan agricultural officials hope to benefit their country through stabilized local economies, an enhanced agricultural infrastructure, and expanded opportunities to participate in international trade.

[bridging language and culture]
While the training is fairly standard, the circumstances aren’t.

“I’ve had experience with plant health training in the U.S. and other countries and have had experience teaching in Pakistan, but this was my first go-round developing and narrating an online module,” said Lottie Erikson, an export analysis coordinator with the agency’s Plant Protection and Quarantine program. Her narrated module was used to prep participants prior to the live training.

“My narration was dubbed into Urdu. When I arrived for the first day of exercises, my students’ comment to me was ‘Memsahib, your Urdu is very good!’” said Erikson.

Kaczmarski has his share of stories, too.

“On the second day of training, we had just wrapped up a passionate discussion about when we should consider a plant pest to be high risk. As we finished, the local imam made the noontime call to prayer,” said Kaczmarski.

“It was about 100 degrees that day. The class stopped, and participants filed outside to face east and pray. I turned to one of my colleagues, and she just smiled and said, “I guess someone’s saying we need a break.”

Despite the linguistic and cultural differences, both Erikson and Kaczmarski were encouraged by how quickly the class picked up some of the more advanced aspects of bilateral trade. During trade negotiation simulations, participants came up with original and culturally specific solutions that fell within WTO parameters.

“I lived in Pakistan for several years, but I had forgotten how almost every exchange is based on negotiation,” said Erikson. “Everyone enjoyed the fast-paced negotiations with spectators cheering on the sidelines as if we were all at a hotly contested cricket match.”

[on a good road]
Kaczmarski and Erikson are both optimistic about the long-term success of the ongoing training initiative.

“Nothing is easy when it comes to trade, but there is definitely cause for hope here,” said Kaczmarski. “They have potential markets for mangoes in the EU. And they have a really good tangerine species with the chance to take advantage of international interests in that, too.”

In the meantime, the training will continue preparing the way for more opportunities. In the coming months, the program is offering participants training modules on pest risk assessments and risk communication.
In mid-May, the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees for Agriculture marked up our Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Appropriations Bill. Later that month, the two bills made their way through Full Appropriations Committee markups in both bodies.

The Senate markup provides $872.414 million for APHIS, an increase of $50.693 million above our current appropriation of $821.721 million. Most of the increase funds a USDA-wide initiative to decentralize its General Services Administration (GSA) rent account (providing $42.567 million for APHIS).

Highlights from the Senate markup include:

• $2 million in new funding to address porcine epidemic diarrhea virus.

• A new line item for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network that contains $10 million; $6.7 million was previously included in APHIS’ Veterinary Diagnostics line item, and $3.3 million was previously funded in the National Institute of Food and Agriculture portion of the bill.

• A $2 million increase for the National Rabies Management Program, for a total of $26 million.

• A $1 million increase for Biotechnology Regulatory Services, for a total of $19.223 million.

The House markup provides $867.505 million for APHIS, an increase of $45.784 million above our current appropriation. Like the Senate markup, most of the increase in the House markup funds the decentralized GSA rent for FY 2015.

The House provided the following funding increases:

• $3.5 million in new funding to address porcine epidemic diarrhea virus.

• $2 million for Overseas Technical and Trade Operations, for a total of $22.114 million, to help resolve sanitary and phytosanitary trade issues and open new markets for U.S. agricultural products.

• $500,000 for the National Veterinary Stockpile, for a total of $4.222 million.

• $5 million for the Citrus Health Response Program, for a total of $48.5 million to address citrus greening disease.

While these markups represent mostly good news for APHIS, neither bill has yet been passed on the Senate or House floor. As it currently stands (as of September 19), Congress passed a Continuing Resolution at FY 2014 funding levels that would be in effect through December 11, 2014. The bill is now on the President’s desk, where he is widely expected to sign it.

The APHIS Training and Development Calendar provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and course descriptions.

For more information, visit the Center for Training and Organizational Development SharePoint site.
By Abby Yigzaw

On July 1, inspectors at Los Angeles International Airport intercepted a shipment of 67 banana rasp snails belonging to the snail family Achatinidae. The Giant African snail, which is considered one of the world’s most damaging snail species, is in the same snail family.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials discovered the shipment and sent samples to APHIS’ Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station for identification.

Patrick Marquez, a Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) entomologist and malacologist, identified the snails and sent digital photos for final confirmation to Fred Zimmerman, APHIS’ Acting National Malacology Specialist.

Zimmerman confirmed that they were banana rasp snails. After notification, CBP seized and destroyed the shipment.

APHIS recently launched its redesigned My.APHIS portal pages with a fresh look, new features, and more resources. My.APHIS makes it easier for you to find the resources you need.

[what’s new and how is it better?]
Visit the new pages today and you’ll see the difference.

• Improved navigation that makes it easier to find information, resources, and news.
• A display that is optimized for use on mobile and tablet devices.
• New and expanded content areas—including an Employee Resources tab with helpful content from Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services, such as HR, financial, administrative, and IT information.
• News Feeds—continuously updated for the latest news media clips, agency information, and Congressional news.
• A search function that taps the My.APHIS site and the APHIS intranet and external Web pages.
• A new “Let Us Help” option for your questions and for suggesting additional content.
• An upgraded blog, making it easier to comment and provide your feedback to Administrator Kevin Shea’s posts.
• A new “Support” tab, which provides quick access to contact information for key agency offices and resources, such as ATAC, Facilities, Travel, and Procurement.
Between March 9 and July 31, 2014, a total of 57 employees retired from the agency. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

March 9–July 31, 2014

animal care
Judy Davis Ogden, UT
Ruth Elder Fort Collins, CO

biotechnology regulatory services
Karen Green Riverdale, MD

international services
Richard Pacer Riverdale, MD

marketing and regulatory programs business services
Deborah Aghamiri Riverdale, MD
John Daugherty Minneapolis, MN
Sharon Hudoba Minneapolis, MN
Herbert Jordan Columbia, SC
Tracy Ramthum Seattle, WA
Diane Riggsbee Raleigh, NC
Thomas Thorne Fort Collins, CO

plant protection and quarantine
Cecilia Beamish Orlando, FL
David Benner Davie, FL
Jane Berkow Riverdale, MD
Nada Carruthers Albany, CA
Kevin Connors Bloomington, MN
William Cousens Miami, FL
John Dooley, Ill San Francisco, CA
Jeffrey Grode Washington, DC
Meredith Jones Riverdale, MD
Linda Mandel Long Beach, CA
Guy Nagai Lihue, HI
Mary Negron Glyco, GA
Henry Nishikawa Lihue, HI
Alberto Rivera Ortiz Ponce, PR
Ailda Rogstad Tampa, FL
Patricia Rufini Wallingford, CT
Frank Salantri Riverdale, MD
Barbara Sowell Biloxi, MS
Jonathan Staples Albany, NY
Arnold Tschanz Riverdale, MD
Gayle van de Kerckhove Seattle, WA
Lloyd Yoshina Hilo, HI

veterinary services
Kathleen Akin Lincoln, NE
Gary Colgrove Riverdale, MD
Randall Crom Fort Collins, CO
Virginia Di Giallonardo Madison, WI
Thomas Dressel Holt, MI
Elizabeth Enciso Jefferson City, MO
David Hopson Maquoketa, IA
Dennis Ihrig Fort Collins, CO
Katherine Jeffrey Fort Collins, CO
Albert Lawrence Raleigh, NC
Philip Marriott Riverdale, MD
Peter Merrill Selah, WA
Susan Miller St. Paul, MN
Betty Real Ames, IA
John Rohret

wildlife services
Joseph Carpenter Chinook, MT
Stanley Colton Denton, MT
Earl Hodnett Riverdale, MD
Barbara Messineo Fort Collins, CO
Gregory Phillips Fort Collins, CO
Keel Price Las Cruces, NM
Gary Rushane Paris, ID
Robert Samuelson Olympia, WA
Michael Thomas Roundup, MT
veterinary services

ojinaga port activities resume

By Ian Perrin

On June 23, Veterinary Services (VS) personnel were cleared to resume port activities for animal imports at the livestock facility in Ojinaga, Mexico.

The facility had been closed since August 2012 due to recurring security concerns and local violence. During the closure, VS employees conducted inspections on the U.S. side of the border at a temporary facility established in Presidio, TX in October 2012.

Prior to resuming livestock inspections in Ojinaga, APHIS officials ensured that appropriate steps were taken to provide for the ongoing safety and security of employees working at the facility. The necessary safety improvements resulted from a collaborative effort involving APHIS and officials in Mexico, other USDA agencies, the U.S. Department of State, and industry.

The Chihuahuan Cattlemen’s Association, for example, completed site improvements such as upgrading the facility’s perimeter fencing, signage, lighting, and secure access points. Additional safety measures were implemented, including coordinating routine facility patrols, providing employees with personal locator/tracking devices, and constructing a safe room equipped with emergency supplies and communication devices.

APHIS officials are pleased that these improvements—along with others—will both safeguard agency employees and enable the movement of healthy livestock through the facility.

in memoriam

Our agency lost several members of the APHIS family from early March through July of this year.

We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

wildlife services
David Baumgartner Hazleton, ND
Gary Rehm Eads, CO
Robin Venuti Richfield, UT
Daniel Vice Barrigada, Guam

marketing and regulatory programs business services
Michael Fuchs Riverdale, MD
Laura Mackenzie Riverdale, MD

plant protection and quarantine
Carol Milanese Albany, NY
Lloyd Richards Honolulu, HI

Sadly, we also note the death of our former APHIS colleague and friend, Paul Eggert who passed away in July.

To read more about Paul’s life and the remembrance written by his daughter, please click here to see Administrator Shea’s July 22, 2014 message to employees.
On July 1, APHIS’ Certification, Accreditation, Registration, Permits, and Other Licenses (CARPOL) team hosted the first APHIS eFile Town Hall meeting for all agency employees. APHIS eFile is the planned agencywide information technology (IT) system that will consolidate several current systems—specifically those that support the agency’s issuance of CARPOL-type authorizations.

By consolidating these systems and using a simple, streamlined Web-based system, APHIS is aiming to reduce the burden on agency stakeholders/applicants. APHIS eFile is a complex project that will affect many programs and existing systems. It will be rolled out in phases and will take between 3 to 5 years to complete.

“This is a great chance for us to make a great leap forward in the IT world,” said Administrator Kevin Shea.

Developing APHIS eFile is “a test of our ability to come together...for the benefit of everyone in the agency,” Shea added.

In addition to Shea, other presenters at the town hall included Associate Administrator Michael Gregoire, APHIS Chief Information Officer Gary Washington, as well as leadership for the four program areas impacted by APHIS e-File—Andrea Morgan (Animal Care), Michael Firko (Biotechnology Regulatory Services), Osama El-Lissy (Plant Protection and Quarantine), and John Clifford (Veterinary Services). During the meeting, a panel of subject matter experts from each of the affected agency programs also responded to employee questions.

“It’s important that we get this right,” said Gregoire, who is overseeing the APHIS eFile project. He—along with the CARPOL team members—recognizes that APHIS’ IT systems are extremely important to the day-to-day functioning of agency programs.

As the project moves forward, Gregoire promised to keep employees informed and engaged with the project.

agency calendar

September
National Hispanic Heritage Month. Watch your email for events and announcements.

North American Plant Protection Organization Biological Control Working Group Meeting; September 9–11; Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico.

Plant Protection and Quarantine Tabletop Incident Command System Exercise; September 10; Phoenix, AZ.

Swine Enteric Coronavirus Disease International Meeting (Veterinary Services and Stakeholder Sponsored); September 23–25; Chicago, IL.

Ergonomics Webinar: Laboratory Ergonomics; September 10; Register via AgLearn; Contact Ginger Dorsey (ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

Working at the Speed of Trust; September 16; 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m (CT); Minneapolis, MN.

Leading at the Speed of Trust; September 17–18; 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m. (CT); Minneapolis, MN.
During summer, “mow the lawn” appears on many people’s list of weekly to-dos. For most, putting the time and money into mowing an acre or two of grass isn’t such a big deal. But for airport land managers who are responsible for cutting hundreds of acres of grass, it is an expensive and daunting task and has safety implications for the aircraft that take off and land.

Thirty-nine to fifty percent of airport properties in the United States are covered by grass. These grasses make the perfect home for certain wildlife species that are responsible for thousands of collisions with aircraft—or wildlife strikes—each year.

To reduce bird populations, airports spend thousands of dollars a year cutting, reseeding, and maintaining these grasslands. In addition to the expense, the laborious upkeep thwarts industry initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**[researching alternatives]**

To address these issues, Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is researching alternatives to turf grass that are less expensive to maintain and attract less hazardous wildlife.

“The purpose of these projects is to find alternatives that won’t attract hazardous wildlife and won’t put an economic drain on airports,” said Travis DeVault, NWRC’s Ohio Field Station leader. So far, NWRC has tested several options that include planting switch grasses (biofuel) and installing solar panels on airport lands.

The U.S. Department of Defense is funding a switch grass project on six military airbases to evaluate its effect on bird populations. “Switch grass is a viable alternative to turf grass because it’s hardy, it’s inexpensive to maintain, and it can be harvested as a forage crop,” said DeVault. But does switch grass reduce the presence of wildlife at airports?

Many critics are concerned that agriculture, regardless of type, will attract unwanted birds to airfields. NWRC’s research, however, suggests that some crops can reduce the presence of birds and subsequent wildlife strikes.

NWRC hopes to use this research to help the industry develop land management policies that will keep the flocks away and produce a yield.

**[here comes the sun]**

To promote green living, the Federal Aviation Administration asked NWRC to test solar panel facilities at airports and to gauge their success at repelling wildlife. NWRC, in collaboration with the University of Mississippi, has observed more birds in areas with solar arrays than in the grasslands; however, the birds are less hazardous than those found in the grasslands. Solar arrays could play a major role in efforts to design and operate greener, safer airports.

“We want the airports and airbases to have options,” said DeVault.

What works for one airport may not work for another as climates, land restrictions, and resources vary by location. For this reason, NWRC will continue to explore more options for airports to consider.
How do you make APHIS’ State and county cooperators truly happy? You make their lives easier and save them money. And if you’re Christian Dellis, supervisor for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program’s Export Services, that means you offer them the Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking (PCIT) system.

The cooperators who issue some 75 percent of the Nation’s phytosanitary certificates for plant and plant product exports—and APHIS’ own staff—benefit from a system that zips along at the speed of international agricultural commerce, reduces costs, and enhances security to boot.

It wasn’t always like this. In the early 2000s, applications for PPQ’s phytosanitary certificates—documents attesting to the health of U.S. plant and plant products exported to foreign countries—were four-part forms filled out with typewriters or by hand.

Because APHIS and its cooperators processed the forms in different locations countrywide, tracking the overall volume of documents was impossible—and it could take 2 weeks just to trace a problematic certificate to the officer who had issued it.

Enter Dellis, whose first move was to contact the cooperators who actually handled the paperwork and find out what, exactly, they needed from a new system. Based on their input, in 2005 he launched a nascent PCIT system as a simple tracking device for PPQ certificates. And, crucially, he kept talking with cooperators about what they wanted.

Nine years and 3,000 tweaks later, PCIT is a Web-based giant that handles all phases of the PPQ phytosanitary certificate application and issuance process.

Thousands of industry applicants and hundreds of Federal and State duty stations now use the system. In fiscal year (FY) 2014 so far, APHIS and its cooperators have issued more than 600,000 certificates.

More. PCIT provides a link to PExD, a repository of foreign countries’ phytosanitary import requirements. It also allows applicants to pay online through one source—an innovation that Dellis says is cooperators’ favorite feature. “Once they had this,” Dellis says, “they moved away from the existing systems they had.”

Cooperators saved precious resources, too. Thanks to PCIT billing efficiencies, says Dellis, one California county did not have to replace two retirees and was able to hire an additional inspector instead.

[security and speed]

Fraud bedevils the export certificate business, but PCIT currently provides ways to detect it that have helped foreign officials catch dozens of fraudulent documents this year.

Security and speed will both be enhanced with the advent of Electronic Phytosanitary Certification (ePhyto), a new PCIT function that automatically transfers phytosanitary certificate data directly to the governments of foreign countries receiving U.S. exports.

Continued on next page
Transmitting certificate data this way brings more credibility, integrity, and safety to the U.S. export system while reducing fraud and certification costs for exporters, according to Michael Perry, the PPQ export specialist who handles PCIT’s day-to-day operations.

“There will be no more waiting for documents to arrive to clear a shipment, or doubts about the legitimacy of paper documents,” Perry says. “In the end, it’s a big win for industry and for APHIS.”

The ePhyto function also represents one more step toward a new PCIT goal—making the system entirely paperless as it moves toward eventual integration into the new APHIS eFile system. Meantime, Dellis and Perry will keep hearing what users have to say. “Because we listened,” says Dellis, “we came up with a system that is what people needed it to be”—the recipe for PCIT’s success.

**Did you know**

Did you know that pork is the world’s most widely eaten meat, followed next by chicken and closely after that by beef?

With this in mind, it’s easy to see why the swine industry places a premium on keeping a steady and healthy flow of animals to market. Losses due to disease or other causes can have a significant impact on the industry.

The highest losses in the pork production process occur within 3 or 4 days of animals’ births, and they can be substantial. It can cost a producer approximately $900–$950 a year to keep a sow. If a sow gives birth to 20 piglets during the year, the cost per pig is $45 to $48; however, if a sow has 25 piglets, the cost per pig falls to $36 to $38.

Unfortunately, the swine industry is dealing with a serious challenge to piglet survival—porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv) and other swine enteric coronavirus diseases (SECD). Industry has estimated that PEDv has killed about 7 million piglets and caused tremendous hardship for American pork producers. Over the past year, consumers have seen pork prices rise in stores by almost 10 percent.

While industry took the lead in addressing PEDv when it first showed up, USDA and State animal health authorities are now playing a greater role in monitoring these diseases, tracing their spread, and advising on best practices to address and control them.

On June 5, APHIS issued a Federal Order requiring producers, veterinarians, and diagnostic laboratories to report new detections of SECD, including PEDv, to the agency or State animal health authorities. Since the Federal Order was issued, 188 SECD-positive premises have been identified in 17 States.

The Federal Order also requires producers with swine affected by any of these viruses to work with their veterinarians or State or APHIS veterinary officials to develop and implement a plan for appropriately managing the virus in their herds. APHIS is providing $26.2 million in funding to combat these diseases. Together, these steps will reduce virus shed in affected animals, address disease spread, and enable continued movement of animals for production and processing.

For more information, including a Q&A, visit the SECD Web page.
Mary Lou Berninger
Microbiologist
Veterinary Services
Plum Island, NY

Girl Scouts of Suffolk County;
Mattituck Presbyterian Church

For the past 9 years, Berninger has been a Girl Scout leader. She leads one troop that has reached the Senior level in scouting and a second troop of Cadette Scouts.

She’s been with both troops as they have progressed upward, beginning in kindergarten as Daisy Scouts. Berninger mentored the girls as both troops earned their Bronze Awards and the Senior troop earned their Silver Award.

The Girl Scouts of Suffolk County’s mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. Berninger’s goal has been to encourage the girls to learn the importance of community service and to fully participate in Girl Scout activities, whether earning badges, camping, or attending fun, local events.

Both troops have served the local community by preparing cookies for a homeless shelter, participating in food drives at grocery stores, helping at community historical societies, and cleaning up local beaches.

In addition to scouting, Berninger volunteers at her church and co-teaches Sunday school class for first and second graders, whom she describes as “a bunch of adorable and energetic kids.” She also helps with children’s church and with leading confirmation.

For her Girl Scout activities, Berninger volunteers more than 100 hours each year. At her church, she volunteers about 90 hours during the year.

It’s been said that diversity is the key to success. If so, then the Animal Care program and the National Zoo have launched a new internship program that holds a promise of success for both organizations.

This fiscal year, Animal Care and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Zoo formalized a summer intern cooperative program—the National Zoo Intern Program—that promotes outreach and workforce diversity.

Zoo and Animal Care officials collaborated to develop internship opportunities that would improve the diversity programs for both organizations. Begun as a pilot program in 2012, the program is now in full swing with six students participating.

The intern program provides college students a chance to learn about Federal career options, zoological husbandry, and the Animal Welfare Act. Interns participate in the program, working full-time for a

Continued on next page
When the forest-defoliating gypsy moth invaded northern Maine’s pristine Baxter State Park in 2008, APHIS State Plant Health Director Terry Bourgoin took it as a powerful wake-up call. He serves on Plant Protection and Quarantine’s Gypsy Moth Working Group, which aims to prevent the spread of this destructive pest of hardwood trees and shrubs.

“We know how it got there—gypsy moths had laid egg masses on heavy tree removal equipment that came into the park from infested areas in southern Maine,” Bourgoin said. “Those eggs hatched, and a whole new infestation began. It really brought home the critical need for outreach and education to all industries that could move the gypsy moth.”

To help prevent similar incidents, Bourgoin’s office sent out letters to moving and recreational vehicle (RV) companies. The letters politely but firmly alerted the companies to APHIS’ regulations requiring that any outdoor household items or vehicles in gypsy moth quarantine areas moving to non-quarantine areas be inspected for gypsy moth egg masses. If found, those masses must be removed. The letters referred company officials to APHIS outreach resources such as YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com, which has a factsheet and inspection checklist that, by law, must be completed, signed, and carried by the drivers.

“RVers love the fun adventure of traveling cross-country,” Bourgoin said. “But if they don’t check for egg masses, we could have repeat performances of Baxter State Park across the Nation.”

Bourgoin doesn’t intend to let that happen.

minimum of 8 weeks. It is a rewarding opportunity for participants with a background and interest in the fields of animal science, zoological husbandry, and veterinary medicine.

APHIS supports the interns by providing housing and salary, but participants are employed by both Animal Care and the National Zoo. Selected interns come from the Pathways Student Intern application process, with the agency conducting outreach through the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences program and other minority-serving programs and institutes.

After an initial orientation at APHIS, the interns work onsite at the National Zoo with zoo curators, zookeepers, and other employees. The interns perform duties such as cleaning, feeding, and observing animals. Additionally, each intern is participating in a research project that addresses the biology and husbandry of the animals with which they are working.
agdiscovery 2014

By Ian Perrin

APHIS kicked off this year’s AgDiscovery sessions on June 2 at Fort Valley State University in Georgia. The AgDiscovery program—now in its 12th year—takes place at 17 universities across the United States.

Counting this year’s 262 participants, AgDiscovery organizers estimate that they’ve reached approximately 1,500 students since the program began.

The collaborative program provides students with challenging educational opportunities in agriculture, focusing on areas such as entomology, veterinary sciences, plant pathology, and horticulture.

As an outreach program, the goal is to educate and develop students for careers in fields such as animal science, agribusiness, plant pathology, and others.

The sessions—ranging in length from 2 to 4 weeks—ran this year from June 2 through August 2, providing participants with hands-on experiences that they will remember for years to come.

Students pose for a team photograph as part of the AgDiscovery program at North Carolina State University, which ran June 16–27.

Shown above, students enjoy a teambuilding exercise during the AgDiscovery program at Kentucky State University, which took place June 15–28.

Photo sources: Animal Care, G. Bartman (PPQ), D. Bergman (WS), B. Bumpas (FAS), OCRDI, D. Root (MRPBS), USDA.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit: www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/.
APHIS' Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Division plans to unveil a new online system for reporting on-the-job accidents. For employees, the new system will reduce the pain and paperwork sometimes associated with the current reporting process. Set to launch next winter, the system will decrease the time spent filling out forms and expedite the process overall. Employees will access the system online and—following its simple navigational prompts—enter the information needed. Using the employee's input, the system logs the incident and can automatically generate a workers' compensation form if desired.

If an employee chooses to apply for workers' compensation, he or she simply hits the “submit” button. The appropriate form is then forwarded directly to APHIS workers' compensation managers and the U.S. Department of Labor. Correspondence will primarily be handled through the system, where employees can easily log in for updates.

USDA's Forest Service launched a similar automated system as a pilot project 8 years ago. Based on the project's success, USDA plans to implement the new system across all of its agencies.

[tracking to improve]
In addition to improving how the agency manages individual incidents and serves employees' needs, the new system offers another benefit. It will better enable USDA and APHIS to track and monitor accident reporting and put that information to use.

APHIS safety officials will review data related to accidents and injuries, especially those that reoccur, to provide better safety management for everyone. For example, officials could use the collected data to help identify areas where additional employee safety training is needed or where operating procedures should be revised.

Watch your email for launch dates and training information.

By Misty Leilani Cordeiro

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

How much do you know about APHIS programs other than your own?

- 39% A Fair Amount
- 34% A Little Bit
- 22% A Lot
- 5% Nothing at All

In our last issue, we asked employees, “How much do you know about APHIS programs other than your own?”

Here's the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

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calling 911 in case of emergency

By John Scott

Hopefully you’ll never need to make an emergency call, but it’s important to be prepared and know what to do just in case.

If you need emergency services and you’re calling from an APHIS VoIP phone in Riverdale or at a hub office, all you need to do is dial 911 for help.

The VoIP systems at APHIS headquarters and hub locations—Riverdale, Ames, Fort Collins, Minneapolis, and Raleigh—do not require 911 to be preceded by any other number to place the call.

With the exception of the agency’s offices in Ames, all 911 VoIP calls made from these locations will be directed to a 911 dispatcher. At Ames, 911 VoIP calls are first routed to facility guards. Because of Ames’ gates and campus size (550 acres), the guards must intervene to efficiently direct any responding emergency services to the scene.

For employees in Riverdale, Fort Collins, and Raleigh, a 911 call on a VoIP phone also triggers an automatic notification that is sent to other responders in the building. Notifications alert onsite responders so that assistance can be provided as quickly as possible.

APHIS Safety and Health officials are working on establishing similar onsite notification systems at other hub locations.

Don’t let embarrassment get the better of you. If you dial 911 accidentally, please remain on the line and simply explain your error. If you hang up without speaking to anyone, an emergency dispatcher will attempt to call you back. And if you do not answer, the dispatcher will send emergency personnel to your location—wasting valuable resources and possibly costing APHIS money.

If you are working from home—or from a location other than your office—avoid using your VoIP phone to call 911. Instead, use a local land line or a mobile phone if available. Be aware that, if you use your VoIP office phone, you will need to inform the 911 dispatcher of your location.

If you are in the office and need to call 911 for someone else offsite—such as a child or other family member at home—avoid using your VoIP phone. Use a mobile phone if possible. Be aware that, if you use your VoIP office phone, you will need to inform the 911 dispatcher about the location of the emergency.
manager profile with dave root

[what is your background?] I grew up in rural mid-Michigan. We farmed nearly 1,000 acres and raised about 250 head of beef cattle. I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force right away and spent nearly 6 years as an airborne Russian/Spanish cryptolinguist. Following military service, I “joined” the U.S. Postal Service, where I worked for almost 19 years in a variety of labor and managerial positions.

[how long have you been with aphis?] I transferred to APHIS in 2007 as a senior employee relations specialist. Sixteen months later, I accepted the position of branch chief for what was then APHIS Employee Relations.

[most memorable APHIS experience?] In 2007, I traveled to the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Plum Island to present training. The daily “commute” from Old Saybrook, CT, was 45 minutes via ferryboat (each way) across Long Island Sound, and then a short trip by bus to the facility. I was greatly impressed with the Veterinary Services mission.

[priorities in the coming months?] Acclimating to our new workload tracking system—LERIS (Labor and Employee Relations Information System). We will also continue providing conduct and performance-based training to customers and new employees.

[accomplishment most proud of?] In 2011, APHIS Employee Relations engaged in a Business Process Improvement project to streamline the services we provide to our customers. We’ve accomplished much in the last 3 years, yet we continue to find ways to improve. I’m truly honored to have the opportunity to work with so many dedicated, talented people within MRPBS.

[most memorable APHIS experience?] I’m currently reading Marilee Adams’ Change Your Questions, Change Your Life. I’ve found it very insightful.

[favorite meal?] Sushi: While I prefer to have someone make it for me, I enjoy making it at home as well.

[favorite movie?] Avatar

[favorite meal?] White Chocolate Truffles: I try to keep them available for customers!

[guilty pleasure?] Gardening: Our flower garden was stunning this year. Red is my favorite color, and I enjoy subtle shades of our red flowers.

[favorite meal?] Jelly-making: I’m an avid cook, baker, and jam/jelly-maker. My mom encouraged me to make pancakes when I was 8 years old, and I’ve loved cooking since then. I enjoy “jamming” and typically share several dozens of jars (in a variety of flavors) with friends and family year-round.

[hobbies?]
Native American ranchers in Montana constantly battle invasive weeds that crowd out the grazing grasses their cattle need. But through partnerships with APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, the Tribes have found that tiny foreign insects—a biocontrol arsenal—can help them win this struggle.

[battling the weeds]
Weeds such as leafy spurge and spotted knapweed have grown in Montana and on adjacent reservations for generations. Although herbicides, grazing, and mechanical controls such as plowing can help manage invasive weeds, biological control agents—such as insects sourced from Europe and Eurasia—are increasingly popular among some Tribes.

Carefully screened by PPQ and its research partners, these “biocontrol agents” use the area’s invasive weeds as a nursery where they lay eggs. After the larvae hatch, they nibble on the target weeds, stunting their growth and development.

Although the concept seems simple, getting the system to work requires ongoing coordination between the office of PPQ’s State Plant Health Director for Montana, Gary Adams, a multitude of weed specialists, and participating Tribes, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Blackfeet Nation, the Fort Belknap Indian Community, the Chippewa-Cree Tribe, the Crow Nation, the Northern Cheyenne Nation, and the Sioux/Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation.

PPQ works with natural resource specialists from each Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to gather insects established in Montana or other States. Cooperatively, they release and monitor the insects in areas with significant weed infestations, in hopes that these insects will establish populations of their own and serve as a reservoir for the Tribes to use in future.

PPQ helps monitor these catch-and-release sites, called insectaries. The program also gives funding to the Indian Nations...
Conservation Alliance (INCA) to support these efforts, along with workshops that teach participants how to identify target weeds, handle equipment and insects, and pursue alternative control methods. For their part, the Tribes place and maintain the insectaries, making sure they remain free from pesticides and safe from animals—all with the goal of becoming self-sustaining biocontrol practitioners.

[getting results]
Surveys attest that, over time, the insects are doing their job. A case in point is the Fort Belknap Indian Community, which has collaborated for many years with PPQ to identify sites for insectaries and release insects that attack leafy spurge. By 2006, the weed's presence had dramatically diminished on the reservation. Even though leafy spurge resurfaced after a 2011 flood damaged the community's insectaries, PPQ, INCA, and the Tribes have continued their efforts and hope to have the weed under control again within a few years.

In the meantime, Adams and his team are strengthening current Tribal partnerships and reaching out to form new ones. "New personnel working for some Tribes are just becoming aware that there's a biocontrol option out there," says Adams. "Although it may be a slow process, it can be a long-term, cost-effective solution" to keeping Native herds and economies thriving.

In the end, he says, the best indicator of PPQ's success is how his staff works with the Tribes toward a goal everyone agrees on: protecting Indian Country's agriculture and "keeping the stewards of the land on the land."●

PPQ works with many Tribal communities outside Montana on biocontrol agents. In Arizona, for instance, the program uses weevils to help the Quechan Tribe cope with giant salvinia and a parasitic wasp to control Asian citrus psyllid on Cocopah Tribal lands.

Since 2002, PPQ's Idaho office has funded the Nez Perce's highly regarded biocontrol facility, which rears agents in gardens, greenhouses, and laboratories; redistributes them from field sites; and works with State and county officials to advance biocontrol activities.

Over the years, Oregon's PPQ staff has provided the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation with training and redistribution materials for 20 species of biocontrol agents, targeting 12 different weeds. PPQ Nevada has partnered with the State Department of Agriculture to provide weed biocontrol agents to the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians. PPQ South Dakota supplies biocontrol support for leafy spurge and other weeds on nine reservations; and in Wyoming, PPQ cooperates with county weed and pest districts to conduct biocontrol activities on Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribal lands.●
When did you start working for APHIS? What made you decide to start working here?

I started working for APHIS in September 1988. After owning a clinical practice for 9 years in Pomeroy, WA, I wanted to share the skills I had developed in a broader public setting. One afternoon, an APHIS veterinary medical officer (VMO) stopped by my clinic, and we visited about his statewide work. He encouraged me to apply for the Public Veterinary Practice Career program. I was accepted, and the rest is a long journey through multiple jobs within Veterinary Services (VS) before I came to the Administrator’s Office.

What are your priorities during the next few months as APHIS Associate Administrator?

To help you get to know them a little better, we thought it would be interesting for you to hear from them in their own words. We sent each a set of questions and are sharing what we heard back.

In this issue, we feature Jere Dick, and in our next issue, we’ll run Mike Gregoire’s responses.

In addition to Administrator Kevin Shea, the agency’s Office of the Administrator includes two other agency leaders who influence APHIS’ day-to-day operations and its greater vision and goals.

As Associate Administrators, both Jere Dick and Mike Gregoire help shape our actions today and prepare APHIS for success in the future.

What’s your most memorable APHIS experience?

I think my most memorable APHIS experience was working as the regional incident commander for 9 months during the exotic Newcastle disease outbreak in 2003. We have great employees in APHIS, and I was able to work side-by-side with many highly committed employees to tackle a very tough problem for the industry and States involved.

What’s one thing that employees would be surprised to know about you?

Most employees see me in a suit and tie during the work day. They’re surprised to see pictures of me in boots and a cowboy hat enjoying my horseback rides in the wilderness areas of the Northwest. That is my quiet time!
What big changes do you see for APHIS employees as we move through the 21st century? What do you think employees need to be ready for?

I think that rapid developments in technology and automation will continue to drive the way we do business. When I started as a field VMO in Montana, I stopped at a roadside telephone to check in with the office. There were no cell phones, no pagers, and no laptop computers. Laboratory testing was conducted manually on glass plates or on cardboard test strips. I can only imagine where we will be in the next 25-30 years. Broad and advanced skill sets will also be necessary as we work with industry and stakeholders. They are hiring highly skilled specialists, and we will need to be able to talk to them at their professional level during the performance of our duties.

A leader must be equipped with the competencies necessary to perform his or her role. Which competency do you think is the most important one for a leader to have?

I think both leading change and leading people will become more important in the future. To make performing them even more challenging, those skills will have to be carried out in a “virtual” environment.

What do you miss most about working in the field?

I miss working with producers the most. They are the lifeblood of agriculture, and I always learned as much from them as they did from me. I am an outdoorsman, so I also miss working outdoors.

How do your years of experience in private practice and working in the field shape how you approach your job as associate administrator?

I think those years are invaluable in giving me a sound perspective of “operational feasibility.” Certain policies may sound good on the surface but may simply be too difficult to implement or too burdensome for industry.

Using the experience you’ve gained with APHIS over the years, what advice do you wish you could go back and give yourself as a new APHIS employee?

Be sure to take time off work and recharge regularly.

How do you start your day? How does it end?

I start and end my day with a prayer. Each day is a gift, and I hope to use it wisely.

What’s the accomplishment you are most proud of?

When asked this question, I know some might automatically think of their work accomplishments. However, I think I am most proud of my family and those things that I have been able to do to coach, mentor, and support them in their successes.

How do you like to spend your time away from the office?

In the outdoors, hiking, hunting, and fishing.

What’s the last book you read?

Crazy Busy by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.

What is your favorite meal?

My wife’s fried chicken and dumplings!

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A forest ranger.
getting a grip on carpal tunnel

By Ginger Dorsey

Although it’s often associated with keyboarding and using a mouse, carpal tunnel syndrome isn’t exclusively a computer-related injury. You may be at risk for developing symptoms even if your job involves mostly handling animals, driving, pipetting, or a host of other work tasks performed away from a desk.

Carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when the median nerve, which runs from the forearm into the palm of the hand, becomes pressed or squeezed at the wrist. The median nerve allows feeling and movement to parts of the hand.

This condition most often affects the hand and sometimes the forearm, but it can also spread up to the shoulder. Symptoms include:

- Pain in your hand, forearm, or wrist that awakens you at night.
- Occasional tingling, numbness, or a “pins-and-needles” sensation (similar to your hand “falling asleep”).
- Weakness of the hand, leading to frequent dropping of items.
- Decreased sensation in the hand (more severe cases).

Continued on next page

recent aphis retirees

Between August 1 and October 31, 2014, a total of 34 employees retired from the agency. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

### August 1–October 31, 2014

#### international services

- Beverley Barber, Riverdale, MD
- Kelly Preston, Tokyo, Japan

#### marketing and regulatory programs business services

- Carolyn Ballard, Shelbyville, KY
- Stephen Fuller, Montgomery, AL
- Sandra Knutson, Minneapolis, MN
- Lynn McDonald, Minneapolis, MN
- Celeste Sickles, Riverdale, MD
- Margaret Thorson, Minneapolis, MN

#### policy and program development

- Richard Fite, North Hampton, NH

#### plant protection and quarantine

- Jessie Baker, Orlando, FL
- Cheryl B. Dean, San Francisco, CA
- Ann Ferguson, Portland, OR

#### veterinary services

- Shirley Frazier, Winter Haven, FL
- Carolyn Getthers, Riverdale, MD
- Mateo Hernandez, Edinburg, TX
- Kathleen Kral, Jacksonville, FL
- Paul Pang, Honolulu, HI
- Lorinda Purcell, Raleigh, NC
- Donald Robbins, Winter Haven, FL
- Carlos Rodriguez, Mission, TX
- Alan Tamiya, Honolulu, HI

#### wildlife services

- Darlene Blaney, Fort Collins, CO
- Cherri Golden, Mississippi State, MS
- Brenda Harral, Louisville, KY
- Howard Homan, Bismarck, ND
- Jerry Twitty, Yakima, WA

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Continued on next page
Former APHIS Administrator Harry C. Mussman died November 7 in Houston, TX, at age 84. As APHIS’ second Administrator, Mussman helped formalize the agency’s role in managing pest and disease outbreaks.

Mussman joined APHIS in 1971 and served as Associate Administrator under Frank Mulhern between 1975 and 1977. As Administrator from 1980 until 1983, he defined the agency’s organizational identity by formalizing the “APHIS Philosophy” of participatory management and articulating the agency’s core values, responsibilities, and expectations. The result was an organizational climate that enabled employees to work at their highest potential while maintaining open communication with the agency’s constituents and other interest groups.

During Mussman’s tenure as Administrator, the agency dealt with several major foreign pest and disease outbreaks. Current Administrator Kevin Shea and others credit Mussman’s leadership for the agency’s successful response and for further defining APHIS’ significance as an organization.

“In the early 1980s, there were three large outbreaks of African swine fever in Haiti, a highly-pathogenic avian influenza outbreak, and a big Medfly outbreak in California,” said Shea. “Our success in those cases was important not only in the short term, but also helped demonstrate the need to expand the agency’s role in helping other nations deal with plant and animal health problems before pests and diseases reach the United States.”

Mussman also helped bring about government–industry consensus on a brucellosis eradication program, and he was chairman of the USDA Boll Weevil Policy Group, which guided development of the agency’s successful cotton insect management effort.

Early in his career, Mussman was an instructor and director of the clinical pathology laboratory at Kansas State University, where he had earned two doctorates and a master’s degree. After his work at APHIS, he became USDA’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Education and Executive Vice President for Scientific Affairs. Mussman later headed a company that provided sterilization services to the medical device, packaging, and food industries.

To minimize symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, you can:

• Use correct hand and wrist postures.
• Alternate tasks between the right and left hands.
• Redesign workstations, tools, or tasks.

For assistance with your ergonomic concerns, contact the APHIS Ergonomics Program at 301-436-3175 or submit a request form for an ergonomic workstation evaluation.

More information is also available at the APHIS Ergonomics Program Web page.
Sometimes $1 + 1 = 1000$.

Animal Care and one of its many stakeholder groups teamed up during the summer to host a webinar addressing animal welfare issues in biomedical research—resulting in 1,000 people directly involved in the care of laboratory animals gaining a better understanding of APHIS regulations.

The National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) seeks to provide a unified voice for the scientific community on legislative and regulatory matters affecting lab animal research. For the second year in a row, NABR presented a webinar on USDA regulatory oversight to its members.

Betty Goldentyer and Robert Gibbens, directors of Animal Care’s Eastern and Western Regions, respectively, fielded and answered the questions for USDA. They delved into the details of the Federal regulations while also focusing the webinar on how lab researchers and technicians can provide the best and most appropriate care to their facilities’ animals.

“Getting direct feedback allows us to determine the level of understanding on certain issues and gives us the opportunity to clarify things,” Goldentyer said.

“It helps us help them,” Gibbens added. “We can also better train our [veterinary medical officers] on these issues so that we’ll all be more uniform in our efforts.”

All facilities in the United States that use warmblooded animals for medical research and testing, including universities and cosmetic companies to name a few, must be registered with USDA. Animal Care enforces the Animal Welfare Act, which requires such facilities to provide their animals with humane care and treatment. Animal Care inspects these facilities to make sure they are adhering to the regulations, but as this webinar shows, the program also educates its registrants.

Universities, private research companies, and research vendors from all over the country tuned in to the webinar. Information shared during the webinar was subsequently provided to all NABR members and Animal Care’s inspectors.

“Getting the answers out in this public way helps increase confidence in Animal Care’s inspection system, and it allows us to speak in ‘one voice’ to a very valuable stakeholder group,” said Andrea Morgan, Animal Care’s associate deputy administrator. “Great audience participation and thoughtful questions made this a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved.”

Above all, the webinar reinforced a passion for animal welfare shared by the regulators and the regulated community.

“While the regulations do need to be interpreted [by us] and followed [by the research facilities], we all care deeply about the animals,” Gibbens said. “And a webinar like this speaks to that fact.”

“Getting the answers out in this public way helps increase confidence in Animal Care’s inspection system”

—Andrea Morgan, Animal Care

\[ \text{the gift of warmth} \]

APHIS Policy and Program Development recently hosted a coat drive in Riverdale for the One Warm Coat/Vietnam Veterans of America Association to provide winter wear to homeless veterans.

APHIS employees in Riverdale stepped up and donated more than 120 new and used coats, as well as 50 pieces of outerwear (sweatshirts, hats, scarves, shoes, and gloves). Many thanks to all who contributed.
For years, reptiles and amphibians have been popular exotic pets. From kids fascinated with snakes to adults who are lizard connoisseurs, the number of homes in the United States that house slithery friends is increasing. But what some pet owners may not know is that these animals are natural carriers for *Salmonella*, often carrying several different varieties of the bacteria—called serotypes.

Although carrying the bacteria rarely sickens reptiles and amphibians, it can cause illness in people if the right precautions aren’t taken. Such risks of exposure to disease highlight the importance of the [One Health](#) initiative, which recognizes that the health of the environment, animals, and people are deeply connected. The One Health concept brings together physicians, ecologists, and animal health professionals in addressing public health threats.

Just this past spring, APHIS’ National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) joined efforts in response to a *Salmonella* outbreak. CDC found that 83 percent of those infected had contact with reptiles. Further questioning indicated that bearded dragons could be the source. CDC officials then visited pet stores and breeders where the people affected had purchased bearded dragons. They collected fecal, egg, and environmental samples and immediately contacted NVSL for help with testing the samples.

Enter NVSL’s new MALDI-TOF Biotyper. Although its name is complicated, the MALDI-TOF is a machine that dramatically simplifies the process of locating isolates. The Biotyper software can analyze up to 380 bacterial colonies per run and quickly tell scientists which isolates are *Salmonella*, greatly reducing the time and expense associated with traditional identification methods.

After separating the *Salmonella* from the other bacteria, agency scientists still needed to determine the isolates’ serotypes to see which, if any, were Cotham and Kisarawe. Once again, NVSL’s cutting-edge technology came in handy.

For each sample, NVSL collected multiple bacterial isolates, often as many as 16. This initially produced more than 3,000 suspect isolates—all needing to be identified to find out if they were, indeed, *Salmonella*.

Enter NVSL’s new MALDI-TOF Biotyper.

Although its name is complicated, the MALDI-TOF is a machine that dramatically simplifies the process of locating isolates. The Biotyper software can analyze up to 380 bacterial colonies per run and quickly tell scientists which isolates are *Salmonella*, greatly reducing the time and expense associated with traditional identification methods.

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APHIS employees spend a lot of time behind the wheel, logging thousands of miles each year. As you can imagine, all that driving comes with a sizeable price tag. To help curb costs and keep the agency rolling, APHIS took a closer look—starting in 2011—and found that our fleet management needed a tune-up.

The APHIS fleet had grown to more than 4,700 agency-owned cars/trucks/vans, a figure that didn’t even include additional agency-leased vehicles. The number simply wasn’t sustainable, nor was it a good use of taxpayer dollars.

[looking under the hood]
To get back on track, APHIS has taken several steps to review and improve its fleet management. Beginning in 2011, APHIS’ Program Leaders Group (PLG)—made up of the associate deputy administrators from each of the agency’s programs—began reviewing the agency’s fleet. And, more recently, APHIS launched a business process improvement (BPI) project to focus on fleet management, spanning fiscal years 2014–2015. The BPI team includes employees from each of the APHIS programs with vehicles, plus staff from Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS) and Policy and Program Development.

Together, the team reviewed every step in the fleet management process—from purchasing vehicles, to maintenance, to the process for excessing or selling vehicles. It also validated the entire APHIS fleet inventory, program by program. And as the BPI team wrapped up its first year, it developed several products aimed at bringing clarity and consistency to the agency’s fleet management. Among other things, these products—expected to roll out this year—include a roles and responsibilities document, an FAQ with essential information, a training curriculum, and other guidance materials.

Now in its second year, the BPI team will be focusing on APHIS’ processes for reporting out on its vehicles and forecasting agency fleet needs.

Continued on next page
**fleet management**

Continued from page 9

**[savings and improvement]**

With the combined efforts of the PLG, the agency’s fleet management community, and the BPI team, the agency is now on a good road. Since 2011, APHIS has reduced its fleet by more than 750 vehicles. And since 2012, APHIS has decreased its annual fleet operating cost by just over $500,000. As the changes take greater effect, agency savings are expected to grow even more.

Two other improvements came out of this overall effort, and they are designed to keep the APHIS fleet pointed in the right direction.

The agency created a new vehicle allocation methodology (VAM) to ensure our fleet stays at the right level. The VAM sets criteria for the minimum amount of miles a vehicle must be driven each year and requires each program to develop a fleet management plan every year, along with a plan for allocating its vehicles.

Also, APHIS now has a new policy and process for reviewing inventories and transferring vehicles between programs before purchasing new cars. The policy has already yielded real benefits.

When Wildlife Services (WS) needed 55 vehicles for the new feral swine program, the program looked internally to see what they already had in their inventory that wasn’t being fully utilized—and they asked other programs to do the same. As a result, WS purchased only 33 new vehicles and obtained 22 from within APHIS’ existing fleet.

**[down the road]**

Going forward, the agency’s associate deputy administrators will play a more active role in managing their respective fleets—including vehicle purchases, allocations, and disposals. The PLG will also review the entire agency fleet on a semi-annual basis to ensure APHIS stays on track.

If you have any fleet-related questions, please contact Fleet Manager Skip Bradford by email (ronald.f.bradford@aphis.usda.gov) or by calling 612-336-3419. You can also visit the MRPBS Fleet Management Services SharePoint page for more information.

**in memoriam**

From August 1 through October of this year, our agency lost two members of the APHIS family.

We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

**veterinary services**

Lawrence Stotelmyre  
Ames, IA

**wildlife services**

Justin Mann  
Lucile, ID

Photo sources:  B. Morningstar (VS), W. Stokes (AC), M. Tadle (PPD), A. Torres (Cornell University), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on My.APHIS.
I knew I’d be helping people when I joined a local church’s medical mission to Jamaica. I just didn’t know that one of the biggest benefactors would be myself.

As an inspector with Animal Care, I help ensure the welfare of the animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act and Horse Protection Act. I travel daily to zoos, commercial dog breeding kennels, and other licensed facilities throughout Missouri, making sure they are providing proper care and adhering to Federal regulations.

I learned about the medical mission from a neighbor, and I was intrigued. The mission and its associated clinic were started by Dr. Wallace Carpenter and his wife, Diane, 15 years ago to offer medical services and provide medicine to the residents in Falmouth, Jamaica. The First United Methodist Church of Warrensburg, MO, organizes trips to the mission, and the volunteers always come back with great stories. So I decided that I’d like to be a part of it. Being a veterinary technician, I thought I’d have some skills that the medical teams could use.

In February, a group of us from West Plains, MO, set out for Falmouth. We could only take carry-on bags on our flight.

Continued on next page
question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “When is your most productive part of the day at work?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

- 3% Evening
- 17% Late Afternoon
- 9% Afternoon
- 11% Middle of the Day
- 34% Morning
- 26% Early Morning

When is your most productive part of the day at work?

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

[next question please]

Some people are extroverts and feel more comfortable in groups and actually get energy from being in a group setting. Others identify more as introverts and prefer more individual time to reflect and recharge. And some people feel that they are a balance of both.

With that in mind, we ask: Would you say that you are an introvert, extrovert, or a blend of the two?

- Introvert
- Extrovert
- Blend of the Two

Feel free to add your comment explaining why.

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/55R6XB5

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helping in jamaica

because our checked baggage allotment was used for medical supplies. During my week in Jamaica, I assisted the clinic’s doctors in any way I could, including dispensing medicine and helping with some medical procedures.

The people who came to the clinic were all different ages, and they began arriving each day at daybreak. Many came from surrounding areas using whatever transportation they could. Some waited up to 8 or 9 hours to see a doctor, but none complained. They were friendly and so grateful to be there. In the United States people get cranky if they have to wait in line, but there was none of that at the clinic.

The patients had such love for the doctors. They would hug, and talk, and smile. I was struck by the affection they showed and their resourcefulness. They are poor but make do with what they have. Some families live in shacks made from metal or plywood sheets that wash ashore. They work very hard to get by, and that made a big impact on me. It has made me far more grateful for all that I have.

During the time I was there, we tended to 750 patients. If not for the clinic, those patients would not have received much-needed treatments and medications. Volunteers also taught carpentry skills, visited children in local orphanages, and repaired desks and bookshelves at the mission’s school.

My friends kidded me by saying that I was going to Jamaica to lay on a beach. But it was so much more rewarding than that. Without question, it was an experience I’ll never forget.

Serving others in need is life-changing, and I think I understand that now more than before.

Note: The mission has an ongoing need for common medications—such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, allergy/sinus medication, vitamins, antifungal skin creams, and antibiotic creams. Non-medical items are also needed, including school supplies, prescription eyeglasses, soap, and other personal care items.

If you would like to donate items, please contact:

First United Methodist Church
141 E. Gay Street
Warrensburg, MO 64093
Phone: 660-747-8158
Did you know that all APHIS employees have an important connection to New Orleans? And it has nothing to do with the city’s famous food, music, or Mardi Gras. It’s about your biweekly statement of earnings and leave.

For all APHIS employees, these statements are generated by our payroll office, the National Finance Center (NFC), located in New Orleans. The statements contain valuable information about your earnings, withholdings, leave, and allotments.

As an employee, you are responsible for the accuracy of the information on your statement. So it’s a good idea to visit your Employee Personal Page (EPP), available online at NFC’s MyEPP Web site, and view your statement to make sure it’s accurate.

Links for MyEPP and other helpful resources are also available on the My.APHIS Web site.

[things to check]
Leave
- Are your leave balances correct, and do they match those in WebTA?
- Annual Leave: Is the balance going to be more than 240 hours at the end of the leave year? If so, talk to your supervisor about options available for your “use or lose” time.
- Is the annual leave maximum carryover (“Max. C/O”) amount correct? Most full-time employees can carry over 240 hours of annual leave from year to year.

Mailing Address
- W-2 forms and other mailings are sent to the address listed on your statement. Is your address correct? If not, you can update it using the MyEPP Web site.

State/County/City Taxes
- Is the correct State/county/city tax being withheld (if applicable)?

Benefits
- Review your benefits information (FEHB, vision, dental, life insurance, and optional life insurance) and the amounts deducted to make sure they are correct.

Allotments
- If you have an allotment deducted from your paycheck, please verify the money is being deposited into the correct account at the appropriate financial institution.

Time and Attendance (T&A)
— Check on webTA
Leave Data Section
- Do your leave balances in WebTA match those on your statement?
- Time-Off Award (TOA): If you have any unused TOA hours, is the correct balance shown in the Leave Data section?

T&A Profile Section
- Is your Service Computation Date correct?
- Is your personal leave ceiling correct? Most employees have an annual leave ceiling of 240 hours.
- Annual Leave Accrual Rate: Are you in the correct annual leave category (4, 6, or 8 hours)?

If you find errors with leave balances or information in webTA, please contact your supervisor or servicing program assistant for guidance. Similarly, if you spot errors on your EPP and/or on your statement, contact your supervisor and the Human Resources processing associate who services your program area. For a list of processing associates, visit the Payroll/Personnel Processing Web page.

Remember—review your records every pay period and report any discrepancies quickly to minimize the impact of any errors you find.
manager profile
with william stokes

[what is your background?]
I grew up on a farm in Fern Creek, KY, raising mainly beef cattle and goats. I earned my B.S. degree from the University of Louisville and my D.V.M. (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) degree from The Ohio State University. I served in the Army Veterinary Corps for 7 years, where I completed a laboratory animal medicine residency and supported research on high-hazard viruses (including Ebola virus), bacteria, and toxins at the U.S. Army Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, MD.

I later transferred to the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and worked at the National Institutes of Health as the animal program director and attending veterinarian for two institutes and as a center director at the U.S. National Toxicology Program.

[priorities in the coming months?]
I look forward to encouraging our field teams to continue improving animal welfare and compliance with the Animal Welfare Act. Our veterinary medical officers and animal care inspectors are uniquely positioned to leverage their extensive knowledge and experience to improve animal welfare through education, outreach, and inspections.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
While serving at the National Institutes of Health, I worked with 15 Federal agencies and various stakeholder groups to establish criteria and processes for the validation and acceptance of alternative safety testing methods that are more humane and use fewer or no animals. The subsequent validation and regulatory acceptance of over 60 alternative test methods has greatly reduced laboratory animal pain and distress and avoided the use of thousands of animals.

[last book read?]
Undaunted Courage by Stephen E. Ambrose.

[favorite meal?]
NC-style BBQ pork, fried okra, collard greens, corn bread, and banana pudding.

[guilty pleasure?]
Ice cream and TV.

[hobbies?]
Spending time with my family, visiting National Parks, canoeing, camping, and hiking.

[flavor of ice cream?]
Vanilla.
Imagine that a Girl Scout hiking along a Hawaiian beach spies a large beetle on a palm frond. Intrigued by the beetle’s unusual horn, she launches the “Palm Pests” app on her smart phone. The app soon helps her identify the insect as a coconut rhinoceros beetle, an invasive species. She and her parents alert State officials about the find.

Meanwhile, a commercial crafts maker in Ohio is evaluating samples of imported potpourri for a new product he is designing. He wants to know what’s in the mix. Using the “Dried Botanicals” app on his iPhone, he identifies the species in the samples and chooses the mix with the widest variety of floral elements.

Although both of these incidents are fictitious, the identification tools described are not. They’re very real and very cool.

[there’s an app for that]

Last year Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Identification Technology Program (ITP) released 10 phone apps for both Android and iPhones. The apps—adapted and converted from ITP’s existing desktop identification products (see ID Tools page)—help users identify specific plant pests, plant diseases, and noxious weeds. And, ITP expects to roll out more apps soon.

For example, to support President Obama’s 2014 Memorandum, “Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators,” ITP and its partners are developing “Bee Mites ID,” for use in the field by entomologists, beekeepers, and others concerned about honey-bee health.
mobile apps

Continued from page 1

working to maintain the health of American agriculture and natural resources, as well as the flow of agricultural trade. This means ITP supports, among others, PPQ identifiers at Plant Inspection Stations, PPQ preclearance program staff stationed offshore, Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey officials, and participants in the National Plant Diagnostic Network.

ITP’s dedicated staff carries out their mission by developing a wide range of innovative, scientifically accurate, digital identification resources. In addition to mobile apps, ITP develops products such as screening aids, keys, pest factsheets, image galleries, and molecular diagnostics.

ITP collaborates with the Nation’s expert entomologists, botanists, and plant pathologists to ensure the accuracy of their content, images, and keys. “Keys” are identification tools that, based on the features of an object, enable identifiers to use a process of elimination to pinpoint what the object is. Many of ITP’s products, including all of its mobile apps, are built around the powerful Lucid matrix-based keys software platform developed by the University of Queensland.

[flexible identification searches]
The big advantage of a Lucid matrix-based identification key is that it allows the user multiple access points to launch a search by choosing among any of a specimen’s basic characteristics, (e.g., wing length, antennae shape, and body size), rather than having to follow a predetermined path required by more traditional, single-access identification keys. The user first selects a characteristic, then high-resolution photographs and illustrations pop up for comparison to the specimen. As each new choice is made, the software interactively narrows down the possibilities, arriving eventually at the specimen’s family or species. The software does not require familiarity with botanical or anatomical terms, but expert users can employ their scientific knowledge to quickly drill down to the correct identification.

“In addition to serving the needs of government professionals, one of our main reasons for creating mobile phone apps is to empower non-experts—including students, educators, and the general public—with access at any time to expert information,” said ITP Coordinator Terrence Walters.

ITP’s iPhone and Android phone mobile apps are free, and are available for download on the ID Tools page.

“ITP’s mobile phone apps liberate anyone seeking to identify a specimen from having to be near an Internet connection and do not even require phone reception,” added Walters.

The software interactively narrows down the possibilities, arriving eventually at the specimen’s family or species.

Visit APHIS Coaching SharePoint Site and learn more about how APHIS is celebrating International Coaching Week, May 18-22, 2015.

You can register on the SharePoint site for events throughout the week.

Watch your email for more information.
Both the size and flight patterns of snowy owls make them hazardous when they locate to airfields. And, unfortunately, airfields are strong attractants to the visiting raptors.

During the 2013-14 surge in the owls’ population—known as an irruption—Wildlife Services (WS) biologists trapped and relocated more than 100 snowy owls from airports where WS works to reduce aviation/birdstrike hazards and cooperated with other biologists in moving even more (See Inside APHIS, Vol. 1, 2014).

An owl captured in January was this year’s first owl caught and outfitted with a radio transmitter harness for owls captured during this past winter. Using multiple trap types, WS-Michigan biologist Aaron Bowden (shown in owl release photo) has caught 20 snowy owls in 2015, compared to 36 in last year’s irruption.

Michigan DNR photographer David Kenyon and Michigan Public Radio documented this capture-release. (More details are available here.)

[follow the birds]
You can follow the snowy owls trapped and released by WS-Michigan in conjunction with this effort by visiting the Project SNOWstorm site and looking for “Alma,” “Prairie Rhonde,” and “Buckeye.” Other WS airport-captured owls have included Monocacy, Baltimore, Philly, and Amishtown.

Also, see Michigan Public Radio’s Unlocking the Secret World of the Snowy Owl. 

By Carol Bannerman
On May 20, APHIS' Raleigh office is host- ing “The 101 Critical Days of Summer,” an emergency preparedness fair for agency employees as well as North Carolina State University students, faculty, and alumni and area businesses.

The days between Memorial Day and Labor Day have been called the 101 critical days of summer due to the peak in injuries and dangers associated with outdoor activities and extreme summer weather conditions. The fair is aimed at raising safety awareness and helping area employees learn about available community services.

Watch My.APHIS and your email for more information.

Progress continues as the agency works on developing its new APHIS eFile system. When complete, the system will provide APHIS employees and stakeholders with the benefits of a consolidated, streamlined, and flexible system for the agency's many certification, accreditation, registration, permitting, and other licensing (CARPOL) activities.

APHIS and its cooperators issue more than 500,000 CARPOL-type authorizations each year. Currently, eight separate information technology (IT) systems—as well as a number of manual processes—support these efforts. With APHIS eFile, APHIS seeks to improve efficiency through a more integrated solution.

The project’s first priority will be to focus on the agency’s permitting process.

Here are three key updates on the project:

1. APHIS awarded the development contract for the new system to a company called Phase One Consulting Group, Inc. The agency finalized the contract in September 2014 and began development work in November. Work on the following program permitting tracks are underway:
   - Plant Protection and Quarantine: fruits and vegetables
   - Animal Care: live dogs

[what's the latest?]
APHIS eFile is a complex project that will affect many programs, so it’s important for employees to stay both informed and involved.

Former Veterinary Services Chief Information Officer John Picanso recently joined the effort and will serve as the project’s program manager.

The project’s first priority will be to focus on the agency’s permitting process.

By John Scott

Continued on next page
Following an example set by the military, Animal Care conducted its first-ever Safety Stand-Down Day on March 23 so program employees could review overall safety practices and better understand the risks involved in their jobs.

The Animal Care Safety, Health and Wellness Council knows that stepping out of the everyday routine can be the best way for employees to assess safety issues on the job. For this reason, Animal Care scheduled no routine work on Safety Stand-Down Day; instead, program employees had uninterrupted time to refocus on job safety. “Animal Care managers see safety as a priority, so we used the day to make sure employees have all the tools necessary to be safe while performing their daily duties,” said Council Chair Natalie Cooper, veterinary medical officer in Arkansas.

Among other activities, field employees reviewed the Animal Care Safety and Health Manual, inspected their personal protective equipment, and reviewed updated zoonotic disease materials. One inspector even took her vehicle to the dealership for a safety recall, and while there a mechanic discovered and repaired the vehicle’s worn suspension, improving its road safety.

[hotlines and q&a sessions]
Throughout the day, the Council and its liaisons in each part of Animal Care hosted a telephone hotline and virtual question-and-answer session to respond to employees’ safety-related questions.

“This was a very positive event,” said John Lopinto, veterinary medical officer in New York who served as Council chair prior to Cooper. “We wanted all of our employees to reflect on the safety issues we are faced with every day because nothing is more important than that.”

By all accounts, Safety Stand-Down Day was a success and will undoubtedly pay dividends in the months and years to come.

“Whether you have been on the job for 25 years or just one year, it forced people to sit down and review the information available, which is always a good thing,” said Bryan Irwin, an Animal Care inspector in Texas. “I learned things that I didn’t know, and I also reviewed the things I already know.”

2. The process of developing APHIS eFile will be lengthy. Its success depends on employees and programs actively engaging in the project throughout the entire process. Agency working groups, which include representatives from each program, are currently focused on important aspects of the permitting process.

3. APHIS recently launched an updated CARPOL/APHIS eFile SharePoint site. As the main information-sharing resource for the project, it’s the place to visit for updates, information, and to pose your questions.

APHIS eFile will be an essential part of the agency’s operations and a key fixture in the agency’s IT environment and business processes. During its development, be sure to stay informed and stay involved.
When did you start working for APHIS? What made you decide to start working here?
I started working for APHIS as a budget analyst in July 1978. I majored in political science and was interested in a public administration career in the Federal Government. I got a good score on the Federal civil service exam and that's how APHIS got my name and invited me for an interview.

What are your priorities during the next few months as APHIS Associate Administrator?
My three top priorities in the coming months are to advance the agency's alternatives to rulemaking strategies, get the APHIS eFile implementation off to a good start, and engage with employees to get their ideas on ways to continue to make APHIS a high performing organization and a great place to work.

What's your most memorable APHIS experience?
I've been lucky to have many great experiences in APHIS. One that stands out for me was working together with the Department of Justice and then going to the Supreme Court of the United States to hear oral arguments in the Monsanto Company versus Geertson Seed Farms case. The case involved a regulatory decision APHIS had made on genetically engineered alfalfa. I never imagined having that opportunity when I started here.

But given their new roles, we wanted to help you get to know each a little better.

What's one thing that employees would be surprised to know about you?
My career in food and agriculture began long before I joined APHIS. When I was a boy, my brother, mother, and I were pictured in a magazine advertisement for New York State applesauce. I worked my way through college as a stock clerk and assistant manager in a grocery store.

What big changes do you see for APHIS employees as we move through the 21st century? What do you think employees need to be ready for?
I think the role that APHIS plays in contributing to global food security is going to be hugely important. Advances in agricultural technology and information technology will provide tools that we probably can't even imagine at this point. Employees will need to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments. I think employees will also need to be ready for many leadership opportunities and challenges in the coming years.

Continued on next page
A leader must be equipped with the competencies necessary to perform his or her role. Which competency do you think is the most important one for a leader to have?

Leaders get their work done through others, so to me leading people is the most important competency—that includes having a vision and goals, choosing the right people for the job, giving them the resources and support they need to get the job done, ensuring accountability, and celebrating their successes.

As a native of Buffalo, NY, do you have any winter driving tips—especially for D.C. area employees?

Telework and stay off the roads if you can. If you have to drive, make sure your car has good tires, windshield wipers, and washer fluid. Wear your seatbelt. Drive slow to avoid going into a skid, and don’t text and drive!

Which of your prior jobs with APHIS has had the most influence on how you approach your job as Associate Administrator? In what way?

My previous two jobs as deputy administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services and Policy and Program Development most influenced how I approach my current job. Those jobs exposed me to and gave me an appreciation for the challenges of leading a program unit and a support unit. Both jobs involved using leadership skills and engaging with internal and external stakeholders, interagency partners, and senior policy officials to get things done—all of which are important aspects of the associate administrator job.

Using the experience you’ve gained with APHIS over the years, what advice do you wish you could go back and give yourself as a new APHIS employee?

Learn how your work contributes to the agency mission and be the best at it you can be. Take initiative. Avail yourself of the many opportunities APHIS has to offer to broaden your perspectives and experience. Those opportunities include training, developmental and collateral duty assignments, special projects, networking, mentoring and field trips, to name a few.

How do you start your day? How does it end?

I like to start the day by scanning the news and then thinking and preparing for what’s ahead. That might include reading in preparation for meetings, thinking about how to advance a particular project or bring an issue to resolution, or identifying key points I’d like to make in remarks I’ve been asked to give at an event. The last thing I do before I leave the office is look at the traffic map before I begin my commute home.

What’s the accomplishment you are most proud of?

With my wife Jane, raising three great children. I’m grateful that APHIS family friendly policies made it possible to balance my work and family life.

How do you like to spend your time away from the office?

I love playing golf, ice hockey, and tennis and spending time with our family and friends.

What’s the last book you read?

The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara, a historical novel about the battle of Gettysburg.

What is your favorite meal?

Buffalo wings, of course.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A major league baseball player.
Avian influenza is again making headlines with recent detections in the United States. For many people following the news coverage, it's easy to get lost in the acronyms and abbreviations associated with the disease—HPAI, LPAI, H5N2, H5N8 and so on. And, as with most things, the fine points matter. Getting the distinctions is important to understanding the potential impact on U.S. agriculture and human health.

To disentangle common terms and provide basic information that will help you follow the latest news, we offer this brief overview about the disease.

Avian influenza (AI), known informally as bird flu, is an infectious disease spread by influenza type A viruses. The disease is a concern because it threatens birds in our food supply (e.g., chickens, turkeys, ducks, and quail).

AI predominantly affects birds but has been known to jump to people in rare, isolated cases—mainly overseas in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East—where people have been infected when working closely with sick or dead birds. Currently, there is no evidence that AI can spread efficiently and in a sustained manner person-to-person. Eggs and poultry are safe to eat when cooked to recommendations.

AI spreads around the world through wild bird migration and the movement of infected birds. There are two main classifications of the AI virus in poultry: highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI). Pathogenicity is the ability of a virus to produce disease.

Generally, the HPAI strains cause severe disease and death in birds, and the LPAI strains cause only mild disease or no symptoms at all. Subtypes of the AI virus are classified based on two proteins on the viral surface: the “H” and the “N” protein. Each combination of these two proteins is considered a different viral subtype (e.g., H5N2, H5N8, etc.), and subtypes are further broken down into different viral strains from there. As with many kinds of infectious disease caused by viruses, the mutation possibilities of an AI virus are endless.

Some strains of AI are more deadly and more infectious than others. AI might go unnoticed in a wild bird population because ducks and geese are typically the carrier species and usually do not show signs of disease; however, when transmitted to densely populated domestic flocks, some AI strains can cause widespread disease and mortality. AI viruses in poultry with any viral subtypes that start with H5 or H7 are of particular concern because H5 and H7 subtypes can mutate from LPAI to an HPAI virus.

APHIS and State Departments of Agriculture have made good progress overseeing and regulating commercial bird movements in the United States to avoid transmission of disease. However, viral transmission from wild to domestic birds is more difficult to predict.

APHIS and its cooperators respond to U.S. outbreaks of AI with extensive investigations into the causative viral pathogen and with efforts to help prevent its spread. APHIS also
As is the case with end-of-year procurement deadlines, there are also deadlines around the production of communications materials.

This year, all complete submission packages for FY 2015-funded publications are due to Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) by May 21, 2015.

This deadline applies to professionally printed publications (brochures, custom factsheets, etc.), as well as posters, displays, and other outreach materials that require contracted design work or printing services.

The deadline does not apply to standard APHIS factsheets published online only or to administrative publications (i.e., technical manuals or other materials used solely by USDA personnel and/or official cooperators).

LPA staff will work with you to develop and gather submission package materials. This includes discussing concept, drafting text, selecting photos, identifying funding, and completing the paperwork needed to start formal clearance and production.

All of these steps must be completed before the May 21 submission deadline.

So, if you have outreach needs, don’t wait: Contact LPA today to get started.

You can direct requests to an LPA public affairs specialist or the designated publications contact for your program area. For a contact list and other useful resources about the publications process, go to LPA’s Publications page on the APHIS Intranet.

Continued from page 8

aphis publications
FY 2015 deadline coming up

conducts ongoing outreach with poultry farmers and backyard flock owners to encourage them to practice good biossecurity and to report sudden bird deaths to veterinarians, the USDA, and State departments of agriculture.

The recent detections of HPAI began in mid-December 2014 and have included finds in U.S. captive wild birds, backyard poultry and commercial poultry operations. Fortunately, the strains detected in the United States do not affect people and have only caused illness in birds.

Detection updates are posted regularly online. For updates and to read more about AI, visit Veterinary Services AI Web page or USDA’s new AI page.

And to learn more healthy poultry practices, visit APHIS’ Biosecurity for the Birds.
Manager Profile

With Terry Morris

[What is your background?]
I was born in Baltimore, MD. My dad had a house built on half an acre of Estep family land, and he moved the family and the family dog, Charlie (a Cockerpoo) to Dunkirk, MD, to live closer to our paternal grandparents. As you may imagine, we loved Charlie, and when Charlie died, I wanted to know why. I asked my dad to pay money to help find out why Charlie died, but that was not an option in those days. As a result of this situation, I vowed, at the tender age of 6, to become a veterinarian.

I received my undergraduate degree in biology from then Salisbury State University in 1988 and my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, Blacksburg, VA, in 1993. After graduation, I worked for USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service for 7 years before accepting a position with APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) in Riverdale, MD.

[How long have you been with APHIS?]
In 2001, I joined VS and transferred to APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Veterinary Regulatory Support unit in 2007. In December 2012, I was promoted to the position of director for PPQ’s Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support Staff.

[Most memorable APHIS experience?]
Perhaps my most memorable APHIS experience is associated with my position as acting director for PPQ’s Phytosanitary Issues Management. As acting director, I participated in the European Union Bilateral Meeting in Brussels. This was my first international trip (excluding Canada), and it afforded me the honor of representing APHIS as part of the APHIS delegation; it gave me the opportunity to refine my political savvy and negotiating skills, and it enabled me to enjoy Brussels after hours.

[Priorities in the coming months?]
There are many, including: working with my colleagues to enhance PPQ’s Agriculture Quarantine Inspection program; implementing a Veterinary Medical Officer Exchange Program between PPQ and VS; and strengthening the working relationship between APHIS and Customs and Border Protection.

[Accomplishment most proud of?]
Co-piloting this accomplishment with my husband of 25 years: our son, David Alan Morris, Jr., 24, is my most proud accomplishment. As an only child, David Jr.—nicknamed “DJ”—has always been exceptional. Fitting into that category of being “a good spoiled” child, his childhood and adolescent years were fairly uneventful. He is now a graduate of the University of Maryland at College Park, working a full-time job, engaged to a wonderful young lady, and working to build his own business in financial management. He continues to make his positive mark on society.

[Last book read?]
The Mentor Leader by Tony Dungy

[Favorite meal?]
Grilled salmon and broccoli.

[Guilty pleasure?]
Chocolate ice cream.

[Hobbies?]
Teaching the children (ages 5–12) that rotate through my church’s Children’s Church Ministry program; learning American Sign Language and to play the alto saxophone.

[Favorite movie?]
Pretty Woman with Julia Roberts and Richard Gere.
As part of APHIS’ continuing effort to leverage technology, Veterinary Services (VS) has implemented an electronic signature service that allows the program to digitally streamline processes and eliminate paper-based processing.

e-SignLive, the newly adopted electronic signature technology, allows VS users to legally and securely sign and send documents—anywhere, anytime, from any Web-enabled device, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

[saving time]
“This technology has reduced the [timing of] signing and sending of documents from days to hours,” said VS’ Patrick McFall, one of the project managers for the implementation.

The electronic signature eliminates the need to print, fax, scan, or ship documents, essentially replacing the pen and paper with an electronic “fingerprint.” This “fingerprint” validates the integrity and authenticity of the signer and the document. With this technology, any change made after the document has been signed invalidates the signature, protecting the program against forgery and tampering with documents.

VS is the first APHIS program to implement electronic signature. The program is using it to improve how it handles the high volume of livestock crossing U.S. borders.

Livestock import and export involves multiple documents and signatures for each animal. VS has incorporated the electronic signature technology into its Veterinary Services Process Streamlining application, used to process both livestock imports and exports.

[getting results]
The program is already seeing positive results. The technology is improving how quickly VS can move internal and external documents, conduct field transactions, locate animals, and track their movement.

“Although VS is the first [program] in APHIS to use this technology, other areas in the agency—like Plant Protection and Quarantine and the agency’s Certification, Accreditation, Registration, Permits, and other Licensing (CARPOL) project—are already looking to integrate eSignLive into their applications,” said McFall.

From November 1, 2014, through February of this year, our agency lost four members of the APHIS family. We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

animal care
Martha Hefner  Raleigh, NC

plant protection and quarantine
Jack Gable  Buckeye, AZ

wildlife services
Daniel Garcia, Jr.  Alice, TX
Marshall Murphy  Leedey, OK

Special Note: We received word from the family of retired APHIS employee Terry Hall that he passed away on February 10, 2015. Terry, who retired from Policy and Program Development in 2011, was widely known throughout the agency for his dedication and his work each year with APHIS’ Combined Federal Campaign efforts.
question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “Would you say that you are an introvert, extrovert, or a blend of the two?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

With that in mind, we ask: What do you do most often for your lunch break?

- I don’t take a break
- Eat at my desk
- Eat lunch away from my desk
- I eat on the run
- Exercise

Feel free to add your comments about your preference.

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: Question of the Day.

working with velociraptors

Is it a rhea or a dinosaur?

Find out here by reading a story of grit and humor from the field.

For more stories, visit VMO Observer, a Veterinary Services SharePoint site well worth a bookmark in your browser. The site offers something for non-veterinarians and veterinarians alike.

Please note that the site has recently moved, so if you already have it bookmarked, be sure to update the link. Click here if you’d like to subscribe to the biweekly VMO Observer digest email. Caution: Along with humor, some pages also contain case reports—some with graphic diagnostic images of animals.
Did you know that the Presidential and Federal Records Act Amendments of 2014 have an important effect on how you can conduct official business for APHIS?

President Obama signed the new amendments on November 26, 2014. The following month, on December 29, 2014, USDA’s Acting General Counsel Jeffery Prieto emailed a memo to all employees concerning the new law; on January 12 of this year, APHIS Chief Information Officer Gary Washington followed up with another all-employee e-mail that provided more details.

Here’s what the new law means for APHIS employees.

[what you need to know]

Employees may not use their personal or private email accounts or any social media format for official business.

This means you cannot copy, forward, text, or send official APHIS documents or official information from your government email to your personal or private email account. You also may not post official documents or information to any social media format.

Examples of personal or private accounts include, but are not limited to:

- Gmail
- Hotmail
- Zoho
- Yandex
- Outlook.com
- iCloud
- Yahoo
- Inbox.com
- Any other commercially available webmail/SMTP/IMAP-based email services

Examples of social media include, but are not limited to:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Tumblr
- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- Instagram

There are several exemptions to the law, including the following staffs and situations:

- Public Affairs and other staffs approved for legal and electronic dissemination of official information;
- APHIS employees who, in the course of their official duties, need to send documents or official information to vendors or contractors such as, but not limited to:
  - Statements of Work or Statements of Objectives;

- Reports on status or other official information required for the performance of the vendor or contractor’s duties in support of APHIS;
- Agreements, memoranda, non-disclosure statements, etc., for signature;
- APHIS employees, who are teleworking or are on travel status and in the course of their official duties, need to send documents or official information to their personal or private account in order to be able to work. Employees are required to also copy their official government email with any official information or documents they send to their personal or private email.
  - Teleworking employees may print official documents and information when they telework.

The new law also created severe penalties for failure to follow its requirements. Intentionally sending official APHIS documents and information to your personal/private email account or posting on social media is a basis for disciplinary action, up to and including removal.

If you have any technical questions about the policy, please contact Michele Thomas, APHIS’ Chief Information Security Officer at michele.j.thomas@aphis.usda.gov.
Between November 1, 2014, and February 28, 2015, a total of 86 employees retired from the agency.

We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

**August 1–October 31, 2014**

**animal care**
- Manuel Adviento, Anaheim, CA
- Frances Binkley, Fuquay Varina, NC
- Kevin Bolin, Raleigh, NC
- Charles Currer, Magnolia, TX
- Doris Hackworth, Shacklefords, VA
- Steven Nusbaum, Queensbury, NY

**international services**
- Edward Gersabeck, Riverdale, MD
- Eleanora Lassiter, Riverdale, MD
- Janice Rokos, Riverdale, MD

**marketing and regulatory programs business services**
- Gloria Benson, Minneapolis, MN
- Carolyn Browne, Minneapolis, MN
- Lan Anh Dao, Ames, IA
- Donald Donnell, Minneapolis, MN
- Deborah Helseth, Minneapolis, MN
- Lisa Roach, Riverdale, MD
- Joann White, Riverdale, MD

**plant protection and quarantine**
- Howard Baba, Honolulu, HI
- Erick Babilonia, Edinburg, TX
- Patricia Brown, Austin, TX
- Wayne Claus, Beltsville, MD
- Iris Colon, Carolina, PR
- Joyce Cousins, Riverdale, MD
- Stephanie Droke, Little Rock, AR
- Peggy Goble, Prattville, AL
- Shan He, Oakland, CA
- John Heilig, Pierre, SD
- Nancy Lebedzinski, Worcester, MA
- Norma Lopez, Edinburg, TX
- Carolyn Mallory, Riverdale, MD
- Clemmie McCants, Sarasota, FL
- Timothy Miller, Lincoln, NE
- Stacey Peacock, Avon Park, FL
- William Pearce, Jr., Vero Beach, FL
- Carlos Perez, Atlanta, GA
- James Perkins, Harlingen, TX
- Scott Redlin, Raleigh, NC
- Eustorjio Rivas, Jr., Alba Rudd, Edinburg, TX
- Alba Sanchez Montalvo, Riverdale, MD
- Lena Soileau, San Juan, PR
- Charles Tatham, Riverdale, MD
- Clarence Toguchi, Jr., Epping, NH
- Sonia Valentín, Honolulu, HI
- Evelyn Vargas See, Mayaguez, PR
- William Wade, Jr., Gainsville, FL
- Eileen Welch, Frederick, MD
- Deborah Winograd, Riverdale, MD
- Joan Wittycombe, Otis AFB, MA
- Derek Yamamoto, Long Beach, CA
- Ronald Yasuda, Honolulu, HI
- Donald Yeutter, Honolulu, HI
- Rodney Young, Long Beach, CA
- George Linz, Beltsville, MD

**veterinary services**
- John Belfrage, Fort Collins, CO
- Cheryl Bovee, Laredo, TX
- Edwin Bowers, Jr., Gainesville, FL
- Annie Broughton, Raleigh, NC
- John Cougill, Ames, IA
- Laurier Couture, Gainesville, FL
- Nancy Feagle, Fort Collins, CO
- Priscilla Fitzmaurice, Riverdale, MD
- Karen James Preston, Del Rio, TX
- Barbara Keel, Ames, IA
- Alison King, Jefferson City, MO
- Justin Krause, Highgate Springs, VT
- David Liles, Sulphur Springs, TX
- Raul Martinez, Miami, FL
- Wayne McCutchen, Brownsville, TX
- Steven Melancon, San Antonio, TX
- Donald Otto, Knoxville, IA
- Walter Peck, Helena, MT
- Margaret Robinson, Gainesville, FL
- Osvaldo Saenz, Mission, TX
- David Silberman, Troutdale, OR
- Stephen Weber, Fort Collins, CO
- John Wiemers, Galesburg, IL
- Robert Williams, Olympia, WA

**wildlife services**
- John Bouchard, Harlowlton, MT
- Phyllis Brown, Fort Collins, CO
- Diana Dwyer, Fort Collins, CO
- Scott Evens, Granville, ND
- Jon Heisterberg, Raleigh, NC
- Charles Jones, Silver City, NM
- George Linz, Bismarck, ND
volunteer spotlight
bruce thomsen

[employee name and program]
Bruce Thomsen
Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer
Pathobiology Laboratory
National Veterinary Services Laboratories
Veterinary Services
Ames, IA

[volunteer organization]
Kiwanis Club of Nevada, Iowa
The Nevada Soccer Club

[organization mission]
The core mission of the Nevada Kiwanis Club’s 50 members is to serve and improve the lives of children, both in Nevada and throughout the world. The club works on a variety of service projects; members donate their time to educational, safety, nutrition, and leadership projects, and to fundraising. Currently, the club’s two largest multiyear fundraising projects are to help pay for the new Nevada High School Auditorium and—working with Kiwanis International and UNICEF—to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus worldwide.

The goal of the Nevada Soccer Club is to provide youth (ages 4–18) with the opportunity to play recreational soccer, be part of a positive team environment, and improve their soccer skills and physical fitness.

[volunteer activities]
As president of the Kiwanis Club, Thomsen led weekly 6:30 a.m. meetings to help guide the efforts of the club’s many active members. Because of the club’s major projects and other activities to assist youth in the community, members work a lot on fundraising. The club’s largest fundraising projects are growing, picking, and selling sweet corn in the summer and recycling community donated cans and bottles year round. The club receives, sorts, and recycles more than 5,000 cans each month—earning 5 cents for every can/bottle recycled.

Volunteering with the Nevada Soccer Club, Thomsen feels lucky to have coached all three of his daughters. He currently coaches his youngest daughter’s U-12 team, focusing not only on soccer skills but also on sportsmanship and on being a good teammate.

As a soccer club board member and equipment director, Thomsen volunteers time to building the growing club and to equipping more than 300 kids and coaches with the gear their teams need for practice and games.

[time given]
In 2013-2014, Thomsen volunteered more than 150 hours. He has been a Kiwanis Club member for 13 years and has served as board member, vice-president, president-elect, and president. He currently serves as past-president. In the soccer club, Thomsen has been a coach for more than 20 seasons and a board member for the past 2 years.

[organization web site]
http://www.nevadakiwanis.org/
http://nevadasoccer.org/

[employee email]
bruce.v.thomsen@aphis.usda.gov

[time given]
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Since December 2014, the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has impacted egg and turkey producers across multiple States. It has killed nearly 50 million birds in what has been called the worst animal health disease emergency this country has ever seen.

Over the course of response so far, more than 600 APHIS employees have deployed and worked with more than 2,000 contracted personnel and State and industry cooperators around the clock in affected States. APHIS has committed over $190 million in indemnity payments to producers to control the spread of disease and help them recover.

APHIS has received more than $700 million in emergency funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation to address the outbreak—including providing compensation for producers and cleaning and disinfecting premises—and to plan for potential outbreaks in the fall.

Although we have not seen any new HPAI cases at a commercial facility since June 17, APHIS is putting tremendous effort into planning with our partners for the potential reemergence of the disease this fall. Realistically, the agency and its partners must consider the potential worst case scenario and plan with that possibility in mind.

“We believe the threat of detections and disease is real for all of our top broiler-, turkey-, and layer-producing States: California, where we first found HPAI in commercial turkeys; across the Midwest from Nebraska to Ohio; and across the South and East from Texas to Delaware,” said Associate Administrator Jere Dick during a recent HPAI planning workshop.

“We’re not saying any of this will happen. We’re saying it could happen. But given the events of the past few months, could is something we take very seriously,” added Dick.

[preparations underway]
During the recent APHIS Virtual Town Hall (audio clip available), Administrator Kevin Shea talked about the fall planning underway. He

Continued on next page
discussed, for example, the ongoing preparations concerning how the agency would pre-position people and equipment and our work to identify available landfills.

The agency is also in the process of trying to hire more than 300 term employees in Veterinary Services (VS). The employees would be prepared for quick response and to work in advance with industry and States to bolster biosecurity measures.

Additionally, APHIS is working on how we would deploy employees in the fall. Under the current response, only VS’ Surveillance, Preparedness and Response Services (SPRS) section has had mandatory deployments, with the balance of the agency’s needs handled through voluntary deployments.

“We are now working at the management level on a plan of how we might have full agency activation for the fall, which might require more people to deploy,” said Shea. He encouraged employees to share their thoughts regarding a full agency activation with their supervisors or through the Tell Us What You Think comment box.

[what you can do]

Volunteers are still needed. If interested, you can find more information on My.APHIS.

The agency has taken steps to improve its ability to track volunteer availability for deployment and to improve the lead time for notifying volunteers about deployment dates.

A critical component of the agency’s response and planning will continue to be APHIS’ dedicated employees. The agency will need the support of all of its employees to meet this challenge and to continue protecting the health of our Nation’s poultry.

As you think about deployment, here are some things you can do:

• Meet with your supervisor and talk about your availability and possible deployment dates.
• Talk to people you know who have already deployed and ask about their experience.
• Think about what preparations you would need to make in your personal life.
• Review the Employee Volunteer Q&A on My.APHIS.

• Participate in the August 13th open house panel discussion to hear about the experiences of other employees who have deployed. Watch your email and My.APHIS for more information.
Sometimes the best way to learn more about something is to hear from someone who has been there, someone with experience. As APHIS prepares for the potential reemergence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) this fall, agency planners want to give you that chance.

On August 13, APHIS will host an open house featuring a panel of employees who completed 21-day deployments for the agency’s HPAI response. Panel members—from throughout the agency’s program areas—will talk about their experience and share their insights. APHIS staff will also be on hand to answer questions about the agency’s response and deployment.

The event will be available to field locations via videoconference, webinar, and conference call.

In addition, we plan to run short pieces on My.APHIS featuring employees sharing in their own words a little about their experience while deployed.

As a preview, we’ve included one of the “APHIS on the Scene” pieces here in Inside APHIS.

If you’re thinking about deployment, be sure to watch My.APHIS and participate in the upcoming open house in August.

What program do you work for and what is your position/job title when not deployed?
I work for Plant Protection and Quarantine in Riverdale, MD, as an agriculturist.

Where and when were you deployed?
I was deployed from June 8–30. I spent the first week of my deployment in Worthington, MN, and the last 2 weeks in Ames, IA.

What advice would you have for others who deploy?
My advice would be to be proactive, forge connections with the people you
meet, and try to learn and absorb as much as possible. It will help you see and find ways to contribute that others might miss.

I made it my goal to jump in and make the most of my time there. The hours are very long and the days will start to mesh together, but being engaged and an active contributor makes the experience much more worthwhile.

**What skills and/or personal traits were most helpful during your deployment?**
The most important traits would be adaptability, openness to change, and an eagerness to learn. An emergency is a very dynamic environment; things can change drastically from one day to another.

**What was it like working with others you hadn’t worked with previously?**
Deployments are an excellent way to increase your professional network. I met so many wonderful people while in Iowa—it was a tremendous experience to work so closely with APHIS employees from all over the country, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and two contracting companies: Witt O’Brien’s and Clean Harbors.

**Did the experience enrich your understanding of the work APHIS does? How?**
Definitely—the experience exposed me to a completely different side of APHIS. I do not have a veterinary background and, prior to my deployment, had never been involved with an emergency program.

However, I was able to get up to speed quickly upon arriving at the Incident Command Post and start making meaningful contributions to the response. I feel like a more well-rounded employee as a result of my deployment.

**What were the challenges and what were the rewards?**
The most difficult part was the work schedule and maintaining a semblance of balance.

We worked 12-hour days, 7 days a week. A work-life balance doesn’t really exist under those conditions, but it was very important to me to continue exercising regularly, eating healthy, and getting a good amount of sleep every night.

Along those same lines, one of the most rewarding parts of my deployment was the sense of camaraderie that developed among everyone working at the Incident Command Post. Because of the long hours, my coworkers became a little 3-week family. The entire group would come together to celebrate birthdays, Father’s Day, and anniversaries.

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**training calendar**

The APHIS Training and Development Calendar provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and course descriptions.

For more information, visit the Center for Training and Organizational Development SharePoint site.
new aphis customer call center

By Tanika Whittington

With more than 900 calls during its first month and over 1,000 calls in its second, the new APHIS Customer Service Call Center is off to a busy start.

Each day the center handles a wide range of APHIS topics—including, for example, calls from families traveling with pets, a trader importing mangoes, a person complaining about nuisance geese, and a company importing a virus.

The net result is that the call center is making it easier for the general public, regulated community, and stakeholders to find the information they need about APHIS programs, services, and activities.

[first point of contact]

Because of APHIS’ diverse mission, customers can find it challenging to know where to look or who to call, and they can get shuffled from person to person or agency to agency trying to find the information they need.

Launched June 3, 2015, the APHIS Customer Service Call Center’s goal is to eliminate these situations by serving as a responsive first point of contact for APHIS and by helping customers navigate the agency’s offices.

The APHIS Call Center collaborates closely with agency programs that have existing call centers or 800 numbers to respond to stakeholder calls. Working together, they ensure clear lines of communication and coordinate how to handle calls. With import/export topics, for example, the APHIS Call Center provides general information and then directs incoming calls to the appropriate program call centers for more detailed information.

The Call Center is committed to delivering a high level of service to our many stakeholders. Program specialists are available at (844) 820-2234, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, to provide resources, and information about APHIS programs and services.

aphis

101 critical days of summer

APHIS’ Raleigh Office hosted an emergency preparedness fair on May 20, drawing more than 160 participants. The event focused on safety and preparedness during the “101 Critical Days of Summer”—the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day when hot weather and outdoor activities are at their peak.

The fair featured 28 exhibits, including displays by area mounted police, the National Detector Dog Training Program, and medical professionals offering free blood pressure and glucose monitoring and information about diabetic emergencies, strokes, and heart attacks.

Other booths provided fire extinguisher training and safety information about heat and fireworks. The “Seat Belt Convincer” was also on hand to demonstrate the importance of buckling up.

Shown here (left to right): Kerry Garcia (VS), Barbara Porter-Spalding (VS), and David Mallard (WS) staff a table displaying personal protective gear.
plant protection and quarantine
weaving tribal relations with nonregulatory solutions

By William Wepsala

It is increasingly important to APHIS’ success that we be flexible and open to finding alternatives to regulations in our efforts to protect U.S. agriculture and natural resources.

Sometimes by simply pausing and taking a second look, we can identify alternatives that better serve our customers and stakeholders and that still meet our safeguarding goals.

Working with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe of New York, APHIS was able to use a more flexible approach—a nonregulatory solution—to ease obstacles created by the emerald ash borer (EAB).

[economic and cultural impact]
For generations, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has traded with the Algonquin community of Maniwaki, Quebec. Most importantly, they trade to get black ash logs used in traditional basket weaving.

Unfortunately, the presence of EAB in other parts of Canada was limiting the Tribe’s ability to import much needed black ash logs. Since arriving in North America, EAB has become a significant pest. It has affected 25 States, inflicting damage on all 16 native U.S. species of ash as well as a number of other trees. Because EAB hadn’t been detected in the area of New York that the Tribe calls home, there were restrictions on its ability to import ash logs from the Algonquin community.

For the Tribe, the potential damage ran deeper than just lost income. Beyond the economic importance of the baskets, the black ash figures heavily into the Tribe’s creation story and is a significant cultural resource.

[seeing an opportunity]
As Tribe members worked to import black ash logs, they found APHIS requirements for import permits and the permitting process...
difficult to navigate. They contacted APHIS to request a permit waiver, but were denied.

In many cases, this might have been how the story ended.

But instead, New York State Plant Health Director Diana Hoffman took a second look and saw an opportunity to be flexible with how the permits were handled under the existing regulations.

At its root, using nonregulatory solutions—or alternatives to rulemaking—means finding ways to meet our mission goals that do not involve creating new APHIS regulations. And, in situations like this one, it also means remaining open to taking a flexible approach to interpreting and implementing our existing regulations.

In this case, Hoffman and APHIS were able to streamline the permitting process and simplify the established permit. Working closely together, the Tribe and local Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) staff developed a workable permit with requirements that provide effective safeguarding but are easier to follow.

APHIS also coordinated with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, training them on the terms of the new permit, ensuring that its implementation would proceed as smoothly as possible. Discussions between the agencies helped anticipate and avoid potential problems at the border. Support from the Associate Administrator’s Office as part of the Alternatives to Rulemaking Program made this possible.

With the new permit and process in place, the Tribe resumed importing black ash, and APHIS turned an important stakeholder into a valued partner.

[strength through flexibility]
By taking a flexible approach, APHIS forged a stronger relationship with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe—one based on understanding and a respect for one another’s goals.

The success has opened the door to others, demonstrating the degree to which nonregulatory solutions can be effective and lead to greater opportunities. APHIS has since worked with the Tribe to provide funding for pest surveys to ensure forest health. And PPQ employees were invited to speak at the New York Indian Nations Conference, where they presented information about EAB, Asian longhorned beetle, invasive pest detection activities, as well as the AgDiscovery and Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS) youth programs.
Here at home in the United States, Wildlife Services wildlife biologist Michael Marlow is known for his varied expertise—from wildlife disease surveillance, to nonlethal predation damage management, to feral swine control. But in Uganda, he’s known simply as “the guy with all of the cool stuff.”

[sharing the cool stuff]
This past April, Marlow took his expertise on the road when he was invited to visit the Nwoya and Gulu districts of Northern Uganda. There, he trained researchers from Sweden, Uganda, and Kenya on the trapping techniques and equipment used to capture feral swine in the United States.

“Wildlife Services has successfully used drop-nets and corral traps to control invasive feral swine in the United States,” said Marlow. “Our hope is that these same techniques can be used in Africa to capture warthogs and bushpigs for an African swine fever study.”

African swine fever is a highly contagious hemorrhagic disease of pigs, warthogs, wild boar, and feral swine. It is prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, and outbreaks have occurred in some parts of Europe. Although the disease can be devastating to wild and domestic pig populations, it is not a human health threat. Experts hope to learn more about the role of the bushpig in the epidemiology of African swine fever—especially at contact points between wildlife and livestock. This information will help African countries deal with the disease and prevent its spread to other countries, such as the United States.

Successful trapping and radio-collaring projects are an important—and admittedly tricky—part of learning more about the disease’s spread.

“Our colleagues at the National Veterinary Institute in Sweden and Makerere University in Uganda, as well as several other partners, were having difficulty capturing and radio-collaring warthogs and bushpigs in Africa,” said Marlow.

“The traps and nets they were using just weren’t working on these very shy, elusive, and strictly nocturnal animals.”

[drop-nets and corral traps]
To help increase trapping success and improve the group’s African swine fever sampling and monitoring efforts, Marlow traveled to Uganda and demonstrated how to use two tools—an electromagnetic drop-net system and a drop-door corral trap.

The drop-net system uses a large, square net hung from four corner poles. Each corner of the net is secured to a weight that is held in place by an electromagnet. A wireless remote-control can turn off the power to the electromagnet and allow the net to drop. Animals are lured under the net with bait.

The drop-door corral trap includes a holding container made of welded fencing material and a suspended, trigger-activated door. Once inside the corral, the animals’ movements trip a trigger line that causes the door to close, trapping them inside. Both techniques can catch multiple animals at a time.

While there, Marlow and the team captured two warthogs with the drop-net system.

“We likely would have caught more animals, but the weather was not ideal. Our trapping...
occurred during the transition period between Uganda’s dry and wet seasons. The sudden increase in food and water made it difficult to predict where the warthogs and bushpigs would be,” said Marlow.

Still, enthusiasm remains high that these new tools will boost capture success and allow researchers to gain valuable

Researchers in Uganda set up one of the drop-nets brought over by APHIS-WS’ Michael Marlow for use in capturing warthogs and bushpigs.

“It’s rewarding to know other wildlife professionals are benefiting from Wildlife Services’ experience,” said Marlow.

Final touches are placed on the drop-door corral trap. Animals are lured into the corral with bait. Once inside the corral, their movements trip a trigger line that causes the door to close, trapping them inside.
animal care

veterinarians aim for specialty board certification

By Dave Sacks

Many Animal Care veterinary medical officers (VMOs) are seeking to enhance their professional credentials by becoming board certified under the newest American Veterinary Medical Association’s (AVMA) specialty program—the American College of Animal Welfare (ACAW).

ACAW’s mission as a new board-certified specialty is to advance animal welfare through education, certification, and scientific investigation. As the world’s largest employer of animal welfare veterinarians, Animal Care knows that its VMOs are prime candidates to fulfill that mission.

It has the makings of a win-win-win situation for Animal Care.

“Our VMOs will benefit from being formally recognized as professional experts in animal welfare. Animal Care’s stakeholders will benefit because these VMOs will advance the welfare of animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act. And, of course, the animals will benefit as well,” said Betty Goldentyer, Animal Care’s director of operations in Raleigh, NC.

[recognizing expertise]

The AVMA—which represents more than 86,500 veterinarians working in private practice, government, industry, academia, and the uniformed services—recognizes 22 specialty organizations, or boards, and encourages its members to develop enhanced skills in specific areas of veterinary medicine. More than 11,000 veterinarians have completed the rigorous postgraduate training, education, and examination required to become board-certified in specialty areas such as surgery, internal medicine, behavior, and pathology.

Individuals who complete the process become “diplomates,” and they serve animals, the public, and the veterinary profession by providing high quality service in their particular area of expertise.

Prior to 2006, animal welfare had never been a board-certified specialty, but a group of veterinarians led by former AVMA president Bonnie Beaver set out to change that. They launched an initiative that would become ACAW.

[how it came about]

“Animal welfare has always been the foundation of veterinary training and education, but viewing it as a specific scientific discipline had not been done previously,” said Dr. William Stokes, Animal Care’s assistant director of operations in Raleigh, NC.

Establishing animal welfare as a distinct professional discipline did not happen overnight.

“It took a while to prepare a certification program and gain accreditation from AVMA—five years to be exact,” said Stokes, who was invited to serve on the ACAW organizing committee in 2007 based on his welfare expertise in the care and use of animals in research and testing. “During that time, our committee laid out the knowledge requirements we felt were needed in order for a diplomate to truly have a professional level of expertise in the discipline of animal welfare.”

Continued on next page
in memoriam

From March 1 through June 26, our agency lost seven members of the APHIS family. We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

plant protection and quarantine
Ronald Winningham  
Krebs, OK
Alvaro Lopez  
Harlingen, TX
Violet Ko  
Kahului, Hi

veterinary services
Zong Xiong  
Ames, IA

wildlife services
Kenneth Baer  
Elko, NV
Shannon Tunnell*  
Roswell, NM
Kelly Hobbs*  
Roswell, NM

*WS Pilot Kelly Hobbs and program cooperator Shannon Tunnell died on June 5 when their aircraft crashed during coyote control work southeast of Raton, NM. Hobbs became a WS employee in 1990 and had more than 35 years with the cooperative WS program, serving as a pilot in New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. Tunnell began his career in 2009 as a New Mexico Department of Agriculture wildlife specialist in Chaves County. He had extensive training as a crewmember in aerial shooting operations for predator damage management. Read more.

Special Note: Since our last issue, we learned of the passing of APHIS retiree John Cougill on February 26, 2015. John joined APHIS in 1991 and retired from Veterinary Services in December 2014.

specialty board certification

Continued from page 10

ACAW certified its first class of diplomates in 2013.

In addition to the education, training, and examination required to become board-certified, candidates must also publish two papers in peer-reviewed journals.

“The journal papers are significant because the candidates, through research or critical reviews, are evaluating new ways to approach specific animal welfare challenges—and this leads to science-based improvements in animal welfare,” said Stokes.

[great fit for animal care]

Animal Care employs 72 VMOs in the field and another 13 in the Center for Animal Welfare and Riverdale. A large number of them have shown a strong interest in becoming ACAW diplomates.

“Many of our veterinarians are interested because becoming a diplomat demonstrates that you have special knowledge and skills in animal welfare—and they want to gain that knowledge and enhance their welfare assessment skills,” said Stokes.

In June, ACAW offered its second annual “Animal Welfare Short Course.” Speakers explained how to conduct animal welfare assessments for a wide range of species and discussed contemporary animal welfare issues and best practices. Stokes discussed strategies for reducing and avoiding pain and distress in biomedical research and testing.

Nicolette Petervary, national animal care specialist in Raleigh, discussed how Animal Welfare Act regulations are applied to address the key aspects of animal welfare. Thirty-three Animal Care VMOs—plus one from Veterinary Services and one from USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service—attended the course.

Animal Care’s Deputy Administrator Chester Gipson is determined to enable as many of his program’s VMOs as possible to become ACAW-certified.

The program has established a working group to develop recommendations for training and education opportunities that would allow interested VMOs to meet the requirements for certification.

“We are supporting those who want to become ACAW-certified because they will be bettering themselves professionally. And our whole program will benefit from that,” said Goldentyer.

Continued from page 10
Imagine returning from an exciting adventure in Mexico or China or a relaxing vacation in Hawaii. You would like to bring back mementos from your trip: an orchid, sand from the beach, even a mango from a tree outside your hotel.

A new Web site, CanIBringIt.com, sponsored by Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), can help you make smart choices when you pack your suitcase.

PPQ works cooperatively with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and State departments of agriculture to protect our agricultural and natural resources from invasive pests. Many travelers do not realize that some fruits, vegetables, and meat products from certain areas can carry potentially harmful pests and diseases that could cost millions of dollars in agricultural and environmental damage and eradication efforts.

While USDA regulations permit certain items to cross U.S. borders or move interstate (i.e., in the case of items entering the mainland from Hawaii), some items are prohibited entry. And all items entering the country are subject to inspection by CBP or—for items from Hawaii—to predeparture inspections by APHIS officials.

Heather Curlett, PPQ’s outreach and risk communications coordinator, says that for travelers, knowing when it’s ok to bring something and when you should leave it behind can be challenging. That’s why Curlett and others in PPQ developed CanIBringIt.com.

“The Web site is currently being piloted,” says Curlett says. “By focusing on certain countries and points of entry, we are learning how to help travelers navigate our regulations. When travelers know what they can and can’t bring, it helps to alleviate pressure on our safeguarding system by reducing the risk that someone might unknowingly bring a dangerous plant pest or animal disease.”

People traveling from Mexico and China, as well as those entering the U.S. mainland from Hawaii, can use the site to make informed choices about what they might wish to bring with them. The interactive, graphic-based Web site is accessible in English, Mandarin, and Spanish. Individuals with limited language skills should find its photo-heavy design easy to use, says Curlett.

The Web site’s accessibility and ability to communicate effectively with broad, diverse audiences have already yielded impressive results. Since the pilot began in mid-April, CanIBringIt.com has received nearly than 51,000 unique visitors and more than 100,000 page views.

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can i bring it? quiz

Can you identify which items are allowed into the United States?

1. Kudzu from China?
2. Orchids from Mexico?
3. Mango from Hawaii?
4. Empanada from Mexico?
5. Seed leis from Hawaii?
6. Curry leaf from Hawaii?
7. Prickly pear fruit from Mexico?
8. Pork skins from Mexico?
9. Citrus peel from China?
10. Wreaths made from spruce from Mexico?

Check your answers on page 13.
question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “What do you do most often for your lunch break?” Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

What do you do most often for your lunch break?

- 59% Eat at My Desk
- 20% Eat Lunch Away from My Desk
- 14% Eat on the Run
- 5% Don’t Take a Break
- 2% Exercise
- 14% Details
- 2% Webinars
- 2% Classroom Courses
- 2% Shadow Assignments
- 2% All of the Above

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

[next question please]

[can i bring it? –quiz answers]

1. Kudzu from China—Allowed (leaves and stems allowed after clearing U.S. Customs and Border Protection)
2. Orchids from Mexico—Allowed (fresh cuttings for decoration allowed after clearing U.S. CBP)
3. Mango from Hawaii—Prohibited
4. Empanada from Mexico—Allowed (thoroughly cooked, prepared food containing meat for personal use in small quantities allowed after clearing U.S. CBP)
5. Seed leis from Hawaii—Allowed (after clearing U.S. CBP)
6. Curry leaf from Hawaii—Allowed (if commercially treated at USDA-approved facility and packed in boxes that are clearly marked/stamped after clearing U.S. CBP)
7. Prickly pear fruit from Mexico—Allowed (after clearing U.S. CBP)
8. Pork skins from Mexico—Selectively allowed depending on State of origin, crispness, and temperature fried (after passing U.S. CBP)
9. Citrus peel from China—Prohibited
10. Wreaths made from spruce from Mexico—Prohibited

With that in mind, we ask: For you, what is the best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to enhance your career with APHIS?

- Webinars
- Shadow Assignments
- Details
- Classroom Courses
- All of the Above

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: Question of the Day.

explore your training options today!

The APHIS Center for Training and Organizational Development (CTOD) offers many courses and options to help you with your professional development goals.

Visit the CTOD SharePoint page to learn about all the resources available, including a Training Calendar that features course descriptions and registration information.

[done]
What happens when someone violates APHIS regulations?

While the question sounds straightforward, the answer can get complicated. Thankfully, APHIS Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) is there to answer the question.

Depending on the particular situation, the details of the violation, and consideration over which enforcement action may best deter possible future violations, each case can take a variety of different paths.

The role of IES staff is to investigate and understand the specifics and then, as needed, advise the agency programs and guide the enforcement action that follows.

IES efforts promote and protect the health and value of American animal, plant, and natural resources by supporting APHIS programs and the agency’s regulations, including those related to essential laws like the Plant Protection Act (PPA), the Animal Health Protection Act, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), the Horse Protection Act, and others.

[no easy task]

The work of IES is no easy task. In every case, there are many factors to sort out. There are often competing information, facts to document, specific provisions in the statutes to consider, and aggravating or mitigating factors to weigh that may shape the penalties pursued by the agency.

IES looks at the seriousness of the violation, the culpability or level of responsibility of the parties involved, and any previous violations. They also consider how cooperative the parties have been.

When you add to this mix the collaboration it takes to investigate potential violations and actually complete an enforcement action, you get a pretty thick stew. IES works closely with APHIS programs, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), USDA’s Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

[striking a balance]

After an investigation that substantiates violations, IES has several options. With agreement from the agency program involved, IES can issue an official warning, pursue a voluntary settlement agreement, refer a case to OGC for an administrative proceeding, or—in cases involving more serious violations—refer the case to the DOJ for civil or criminal action.

For practical reasons, not all cases result in pursuing the toughest possible enforcement action or penalty. Considering available resources, it’s just not possible, and such an approach wouldn’t necessarily yield better compliance results. Instead, IES aims to strike a balance between two things: applying effective measures that support the agency’s mission and maximizing USDA’s overall enforcement resources.

This means understanding, for example, that an official warning will work well in some cases, and in others, a civil monetary penalty is needed.

[deterrent effect]

Determining which enforcement action to take is difficult, and it can be controversial. Questions can arise about appropriate penalties, the complexities of following Federal regulations, the financial impact on small businesses, issues of quality and timely case resolution, and how effective enforcement actions are as deterrents to future violations.

That last part—an enforcement action’s effectiveness—is especially hard to quantify and predict. For some, the value of a deterrent is measured in dollars. For others, the deterrent is more about being publicly associated with violating Federal regulations.

In a recent case, a plant nursery—in violation of APHIS regulations—shipped plants known

Continued on next page
Did you know that our Investigative and Enforcement Services’ (IES) Web pages now feature data and summaries outlining APHIS enforcement actions for each program, agricultural quarantine inspection activities, and the agency as a whole?

IES recently posted the information to help increase public awareness and support of enforcement activities for APHIS-administered laws.

The Web site helps make APHIS enforcement efforts more transparent. It houses data and summaries covering fiscal years’ (FY) 2014 and 2015 (mid-year), plus information about IES and how it supports the APHIS mission.

IES will update the posted data at the end of FY 2015 and twice each year thereafter.

[increasing efficiency]
The site also shares some exciting successes from IES’ Business Process Improvement (BPI) project. The goal of the BPI was to help IES take swifter action on alleged violations. Through this project and other initiatives, IES has increased its efficiency, cutting its processing time in half.

The project has also driven dramatic reductions since 2011 in the number of open cases pending action. And, last year alone, IES efforts resulted in nearly 1,800 official warnings, the collection of more than $1.8 million in stipulated penalties, and the assessment of almost $1 million in civil penalties from administrative orders.

[improving communication]
With a focus on community relations, IES has taken other steps to improve the availability of its information online.

For example, IES listened to public requests and began posting the Horse Protection Act Disqualification List on the Web site. But it’s not just about data. The site now also provides links to information for small businesses, frequently asked questions, and IES contacts. The program is planning other exciting additions as well, such as a searchable enforcement action tool.

Visit the IES Web site to see what’s new and check back for up-to-date information about APHIS enforcement efforts.

weighing options

as a host for sudden oak death. The nursery sent the plants without the necessary notifications and continued even after a hold was placed on materials that tested positive for the pathogen. In response, IES pursued a case, and an Administrative Law Judge issued a consent decision assessing a civil penalty of $10,750. Despite the penalty, the nursery is now again under investigation for continuing to violate the PPA. Together, IES, OGC, and the Plant Protection and Quarantine program are pursuing stronger enforcement actions to compel the nursery’s compliance.

In contrast, consider the case of a public zoo that had several serious AWA-related issues. These involved animal enclosure hazards, poor sanitation, and providing insufficient qualified care. Following an IES investigation, the zoo agreed to a monetary settlement agreement of $8,107. Unlike the nursery, the zoo has not been the subject of any further investigation.

[not just numbers]
In fiscal year 2014, IES initiated over 2,500 enforcement actions, but the numbers alone are not its goal.

IES serves to support the APHIS mission. And, like the agency, IES is becoming increasingly aware that fulfilling this mission can be done not just through enforcement actions, but through proactive collaboration and communication with the public and with greater transparency and information sharing on its Web site.
Between March 1 and June 26, 2015, a total of 48 employees joined the ranks of APHIS retirees.

We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

office of the administrator
Cynthia Smith Edenton, NC

international services
Eloisa Jones Riverdale, MD

marketing and regulatory programs business services
Deborah O’Brien Minneapolis, MN
Sherri Sirotkin Riverdale, MD

plant protection and quarantine
Deverett Alexander Palmetto, FL
Debora Bivins Goldsboro, NC
Joseph Cavey, Jr. Riverdale, MD
Linda Chan Daly City, CA
James Clow Raleigh, NC
Dean Daugherty Owensboro, KY
Joseph Dayball Ft. Pierce, FL
Darlene Di Leone Riverdale, MD
Peggy Elder Otis AFB, MA
Joel Floyd Riverdale, MD
Steven Golebiowski Worcester, MA
Stephen Knight Des Plaines, IL
Nora Lynch Riverdale, MD
Mark Michaelis Berlin, VT
Connie Pepper Sacramento, CA
Richard Richerson Glynco, GA
Joseph Rocco, Jr. Ft. Pierce, FL
Gilbert Rowe, Jr. Mullins, SC
Ralph Salber Mullica Hill, NJ
William Spitzer Baton Rouge, LA
Earl M. Toyama Honolulu, HI
Shirley Wager-Page Riverdale, MD
Terrance Washington Miami, FL

veterinary services
Debra Beaughey Fort Collins, CO
Judith Berganini Fort Collins, CO
Judy Crawford Gainesville, FL
Arthur Davis Ames, IA
Jack Ellithorpe Lakewood, CO
Nils Forseth Miami, FL
David Gramlich New Braunfels, TX

wildlife services
Peter Butchko Okemos, MI
Rodney Krischke Casper, WY
Judy Loven West Lafayette, IN
Brenda Scott Springfield, IL
Ricky Walker Collins, MS
[**Manager Profile**]

**Michelle Weddle Wenberg**
APHIS Budget Officer
Policy and Program Development

[**What is your background?**]
I was born and raised in the Washington, D.C., area. I began working for APHIS in 1990 when I was a student at the University of Maryland in College Park.

After graduating with a degree in business, I began working for APHIS full-time and have since held positions in Plant Protection and Quarantine, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services, Wildlife Services, and Policy and Program Development (PPD).

I also spent a year on detail with the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Agriculture in the early 2000s. I have been the APHIS Budget Officer since 2005.

[**Most memorable APHIS experience?**]
I have had a number of memorable experiences while working for APHIS. As a headquarters employee, I have particularly enjoyed opportunities to spend time in the field to see APHIS’ mission in action.

Some examples are when I volunteered for the Karnal Bunt emergency program in Arizona and tracked coyotes that were preying on sheep in the Colorado mountains. Another big highlight of my career was helping draft the fiscal year (FY) 2003 appropriations bill during my congressional detail.

[**Priorities in the coming months?**]
My staff and I will continue to defend and justify APHIS’ FY 2017 budget request as it makes its way through USDA and the Office of Management and Budget. I have been spending a lot of time preparing and justifying emergency funding requests for the current avian influenza emergency, too, and expect that to continue into the fall. Another priority for me is leading the effort to develop PPD’s first strategic plan.

[**Accomplishment most proud of?**]
Professionally speaking, I am most proud of receiving the APHIS Supervisor of the Year Award in 2012 because members of my staff nominated me for it.

[**Favorite meal?**]
Being a Maryland girl, I love to spend time on the water picking crabs during the summer. Of course, this must be accompanied by a healthy helping of crab dip and a cold beverage.

[**Hobbies?**]
I enjoy planning community outreach activities for my daughter’s Girl Scout troop, for which I am also the money manager.

I also got a FitBit watch recently to track my steps, activity, etc. and am having fun challenging myself—and my FitBit friends—to walk more each day.

[**Guilty pleasure?**]
Binge-watching recorded episodes of The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon. And all things chocolate.

[**Favorite movie?**]
National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation.
“How do you make diplomats out of scientists?” Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Assistant Deputy Administrator John Greifer asked recently. “You do everything you can to prepare and equip them to deal with a rapidly changing world.”

“Historically PPQ has been known primarily for its domestic work, but now we’re about much more than keeping bugs away from our borders,” said Greifer.

When PPQ reorganized in 2013, one of its priorities was to increase the program’s focus on international standards and trade by placing those responsibilities directly under the PPQ Deputy Administrator.

In an increasingly complex, global society, PPQ believes it is critical that more employees understand international guidelines for plant health in order to work more effectively with foreign counterparts.

To help achieve this goal, PPQ recently introduced a new training program, available through AgLearn to all USDA employees. The training course is called Introduction to International Phytosanitary Standards.

It introduces users to standards set by International Standard Setting Organizations (ISSOs)—such as the International Plant Protection Committee (IPPC) and North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO)—and the way they affect PPQ’s daily operations. The four-lesson training takes about an hour to complete.

“The course information is interesting and it provides a good foundation for employees who participate in IPPC or NAPPO meetings or with international working groups,” said Lora Katz, PPQ communications program specialist.

More than 100 APHIS employees designated as subject matter experts have attended IPPC or NAPPO meetings abroad or served on ISSO working groups here in the United States.

Since the May 1st launch of the online training, 16 plant health safeguarding specialists, entry-level professionals serving in duty stations around the country, have completed the course as part of their basic agricultural safeguarding training.

“The Introduction to International Phytosanitary Standards training is only the beginning,” said Katz. “Changes in global agriculture will require a workforce that understands the global policy framework that affects commerce and regulators. We welcome employees with an interest in this critical area to let us know if they would like to serve as a technical expert on an IPPC or NAPPO working group.”

For more information about the online training, contact Katz or Stephanie Dubon. Katz is available at lora.katz@aphis.usda.gov or (301) 851-2256; Dubon is available at stephanie.m.dubon@aphis.usda.gov or (301) 851-2180.

More than 180 countries, in addition to the United States, are members of the IPPC.

The NAPPO member countries are the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
Plant Protection and Quarantine: Supporting Exercise Talisman Sabre

Combined Federal Campaign: We Make It Possible

In Memoriam

International Services: Improving Vesicular Disease Surveillance in Central America

A Good Rainy Day’s Work

Pear Program Party

Wildlife Services: Returning Black-Footed Ferrets to Prairie Lands

Presentation Training: Overcoming the Blah, Blah, Blahs

Biotechnology Regulatory Services: How APHIS is Improving Biotechnology

Recent APHIS Retirees

In Tribute: Kelly Hobbs and Shannon Tunnell

Question of the Day

Gleaning for Feds Feed Families

Manager Profile: Burke Healey

Did You Know

Every two years, the United States and Australia conduct a joint military exercise called Talisman Sabre. The exercise provides an opportunity for the two countries to test and practice their capacity for contingency response and the interoperability of their tactics, techniques, and procedures.

And for Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Preclearance and Offshore Programs (POP), the exercise—which occurred again this past summer—gives agency personnel the chance to support the training, collaborate with a key agricultural trading partner, and demonstrate PPQ’s skills at safeguarding agricultural and natural resources.

Since 2007, POP’s military preclearance inspectors have joined forces with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to facilitate the exercise, which requires the movement of U.S. military equipment to Australia. Australia has strict biosecurity requirements that protect its agriculture and natural resources.

Shown (left to right) are: Nicole Harvey (Aus.), Michelle Brotohusodo (Aus.), Andrew Agius (Aus.), Leonie Keamey (Aus.), Bill Aley (PPQ), Emma Davidson (Aus.), JoAnn Cruse (PPQ), Lee Newport (PPQ), Jon Bicket (Aus.) and (kneeling front) Jose Lozada (PPQ).

By Jose Lozada and Andrea Simao

Continued on next page
resources. Without the support of POP inspectors, these requirements would make it very difficult to conduct a realistic training exercise since military equipment can pose a high biosecurity risk.

Additionally, POP’s involvement eases other obstacles concerning inspection. Because U.S. military vessels and aircraft have sovereign immunity, foreign authorities may not board and conduct inspections required for entering Australian ports and national waters. Here again, POP personnel step in and help.

**[exercise preparations]**

As part of the preparation for the exercises, POP officials conducted pre-inspection of U.S. military equipment and eliminated all agricultural risks discovered during the inspection process. These efforts included inspecting and certifying 41 combat aircraft, 5 amphibious vessels, and all of the U.S. vehicles and equipment used by the more than 30,000 military participants.

The process required great patience and immense attention to detail. Each Cobra helicopter took an average of 3 days to clean, inspect, and certify.

**[step aboard]**

In July, members of POP’s military preclearance team left land and served aboard U.S. Navy vessels. During the 3-week exercise, team members provided advice, inspection, and certifications at sea, which allowed DOD to practice on the Australian shores.

PPQ’s involvement demonstrated the program’s unique ability to deliver agricultural risk mitigation any time, any place—even under the challenging environments at sea.

Congratulations to PPQ’s Jose Lozada, Lee Newport, William Aley, JoAnn Cruse, and Colleen Kitzmiller for their outstanding work on Talisman Sabre.

Photo sources: Bill Aley (PPQ), Kristy Bly (World Wildlife Fund), Anson Eaglin (LPA), Bob Nichols (USDA), Plant Protection and Quarantine, John Steuber (USDA), Veterinary Services.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on My.APHIS.

**interested in writing?**

Whether you’re looking to practice your skills, add an interesting new goal to your individual development plan (IDP), or you simply enjoy writing, consider contacting Inside APHIS to learn about writing opportunities.

Contact editor John Scott by phone (301-851-4068) or email (john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov) for more details.
combined federal campaign

We make it possible

By Amanda Sutker

There’s still time to make your contribution to the 2015 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The campaign has been extended and now runs until December 31st.

With a list of thousands of eligible charities to choose from, it’s easy to select an organization or charity of interest to you. CFC keyworkers in Riverdale and Washington, D.C. are available to assist you with completing paper donation forms or online giving.

Since the CFC kickoff in September, APHIS employees throughout the country have participated in local CFC campaigns, pledging payroll deductions and attending events to raise awareness about CFC.

Agency employees in the National Capital Area have so far raised nearly $58,000. Contributions have come from individual donors and an active fundraising schedule, including jeans and jersey days, a coffeeshouse with live music, an international chocolate fair, and various luncheon food events.

To benefit other regional CFC campaign areas, APHIS employees in Minneapolis, Raleigh, Ames, Fort Collins, and other locations are supporting CFC by working with State campaign coordinators to sign up donors and host events.

Fort Collins employees even found a way to connect their local USDA People’s Garden to this year’s CFC fundraising efforts. Veterinary Services’ Kasey Reyling organized a “guess the pumpkin’s weight” contest in October. The pumpkin, which Kasey and others grew in the garden, weighed 53.1 pounds.

Through individual pledges and events like the “guess the weight” contest, APHIS employees in Fort Collins have raised nearly $18,000 in support of CFC.

From June 26 through November 28, we lost five members of the APHIS family. We will miss them, and our thoughts go out to their families and loved ones.

Robert Dahl
Gladstone, MO
Lance Oshiro
Honolulu, HI
Genoveva Pereira
Miami, FL
Juan Vasquez
Edinburg, TX

Special Note: We learned recently of the passing of APHIS retiree Dr. Pierre Arthur Chaloux, former Deputy Administrator of Veterinary Services.

Chaloux joined USDA in 1953 and had a lengthy and very accomplished career.

Among other achievements, he played a key role in the development of the bovine tuberculosis, screwworm fly, and hog cholera eradication programs.

For more, read Administrator Kevin Shea’s message (December 2, 2015).
international services

improving vesicular disease surveillance in central america

By Conrad Estrada

In August, APHIS signed a cooperative agreement to begin an enhanced and sustainable level of vesicular disease and screwworm surveillance in various Central American countries. The agreement—a collaborative effort with the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA)—improves animal disease surveillance in the region and helps safeguard the United States against the risk of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

[pairs in protection]
OIRSA is an intergovernmental organization that provides technical assistance to the ministries and departments of agriculture and livestock of nine member states: Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Mexico, and Costa Rica. The organization plays an important role in disease and pest control throughout Central America, protecting and strengthening development of agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture by enhancing production capacity and the safety of crops and agricultural products.

The recent cooperative agreement supports field surveillance for vesicular diseases, data management and program analysis, as well as the Vesicular Disease Laboratory in Panama.

[risk-based strategy]
Since the 1970s, APHIS has supported vesicular disease surveillance in Central America, working on early detection systems for FMD, screwworm, and other transboundary animal diseases. In recent years, however, with less financial support for these programs, the number of field samples and the efficiency of the system has decreased.

Veterinary Services employees spent hours in the rain on November 17 at the port of Olympia, WA, to safely load 1,427 Holstein heifers for export. The exporter shipped the cows to Vietnam to help enlarge the country’s herd and meet a national goal of providing all children with one glass of milk per day.

Shown here, loading crew members were (left to right): Mille Chopic, Jodie Jones, Tom Lehman (back), Aaron Gilbertsen, Kate Bowers, and Victoria Knutson.
improving vesicular disease surveillance

Continued from page 4

A robust vesicular disease and screwworm surveillance program includes field investigations, sample collection and submission, and diagnostic sample processing. The new cooperative agreement outlines a risk-based surveillance strategy. It focuses on higher risk populations and species, which in turn increases the efficiency of detections while optimizing the use of the designated funds.

Although no country in Central America has ever reported an occurrence of FMD, vesicular stomatitis is an endemic disease with clinical signs similar to those of FMD. By supporting vesicular disease surveillance in the region, APHIS is helping to ensure that there are no undetected disease incursions in FMD-free areas. This reduces the risk of FMD being introduced into the United States. The project also supports screwworm surveillance in coordination with the Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworm in Panama.

[how it will work]

In accordance with the cooperative agreement, each participating country in the Central American region will identify the sources, such as farms with susceptible species, that may be at risk because of their proximity to ports, airports, and landfills. The countries will subsequently develop a surveillance plan to track and detect disease in these areas. Countries will have the option of participating in other established surveillance programs as long as samples are collected from the identified at-risk sources. Countries will also include samples from vesicular disease investigations.

Countries will decide how frequently veterinarians and animal health technicians should visit sites to collect samples and epidemiological information and to talk with producers to ensure they are familiar with the goals and objectives of the program.

The project will last one year and supports long-term capacity-building objectives that will allow the region of Central America better access to diagnostic and analytical systems. Additionally, the project collaboration and information exchange are both essential ingredients in APHIS’ efforts to combat serious transboundary and emerging animal diseases.

peach program party

On November 17th, International Services and Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) celebrated the 30th anniversary of the sand peach export program in South Korea. The event was hosted by the industry cooperators and the National Plant Protection Organization for South Korea. Organizers presented awards to growers and exporters who have been active in the program for a number of years. Ron Tsunezumi, a pre-clearance mitigation specialist in PPQ’s Preclearance and Offshore Programs, received a plaque for his 15 years of work with the program. Shown here (center), PPQ’s Ken Law poses with exporters participating in the program.

APHIS formalized the cooperative agreement with the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) in Washington, D.C. on Aug. 26, 2015.
A black-footed ferret pokes its head out of the ground on the Crow Nation reservation in Montana. As onlookers take photos, the ferret gazes around at its new home with no way of knowing the many cooperators it has taken to make this day happen.

[first time in a long time]

It’s been 92 years since the charismatic black-footed ferret has called the Crow lands its home. But now it’s back, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Federal, State, Tribal, and environmental agencies and organizations. Together, they coordinated the release of 29 ferrets onto the reservation on October 23. The project’s goal is to return black-footed ferrets to the North American prairie.

For its part, Wildlife Services (WS) is helping to make sure the ferrets are well-fed and healthy. WS role is to protect the reservation’s prairie dog population—the ferrets’ main prey and food source. WS biologists worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Crow Nation Fish and Game Department; and the World Wildlife Fund.

“This important partnership is a part of the effort to return the masked bandit to its prairie homeland,” said Kristy Bly, senior wildlife conservation biologist with the World Wildlife Fund.

[plagued by fleas]

The black-footed ferret is one of North America’s most endangered mammals due to habitat loss and sylvatic plague—a non-native disease that is transmitted by infected fleas and lethal to ferrets and prairie dogs.

As part of the project, all ferrets released into the wild are vaccinated against plague before they leave the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ferret Recovery Center in Colorado. But that’s just part of the equation. Without intervention, plague can spread through a prairie dog colony in just a few days, leaving the ferrets stranded without food.

This is where WS comes in.

This summer WS biologists in Montana applied an insecticide called DeltaDust® into prairie dog burrows on the Crow Nation where ferrets were reintroduced. The insecticide kills the fleas that transmit plague to the prairie dogs and reduces the occurrence of the disease.

WS personnel have used DeltaDust® in Colorado, Montana, and Arizona to prevent plague where more ferret releases are planned, and near where the ferrets have already been released.

“We are so thankful for Wildlife Services’ partnership and contributions to ferret recovery. Protection of prairie dog habitat from plague is an essential part of restoring and retaining ferrets on the landscape, and Wildlife Services personnel are excelling at it,” said Bly.

What was the worst presentation you ever sat through? A likely guess is that the speaker was standing in front of a screen, facing away from the audience and reading word-for-word from PowerPoint slides crammed with meaningless bullets and charts. Sound familiar? Or, perhaps you have even done this yourself?

Frankly, we all know there must be a better way to communicate ideas. To help employees discover their inner-speaker, APHIS is offering training opportunities to learn, practice, and refine vital presentation skills. These skills are essential both for personal effectiveness and career advancement. And they benefit APHIS as well: every presentation an employee makes to an external audience is an opportunity to enhance the public’s faith and confidence in our agency.

Recently, the agency hosted two contractor-led classes: Death by PowerPoint and Effective Executive Speaking. Both courses received rave reviews from participants.

Death by PowerPoint focused on speech content and explored what makes ideas “stick” in an audience’s long-term memory. Participants learned how to keep an audience’s attention by using PowerPoint to create arresting, image-rich slides that complement a spoken message.

Effective Executive Speaking emphasized the importance of speech preparation and delivery techniques, such as voice projection and hand and body movements that reinforce a speaker’s authenticity with an audience.

[more help on the way]
Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services’ Center for Training and Organization Development (CTOD) and Plant Protection and Quarantine’s Professional Development Center are partnering to develop a hybrid presentation course that will be offered to APHIS employees nationwide. Although final details are still in flux, the course will likely consist of video and/or webinar sessions coupled with a classroom component to provide opportunities to practice the skills with other enrollees. Watch your email for course descriptions and training dates!

In the meantime, if you’d like to sharpen your skills right now, CTOD has a robust online Career Development Center website that offers a wide range of learning activities to fit your learning style, developmental goals, and work situation. These activities are organized around the Office of Personnel Management’s 28 core career competencies and other learning categories, including a section on presentation skills. Click on any of the associated links and you will discover a broad range of courses, webinars, reading materials, websites, and personal activities to enhance your skills.

And remember to check out your local Toastmasters club. Toastmasters is an excellent way to gain confidence in public speaking through fun, structured practice with colleagues. APHIS reimburses the cost of Toastmasters’ membership fees.

Visit the Toastmasters website to search for a club near you. The Riverdale Club meets every other Wednesday in the library, and guests are always welcome.
You probably know that APHIS’ Biotechnology Regulatory Services program (BRS) regulates certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms, some of which become part of the U.S. agricultural system. Additionally, Veterinary Service (VS) regulates veterinary biologics that contain GE organisms and may regulate certain GE animals if they present an animal health risk. What you may not know is that BRS and VS are one part of a larger science-based Federal regulatory framework that regulates the safe use of GE organisms.

Within that framework, APHIS partners with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). APHIS is responsible for protecting agriculture from pests and diseases. The EPA regulates pesticides in order to protect health and the environment. FDA is responsible for ensuring the safety and proper labeling of all plant-derived food and feed, including those products developed through genetic engineering.

The three agencies have worked together since 1986—that’s when the framework was created by the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The framework was last updated in 1992. Recently, in July 2015, OSTP directed the three Federal agencies to again update the Coordinated Framework to clarify roles and responsibilities, to develop a long-term strategy to ensure that the system is prepared for the future products of biotechnology, and to commission an expert analysis of the future landscape of biotechnology products to support this effort.

On October 30, the three agencies held a public meeting with the overall goal of helping stakeholders understand the current system and to receive input on how to improve the transparency, predictability, coordination, and ultimately the efficiency of the biotechnology regulatory system.

The meeting was the first in a series of expected public engagement sessions on the initiative.

During the meeting, presenters from the three agencies discussed their regulatory roles and the OSTP memorandum entitled, “Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology Products.” Public participants then provided oral comments representing a wide range of views.

APHIS’ John Turner (BRS) and Lisa Ferguson (VS) presented during the meeting.

For additional information—including meeting agenda, webcasts, transcripts, presentations, and the Notice of Public Meeting—visit FDA’s Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology Products webpage. The page also features a link to sign up for notifications of future activities related to the effort.
Between June 27 and November 28, 2015, APHIS had 62 employees retire.

We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

**animal care**
Joseph Nelson Raleigh, NC

**international services**
Eric Hoffman Santo Domingo, DR

**marketing and regulatory programs business services**
Anita McGrady Washington, D.C

**policy and program development**
Karla Gainey Riverdale, MD
Craig Roseland Riverdale, MD

**plant protection and quarantine**
Ada Alamani Waimanalo, HI
Linda Beal Shafter, CA
Michael Bechtel Raleigh, NC
Dennis Blinkhorn Amelia, OH
Joann Botte Boston, MA
Charles Brown Riverdale, MD
Donovan Cho Kailua Kona, HI

Gerald Clardy Phoenix, AZ
Joseph Gittleman Amityville, NY
Katherine Handy Baton Rouge, LA
Cedric Howell Honolulu, HI
Reynold Ito Vero Beach, FL
Joanne Johnson Jacksonville, FL
Lawrence Kershaw Miami, FL
Carmen Laureano Orlando, FL
Willie McDonald Albany, NY
Kimberly Merenz Honolulu, HI
George Muneoka Edinburg, TX
Jose Renteria Raleigh, NC
Joe Rodriguez Baltimore, MD
David Root Mulins, SC
Gilbert Rowe, Jr. Mullika Hill, NJ
Michael Saah Kailua Kona, HI
Ralph Salber Riverdale, MD
John Tanaka San Francisco, CA
Alan Tasker Lihue, HI
Michael Telson Frederick, MD
Tom Yoshinaka

Lawrence Zaleski

**veterinary services**
Gerardo Alarcon Santa Teresa, NM
Linda Craig Sacramento, CA
Eileen Cramer Riverdale, MD
Mary Darragh Austin, TX

Phoenix, AZ
Amityville, NY
Baton Rouge, LA
Honolulu, HI
Vero Beach, FL
Jacksonville, FL
Miami, FL
Orlando, FL

**wildlife services**
Mark Kinney Redmond, OR
Daniel Libby Chehalis, WA
Nancy Stephan Bismarck, ND
Jacob Wimmer Miles City, MT

Larae Doph Ames, IA
Nils Forseth Miami, FL
Joe Garrett Austin, TX
Joyce Grow Hollidaysburg, PA
Arnoldo Gutierrez Aspermont, TX
Leroy Jan San Juan, PR
Susan Jistel Austin, TX
Kristine Kraig Tumwater, WA
Mark Mason Turnwater, WA
Lawrence Miller Ames, IA
Terrel Milligan Riverdale, MD
Kathleen Nelson Ben Wheeler, TX
Annette Olson Ankeny, IA
Joseph Pericozzi, Jr. Ames, IA
Gary Ross Eupora, MS
Charles Shaw, Jr. Ames, IA
Ruth Smith Eagle Pass, TX
Oscar Winn Nashville, TN
Michael Wooten

Lawrence Zaleski
in tribute
kelly hobbs
and
shannon tunnell

By Pam Boehland

On Friday, June 5, 2015, Wildlife Services (WS) pilot Kelly Wayne Hobbs was flying a small, fixed-winged aircraft while Shannon “Bubba” Tunnell, a wildlife specialist from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, was on board conducting coyote control when the plane went down near Raton, NM.

Both men were lost in the line of duty, and their sacrifices were honored during the Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards at the USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C, on November 5.

During the award ceremony, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Department of Administration Assistant Secretary Gregory Parham, and APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea presented a folded flag encased in a wooden frame to the families of the two fallen men.

“Kelly was an exceptionally skilled and well-respected pilot, and absolutely loved flying for Wildlife Services,” said Alan May, WS State director in New Mexico. “He was a no-nonsense, salt of the earth man who took great pride in helping ranchers be more productive.”

Hobbs had served with WS since 1990 and as a pilot since 1992. He had more than 35 years of service with the cooperative WS program and had accrued more than 13,500 hours of flight experience, serving as an APHIS pilot in Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah.

May said that, “Bubba was an easy going guy, who was happiest out in the field on the trap line with his dogs. Always a smile on his face, he spent a lot of time thinking of ways to improve the job he truly enjoyed.”

Tunnell had served as a wildlife specialist since 2009 and trained extensively as a crewmember for aerial wildlife damage management activities.

“Both of these guys had hearts bigger than Texas,” said May. “They were friends that the WS family and the agricultural producers of New Mexico will miss forever.”

Secretary Tom Vilsack, Assistant Secretary Gregory Parham, and APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea presented flags to family members in memory of Kelly Hobbs and Shannon Tunnell. The flags were presented during the Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards Ceremony. Above (left photo) are Hobbs’ son Donald and daughter Vicki Crawford; (right photo) Tunnell’s mother Sharon Null, sister Savannah Fleck, and nephew Jacob Fleck.
For you, what is the best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to enhance your career with APHIS?

In our last issue, we asked employees, “For you, what is the best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to enhance your career with APHIS?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

- 19% Classroom Courses
- 19% Details
- 16% Shadow Assignments
- 11% Webinars
- 35% All of the Above

As always, thanks for responding, and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

[next question please]

As 2015 draws to a close and the New Year begins, many people will take the time to reflect on their lives—both inside and outside of work.

With that in mind, we ask: What advice would you give yourself for the coming year? (50 words or less)

gleaning for feds feed families

APHIS employees nationwide gave generously to the 2015 Feds Feed Families (FFF) food drive that ended October 2. The agency collected a total of 121,565 pounds of food and personal hygiene items. Employee-organized gleaning efforts contributed significantly to the total collected.

Shown here, employees and family members participate in a gleaning event sponsored by the APHIS Emerging Leaders Program. International Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Policy and Program Development, and Veterinary Services employees joined together to glean sweet potatoes at the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network Warehouse.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! To take part, click Question of the Day—Vol. 3, 2015.
[what is your background?]
I was raised in southern Oklahoma on my dad and uncle’s beef cattle ranch and haying operation. Following college and veterinary school, I practiced small, large, and exotic veterinary medicine in Arkansas and Texas before buying my own practice in Oklahoma.

After 10 years in practice, I was selected as the Oklahoma State Veterinarian, a position which I enjoyed for another 10 years before joining APHIS as the Oklahoma area veterinarian in charge.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
I joined the APHIS team in 2006 and shortly after relocated from Oklahoma to North Carolina in the Eastern Regional Office for several years before returning west to Fort Collins.

While in Colorado, I have had the pleasure to serve as an associate regional director, director of cattle health, and for the past year as the executive director of SPRS under Associate Deputy Administrator TJ Myers.

[most memorable aphis experience?]
There are many wonderful experiences and memories with APHIS, some of which shouldn’t be placed into print. Perhaps, however, the most recent was a call with TJ Myers where I suggested I may need to stay back from an international trip to assist with some highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) questions that were arising. By the time we hung up, I was the national incident coordinator for the recent HPAI incident.

[priorities in the coming months?]
My top priority is working on finalizing preparations for a possible reoccurrence of HPAI this winter/spring all the while hoping the virus has mutated enough to not be the issue it was this past spring.

Concurrent priorities are focusing on my role as executive director to make adjustments in the new structure of VS to better support our staff in conducting daily activities in the field.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
In work, it is the fact that we were able to pull together some of the greatest folks in government to manage and stave off HPAI as it devastated the Midwestern poultry industry this past spring. It was an honor to be a part of such a committed and energetic group of individuals—from the field responders to the highest levels of the agency—selfless individuals with the dedication necessary to tackle the largest event of this nature that we have witnessed in recent times.

[last book read?]
My pleasure reading is usually limited to a mystery that I grab before flights and travel that I can read before returning home. The latest title I recall was a Vince Flynn memorial novel, The Survivor.

[guilty pleasure?]
Ah, guilty pleasures? That would have to be jumping on the Harley and riding away with no connections to work or life for a short period—just wind and road. It is always good to end up the journey with friends and family to reconnect however.

[favorite meal?]
I really like to eat, so picking a favorite food is kind of tough. But meals have always been a time to celebrate family and friends, so any time they are present and enjoying a relaxing meal is memorable and a pleasure.

Continued on next page
Did you know that all of the 211 commercial facilities affected during the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak are now eligible to restock?

Here are some snapshot facts about the outbreak, its size, and APHIS’ response.

- The HPAI outbreak is the largest animal health emergency the Federal Government has ever faced. In total, 211 commercial and 21 backyard poultry flocks were affected, which resulted in nearly 50 million birds being put down.
- More than 600 employees from across the agency deployed to emergency sites—primarily in Iowa and Minnesota, but also in other States like Nebraska, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin.
- During deployments, many employees stepped away from their normal lives, making personal sacrifices and missing anniversaries, birthdays, or other special events while deployed. They missed other popular events and things that we likely took for granted. For example, between December 2014 and late August—when the last employees returned from field deployment—there were 6 Federal holidays, 36 weekends, roughly 90 films released nationwide, the Super Bowl, and the NCAA basketball tournament.
- In the summer months, employees managed 100+ degree temperatures while working in biohazard suits to help producers get back in business as quickly as possible.
- Employees with our National Veterinary Services Laboratories produced more than 220,000 tubes of the media used to transport samples. In total, they received nearly 3,000 samples and performed almost 14,000 tests on those samples.
- Veterinary Services’ (VS) Professional Development Services helped provide an incident overview and safety training to hundreds of responders, in addition to creating and delivering specialized training on environmental sampling, case management, biosecurity, and the use of personal protective equipment. This training helped ensure that responders had the information they needed to do their work as effectively as possible while staying safe.
- Employees at the VS warehouse in Kansas City sent more than 1,000 supply shipments out to support the HPAI response.
- Employees also spent countless hours reviewing and processing indemnity claim forms, which were crucial to the depopulation efforts.

Continued from page 12

Manager profile with burke healey

Hobbies?
Working around the house/farm, motorcycles, snow sports/kiing (No more snowboarding but that is another story).

Favorite movie?
Another tough question, as I really like to attend movies—whether it is a quiet date with my lovely wife or watching Minion movies with grandkids at the drive-in. But I tend towards action type movies now that westerns don’t seem to be in production anymore.
plant protection and quarantine
preparing to take off with remotely piloted aircraft
By Will Wapaala

This year, the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program plans to take to the skies in a new, high-tech way—using remotely piloted aircraft (RPA).

RPA are controlled and flown without an onboard pilot; they offer PPQ greater flexibility and potentially lower costs for program operations.

[pilot project without a pilot]
In 2015, PPQ successfully tested an RPA for use in its pink bollworm eradication efforts. The project combined the program's well-established sterile insect technique (SIT) with new RPA technology—in this case, a battery-powered aircraft with a 6-foot wingspan.

SIT programs involve raising a targeted species of insect, sterilizing them, and then releasing them by aircraft into infested areas. The released sterile insects successfully mate with other insects of the target species, but produce no offspring. Over time the targeted pest population is reduced.

Usually, piloted aircraft are used, but for this project PPQ released sterile pink bollworm moths using an RPA outfitted with canisters on the wings. [VIDEO: Watch RPA insect release.]

Continued on next page
remotely piloted aircraft

Continued from page 1

[benefits of remotely piloted aircraft]
The main benefit of an RPA is the ability to get it into the air quickly; it is ideal for targeting sporadic incidents like pink bollworm detections that affect cotton.

Thanks to eradication efforts, the pink bollworm is no longer found in the United States. However, flare-ups can occur and, if they do, a speedy response makes a big difference.

This is where an RPA shows its value and appeal.

An RPA is smaller, easier to transport, and requires less infrastructure. The models used for the 2015 tests require only a short stretch of dirt road for takeoff. The RPA takes off manually—meaning the plane is directly controlled by the pilot on the ground. Once airborne, a computer—operated by the pilot—takes over and follows a programmed route, after which the pilot retrieves the controls and lands the aircraft manually. Per Federal Aviation Administration regulations, the pilot has to remain in the line-of-sight of the RPA during flight.

Michelle Walters, an entomologist with PPQ who saw the tests called the RPA “small and sleek,” adding that their flights prompted curious farmers to gather and ask about the trials.

An RPA is also less expensive than traditional aircraft. Currently, PPQ works with a contractor who co-developed the technology to fit the program’s needs. The contractor owns the RPA and provides licensed pilots and observers. This eliminates the need to maintain an airfield, and the upkeep associated with it. Powered by lithium ion batteries, an RPA eliminates high fuel costs. It can also use rechargeable solar batteries, making it greener. Removing the pilot from the aircraft also reduces human safety concerns.

[the sky’s the limit]
APHIS envisions the use of RPAs extending beyond sterile insect releases. RPAs are ideal for dirty, dull, and dangerous tasks. They can operate in smoky and dusty conditions and do not suffer from fatigue. They could be used to monitor invasive species, or conduct land surveys in difficult-to-reach areas—again, helping to avoid putting pilots at unnecessary risk.

This year APHIS plans to test multi-copter models. With the ability to lift off vertically, multi-copters can be used in undeveloped, mountainous, and forested areas, potentially helping to detect damage from forest pests like the Asian longhorned beetle. The Agency will also test a catapult mechanism, which launches winged aircraft models from a short track. This eliminates the need for a road—and reduces the space necessary—for takeoff.

As technology continues to advance rapidly, RPAs are an exciting, emerging tool for APHIS to employ in fulfilling its mission to safeguard U.S. agriculture. For now, it looks like the sky is the limit.
aphis launches new emergency volunteer corps

By John Scott

You may have heard people talk about the VERRC but perhaps aren’t quite sure what it is. It stands for Volunteer Emergency Ready Response Corps. Here’s a little more information to help you understand what it is and how to sign up.

[what is VERRC?]
In simplest terms, the VERRC is a list of volunteers who are available to help APHIS respond to emergencies. These APHIS employees have voluntarily signed up, identified the positions/roles they are interested in and qualified for, and the time periods when they would be available to fulfill those roles during a response.

In most emergency response situations, the agency’s incident management teams (IMTs) are the first to deploy. The IMTs are made up of highly trained volunteers who are prepared to respond to emergencies collectively as a unit, with each member fulfilling a specific organizational role (e.g., incident commander, safety officer, etc.). APHIS has ten IMTs at the ready.

However, in some cases—such as with the 2015 highly pathogenic avian influenza response—the need for emergency personnel is greater than the agency’s IMTs can cover by themselves. Some emergencies are too large, impact too many different locations, or require multiple staffing rotations over time.

This is where the VERRC comes in: it’s a ready source of additional personnel. Depending on the situation, APHIS may call upon the VERRC for multiple volunteers or perhaps for just a few people to fill specific roles that are in high demand.

Continued on next page

drum major for service award

On January 21, at USDA’s Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, D.C., a group of APHIS employees accepted the USDA Drum Major for Service Award. These awards acknowledge USDA employees who “serve as helping hands, performing extraordinary acts of volunteerism with reliability and commitment, but seldom receive recognition.”

The Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) staff received the award for their ongoing volunteer service unloading delivery trucks and restocking the Sowing Empowerment & Economic Development, Inc., food pantry in Riverdale, MD. Shown (left to right) are: USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Gregory Parham, Amanda Sutker (LPA), Danielle Branch (LPA), Abbey Powell (LPA), Scott Moore (PPD), and USDA Chief Human Capital Officer Roberta Jeanquart. •
new emergency volunteer corps

Continued from page 3

[speed, flexibility, and reliability]
As the agency’s primary emergency response units, the IMTs enableAPHIS to very quickly put fully operational teams in place. The VERRC will further strengthen APHIS’ response capabilities by enabling the agency to scale up or down the number of emergency responders with speed and flexibility.

The VERRC’s roster of volunteer participants have already been matched to specific positions/roles and have confirmed their availability for specific time periods. This means the agency can avoid putting out a mass call for volunteers while in the middle of handling an emergency situation.

[how to enroll in the VERCC]
You can enroll in the VERCC by submitting an application on the VERRC SharePoint page. But before enrolling, there are a couple things you should do first:

- Visit the SharePoint page to learn more about the VERRC. In addition to the application form, the page has helpful Q&A documents, position descriptions, and more.
- You should also talk to your supervisor and discuss the positions and times you are interested in and any other concerns. Supervisor approval is needed to participate, and all VERRC applications are electronically routed to supervisors for approval.
- Because of the potential for travel and time commitment, you should also speak with your family and consider the arrangements you would need to make in your personal life if you were deployed.

If you have additional questions, please contact the VERRC program manager at VERRC@aphis.usda.gov.

[Employee Resources]
The HPAI Employee Resources page is a good place to start if you want to learn more about emergency deployments for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) or about volunteering for the newly created Volunteer Emergency Ready Response Corps.

Fortunately, the United States has not yet experienced a resurgence of HPAI detections like those in 2015. However, APHIS needs to be prepared in case HPAI cases resurge. One way to prepare is to make sure employees have—or can find—the information they need.

Visit the HPAI Employee Resources page today to learn more.
highlights from the 2015 support unit report

Throughout the year, APHIS’ support units help advance the agency’s mission and goals. Whether working behind the scenes or on the front lines, shoulder-to-shoulder alongside program staff, our support unit employees are essential to the agency’s accomplishments.

For several years now, APHIS has issued an annual report featuring the work of the support units. Below are a few highlights from the 2015 report.

In 2015, APHIS support units:

- Led APHIS efforts to purchase the agency’s Riverdale building—and eliminated parking charges at the site
- Processed over 87,000 payments for APHIS and other agencies, totalling nearly $690 million
- Made fleet-management program improvements with an expected annual cost savings of $400,000–$683,000 and a one-time benefit of $5.98 million
- Reduced time-to-hire timeframes by 36 days and doubled the total number of hires, with 1,996 employee selections
- Planned and delivered large-scale active-shooter training exercises in Riverdale and Fort Collins
- Delivered the AgDiscovery program at 17 schools nationwide, with 277 students participating
- Managed numerous programs for underserved and minority groups, bringing 69 scholars and interns to the agency
- Designed and facilitated an APHIS multi-agency-coordination group to respond to the HPAI emergency, led development of the APHIS Mandatory Mobilization plan, and helped conceive an agency-wide Volunteer Emergency Ready Response Corps
- Carried out “Alternatives to Rulemaking,” re-evaluating several risk assessments and easing restrictions for key products such as imported processed mango products and “flash frozen” fruits and vegetables from Canada.

To read more about support unit contributions to each of the agency’s programs, visit the 2015 Support Unit Report available now on My.APHIS.

interested in writing?

Whether you’re looking to practice your skills, add an interesting new goal to your individual development plan (IDP), or you simply enjoy writing, consider contacting Inside APHIS to learn about writing opportunities.

Contact editor John Scott by phone (301-851-4068) or email (john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov) for more details.
**Did you know**

Did you know that all Federal employees—including APHIS personnel—are subject to restrictions when it comes to engaging in political activities? During this election year, we all need to know the basic dos and don’ts, as well as where to find more information.

The Hatch Act of 1939, as amended, is the law that restricts certain political activities by Federal employees. The law defines political activity as any activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, partisan political group, or candidate in a partisan race.

Specifically, the law focuses on three main points:

- Ensuring that Federal programs are carried out in a nonpartisan way
- Protecting Federal employees from potential political coercion in the workplace
- Reassuring the American public that the government serves all the people

Under the law, certain political activities are prohibited for all Federal employees. However, for some other activities the prohibitions depend on whether you are considered a less or further restricted employee. Typically, members of the Senior Executive Service are further restricted, and general schedule (i.e., GS) employees are less restricted.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel’s (OSC) Web page [How Does the Hatch Act Affect Me?](https://www.osc.gov/hatchact) provides helpful information concerning prohibited and permitted activities for Federal employees who are considered either less or further restricted.

As a quick reference though, here are the political activities prohibited for all Federal employees.

Employees may not:

- Use their authority or influence to affect the result of an election, such as using their official titles while engaged in political activity or suggesting to subordinates that they attend political events.
- Solicit or receive financial contributions for a partisan political party, candidate, or group.
- Be candidates for public office in partisan political elections.
- Use an official government email account or government-issued computer equipment, cell phones, or other government resources for partisan political purposes.
- Engage in political activity while on duty, in a Federal building, or while using a Federal vehicle. This means that, while on duty, employees cannot:
  - Distribute or display campaign materials.
  - Perform campaign-related chores.
  - Wear or display partisan political buttons, t-shirts, signs, or other items.
  - Post a comment to a social media site (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) advocating for or against a partisan political party, candidate, or group.
  - Use any e-mail account (including personal e-mail) or social media to distribute content that advocates for or against a partisan political party, candidate, or political group.

In general, you can avoid violating the Hatch Act if you don’t engage in political activity on duty or in the workplace, don’t engage in political activity in an official capacity at any time, and don’t solicit or receive political contributions at any time.

One last tip: If you are active in social media, you may want to read the [OSC's FAQ on Federal Employees and the Use of Social Media](https://www.osc.gov/AboutUs/FAQs/FAQ1501). It contains helpful answers to questions about online political actions—a category of activity that has expanded greatly in recent years.

If you have additional questions or need additional clarification, please contact USDA’s Office of Ethics for guidance: (202) 720-225 or daeo.ethics@oe.usda.gov. 
wildlife services

collaboration key to \textbf{success} in illinois feral swine removal

By Pam Boehland

An elusive Ione boar scurries past trail cameras in Illinois, leaving a date stamp of March 17 on the captured image. It is the last known swine of its kind in the State. The image is a tangible mark of success, created thanks to the strategic, collaborative efforts of Wildlife Services (WS) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

\textbf{[from 450+ down to one]}
The first confirmed reports of feral swine in Illinois date back to 1993; in 2009, WS and IDNR began working with private landowners to conduct feral swine disease surveillance in the State.

“There were several hundred swine in Illinois at that time, and they can reproduce quickly,” said Brad Wilson, WS feral swine coordinator for the State.

In 2011, to more aggressively address the problem, the two agencies signed a Cooperative Service Agreement (CSA), officially launching collaborative damage-management efforts.

Together, WS and IDNR wildlife biologists conducted extensive field investigations, trail camera surveillance, and aerial surveys to search for damage, better estimate the animals’ population density, and determine its range and distribution within management areas. Additionally, the IDNR established a new administrative rule regulating the release, transportation, and harvest of feral swine in Illinois.

In the 4 short years since the project started, the two agencies have helped more than 100 landowners across 40,000 acres and have reduced the population from more than 450 to one sole, remaining animal.

\textbf{[round them up]}
“A key strategy in successful population removal involved using the whole sounder

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\textbf{background: feral swine}

Feral swine are a non-native, invasive species that have rapidly increased their range across the Nation. Since 1982, feral swine have expanded from a small percentage of counties in only 17 States to at least 41 States by 2014.

In response, Congress appropriated $20 million to APHIS in fiscal year 2014 to launch a collaborative, national feral swine damage management program. According to current estimates, over 6 million feral swine can now be found across more than 35 States.

Feral swine can carry at least 30 viral and bacterial diseases and nearly 40 types of parasites that can affect humans and animals. The annual cost of feral swine damages is estimated to exceed $1.5 billion nationwide, with more than half of the damage directly impacting agriculture.

For more information, visit the agency’s feral swine web page.
customer service
mission critical

By Tanika Whittington

Customer service is not just important—it’s a vital part of how APHIS does business. Whether you’re vaccinating raccoons, endorsing health certificates, issuing permits, inspecting regulated facilities, or answering calls from stakeholders, good customer service is good for APHIS mission, and—simply put—it’s just the right thing to do.

Chances are, at some point in your life you’ve come home from the grocery store with a bad batch of berries or a soggy bag of salad. Of course, you want all your food to be fresh and suitable for consumption, especially with the price of food these days. When it’s not, you expect a refund or an exchange. Why? Because it’s the right thing to do and because it confirms that the store values you as a customer.

We all want to feel valued. APHIS customers are no different. That’s why APHIS is committed to—and strives for—first-class customer service. To further our commitment, APHIS developed agency-wide Customer Service Best Practices—all intended to optimize our customers’ experiences.

Therefore, good customer service isn’t just about being friendly; it’s about doing things right and following our guidelines. Asdeer Walsh, APHIS Service Manager, said, “We can be regulatory and at the same time be friendly.”

Many employees across the Agency already incorporate these best practices into their everyday interactions with customers.

Allen Page and Kandace DeBolt, Veterinary Services (VS) employees in Frankfort, KY, practice a customer service approach they describe as “doing right by our customers and by our guidelines.”

“We can be regulatory and at the same time be friendly,” said Page, who, along with DeBolt, works as a veterinary medical officer.

Recently, they—as well as other VS officials—worked at the 2015 Breeders’ Cup, conducting veterinary health inspections. Their impressive customer service caught the eye of Adrian Beaumont, the Breeders’ Cup’s European agent.

“Without a doubt this was the best organized and friendliest Breeders’ Cup I’ve ever worked,” said Beaumont.

[best practices get results]

The approach consists of preparing a bait site where feral swine are present, using scoured corn, and subsequently monitoring the site with trail cameras. Once the feral swine are visiting the bait site, a coral trap (see photo) can be gradually built over several days, allowing the animals to slowly acclimate to the new trap. The swine are smart, and if they associate the trap with danger, they become even harder to capture.

Next, wildlife biologists continuously monitor the trap; once the feral swine are freely entering and exiting the trap as a group, they set a drop gate. The gate is triggered to close rapidly as the animals move or feed while within the coral trap. After the swine are trapped, wildlife biologists then euthanize and remove the animals.

Wilson credits the Illinois success to early action by both agencies and to the effective coordination of staff and resources. “The interagency collaboration was really vital to our success,” said Wilson.
customer service mission critical

Continued from page 8

Page and DaBolt attribute the feedback to wearing a smile, being personable and non-intimidating, and to teamwork.

Chris Bembenek in Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) also knows the value of good customer service.

As a team leader in PPQ's Import Customer Support Call Center, he's been known to receive accolades from customers for his "above and beyond" service and friendly attitude.

"Good customer service is simply treating people the way you want to be treated," said Bembenek. "When you do this, you change the perception of Federal employees and their readiness to assist stakeholders and the public."

Bottom line: every day, every interaction is a chance to wow customers by providing amazing service. The APHIS Customer Service Best Practices Web page can help you do that. Visit the APHIS Customer Service Best Practices Web page to learn more.

How do you recognize good customer service? What does it look like?

Some people say that smiling is important and that demonstrating a positive attitude through your expression, tone, and action makes a difference. Others emphasize things like patience and clear communications.

Visit our Up the Chain page and share your thoughts on the current question: What does good customer service look like?
new era for aphis cybersecurity

By Vivian Keller

The Feds are fighting back. After the infamous cyber breaches at the Office of Personnel Management and the Internal Revenue Service, and in response to escalating daily attacks on government information systems, cybersecurity is now at the top of every agency’s agenda. President Obama’s budget for FY 2017 includes a massive request of $19 billion for governmentwide cybersecurity—a 35 percent increase over current levels. And at APHIS—home to sensitive information that hackers worldwide want—the virtual landscape is changing fast.

“It’s a new era now,” says Gary Washington, APHIS chief information officer (CIO). “We need to have a laser focus on making sure that, with employees’ cooperation, we resolve our security issues and that they don’t come back.”

The guidebook to this new era is the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014 (FISMA), now being implemented across the U.S. Government. Building on previous legislation, FISMA provides a rigorous framework for establishing and implementing cybersecurity practices. That includes instituting a Federal hierarchy for detailed oversight of information security management that stretches down from the Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology to individual Departments and their component agencies. FISMA also gives agencies the tools they need to improve their security status.

[passes and patches]
In keeping with FISMA requirements, APHIS now reports to USDA’s CIO every week, or even daily as needed, on the state of its cybersecurity. The agency also has clear, consistent standards and guidelines for protecting its 24 information systems from cybersecurity threats. Following those guidelines, APHIS has been focusing on two major areas for improvement: ensuring (1) that every APHIS employee is using LivePass and (2) that vital security updates to software (“patches”) are downloaded and installed without delay.

The results are impressive. After a concerted push, nearly 95 percent of APHIS staff are using LivePass. As for patches, Michele Thomas, APHIS chief information security officer, worked with her colleagues in the Information Technology Division to institute a new automated program through which APHIS employees download patches during their online workday as necessary. Another innovation has been the regular scheduling of Come In and Plug In Days for employees, whose participation has helped upgrade APHIS’ cybersecurity substantially (see sidebar, next page).

Regrettably, APHIS’ cybersecurity issues have also involved some inappropriate behavior. Thanks to stepped-up monitoring of APHIS

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new era for aphis cybersecurity

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networks by ITD and DHS—which is now aggressively monitoring U.S. Government systems 24/7—Thomas and her staff have caught an uncomfortable number of APHIS employees engaged in unsanctioned or illegal behavior such as downloading personal software without permission, downloading movies, shopping, or gambling. The consequences can range from verbal counseling to removal. In some extremely egregious cases, typically handled by the Office of Inspector General, employees may even be prosecuted.

[be part of the solution]
Most agency employees, however, continue to be a crucial part of the solution, and both Washington and Thomas stress that sound cybersecurity isn’t possible without them. “Cybersecurity is every individual’s responsibility,” says Washington. “ITD just can’t do the job alone.”

With ITD’s expertise and employees’ increasing understanding of their vital role in safeguarding the agency’s information technology, APHIS is on the right track to meet the challenges in this new era of cybersecurity.

[why more than one come in and plug in day?]
Cybersecurity is a never-ending battle. To protect our IT environment, APHIS plans to host future Come In and Plug In Days.

Together, the February and March Come In and Plug In Days were a success—the first one alone reduced our IT-related vulnerabilities by half. Simply by visiting the office to log in to the APHIS network and download patches they might have missed, APHIS employees ensured that their computers are—for the moment—for safer from cyberattack.

Come In and Plug In Days ensure that APHIS networks are secure and that all employees can get their work done without disruption. So thank you for coming in and plugging in!
Between November 29, 2016 and February 29, 2016, 89 APHIS employees retired.

Congratulations to each. We wish them all the very best.

animal care
Chester Gipson  Riverdale, MD
Dee Heezen  Sioux Falls, SD
Allan Hogue  Riverdale, MD
Jeanne Lorang  Lebec, CA
Connie Morris  Fort Collins, CO

biotechnology regulatory services
Tracy Bowman  Riverdale, MD

international services
Helen Gregory  Riverdale, MD

marketing and regulatory programs business services
Laverna Allen  Riverdale, MD
Brian Bowman  Riverdale, MD
Robert Davis  Memphis, TN
Oynthia Edmond  Minneapolis, MN
Theresa Gmiterko  Minneapolis, MN
Lynn Kent  Riverdale, MD
Ellen Mudd  Riverdale, MD
Mary Ruoke  Minneapolis, MN
Kathleen Van Swol  Riverdale, MD
Marie Trickey  Riverdale, MD

plant protection and quarantine
Arthur Berlowitz  So. San Francisco, CA
Mariena Bombara  Amityville, NY
Barbara Chambers  Federal Way, WA

Asghar Chaudhry  Bordentown, NJ
Stanley Cornelius  Riverdale, MD
Yvonne Demarino  Murfreesboro, TN
Thomas Denholm  Robbinsville, NJ
Wilfredo Garcia Diaz  Carolina, PR
John Brady Finch  Upland, CA
Lynn Garrett  Raleigh, NC
Patrick Gomes  Raleigh, NC
Robert King  West Valley City, UT
Alfred Levy  Riviera Beach, FL
Herman  Kahului, HI
Macadangdang  Yakima, WA
Paul McCarthy  Mission, TX
Ricardo Montes  Sarasota, FL
Terri Morris  Carlisle, PA
Jon Nishimoto  Raleigh, NC
Coanne O’Hern  Mission, TX
A Pepper 讹曼, Hi
Timothy Roland  Weimaranol, Hi
Carol Russell  Raleigh, NC
Juan Santiago  New York-Queens, NY
Dawn Smith  Honolulu, Hi
Richard Sommer  Austin, TX
David Vela, Jr.  McAllen, TX
Thomas Watanahe  Honolulu, Hi
Patricia Waszak  Raleigh, NC
Thomas Watanahe  Honolulu, Hi
Maureen Wilkins  Urbandale, IA

policy and program development
Michael Caporalatti  Riverdale, MD

veterinary services
Bob Bokma  Riverdale, MD
Carlo Broglio  Riverdale, MD
Benjamin Carson  Qual, TX
Orsundo Castillo  Riverdale, MD
Danny Cooper  Searcy, AR
Jean Dockery  Del Rio, TX

Lori Douglas  Little Rock, AR
Donita Eckloft  Ames, IA
Mary Evans  Ames, IA
Mark Gardner  Fort Collins, CO
Arnold Gertonson  Mission, TX
Derly Guerra  Ames, IA
Steven Hennagar  Orient Point, NY
Ronnie Hill  Turnwater, WA
John Huntley  Turnwater, WA
Carli Marks  Mission, TX
Mario Morales  Ames, IA
Carl Nagle  Milan, MO
Jean Nee  Ames, IA
Roxanne Payne  Rio Grande City, TX
Janice Pedersen  Brush, CO
Jimmy Richmond  Riverdale, MD
Lauren Roark  New York-Queens, NY
Kristin Schnitz  Sutton, MA
Arthur Schwartinez  Paris, FR
William Smith  Ames, IA
Alejandro Thiermann  Roswell, NM
Deborah Vickers  Little Rock, AR
Susan Weston  Ames, IA

wildlife services
Rosa Linda Benavides  San Antonio, TX
Larry Duran  Fort Collins, CO
Richard Eizay  Cambridge, MD
Carol Fish  Reno, NV
Joanne Garrett  Riverdale, MD
George Graves  Boise, ID
Bruce Inness  Craig, CO
David Krakar  Kahului, HI
Philip Mastrangelo  Bismarck, ND
Valerie Putman  Sacramento, CA
Dwaine Scott  Weatherford, OK
Sandusky, OH
Edward Zydzlik  Phillips, WI
Manager Profile with Mike Watson

[What is your background?]  
I was born and lived 40+ years in Prince George’s County, growing up a stone’s throw from what is now National Harbor. I attended Oxon Hill Jr. High and Oxon Hill High School before moving on to the University of Maryland (UM).

After graduating from UM with a B.S. in microbiology, I went to graduate school at the University of California, Davis (UCD) where I received my Ph.D. in plant pathology. After UCD, I was a post-doc at USDA’s Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville. My next stop was with the Environmental Protection Agency, where I worked for about 5 years before moving to the Food and Drug Administration for 2 years.

[How long have you been with APHIS?]  
I have been with APHIS for about 13 and a half years. My APHIS career began in Biotechnology Regulatory Services, where I worked for about 6 and a half years and then moved to Plant Protection and Quarantine, where I was for the next 6 and half years or so. I have been with MRPBS-HRD for the past 5 months.

[Most memorable APHIS experience?]  
Several years ago I had a staff member ask for honest feedback. While this was somewhat of a difficult conversation, to have this person thank me and tell me that no one had provided such helpful feedback before was reassuring. The potential to have a positive impact on someone’s career is the best part of the job.

[Priorities in the coming months?]  
I have spoken a lot lately about building partnerships between HRD and the APHIS programs. I think that through better collaboration, we have a tremendous opportunity to ensure we (APHIS) are working from a position of strength, where there is a common understanding between HRD and the programs about each issue that we face together.

[Accomplishment most proud of?]  
I certainly did not do this alone, but establishing the career ladder program in PPQ’s Plant Health Programs. Not only did this program bring tremendously talented people into the organization, but it gave us a potential model for succession planning.

[Last book read?]  
The Advantage by Patrick Lencioni

[Guilty pleasure?]  
Lindt chocolate truffles

[Favorite meal?]  
This is a tough one as it really depends upon the day, but I would have to stick with a home state favorite—Maryland crab cakes.

[Hobbies?]  
Sports—watching and playing; working around the yard; attending kid’s activities.

[Favorite movie?]  
Can I choose more than one? Hitch and Wedding Crashers are great comedies. Remember the Titans is a tremendous story. And, Star Wars will always be a favorite.
**What advice would you give yourself for the coming year?**

Here are some of the answers we received in response to our last newsletter’s question. Our thanks to everyone who shared their self-advice.

- Take a deep breath and slow down before responding to that frustrating email!
- Do your best to be OK with yourself.
- Stay passionate about your work and learn something new about work every day.
- Take more time off and ENJOY LIFE.
- Accept the challenges of working outside of your specific programs to better understand the global picture.
- You are your own guide and with the help of others to keep you on track this year will be one of the best.
- Eat right, stay healthy.
- Remember: you only have three more years to your target retirement date.

**[next question please]**

A heavy workload can be a real test of your time-management skills. With multiple projects, competing deadlines, and an expanding to-do list, it takes a conscious effort to manage your time and be effective at work and at home.

With that in mind, we ask:

**How strong are your time-management skills?**
- I have strong time-management skills.
- I do okay with time management.
- I would like to improve.
- I really struggle with time management.

Also: *What’s your best tip for effective time management? (50 words or less)*

**aphis in memoriam**

Since the previous issue of Inside APHIS, we have lost one member of the APHIS family: Andrea Luna with Veterinary Services in Temple City, CA, passed away. We will miss her, and our thoughts go out to her family and loved ones.
Help Wanted—Keep APHIS Cybersafe

Adapting to a Changing Climate

Super Team Photo

Wildlife Services: State Director Recognized for 50 Years of Service

Did You Know?

APHIS in Memoriam

Into the Field with the Emerging Leaders Program

Top Ten Goal Sessions

Recent APHIS Retirees

Veterinary Services: A Fish Story—Javier the Flying Catfish

Question of the Day

Manager Profile with Bernadette Juarez

Creating a Culture of Safety: The 4th Annual APHIS Safety Coordinator Training

Safety and Health Contacts and Links

Spoofing, phishing, spam, general junk—close to 90 percent of the world’s emails fall into one of these categories. So, odds are that despite APHIS’ best safeguards, email intruders may appear in your inbox at some point. They may even carry a hefty dose of malware—malicious software designed to damage or disable computers or even the APHIS network.

Do you know when not to click? How to respond to a mistaken click so that the APHIS system stays secure? Or might you be compounding APHIS’ security concerns with some online conduct of your own?

“Our two biggest cybersecurity problems at APHIS are malware and inappropriate online behavior,” says APHIS Chief Information Security Officer Michele Thomas. “With employees’ help, we could do much, much better.”

The following is a short guide to doing just that.

[malware]

It looked like an email attachment from a reliable contact. So... click! But the attachment contained malware that surged into an APHIS employee’s computer, encrypting the employee’s files—and many files that the employee had accessed elsewhere—so no one could use them.

To remediate the incident, two file servers were taken offline for almost 2 days—servers that many colleagues had needed to use. One innocent click cost APHIS dearly.

None of us wants to be in this position. Here are some basic ways to identify and cope with malware:

1. Do not be a distracted emailer. Focus on what comes into your inbox. If an email looks unusual and the address it came

Continued on next page
keep aphis cybersafe

Continued from page 1

from isn’t one you recognize, don’t click on it or any of its links/attachments.

2. Sometimes unusual isn’t the tip-off, given how convincingly fraudsters construct their emails these days (see sample to left). Even attachments prosaically named “Cattle Count” or “PPQ Plant Inventory” have proved fraudulent. If unexpected emails with attachments/links appear, check the address and/or call the person who apparently sent it before clicking.

3. Contact the APhIS Cyber Incident Response Team (ACIRT) immediately if you click and think fraud is evident. As Thomas says, “we know mistakes happen. But we can’t handle the problem quickly and effectively if we don’t know about it. Please just tell us right away so we can help.”

4. Take the AgLearn cybersecurity refresher courses seriously. They can give you the best guidance about the latest cyber threats we face.

[inappropriate use]

Given the increasingly blurred lines between work and personal time, telecommuting and office hours, it can be tempting to treat your work computer as your personal property. Don’t. It’s for Government business only. And remember you’re being monitored online by APhIS (at headquarters and through a center in Kansas City) as well as, increasingly, USDA and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Some basic advice about what you can and can’t do with your Government computer and/or mobile device:

1. A list of software that can be installed on your computer is available under APhIS Software Standards. If the software you want to install is not on this list, you need to contact your Program Information Systems Security Manager.

2. You may be subject to investigation or even legal action if you are caught intentionally going to an illicit Web site (pornographic, discriminatory, or otherwise). If you inadvertently arrive at one of these sites, get out immediately and let ACIRT know.

3. You may not gamble, shop for personal items, or conduct a personal business. And it’s a felony to illegally download or view copyrighted materials such as television shows and movies for personal use.

4. Even if you legitimately subscribe to Netflix— you can’t watch those shows at any time. Or stream music, even from legitimate sources. Apart from violating Federal copyright laws (if you are not subscribed) and/or subjecting yourself to potential personnel action (even if you are subscribed), you are taking up so much bandwidth that colleagues who are trying to work can’t.

5. Using your Government computer appropriately helps keep APhIS’ network safe and free of viruses or malware that may lurk on outside sites.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping keep APhIS cybersafe!
adapting to a changing climate

By Scott Moore

How important will climate change considerations be to your work in the next 3-5 years? That was one of the questions employees were asked at the start of a 2-day spring workshop in Riverdale.

The hands-on training session, organized by APHIS’ Climate Change Working Group along with experts from the Forest Service’s Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science, was designed to help APHIS employees from various program and support units understand and incorporate climate change considerations into their actual projects. Attendees included APHIS Associate Administrators Dr. Jere Dick and Michael Gregoire.

[structured yet flexible]

The workshop emphasized a structured yet flexible adaptation approach developed by the Forest Service to integrate climate change considerations into project planning and activities. The process includes 1) defining the area of interest; 2) assessing climate change impacts; 3) evaluating management objectives; 4) identifying and implementing adaptation tactics; and, 5) monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of actions.

Workshop participants used this process to analyze how changes in climate variability might affect APHIS’ mission in addressing the presence and movement of agricultural pests and diseases. For instance, would exotic animal and plant species—already proven to be adaptable to changing conditions—be better equipped than native species to survive climate change? How might storm surges aid in the spread of wood-borne pests? How might changes in climate in other countries affect shipping routes, import seasons, and other trade issues? Could there be ramifications for employee safety?

APHIS already is considering these issues. The APHIS Strategic Plan identifies climate change as a key external threat to our ability to meet mission critical goals. Among other factors, the strategic plan notes that changes in environmental conditions can increase the likelihood of shifts in the distribution of animal and plant diseases and pests. APHIS also expects an increase in the demand for genetically engineered crops that are modified for increased resilience to the effects of climate change, such as drought.

APHIS also has an active Climate Change Working Group, known as C3WG, an offshoot of the agency’s Coordinating Office for Science & Technology Assessment (COSTA). In conjunction with USDA’s Climate Change Program Office, C3WG has been working with the Office of Management and Budget and the White House Council on Environmental Quality on their efforts to ensure that agencies are actively working to adapt to climate change.

[staying resilient]

Wendy Hall, an assistant chief in Policy and Program Development’s (PPD) Environmental and Risk Analysis Services branch, serves as the agency’s primary point of contact for climate change issues and co-lead of the C3WG. She says considerations that allow us to be resilient to climate and other changes are already integrated into many program areas. As an example, Hall mentions our alternatives to rulemaking approach that allows APHIS’ workforce to be more nimble and better prepared to respond to various challenges.

“From what we can see,” said Hall, “the spread of pests and the timing of biological activities—like when different plants and pests emerge in the spring (and) when they flower—all these things can have large impacts on agriculture and our mission. For us to continue to do our jobs—whether it’s stopping the spread of pests and diseases, protecting..."
climate change

Continued from page 3

pets, addressing wildlife conflicts, safeguarding food and natural resources, or supporting trade—we need to be resilient to the changes that are occurring.²

[already adapting]
Climate and weather already have altered workday operations at APHIS. Remember Snowmageddon, the storm that shuttered Federal government offices in February 2010? That climactic event led to the Telework Enhancement Act, which encouraged agencies to incorporate telework into their continuity of operations plans. So, most APHIS employees now continue to work from home, when Federal offices are closed. APHIS has also expanded the use of telework overall.

The wake of another storm, Hurricane Katrina, also led to important changes. Concern over the safety and well-being of pets and their owners brought about the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act, which changed APHIS’ roles and responsibilities under the Emergency Support Functions system.

[repeating the question]
At the end of the workshop, participants were asked again, “how important will climate change considerations be in the next 3–5 years?”

And what they came to realize after completing the workshop’s various breakout sessions and small group work is that climate change considerations are already raising questions that will shape the agency’s actions in the years to come. Participants also realized that there is a way to incorporate climate related changes, increased uncertainty, and new information into their work.

super team photo

APHIS employees (left to right) Jeffrey Beamam, Brett Miller, Bob English (retired), Cindy Walters, and Marco Flores joined together in a lighthearted photo celebration.

As members of a Plant Protection and Quarantine team, they were rejoicing over two super accomplishments. First, they were celebrating the group’s efforts to develop key technical pieces needed for the new International Trade Data System (ITDS). Created by Presidential Executive Order, the ITDS—and its companion Automated Commercial Environment—allows businesses that import or export cargo to electronically submit data required by Federal agencies—such as APHIS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, etc.—into a single system.

Secondly, the team was celebrating Bob English’s retirement. English provided t-shirts to the team, which he had jokingly dubbed the superman group for its extraordinary efforts in tackling complicated tasks and short deadlines with limited resources. Great job, team!
wildlife services
state director recognized for 50 years of service

By Carol Bannerman

When Thurman Booth moved to Arkansas as the assistant State supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) animal damage control program, his plan was to gain experience and advance to a western State, which he considered to be the “big leagues.” The year was 1966, and humans hadn’t yet landed on the moon.

Booth, however, quickly grew to love both the work and the State. So he stayed, worked hard, and raised a family. This spring Booth was recognized for his 50 years of Federal service.

[guiding through changes]

Since 1966, working under a variety of titles—and nine different U.S. presidents—he has served as the director for wildlife damage management operations in the State.

For more than half a century, Booth has guided the Arkansas program through shifting wildlife issues, funding levels, and societal expectations. He’s been there to experience the changing focus from coyote predation on livestock, to beaver damage to timber industry, to extension work on migratory birds.

Following the transfer of the program from FWS to USDA under APHIS—and its subsequent renaming to Wildlife Services—the focus changed again, to bird damage to aquaculture, crops, and urban areas. Booth now sees feral swine as the next pressing issue.

[land of milk and honey]

Booth describes Arkansas as the land of milk and honey with everything he could want (except a coastal marsh), including “cooperative, fine people” as customers and staff.

“If I had another life to live, I would want to work with Wildlife Services,” Booth said recently.

“We can directly assist people, resolve their problems, and protect wildlife. Even if we can’t completely resolve a problem, our customers are appreciative as long as they see us really trying.”

A certified wildlife biologist, Booth graduated from Louisiana State University with a bachelor of science in zoology and a master’s degree in game management. He strongly supports AgDiscovery at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Booth received the APHIS Administrator’s Civil Rights Award in 2008, and he is well-known for his leadership, coalition-building skills, and outreach activities.

Wildlife Services Assistant Regional Director John McConnell presents Thurman Booth with his 50-Year Plaque and a letter from Secretary Vilsack.
**Did you know**

That in 2015 the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program and its State and industry cooperators kept 99.5 percent of the United States' 16 million acres of cotton free from boll weevil?

It’s a significant accomplishment for PPQ and the Cooperative Boll Weevil Eradication Program—especially when you consider that the boll weevil has cost the cotton industry more than $23 billion in losses since its introduction into the United States in the 1890s.

**[but wait—there’s more]**

What’s more impressive is that this is just one of PPQ’s many accomplishments featured in a recent report: *Plant Protection and Quarantine: Recognizing Program Successes in 2015*.

As the report shows, despite increasing pest pressures, PPQ continues to show its strength in detecting and managing pests and in supporting and growing U.S. agricultural trade.

**[great achievements]**

The report includes numerous achievements concerning PPQ’s pest detection, management, and eradication efforts. In 2015, the program and its cooperators:

- Detected 91 percent of outbreaks before they spread beyond the site of the original colonization
- Eliminated plum pox virus from Niagara County, NY
- Eradicated 82 percent of the Asian longhorned beetle infestation in New York
- Had zero detections of pink bollworm and European grapevine moth, positioning both programs to declare full eradication this year
- Reached a pivotal agreement with China to allow access for all U.S. apple varieties, valued at over $35 million in 2015
- Protected more than $800 million in annual sales of hard red winter wheat when a detection of flag smut threatened U.S. wheat exports to 16 countries
- Facilitated the timely release of more than 250 U.S. shipments valued at more than $63 million that were held at foreign ports of entry
- Worked closely with our international trading partners to reach critical plant health agreements and eliminate trade barriers to sustain and expand U.S. export markets valued at more than $2.4 billion

**[get the details]**

The report also highlights the program’s use of new technologies and recognizes PPQ employees’ outstanding performance during 2015.

For more details, check out the full 28-page report: *Plant Protection and Quarantine: Recognizing Program Successes in 2015*.

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**aphis in memoriam**

Since the previous issue of Inside APHIS, we have lost one member of the APHIS family: Clifford Miles with the Plant Protection and Quarantine program in Linden, NJ, passed away. We will miss him, and our thoughts go out to his family and loved ones.
into the field with the emerging leaders program

By Kelsey Branch

In 2014, a small group of staff-level employees in Riverdale, MD, founded the APHIS Emerging Leaders Program (ELP). Since then, the ELP has grown from 4 to 142 members, and the organization has hosted numerous informative events for developing leaders.

Now, ELP wants to help employees outside of the D.C./Riverdale area start field chapters and further grow its network of engaged and motivated employees.

[What ELP does]
The ELP organizes and hosts events focused on leadership and career development. Its biggest annual event is Leadership Development Day.

This event showcases the agency's leadership and training programs and resources, such as: the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Leadership Development Programs; Globesmart/APHIS International Training Program; the Center for Training and Organizational Development; the Mentoring Program, and more.

As a result of ELP's Leadership Development Day events, more than 500 APHIS employees have learned about and signed up for the agency's leadership offerings.

Continued on next page

top ten goal sessions

The ELP recently hosted an info session on Huanglongbing (HLB, citrus greening)—one of the most devastating citrus diseases in the world. The session was ELP's third in a series about the Administrator's Top Ten Goals.

Mary Palm (Plant Protection and Quarantine), Yindra Dixon (Legislative and Public Affairs), and Deborah Mills (Policy and Program Development) presented an overview of the HLB Multi-Agency Coordination System, an emergency response framework set up to combat the spread of citrus greening,

Previous Top Ten Goals sessions spotlitghted the agency's feral swine damage management program and alternatives to rulemaking. These sessions are available to all agency employees via webinar. If you'd like to receive information about future presentations, please contact emerging.leaders.committee@aphis.usda.gov.
Another ELP event series, Coffee with an APHIS Executive, provides members with the opportunity to network with and learn from agency senior executives. Past leadership participants include: APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea, Human Resources Director Michael Watson, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MPPBS) Deputy Administrator Marilyn Holland, and MPPBS Associate Deputy Administrator Rob Huttonlocker.

The ELP also hosts information sessions focused on the Administrator’s Top Ten Goals. The sessions help expand employees’ cross-program knowledge and provide background and updates on the agency’s efforts.

[growing the ELP]
Since the start, the ELP has aimed to make its events available whenever possible to field staff through webinars, telephone, and video teleconferences. However, ELP leaders are now taking it a step further and creating the opportunity for starting field chapters.

“We’d like to see the ELP grow,” said Rhonda Santos, ELP field liaison. “Ideally, our goal is to create a nationwide network of Emerging Leaders chapters started and led by local employees.”

With field chapters, employees at field locations could still participate in D.C./Riverdale ELP events, but they could also get more involved and active through local events and networking opportunities.

[start-up kits available]
If you’d like to learn more about starting a field chapter, the ELP has created a “start-up kit” to help. The start-up kit is available on MyAPHIS and it contains the requirements for forming a chapter, a template charter, officer position descriptions, and contact information for questions. If you have any questions about starting a chapter in your location or would like to send your completed start-up kit materials, please contact emerging.leaders.field.liaison@aphis.usda.gov.

To receive information about ELP events in Riverdale (even if participating remotely from the field), please contact emerging.leaders.committee@aphis.usda.gov.

[Continued on next page]
veterinary services

a fish story—

the flying catfish

By Amanda Sutkar

When staff with the Wonders of Wildlife Aquarium contacted Veterinary Services (VS) National Import Export Services (NIES) last January, their request to import a single, eight-foot long, 200 pound Wels catfish (Silurus glanis) from Spain to Springfield, MO, was—for many reasons—unique.

Usually, NIES works with fish importers who transport large quantities of animals internationally, not individual fish. And, typically, not fish that have a name—Javier in this case.

Plus, there was one more thing. The aquarium's request posed a unique testing question.

NIES' testing requirements for importing fish susceptible to spring viremia of carp (SVC)—a serious, deadly disease that affects Silurus glanis and other species of fish—include sampling internal organs for signs of the disease.

Importers with large shipments meet this testing requirement by sacrificing fish for lethal sampling. In the case of Javier, the Wels catfish, such sampling wasn't an option.

[thinking creatively]

To assist the facility with its request, NIES officials worked creatively to safely import the animal.

"It would have been easy to say no," Christina Der, veterinary medical officer with NIES, said. "We had never imported a single catfish in this risk category before."

However, for Der and others in NIES, the decision to work with Wonders of Wildlife was a simple one: "Knowing how committed the stakeholders were to seeing this project through, we were equally committed to working with them to ensure biosecurity and help them achieve their goals."

In order to safely import the fish, NIES officials worked with Wonders of Wildlife to draft a compliance agreement specific to Javier's transport. The agreement required Wonders of Wildlife to—among other things—isolate Javier in a quarantine tank for 30 days upon his arrival to the United States to prevent the potential spread of SVC.

Continued on next page
question of the day

How strong are your time-management skills?

In our last issue, we asked employees, “How strong are your time-management skills?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received:

- 14% I would like to improve
- 29% I really struggle with time-management
- 43% I have strong time-management skills

- Our communication is okay, but I’d like us to do better.
- We communicate poorly.

Thanks for responding, and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

[next question please]

Communicating well with your supervisor is an important component of working effectively and contributes to job satisfaction. Practicing good communication can be a challenge; both you and your supervisor are responsible for achieving success.

With that in mind, we ask: How well do you and your supervisor communicate?
- We communicate very well.
- We communicate moderately well.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! To take part, click Question of the Day--Vol. 2, 2016.

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javier the flying catfish

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[moving day]

“Teamwork, planning, dedication, and creativity were key to bringing Javier over,” Der said.

Together with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials, Wonders of Wildlife staff, and private transporters, VS staff in the field and headquarters worked to safely move Javier to the Springfield aquarium on April 15, 2016. After NIES officials and VS port staff inspected Javier upon his arrival at the O’Hare International Airport in Chicago, IL, and monitored the fish throughout the quarantine period, Javier reached his final destination: a permanent display enclosure pre-approved by VS officials to ensure biosecurity.

But APHIS’ work to protect Javier and U.S. aquaculture from SVC doesn’t end there. Moving forward, VS will continue to periodically inspect Wonders of Wildlife to ensure that Javier’s care and the facility’s procedures comply with requirements to minimize the risk of SVC spread.

“We will continue to work with the facility to ensure Javier and his new, permanent environment remains safe,” Der said.
Manager Profile

with Bernadette Juarez

[What is your background?]
I began my career with USDA in 2002, as a trial attorney in the Office of the General Counsel prosecuting cases under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Horse Protection Act (HPA), among other statutes. In 2009, I joined APHIS as the Deputy Director for Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES); in 2013, I was appointed Director. In January 2016, I began serving as acting Deputy Administrator for Animal Care, and I was formally appointed in February 2016.

[How long have you been with APHIS?]
I've been employed by APHIS for 7 years, but I feel like I have "been with APHIS" for 14 years—since I started my career with USDA.

[Most memorable APHIS experience?]
In 2015, IES held its first all-hands meeting in 7 years, and I had the good fortune of serving as the IES Director at that time. I enjoyed having the entire IES family come together—learning about each other, learning about new topics, and reconnecting as an organization.

[Priorities in the coming months?]
Publishing two new proposed rules involving the AWA and HPA, finalizing a rule involving the AWA, and issuing a new Strategic Plan for Animal Care, as well as launching a new information management system, and concluding a review of hiring practices. I will also be making trips to the field to connect with employees, saying farewell to Dr. Andy Morgan as she retires, and recruiting a new Associate Administrator. Other priorities include: issuing a new policy related to surgeries carried out by AWA licensees and registrants, responding to Animal Care Safety and Health Committee questions, preparing for the transition in Administrations, attending the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration, and completing any "other duties as assigned."

[Accomplishment most proud of?]
At work, I am most proud of representing Animal Care in an administrative enforcement action that placed 16 elephants at facilities able to provide them with humane care (circa 2004), championing IES' business process improvements that reduced processing time for investigations and related enforcement actions by 50 percent and establishing a process for monitoring performance measures (circa 2010-2014), and supporting IES as it strengthened communication, engagement, and learning opportunities across the organization (circa 2014-2016).

[Last book read?]
I recently read Sweet Nata: Growing Up in Rural New Mexico. The author details New Mexico family traditions and the joys and hardships she experienced. I enjoyed comparing the author's stories with my family's stories, and thinking about how some things have changed in New Mexico, while others have stayed very much the same.

Continued on next page
creating a culture of safety
the 4th annual aphis safety coordinator training

By Danielle Branch

In April, more than 80 participants and 8 instructors attended the 4th annual APHIS Safety Coordinator Training held in Columbus, OH, and sponsored by the National APHIS Safety and Health Council (NASHC). Agency participants—representing APHIS’ national and regional hubs, as well as State and district program offices—traveled from around the Nation, including Guam, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, to attend. In addition to performing their primary job duties, most of the conference attendees serve as collateral duty safety officials in their respective programs.

The training lasted 4 days and consisted of sessions led by NASHC members and safety professionals from APHIS’ Safety and Health Environmental Protection Branch, part of Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services. The sessions covered a variety of topics ranging from job hazard assessment to personal protective equipment, and included hands-on exercises and group discussions, providing attendees the opportunity to learn about and hopefully avoid the many safety hazards employees face while carrying out program activities.

[safety situations]
During the training, field employees shared personal experiences and talked about a variety of situations and safety issues they face on the job.

For example, participants with Veterinary Services’ cattle fever tick eradication program—known as tick riders—discussed the hazardous chemicals they encounter while dipping cattle along the U.S. border with Mexico to rid the animals of fever ticks. In addition to chemical risks, the tick riders described the precautions they need to take to protect themselves against tick bites.

Animal health technicians with Animal Care talked about the importance of situational awareness concerning their work with both animals and people. They often face challenges in working with disgruntled facility owners, and they can also be at risk of injury by the animals that they inspect.

In addition to personal safety topics, training participants shared resources and tips on ways to help create and nurture a culture of safety throughout APHIS programs.

[educating supervisors]
On June 6, APHIS hosted a similar safety training for supervisors, in Columbus, OH.

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aphis safety coordinator training

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The APHIS Supervisor Safety Training was geared towards educating supervisors on mandated requirements, as well as identifying the responsibilities and liabilities that supervisors face in making workplace decisions. Supervisors are an employee’s first safety resource. If you have a safety concern, you should report the issue to your supervisor, and then follow up with your safety coordinator, Collateral Duty Safety and Health Official, or program safety and health professional.

[reminder for employees]

As a reminder, employees who are injured on the job should immediately seek medical attention for life-threatening injuries, and, as necessary, for non-life threatening injuries. Employees must contact their supervisor as soon as reasonably possible to ensure the appropriate notifications are made. All accidents must be reported using the First Report tool. The supervisor also must complete the OSHA 301 for recordable incidents and the OSHA 300 log, which is given to the facility manager.

Injured employees who choose to file for workers’ compensation should work with their supervisor to complete the CA-1 form and/or contact their program’s Workers’ Compensation Coordinator or the APHIS Office of Workers’ Compensation Program (OWCP). For general questions, please contact OWCP by email at owchelpdesk@aphis.usda.gov. For claim-specific questions, email owcclaims@aphis.usda.gov. The OWCP Help Desk is available to answer questions during normal business hours, between 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST., at (855) 804-7310.

safety and health contacts and links

Robert Huttenlocher
APHIS Designated Agency Safety & Health Official (DASHO)
DASHO@aphis.usda.gov

Thomas R. Walker
Safety Health Environmental Protection Branch Chief / Medical Officer
thomas.r.walker@aphis.usda.gov

Marquess Commodore
OWCP/ Post Accident Drug Testing Program Manager
marquess.c.commodore@aphis.usda.gov

Jim Mckee
Safety & Occupational Health Program Manager
james.e.mckee@aphis.usda.gov

Gerald Houvener
Industrial Hygiene Program Manager
gerard.houvener@aphis.usda.gov

Ginger Dorsey
Ergonomics Program Manager
ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov

Daniel Weissman
Environmental Protection Program Manager
daniel.z.weissman@aphis.usda.gov

For more information on the latest safety advisories, please visit the APHIS Safety SharePoint site.

For NASHC meeting minutes and training materials, please visit the NASHC SharePoint site.
Plant Protection and Quarantine: Celebrating European Grapevine Moth Eradication

Wildlife Services: New Technology Targets Invasive Brown Treesnakes from the Air

Show Some Love: 20,000 Ways

Animal Care: Another Kind of Helping Hand

Manager Profile with Lou Vanechanos

Veterinary Services: New Pet Travel Site Improves Service and Decreases Workload

APHIS Website Top Ten Search Terms

Veterinary Services: Healthy Horses for Healthy Competition

Question of the Day

Wildlife Services: Odd Day in the Field

APHIS in Memoriam

Thwarting Thieves: Keep Your Equipment Safe

Did You Know

Recent APHIS Retirees

APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) officials joined with others on October 21 to celebrate the eradication of the European grapevine moth (EGVM) in California—one of the agency’s top ten goals.

Though the day was sunny and warm, and the celebration picturesque, the fight against EGVM was by no means easy.

EGVM had threatened to significantly damage California’s $4 billion grape crop—a crop with an annual economic impact to the State of more than $5 billion.

It took 7 years of hard work, cooperation, and many resources to defeat EGVM. Along with the funding provided by producers and State and local governments, PPQ invested $4.5 million in eradication efforts following the pest’s initial detection in 2009.

Held at the Robert Mondavi Winery in Napa County, the event marked an achievement to be savored.

The event brought together many of the players who contributed to the program’s collective success. Farmers, wineries, industry representatives, and State and county government officials gathered for congratulatory remarks, celebratory wine, handshakes, and hugs.

Continued on next page
European Grapevine Moth

Continued from page 1

In addition to agency funding, PPQ officials—including the late Associate Deputy Administrator Paul Eggert—dedicated a significant portion of their careers toward eradication efforts. At the eradication ceremony, Deputy Administrator Osama El-Lissy recognized Eggert posthumously for his extraordinary contributions to EGVM eradication efforts.

“He knew from day one that we could beat this moth, and he worked tirelessly to secure the funds this program needed to do its job,” said El-Lissy. “Paul was a strong advocate for the program and for the men and women of PPQ.” El-Lissy declared at the celebration. “He believed in you, and he trusted the relationships you had built with one another and with CDFA (California Department of Food and Agriculture) and the counties. He knew you would succeed.”

At the celebration, El-Lissy recognized the work of other APHIS employees as well. Dave Lance and Greg Simmons, both with PPQ’s Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, were recognized as representatives of the EGVM technical working group. Together with others from industry and academic institutions, Lance and Simmons offered technical and scientific input to the EGVM eradication program.

Helene Wright, California State Plant Health Director, and Beth Stone-Smith, EGVM Field Program Manager, were recognized for their work to build relationships with cooperators, industry, and State and Federal partners. According to El-Lissy, Wright and Stone-Smith fostered trust and respect with communities critically affecting EGVM eradication.

Just before the event’s celebratory toasts, Acting Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Elvis Cordova spoke, reminding attendees of USDA’s ongoing dedication to safeguard California’s important grape industry.

“USDA remains committed to working with our partners in the future to protect every grape picked for consumption, dried for raisins, and crushed for wine or juice,” said Cordova. “Our success here demonstrates the power of partnerships—and our commitment to working closely with everyone involved, every step of the way.”
wildlife services

new technology targets invasive brown treesnakes from the air

This past summer Wildlife Services (WS), in partnership with several government agencies and a private engineering firm, made progress on improved delivery of a tool to combat invasive brown treesnakes on Guam.

The technology uses acetaminophen-treated dead mouse baits attached to biodegradable streamer-like cartridges. Launched from a helicopter or airplane, the baits snag in trees where the snakes feed, ingesting a lethal dose of acetaminophen.

Earlier tests—conducted on Guam since 2004—proved the feasibility of this technique; however, those tests used a small number of handmade baits manually dropped from a helicopter. The recent test employed machine-made baits automatically deployed in large numbers at high speed.

**[rapid delivery]**

“This effort is a culmination of years of work with engineers from Applied Design Corporation—a private company in Colorado—to design a bait cartridge and delivery system that can rapidly and accurately deliver baits from a helicopter over large forested areas,” said Shane Siers, lead researcher for the project at the National Wildlife Research Center.

“The system delivers baits at a rate of up to four per second. This ensures we get the appropriate bait coverage in Guam’s dense forest canopies. We also wanted the final product to be easily manufactured and cost effective. If it proves to be successful here on Guam, the device could be adapted for other invasive species management efforts,” said Siers.

In July, WS and its partners deployed an estimated 14,000 baits from a helicopter over a 110-hectare demonstration site at Andersen Air Force Base ([Watch VIDEO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example_video_id)). WS and others are monitoring snake activity at the site over the next year to determine the impacts of the experimental treatment and inform future brown treesnake control efforts. Preliminary results show a clear decrease in snake activity. Continued monitoring will show how long that effect will last.

“We’re pleased so far with what we’ve seen,” said WS-Guam State Director Robert “Goose” Gosnell.

**[bigger strides]**

“Though WS’ traditional containment efforts have been highly successful and we’ve kept the snakes from getting off Guam, we’re now expanding our focus to remove snakes from the more remote areas of the island. With these new tools, our efforts may soon make even bigger strides toward our goal of reintroducing native birds to the island. It’s an exciting time to be working on this project,” said Gosnell.

Extensive scientific research, field observations, and video monitoring—in addition to the findings of an environmental risk assessment—confirm that this method is humane to snakes and presents little risk to nontarget species. Brown treesnakes ingesting the small dose of acetaminophen (60 milligrams) die within about 24 hours with no outward signs of distress. Given that the baits are hung in trees, distributed at low densities, and eaten quickly by snakes, there is very limited exposure of the baits to nontarget species. Moreover, this project poses no risk to humans or aquatic resources.

*Continued on next page*
combined federal campaign

show
some love
20,000 ways

By Steve Bennett and Alan Dowdy

APHIS has a culture of providing service. Employees create that culture in the workplace and through the volunteer work we do with our local churches and community groups. We also are known to be generous through our giving to charities represented by the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

The mission of the CFC is to provide Federal employees the opportunity to make charitable, tax-deductible donations in a simple and cost-effective manner. CFC is now in its 55th year, and Federal employees like us have donated in excess of $9 billion to more than 20,000 charities around the world.

APHIS employees across the country have partnered with the CFC by hosting fundraising events—such as meals, coffeehouses, and bake sales—that raise dollars for the CFC general charity fund. While these events foster camaraderie and increase awareness of the CFC, it is even more important that each of us make a personal commitment to support the charities that are meaningful to us.

(show some love)

This year’s theme is “Show Some Love,” and there are many ways we can show some love to our friends, families, local communities, and national organizations by making a payroll deduction or direct contribution through the CFC to the causes most important to us.

Many of us have loved ones and coworkers suffering from diseases that affect their quality of life. Cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s are just a few that may affect us directly or those around us. APHIS employs many veterans and family members of veterans who have given a great deal of themselves to our country. At-risk youth in both urban and rural America continue to face difficult challenges. Natural disasters—like Hurricane Matthew, flooding in Louisiana, and wildfires in the West and Southeast—seriously impact communities, including members of the APHIS family. And providing for animals in a humane way is a core activity of APHIS and one that affects many of us at a personal level.

[more information]

In the CFC Catalog of Giving, you can find charities that support these causes and many others. To find information about the CFC in your area, visit the Office of Personnel Management’s CFC Web page. In the National Capital Area, visit CFCNCA.org.

Please remember our APHIS ID is 4013400 when making your gracious donations online.

brown treesnake

The brown treesnake is an invasive species unintentionally introduced to Guam in the late 1940s. With no native predators, the snake’s population has grown to an estimated 1 to 2 million. It is responsible for the disappearance of most native bird, bat, and lizard species on the island. The snake has also caused extensive damage to the island’s economy and electrical grid, costing an estimated $1 to 4 million annually in lost productivity due to power outages. The unintentional movement of brown treesnakes as a result of shipping or travel poses a danger to all islands in the western Pacific basin and sections of the U.S. mainland.

Bait cartridges with acetaminophen.

Continued from page 3
animal care
another kind of helping hand

By John Scott

Sometimes creative solutions begin with a simple question, such as “How am I going to do this?” At least that’s what happened for Animal Care (AC) Inspector Lori Linn.

Linn, who has worked with AC for 10 years, was attending a dog breeders meeting last May in Indiana when she was approached by two Amish men. They were conversing in sign language and one turned to her to explain. His friend wanted to apply for a breeder’s license, but he wasn’t sure how to get started. He knew he needed a pre-application visit by an inspector, but he didn’t know how that would work given that he is deaf.

At first, Linn wasn’t sure either, but then she talked with others in AC and formed a plan. She spoke with Compliance Specialist Pat Keith, who suggested she contact Josh Moore—one of AC’s newer compliance specialists based in Kansas City, MO. Moore is deaf, but with the help of hearing aids he has partial hearing and is able to speak for himself without an interpreter. Together, he and Linn devised a way to do the initial walk-through inspection.

[the plan]
Linn scheduled the facility visit and had her laptop onsite with her at the kennel. Using Skype, she connected with Moore at his office in Kansas City. This gave Moore and the kennel owner the ability to see each other and to communicate through sign language. To complete the communication loop, Linn simultaneously connected with Moore by telephone. Through a combination of lip reading and using a special phone adapter that is compatible with his hearing aids, Moore was able to converse with Linn over the phone.

The net result was that Moore was then able to act as an interpreter, enabling Linn and the kennel owner to communicate in real time.

“I don’t know how I would’ve done it without Josh. He did an awesome job,” said Linn.

[a happy ending]
The walk-through went well and Linn was able to give the owner feedback and answer his questions. “It was really cute. He was holding his puppies up to the screen so that Josh could see them,” said Linn.

As the walk-through concluded and Linn was about to leave, the owner’s wife arrived home by buggy. He ran over to her, eager to sign and say how well it had gone. “His face lit up. He was just so overjoyed,” said Linn.

Since her visit, the kennel owner has received his AWA breeder license and the small kennel is now operational. She credits the kennel owner, calling him brave for taking the first step to reach out. “I’m sure it seemed overwhelming at the start,” said Linn.

Like her, Moore is also pleased at how it all worked out. “As someone who has been deaf since 18 months of age, I’ve been involved in many situations where communication was severely lacking. This was a chance to offer information and answer questions in a positive manner, eliminating the potential for misunderstanding with the kennel owner so that he had all the tools and information necessary to build his business,” said Moore.

“It was an opportunity to show someone the services we can provide and that we actually do care about more than just animals,” Moore added.
manager profile
with
lou vanechanos

Regional Director
North American Region
International Services

[what is your background?]
I have a plant health background, with a degree in horticulture and plant sciences. Those within the agency who have met me know I cannot hide my “Jersey” accent, quite naturally of course, as I was born, raised, and am a product of the Garden State. New Jersey is much more than the caricature shown in The Sopranos, Boardwalk Empire, and Jersey Shore—much to the surprise of those who actually drive beyond the NJ Turnpike.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
I have been with APHIS 35 and a half years—19 of those years with Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and the rest with International Services (IS). Guess you can call me a lifer.

[most memorable aphis experience?]
Going on my first foreign temporary duty (TDY) for PPQ in 1987 to the Chilean Pre-clearance Program. That detail changed the entire trajectory of my life. It got me interested in working for IS. While serving on that TDY, I could not have expected that 13 years later I would be assigned to Chile to be in charge of that very same program for 5 years. It was also where I met my wife—and 25 years and two sons later, we are still going strong.

[priorities in the coming months?]
A top priority will be to continue nurturing APHIS’ excellent working relationships with our Mexican government counterparts and other Mexican cooperators. We will also be bringing on board APHIS’ new veterinary attaché in Mexico City, while advancing our succession planning with respect to current staff.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
The work done during my assignment in China to improve and maintain the relationship with our counterparts was very meaningful and rewarding. I also believe those relationships formed a critical component in achieving new market access for two high profile U.S. export commodities into China—U.S. apples and pears. Of course, those achievements were not done in a vacuum. It took an APHIS team effort across program units. But the contribution of IS in facilitating that access, by laying the groundwork with our Chinese counterparts, was essential.

[last book read?]
Jared Diamond’s books Guns, Germs, and Steel and his later companion work Collapse. Must read for anyone with scientific curiosity.

[guilty pleasure?]
Getting away from everything and everyone by taking “alone time” fishing and boating on my favorite lake.

[favorite meal?]
Barbequed lamb rib chops straight off the grill, seasoned with rosemary and garlic, and accompanied by a fine pinot noir. Food of the gods!

[favorite movie?]
Tough to call just one, but if I had to, it would be The Big Lebowski. That said, I really do love the classic Audrey Hepburn movies.

Continued on next page
veterinary services
new pet travel site improves service and decreases workload

By Christa Anderson

The APHIS launch of a new Pet Travel Web site is proving to be a model of success in improving customer service and decreasing Agency employee workload.

From the brainstorming stage to its public introduction on July 18, the site took just ten months to develop. And it was completed without additional vendor costs to the Agency. A cross-program working group—comprised of 26 APHIS employees from Veterinary Services (VS), Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) and the Information Technology Division (ITD)—guided the project from concept to reality.

[understanding the problem]
The APHIS Management Team identified pet travel as a fiscal year 2016 priority project. For several reasons, assisting people who travel with pets has been a unique and longstanding challenge for the agency.

VS’ role in protecting U.S. animal health and facilitating animal exports usually involves working with stakeholders transporting animals as part of a business; typically, these stakeholders are experienced and know the process well, or they hire brokers who take care of the regulatory details.

By contrast, pet owners looking to travel with or ship their pets internationally are usually “one and done.” Often they are unaware of the processes, requirements, and time involved in moving animals across borders. This can result in problems, such as presenting incorrect health certificates to VS for endorsement, animals being held at borders, and last-minute questions and complications.

Given all this, it’s not surprising that pet travel questions prompt a vast majority of APHIS Web site inquiries, as well as phone calls to the Agency’s Call Center in LPA and VS field offices.

And yet another factor can complicate communications with people transporting pets. “With pets, we’re dealing not only with

Continued on next page
people's money but also their hearts. "People often consider pets to be like their children or extended family members," said VS' Shanna Siegel, who served as project manager for the new Web site.

"Emotions are wrapped up with this and, many times, it involves a major life event too, like moving. It can be an incredibly stressful time of life when people are traveling with their pets," said Siegel.

[fixing the problem]
To begin, VS identified the kinds of information and functionality needed to answer pet owners' questions—keeping in mind that each country has its own animal health import requirements and/or diseases of concern. Then VS enlisted the help of APHIS Lead Web Manager Kim Bailey in LPA, and Information Technology Specialist Robb Bryn in ITD.

Bailey and Bryn helped conceptualize and strategize the best way to make the complex and far-ranging information accessible to the public in a user-friendly way. They worked closely with VS to address technical challenges, and VS' Donna Hodge and LPAs' Kelly Hutchinson helped Bailey build content for the site's pages.

The result is a visually clean, easy-to-navigate Web site that provides plain-language guidance. For Bailey, the foremost goal was to make sure the Web site provided a good user experience. And so far, the reviews are good.

The Agency has received positive feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including pet owners, USDA-accredited private veterinarians, airlines, airline associations, and even APHIS employees.

"The most rewarding thing," says Bailey, "is hearing positive feedback from our field folks and the Customer Call Center, and even the press. The field folks said the Web site has reduced their call load about 80 percent. And the Customer Call Center has raved about how easy it is to walk customers through the site while they're on the phone."

Everybody likes a good top ten list. So here are the top ten most frequent search terms used in October 2016 on the APHIS Web site.

Even with the new Pet Travel Web page, searches related to pet travel continue to be of great interest to users. Searches for APHIS Form 7001—the United States Interstate and International Certificate of Health Examination for Small Animals—occupy the number one and number eight positions on the list. APHIS is discontinuing use of the form and now provides health certification specific to the destination country.

1. 7001
2. e-Permits
3. Forms
4. EU Health Certificate
5. Health Certificate
6. Hawaii
7. Cheese
8. Form 7001
9. Screwworm
10. Puerto Rico
Some of the most elite athletes in the 2016 Olympic Games didn’t walk or run. They trotted, jumped, and galloped.

More than 300 horses participated in the Olympic equestrian events last August in Rio de Janeiro. And APHIS’ Veterinary Services (VS) program had a key role to play for some of the four-legged athletes traveling to Brazil. Officials in VS’ National Import Export Services facilitated safe transit for 16 of the horses vying for Olympic gold.

As they do for all animals entering, leaving, or transiting through the United States, VS processed permits and health certificates for horses en route to and returning from the Olympics to ensure their safe transit and prevent the entry of disease into the United States.

Both the Miami and New York Animal Import Centers inspected horses heading to the Games and inspected, tested, and quarantined horses returning from the Games. A majority of these horses—10 in all—trained with American athletes, but VS also helped facilitate the safe transit of 5 horses competing for the Canadian Olympic team and one for the Australian team.

According to Renee Oleck, director of the National Animal Import Center, the protocols for imported and exported horses varied based on the equine disease status of their originating countries. Some countries—including the United States—are free of diseases like African horse sickness, Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis, and epizootic lymphangitis, so testing for these diseases was unnecessary. However, Olympic horses traveling from the United States to the Games were tested for other diseases, including equine infectious anemia and equine piroplasmosis—both transmitted through insects.

Notably though, the Zika virus—a frequent topic of headlines throughout the Olympics—was not a concern for horses. “Zika posed no threat to horses,” said Oleck. “There is currently no evidence that horses get sick from Zika or serve as a source of infection for humans.”

[handle with care]

Officials at VS import centers in Miami and New York work regularly with exporters and horse owners in preparation for other international horse shows. They are accustomed to the process of moving these large and valuable animals in a way that safeguards their health and safety. For the Olympics, it was business as usual with only one minor exception: “For the Olympics—and only for the Olympics—we allowed grooms who care for the animals to enter quarantine facilities to check on the horses and provide special feed or hand walking, understanding these athletes did not have much time to rest post-Games. These horses needed special attention to ensure a safe recovery,” said Oleck.

[healthy and happy returns]

In addition to coming home disease-free from this summer’s events in Brazil, one of the horses that APHIS worked with returned to the United States with something special in tow: an Olympic medal. On August 9, Mighty Nice helped U.S. athlete Phillip Dutton reach the Olympic podium in show jumping and was awarded a bronze medal in individual competition.

Regardless of competition scorecards or medals, Oleck and her staff—led by Kathleen

Continued on next page
question of the day

In our last issue, we asked you, "How well do you and your supervisor communicate?"

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received:

- 43% Communicate Very Well
- 29% Communicate Okay
- 14% Communicate Moderately Well
- 14% Communicate Poorly
- 4% Communicate Very Poor

In addition to the survey results, we received the following comments:

- My current supervisor and I communicate very well. He is very intuitive and personable. He has an open door policy if you need to talk and discuss work or anything really. Could not ask for better.
- There are times I don’t even know when my supervisor is working or when they are on leave/travel/training.

[new questions at new location]

We are discontinuing the Question of the Day feature in the newsletter. Instead, we will be introducing similar user polls on the MyAPHIS Web site.

More details to follow, but our goal is to keep the user polls interesting, short, and simple to use. Plus, they’ll update in real time so you can more quickly see the results.

If you have suggested topics for user polls, please email john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov.

healthy horses

Turner in Florida and Michele Burke in New York—remain committed to the agency’s safeguarding mission for every animal. They work closely with exporters and owners to safely transport all kinds of animals, including horses, livestock, and exotic animals like giraffe, buffalo, and gazelle.

"Today it’s the Olympics, tomorrow it’s another international competition,” said O’Leck. “We do this sort of work every day. We’re always working to keep the animals that pass through our country’s borders safe.”

in case you missed it

See PHOTOS of APHIS employee Deb Sime, who volunteered as an equine testing technician during the summer Olympics in Brazil.
It's a good thing Wildlife Technician Cory Clark got this on video, otherwise it could be hard to believe: a full-grown buck with its hind leg stuck in its antlers. VIDEO

Clark, who works for Wildlife Services in Ohio, was preparing to check a feral swine trap when he spied something flailing on the ground in a nearby field. Through his binoculars, he could see that it was likely a deer, but couldn't tell for sure what the problem was. "Deer don't just roll around on their back," said Clark.

After investigating the situation more closely, he could see that its rear leg was caught. The deer was obviously distressed and had been struggling for a while. The next question: What to do?

Clark retrieved some rope, an empty backpack, and some water from his truck and returned to the deer.

As the clip shows, he covered the deer's eyes with the backpack to lessen its panic. As he positioned himself by the deer, he placed a foot on the antler to immobilize it—in part, making it easier to free the animal, but also to protect himself.

"The biggest danger at that point was getting gored," he said. With an eight-point rack and an animal weighing about 150–200 pounds, even tangling accidentally with the deer could be painful.

Although the deer's leg was impaled on an antler point, Clark found it easier than expected to release.

Once freed, the deer ran and stumbled, remaining on the ground about another 30 minutes until it recovered enough strength to move on. Clark poured water on the deer while it was still down to help cool it. He then moved away to observe from a distance.

Clark still laughs a little talking about the day's adventure, saying he's never seen or heard about a deer getting stuck like that before.

When asked why he recorded the rescue, he said partly to help if any questions came up about the animal, but then added, "Also, because it was just an extremely bizarre situation." ♦
thwarting thieves—
keep your equipment safe

By Vivian Keller

A livestock market, an airport lounge, the counter of an office supply store, even a seemingly secure APHIS conference room... These are just a few of the places where close to 100 APHIS-issued devices—such as laptops, personal data assistants, Blackberry devices, and cellphones—were lost or stolen in the past year.

Apart from the tens of thousands of dollars spent looking into these incidents and replacing equipment, the security threat posed by these losses is significant. So please, take a moment to review the following:

[protecting your equipment]

- When traveling with your devices—whether it’s to a conference in Fort Collins or just home for the day—keep them either locked up or on your person. There’s no other way you can be sure they’re secure.

- If you are carrying your device on public transportation, put it in a nondescript case, briefcase, or bag before you get to the station, and don’t use it on the train or bus. Thousands of cellphones were stolen in the D.C.-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) area in 2015—and 235 of them were snatched directly from riders on the DMV’s Metro transit system.

- When using a laptop, store your data on the APHIS network drives (H:, I:, etc.), not on your C: drive. If all of your information is on the network drives—and your laptop is encrypted with BitLocker and powered down—a laptop thief can’t gain access to any sensitive information.

- If a lost phone or iPad stays turned on, it remains connected to the APHIS email system—which can put at risk personally identifiable and other sensitive information. What if you took photos of a site/location that reveal confidential information? Or you have a list of farmers that includes their confidential business or personal information? If you must store information on your device, be certain that your device is password protected, encrypted using APHIS-approved encryption software, and that the agency’s Information Technology Division has explicitly authorized your device for collecting and storing that information.

- If your credit card was lost or stolen, you would report it right away. The same should hold true for a lost or stolen work device.

APHIS’ Employee Rules of Behavior for IT Security require you to report the incident within 1 hour. The toll-free hotline for reporting lost or stolen equipment is 1-877-PII2YOU (1-877-744-2966) for domestic incidents and 1-816-926-6660 for international incidents. If the incident involves an APHIS facility break in, you must also call Physical Security immediately at 1-970-494-7169. We suggest that you keep these numbers in your wallet. You can reach someone there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

- Know that you may be held financially responsible for lost or stolen IT equipment if it turns out you used it carelessly or negligently. In extreme circumstances, disciplinary action such as a letter of reprimand up to and including a removal proposal may apply in accordance with MRP Directive 5000.2, Sensitive Property Management.

Treat your government IT devices as carefully as you would your own, while remembering that these devices—and the information on them—belong to the U.S. Government.
Did you know that APHIS recently confirmed the first local infestation of the New World screwworm in the United States in 30 years? (Bonus Question: And do you know the screwworm’s historic connection to our current sterile insect release programs?)

The recent infestation was initially detected in Key deer within the National Deer Refuge on Florida’s Big Pine Key. To date, the screwworm remains contained on the Florida Keys—with detections confirmed on 12 Keys and the city of Marathon.

APHIS is working cooperatively with other Federal and State agencies. Response activities include trapping, disease surveillance, and the release of sterile flies to prevent reproduction and to eradicate the infestation. As of December 8, APHIS has released roughly 50 million sterile flies on 12 islands and the city of Marathon. APHIS plans to continue to release sterile screwworm flies for the next 3 months, while continuing surveillance, and at the end of that time will then evaluate the situation to determine next steps.

Did you know that APHIS recently confirmed the first local infestation of the New World screwworm in the United States in 30 years? (Bonus Question: And do you know the screwworm’s historic connection to our current sterile insect release programs?)

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**[serious and gruesome pest]**
Screwworm is an extremely harmful pest with a grisly reputation. It is the only insect known to consume the living flesh of warm-blooded animals. It has caused immeasurable suffering in livestock, wildlife, and even human populations all over the world. In 1930, prior to eradication, estimated livestock losses in the South due to screwworm were valued at $100 million annually.

New World screwworms are maggots that most often enter livestock or wildlife through an open wound. While human cases are rare, they have occurred in the past. If untreated, an animal infected with screwworm may die within 5 to 10 days.

Since officials confirmed the presence of screwworm on September 30, more than 130 Key deer have been infested and euthanized or died. Over 6,000 preventative treatments have been given to Key deer to help save the remaining population.

**[a pioneer in sterile insect technique]**
In the 1950s and 1960s, the screwworm inspired the development and first programmatic use of the sterile insect technique, now used worldwide to combat a variety of pests, including fruit flies and more.

USDA scientists Edward Knipling and Raymond Bushland first pioneered the technique, which produces mass-reared sterilized insects that are released into infested areas. Wild flies that mate with the sterilized flies produce no new offspring, decreasing the size of the next generation. After a sufficient number of cycles, the targeted screwworm population is eradicated.

In 1954, over the course of 7 weeks, the then-new sterile insect technique successfully eradicated screwworm from the small island of Curacao, off the coast of Venezuela. Following that success, the technique was used from the late 1950s into the 1970s to control and eventually eradicate the U.S. screwworm population.

Today, the United States and Panama conduct the Screwworm Barrier Maintenance Program, protecting a barrier region, called the Darien Gap, which runs through eastern Panama and neighboring areas of Colombia. The joint program protects the region and United States by preventing the pest’s potential northward spread.

For more information, visit our New World screwworm Web page.●
Between June 26 and November 26, 2016, 56 APHIS employees retired. Congratulations to each. We wish them all the very best.

**animal care**
Andrea Morgan  
Riverdale, MD

**biotechnology regulatory services**
Subhash Gupta  
Riverdale, MD

**legislative and public affairs**
Dwight Cunningham  
Riverdale, MD

**marketing and regulatory programs business services**
Carol Anderson  
Minneapolis, MN
Bernice Bridges  
Minneapolis, MN
Terry Caine  
Washington, D.C.
SooRae Dunn  
Minneapolis, MN
Jennifer Graham  
Riverdale, MD
Phillip Grove  
Riverdale, MD
Cynthia Pericak  
Raleigh, NC
Kraig Peterson  
Minneapolis, MN
Helen Robinson  
Riverdale, MD

**plant protection and quarantine**
Bruce Adamic  
Madison, WI
Bruce Batsche  
Ft. Pierce, FL
Susan Bollinger  
Nogales, AZ
Bruce Cahan  
Philadelphia, PA
Pamela Deerwood  
Bloomington, MN
Thomas Foos  
Rivera Beach, FL
Rebecca Freeman  
Tampa, FL
Garcia Galat  
Linden, NJ
Awilda Gonzalez  
Carolina, PR
Merren Hao  
Honolulu, HI
Michael Lidsky  
Riverdale, MD
Nube McDermott  
Orlando, FL
John Milos  
Baltimore, MD
John Nelson  
Daly City, CA
Marianne Rodriguez  
Laredo, TX
Shirley Roper  
Sacramento, CA
Bacilio Salas  
Edinburg, TX
Gary Sibert  
Fort Lauderdale, FL
Eileen Smith  
Riverdale, MD
Richard Stone  
Idaho Falls, ID
Ernest Storm  
Phoenix, AZ

**veterinary services**
Robert Brady  
Sutton, MA
Ronald Brock  
Elkhart, IN
Steven Chells  
Ellsworth, MI
David Dusek  
Ames, IA
Joseph Frank  
St Paul, MN
Dean Goedtner  
Riverdale, MD
Bambi Gutierrez  
Riverdale, MD
Debra Hinrichsen  
Ames, IA
Jenny Huntrods  
Ames, IA
Arlene McConvey  
Raleigh, NC
Joan Mckinney  
Jefferson City, MO

**wildlife services**
Cynthia Benton  
Fort Collins, CO
Arnold Debock  
Rock Springs, WY
Joel Dowdy  
Roseburg, OR
Randall Engleman  
Lake City, FL
Gordon Gathright  
Fort Collins, CO
Charles Graf  
Upton, WY
Casey Hunter  
Yoder, WY
Michael Smith  
Chillico, CA
James Miller  
Columbia, SC
Robert Rice  
Riverdale, MD
Frankie Sullivan  
Zapata, TX
Roland Thompson  
Fort Collins, CO

**Photos/Video sources:** Amee Eagan (LPA), Cory Clark (WS), Pam Manns (LPA), Tony Puglisi, John Scott (LPA), Dennis Trainum (LPA), USDA, and Lou Vanichanos (IS).

*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on MyAPHIS.
As kids, many of us climbed trees. Back then any tree with low limbs that were easy to grasp offered an invitation to explore the world from above. And while most of us haven’t scaled a tree in ages, there are some among us in APHIS who have become experts at it, transforming an activity usually considered play into a profession.

For more than 20 years, as part of the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Eradication Program, APHIS has employed professional tree climbers—scaling trees in Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio. Their goal is to locate trees with pencil-width holes and other evidence of ALB infestation. Thanks to the climbers’ skills, the agency and its partners have eradicated damaging beetle infestations in Illinois, New Jersey, and New York and helped curtail the pest’s potential spread.

And although it may sound youthful and carefree, as a profession, tree climbing is no easy feat.
all day long and must often hand-carry heavy gear to climbing sites. The work is physically demanding and comes with unique challenges. These facts—and in particular, injuries and other issues climbers in Worcester, MA, were experiencing—prompted the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program to contact APHIS Ergonomics Program Manager Ginger Dorsey for assistance.

Typically, Dorsey works with employees in more controllable environments—such as offices, laboratories, vehicles, and warehouses—making sure that people and workplaces relate to one another in ways that are efficient and safe. Working with tree climbers was a first.

“This type of work is unpredictable, less controlled. It requires an uncommon approach to resolve climbers’ concerns while still following ergonomic principles,” she says.

scrapes, bruises, and aches

In November 2014, Dorsey began looking into what was going on with PPQ’s beetle hunters and conducted an onsite visit to assess the ergonomics concerns of climbers working in Worcester. During the preceding 20 months, area tree climbers had reported 18 incidents, including tick bites, falls, other movement injuries, poison ivy exposure, and a dislocated finger. They had also experienced bruising and muscle aches resulting from their work. Some climbers also described numbness and pain in the arms and neck.

Following the visit, Dorsey prepared an evaluation report with recommendations to reduce injuries and discomfort, including a suggested stretching and strengthening intervention program.

After her visit and recommendations, the tree climbers began to pay closer attention to and slightly modify their climbing techniques and other work habits. The climbers reported that the combination reduced the discomforts previously noted. Over the 18 months that followed, Worcester climbers reported only four minor incidents.

Next, in May 2016, Dorsey worked with Federal Occupational Heath to provide the tree climbers with a comprehensive onsite stretching and strengthening intervention program. Climbers participating in the program are seeing recognizable benefits. As of the end of March 2017, Supervisory Tree Climber Ted Robinson formally reported only one exertion injury—a climber’s shoulder soreness not requiring medical attention. Since starting the program, climbers have added a few exercises to the regimen and continued with the recommended exercises that strengthen core muscles used in their work.

success sparks interest

Following the success in Worcester, Dorsey has received requests for help from tree climbing teams in Amityville and Jamaica, NY, as well as Amelia, OH. She visited the New York teams in December 2016, and those teams are reviewing her report to determine what modifications they can make. Dorsey plans to visit the Ohio team this spring.

more information

If you are experiencing discomfort while working or would like an ergonomics assessment, contact Ginger Dorsey with the APHIS Ergonomics Program at aphis.ergonomics.program@aphis.usda.gov or by phone, 301-436-3175.
By Will Wepsala

James Mason was on the front line of national security for years, first as a member of the U.S. Air Force and later with local police, training dogs to detect narcotics and explosives. Although retired from active duty, James still trains dogs. Now, though, it’s for protection of a different sort.

Mason is one of 10 dog trainer specialists working for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program to safeguard America’s resources. He works at PPQ’s National Detector Dog Training Center, schooling dogs and their handlers to help combat invasive species.

Located in Newnan, GA, the Center trains dogs and handlers for a wide variety of tasks and clients, including other Federal agencies, State governments, and countries.

Like Mason, a number of the Centers’ trainer specialists have military experience. But others—like trainers Jodi Daugherty and Jenni Anderson—come from different backgrounds, drawn by the chance to work with dogs. Anderson previously worked at a kennel and trained dogs privately. Daugherty began raising guide dogs in high school, and she eventually opened a training school. Despite their diverse backgrounds, the one thing all trainer specialists have in common is a dedication to the dogs and the work they do.

from shelter to canine trainee

The Center typically trains beagles and Labradors, with the vast majority of animals coming from shelters. First, dog candidates must undergo and pass a temperament test and a brief medical check. Next, trainers take them to a local airport to see how they cope with the sights and sounds. If a dog does well and passes an additional medical examination, it then becomes an official canine trainee.

Typically, trainer specialists work with 5-8 dogs at a time. The dogs receive a minimum of 6 weeks training before handlers arrive. After that, the canines and their new handlers train together for 10-13 weeks, starting with 2 weeks in the classroom. Handlers then complete the training with dogs on leash in a controlled environment, including sessions at the local airport to simulate work scenarios.

airports, swamps, and forests

Much of the work of PPQ’s trainer specialists supports U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)—specifically, agricultural inspections at U.S. ports of entry. CBP is the largest of the Center’s clients. However, trainers also prepare dogs and handlers for other tasks, each presenting its own challenge.

In Maryland, Wildlife Services uses dogs to detect nutria, an invasive rodent that inflicts damage to wetlands. Because these dogs work in swamps where handlers cannot easily see the dogs, the typical “sit response,” used to signal a detection, is ineffective. Instead, specialists train dogs to bark when they find nutria scat.

Trainer specialists also teach dogs to find Asian longhorned beetles (ALB). Although the target pest lives well above ground, dogs learn to detect frass, the sawdust-like waste material that falls to the ground as the ALBs tunnel into trees.

dead or alive

The Center is recognized internationally for the expertise of its trainers and programs. Knowing the Center’s reputation, New Zealand recently requested help with a pilot project.
veterinary services
an outbreak in her home county

In December 2014, when Brianna Schur learned about a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Douglas County, Oregon, she didn’t need Google to find it on a map. As fate would have it, the affected backyard flock was in her home county. The detection became the first chapter in a 7-month national outbreak affecting 232 flocks. And with it, Schur became the agency’s first HPAI case manager for the outbreak.

The role of case manager can be demanding both professionally and personally. Case managers serve as the main point of contact for producers affected by HPAI: communicating between producers and Incident Command, advising producers on technical issues, reporting security and biosecurity issues at affected facilities, and taking charge of interactions with contractors.

“For our initial case, I was struck by how well different local, State, and Federal partners came together to respond to HPAI in our community,” said Schur, who was working as a veterinary medical officer with Veterinary Services (VS) Surveillance, Preparedness and Response Services at the time.

“With our initial case, I was struck by how well different local, State, and Federal partners came together to respond to HPAI in our community,” said Schur. The local response to Douglas County’s initial case was a good working example of the “One Health” concept—the model in public health that stresses the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the environment.

the people impact
Following the early HPAI detections, Schur

Continued on next page

Continued from page 3

teaching a nose

offering a new twist on detecting a smelly foe—dead or alive: New Zealand officials want to train and use detector dogs to protect the island nation against the brown marmorated stink bug, an invasive pest that is not easily detected visually. However, they don’t want to risk importing live insects for a dog training program. So they decided to test whether dogs trained to detect dead brown marmorated stink bugs could also detect live insects. PPQ’s trainer specialists were confident that they were up to the task.

First, they worked with two dogs to achieve odor association for dead stink bugs. During the trials that followed, the dogs then successfully detected live brown marmorated stink bugs at proficiency rates of 100 and 99 percent respectively. The success of the pilot showed New Zealand officials that it is possible to train canines without the need to import live stink bugs.

For the trainer specialists, the pilot project is another success on a growing list of what can be accomplished working side-by-side with the Center’s four legged partners. ●
deployed again as a case manager in Iowa during the summer of 2015. As she had learned earlier, case manager’s deal with many detailed questions about the emergency response process, and they see firsthand the impact on people’s lives—basically, they experience the very challenging and human side of APHIS’ efforts.

“I did whatever I could to help the families I worked with, despite the bad news that came with their flocks testing positive for HPAI,” said Schur.

Like Schur, many of those involved in the HPAI response—including APHIS employees, State and local partners, contractors, and family producers themselves—went above and beyond to help those critically affected to recover.

On one farm, Schur helped a family restore the paved lane to their property, which had been heavily damaged by large machinery used to remove thousands of bird carcasses. The repair was necessary for daily farm operations to resume and—in a small dose of normalcy amidst the outbreak—it enabled the family’s teenage sons to take the family car to prom.

“We were working with ‘salt of the earth’ people,” said Schur, describing the character of the community. “The same kids who went to prom on Saturday night were picking up dead birds on their parents’ farms Sunday morning.”

the hard necessities
During the response, euthanizing flocks was necessary to save the poultry industry from further widespread damage. But as Schur knows, it’s never easy to give families the hard message about depopulating their flocks.

“Even when we’re euthanizing people’s animals because of disease, it doesn’t feel like we’re helping industry, especially when you’re talking to that one given producer,” said Schur. “As regulatory veterinarians, we know we are here to help, even if that means depopulation. I’ve always tried to remember that.”

it stays with you
The experience of serving as a case manager and working closely with producers as they face a difficult situation is one that stays with you. And for Schur that’s especially true since she still lives in a community that was so directly affected.

Though the outbreak in her home county ended more than 2 years ago, she still sees a family she worked with as a case manager from time to time. Over time, she’s been able to watch as they have recovered from the initial shock of HPAI.

“It’s nice to see them. I’ve gotten to witness their stages of grief. I’ve seen them recover from the initial trauma of depopulating their backyard flock,” said Schur. “The last time I saw them, they showed me pictures of last spring’s baby chicks.”

Continued from page 4

about brianna schur—

Schur is director of Air and Sea Port Services for VS’ National Import Export Services; however, her journey with APHIS—and her understanding of Federal service and animal health—began in high school. She started with APHIS at age 17, as an 1890s high school scholar, and she worked for the agency each summer while completing her undergraduate and veterinary school education.

“I have been incredibly fortunate throughout my time at APHIS to have supervisors who believed in me and supported me through training opportunities, details, and graduate degrees,” said Schur. “It’s made all the difference in my professional development.”
Asian Gypsy Moth—
A Positive Negative Trend

By David Steigman

Sometimes a negative trend can be a good thing. In the case of the Asian gypsy moth (AGM) program, for example, it’s what we are not seeing that shows the program is on the right track.

Specifically, a recent trend shows, among other things, that we are not seeing as many vessels arriving at U.S. ports of entry with AGM aboard.

A Partnership of Many

The AGM program relies on a collection of many partners—both domestic and international—to protect the United States from the threat of AGM.

The program works with other USDA agencies, including the Foreign Agricultural Service and the Forest Service, and with the Department of Homeland Security’s U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). In addition, the program cooperates with many international partners, including the national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) for Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, and South Korea.

Together, the Plant Protection and Quarantine program (PPQ) and International Services (IS), initiated the agency’s multinational effort following the original 1991 detection of AGM in North America. APHIS and its domestic and international partners collaborate through the Offshore Mitigation and Exclusion Program.

AGMs were first identified in North America in late 1991 near the Port of Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. Moths were then discovered in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. Working with its counterpart in Canada, APHIS convened a technical working group to eradicate the pests. Since that time, 20 additional incursions have occurred in the United States—with the pests successfully detected and eradicated each time. For more, visit PPQ’s gypsy moth Web page.

Continued on next page

Asian Gypsy Moth Basics

The Asian gypsy moth (e.g., Lymantria dispar asiatica and L. dispar japonica) poses a major threat to the environment, trade, and forest-based industries that employ 1.3 million people in the United States.

AGM larvae feed on a much broader range of plant species than do European gypsy moths, including more than 100 botanical families of conifers, hardwoods, and other agriculturally important species. The potential establishment of AGM in the United States could result in associated control costs and industrial and environmental losses totaling billions of dollars.
asian gypsy moth

Continued from page 6

program for AGM. The goal is to keep the pest from even arriving at our shores.

“It is a lot better to keep this pest out of North America than deal with it once it gets here,” says Ingrid Asmundsson, PPQ’s AGM program director.

recent numbers
Since its start, the AGM Offshore Mitigation and Exclusion program has evolved and improved, producing notable results in recent years. In 2014, 48 vessels were found with AGM, while just 7 vessels were found with AGM in 2015, and only 1 vessel in 2016. Further, when AGM was found on vessels, the numbers of pests found per vessel decreased over time.

Compliance with the program has improved as well. The number of vessels with appropriate AGM documentation calling on U.S. ports has increased from 15 percent in 2010 to 82 percent in 2016.

listening and learning for success
The program’s success is rooted in its ongoing emphasis on collaboration. “IS works closely with PPQ, other U.S. agencies—as well as our international partners and the private sector—to combat Asian gypsy moth,” said Russell Duncan, IS attaché in Lima, Peru.

A big part of its cooperative offshore efforts focuses specifically on pre-departure vessel inspections and certifications in countries regulated for AGM. So in the fall of 2016, IS staff in China, Chile, South Korea, Peru, Japan, and Austria participated in meetings with PPQ, other U.S. and international partners, overseas port authorities, ship owners associations, and third-party vessel certification and inspection bodies.

Together, they reviewed and discussed offshore monitoring for AGM, pre-departure vessel inspection and certification, and mitigation and exclusion activities. Participants also visited ports to observe inspection procedures firsthand, and they established and improved their ability to exchange program data among NPPOs.

The goal is to protect U.S. agriculture and resources through consistent and meaningful collaboration. “We need to continue to listen and learn from each other. We need to identify and strengthen our similarities and successes, and focus on differences and areas that require improvement,” said Brendan Reardon, assistant director for PPQ’s Preclearance and Offshore Programs, which leads the AGM offshore program.

Continued from page 6

Visit My.APHIS and participate in the new user polls posted every two weeks.

Upcoming Question: What do you find most distracting in your office?
• Loud conversations
• Speakerphone calls
• Music
• Unpleasant perfume or food smells
• Other
Did you know APHIS employees can personalize their instant message and Outlook profiles to display a picture? With thousands of APHIS employees—and the ever-increasing use of technology in lieu of face-to-face interactions—it is important we create an easy way to match names and faces when connecting online.

Want to change your profile image but don't know how? Follow the step-by-step instructions below.

**how to change your profile image**
Before you begin, make sure you have saved to your computer the image you want to upload. At the end of the following steps you will be prompted to browse to the image and upload it.

1. Open Outlook and click the “File” tab in the top left corner.
2. This takes you to a page titled “Account Information.” The default icon, which is the white silhouette of a person against a gray background, will be displayed in a box to the right. Click the blue link, labeled “Change,” right below the icon.
3. Clicking the link opens an Outlook page in Internet Explorer (the default Web browser for most users). The web page prompts you to log in.
4. In the first box, where it asks for your username, enter “USDA,” followed by a backslash, and then your APHIS log-in name. This is your Windows username, not your email address. When complete, it should look like: “USDA\username”
5. Next, enter your Windows password. As with the username, enter your Windows password—not your LincPass pin, or other password.
6. After logging in, different users may see different screens. For example, you may see the account settings page with the sidebar to change your icon. You may also see your account information page again with the silhouette icon and a blue “Change” link below it. Or, you may see your inbox page, in which case clicking the round icon at the top right of the screen will display a blue “Change” link below it.
7. No matter what page view you see, selecting the “Change” link at this point will lead you to a sidebar with a large default photo and an “Upload photo” option right below it. Simply click on that link, navigate to and choose the photo you want, and hit “Save” when you’re done.
8. Your newly uploaded photo will replace the default image on Outlook and instant messaging.

If you need additional assistance, contact ATAC at 1-877-944-8457.

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**aphis in memoriam**

Since the previous issue of *Inside APHIS*, we have lost nine members of the APHIS family. We will miss them, and our thoughts go out to their families and loved ones.

**Animal Care**
Ordean Wonsbeck .... Fort Collins, CO

**MRP- Business Services**
Kathleen Kullmann .... Minneapolis, MN
Jessica Proctor ......... Riverdale, MD

**Plant Protection and Quarantine**
Wendal Cushing ...... Bottineau, ND
Katherine Ellingson ... Conyers, GA
Patsy Sehuwerert ..... Miami, FL

**Veterinary Services**
Ellen Buck ................ Riverdale, MD
Michel Carr ............... Ames, IA

**Wildlife Services**
Grant Belden ............ Thermopolis, WY
new intern program to nurture talent

By Melissa Barbour

In June, APHIS will welcome approximately 20 Pathways students in the biological sciences fields to participate in the pilot of an exciting, new internship program. Based on their educational background, experience, and interest, the students will be selected for positions at the GS-4, 5, or 7 levels in Biotechnology and Regulatory Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Veterinary Services, and Wildlife Services.

The APHIS Biological Science Intern Program, which will last up to two years, is designed to expose rising juniors, seniors, and graduate students to APHIS’ diverse mission and its inclusive culture. Participants will develop some of the key technical and leadership skills necessary to become successful APHIS employees. After completing the program, students may be eligible for noncompetitive conversion into a permanent position.

“We want to look at ways to diversify the way we fill positions by creating a well-rounded group of students who are fully prepared to hit the ground running after they graduate,” said Human Resources Director Mike Watson.

“This pilot program gives us the opportunity to make the most of student talent and support our succession planning.”

support for interns and supervisors
APHIS created an Intern Support Office (ISO)—within the agency’s Human Resources Division—to facilitate the pilot program, lead the intern group, and provide support to supervisors.

Outside of the day-to-day responsibilities related to their positions, the students will attend weekly interactive “cohort” meetings, work on group projects, partner with a mentor, and participate in trainings and other learning activities.

mentors needed
Agency mentors will play an important part in providing a holistic and strong support network for the students. The ISO is currently recruiting employees to serve as mentors for the soon-to-arrive student group.

“Mentoring is an extremely rewarding experience,” said Watson. “And mentoring for this program in particular is a unique chance to play an important role in helping the agency attract and keep high-caliber talent!”

If you’re interested in becoming a student mentor and/or learning more about this pilot program to see if it’s right for you, please contact Melissa Barbour, ISO coordinator, at melissa.l.barbour@aphis.usda.gov. You can also visit the APHIS Mentoring Program Web page.

Photo/Video sources: Anson Eaglin (LPA), Gail Kearn (LPA), PPQ, Matt Roach (PPQ), Brianna Schur (VS), Ibrahim Shaqir (BRS), USDA, and WS.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on My.APHIS.
On a cold and blustery January day, APHIS wildlife disease biologist Jared Hedelius sits in his truck by Montana’s Bighorn River and waits. Although the temperatures outside are well below freezing, the mallards on the river are busy searching for food, oblivious to the live trap just a few feet from the shoreline. Soon, enough ducks have entered Hedelius’ trap, and he leaves his warm truck and heads to the water. He sets up his equipment and begins collecting samples.

Hedelius is one of 33 wildlife disease biologists in APHIS’ Wildlife Services (WS) program tasked with collecting samples from a variety of wildlife species for disease monitoring purposes. Depending on the target disease and species, biologists collect different kinds of samples, including oral swabs, blood, tissue, and feces. Sampling wild animals requires WS experts to spend a lot of time outdoors, at all times of the day and night, and in all types of weather conditions and habitats.

In Hedelius’ case, he is weathering the cold and wet conditions to gather samples from live and hunter-harvested wild birds for avian influenza testing. Wild migratory waterfowl are a natural reservoir for avian influenza, and these viruses can travel in wild birds without them appearing sick. Since July 2015, WS disease biologists and partners have collected and tested more than 78,000 wild bird samples for avian influenza.

Avian influenza is just one of many diseases monitored by WS disease biologists. The list also includes classical swine fever, pseudorabies, and other pathogens in feral swine; plague and tularemia in coyotes; and Newcastle disease virus, West Nile virus, and salmonella in wild birds.

“By monitoring these pathogens in wildlife, WS and its partners are able to provide an early warning system to America’s agricultural and human health organizations,” says Dr. Tom Deliberto, assistant director of WS’ National Wildlife Research Center.

In Hedelius’ case, a sample he collected from a hunter-harvested mallard in Fergus County, MT, tested positive for H5N2 highly pathogenic avian influenza, one of the strains which circulated in North America during the 2014–2015 avian influenza outbreak in domestic poultry. The outbreak affected over 49 million birds and cost approximately $1 billion in damages and control costs. The recent H5N2 finding serves as a powerful reminder that there is still avian influenza circulating in wild birds, and producers and industry need to continue to be vigilant about biosecurity to protect domestic poultry.

similar work miles away

Around the same time as Hedelius’ wild duck sampling—but across the country in Pennsylvania—WS disease biologist Kyle Van Why meets up with hunters to sample their recently harvested coyotes and foxes. Coyotes can be hunted throughout the year in Pennsylvania—WS disease biologist Kyle Van Why meets up with hunters to sample their recently harvested coyotes and foxes. Coyotes can be hunted throughout the year in Pennsylvania, but sometimes sportsmen organizations sponsor group hunts. This offers WS a unique opportunity to sample numerous animals from across a large area in a short period of time.

Continued on next page
In this case, Van Why is collecting samples to test for tularemia and leptospirosis—two pathogens that can harm people. When the diseases are common among coyotes, he notifies local hospitals to watch for cases in people.

On this day, Van Why collects more than 70 blood and tissue samples from coyotes and foxes from 25 counties. He also helps several museum and university experts by collecting genetic material and skulls, and additional blood and tissue samples for cooperative disease projects.

WS disease biologists, like Hedelius and Van Why, stay on the lookout for wildlife diseases, and they also serve as emergency responders for events such as disease outbreaks, oil spills, floods, and other natural disasters. At a moment’s notice, WS disease biologists can mobilize and arrive at an emergency site within 48 hours. Recent high-profile incidents that have benefited from WS expertise include the screwworm outbreak in Florida, the BP Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak at poultry facilities in the Midwest.

“My job as a wildlife disease biologist is both challenging and exciting,” says Van Why.

“I love being outdoors and working with a variety of wildlife species and APHIS stakeholders. Knowing that the information I gather may help prevent the spread of disease in wildlife and people is very rewarding.”
[what is your background?]
I began my career in agriculture in the United States while I was an undergraduate at Rutgers University, and later I worked with the University of Maryland Extension Service, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program. I also worked as a consultant with the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service where I managed a multilateral IPM project in the Middle East.

In 2001, I joined the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service, Office of International Research Programs (OIRP) as an international affairs specialist. In 2008, I was appointed OIRP director until I joined APHIS in 2016.

[priorities in the coming months?]
APHIS just published in the Federal Register a proposed rule amending the biotechnology regulations, 7 CFR-340. An important priority is supporting APHIS in carrying out and ultimately finalizing this rule as soon the public comments and our responses have been finalized.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
In my personal life, I am proud to be a husband and father. Professionally, I am most proud of my work utilizing USDA “Science Diplomacy” in mitigating the most pressing issues related to drought stress challenges to U.S. agriculture, the Middle East, and the dry areas around the world.

[last book read?]
I recently read A Spy among Friends: Kim Philby and The Great Betrayal by Ben Macintyre. I enjoyed the historical references to the Second World War.

[guilty pleasure?]
One of my guilty pleasures is taking hours to pick crabs in the summer.

[most memorable aphis experience?]
Meeting the majority of the BRS staff at my first all-hands meeting, I was impressed and touched by how welcoming and generous everyone was towards me, making me feel part of the BRS team.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
I have been with APHIS for 9 months as of May 2017.

[favorite meal?]
My favorite meal is sushi and sashimi.

[favorite movie?]
One of my favorite movies is Gladiator.

[hobbies?]
My hobby is running, and I try to run four times a week.

I also enjoy traveling and have had the opportunity to run in beautiful settings such as Turks & Caicos; Stanley Park, Vancouver; and Monterey/Carmel, CA.
In January 2013, APHIS said goodbye to its agency logo. Since then, the USDA logo has been the sole identifying mark for all USDA agencies and programs. Agency and individual program logos are no longer permitted for use in either internal or external communication.

It's important to do a self-check in any situation in which you're considering adding a logo—whether it be for a PowerPoint presentation or a simple flyer. It is especially important for publications of any kind. No matter the project, the USDA logo is always the only logo to use. When creating materials, please follow the visual standards set forth by USDA. Guidelines for the appropriate use of the USDA symbol can be found in the Visual Standards Guide.

If you have questions, please contact Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) at (301) 851-4100.

Additionally, we encourage you to reach out to LPA while still in the planning stages of your communication projects. Remember too that USDA and APHIS policies require that publications intended for external audiences be referred to LPA for clearance and production.

Being an APHIS field employee often means working in remote locations where there's very little chance of running into another APHIS employee, especially one from your own program. And if you're working for APHIS abroad, those odds become even slimmer. But that's just what happened to Ben Buckley, a wildlife biologist with Wildlife Services (WS).

In August 2016, Buckley, normally stationed in Louisiana, was deployed by WS to Ali Al Salem Air Force Base in Kuwait to perform bird damage-management work. On his first night at the base, Buckley was walking to the dorms when two things happened: Tommy Graeter walked over to say hello, and the world got a little smaller.

Graeter was in Kuwait serving as a Master Sergeant in the Air National Guard, but stateside he is a WS biological specialist who works on aquaculture projects in Alabama. Buckley and Graeter had never met before, but as they talked they soon discovered their common WS connection and quickly hit it off.

"Tommy got to see a lot of the work I was doing on base, and we had a standing get-together on Sunday mornings. He was really helpful. I could bounce ideas off of him about how to trap certain animals," says Buckley.

Since returning to the States, Buckley and Graeter have kept in touch—proving that you never know when or where you might make a friend. But working for APHIS, it just might be in the unlikeliest of places.

Shown (left to right): Wildlife Services’ Tommy Graeter and Ben Buckley.
Between November 27, 2016 and April 29, 2017, APHIS had 79 employees retire.

Congratulations to each. We wish them all the very best.

animal care
Donnovan Fox, Jr. Van, TX
Linda Kovar Fort Collins, CO
Craig Mabray Kansas City, MO

marketing and regulatory programs
business services
George Chambless Oxford, GA
James Finn Moosup, CT
Jacqueline Freeman Elgin, TX
James Gailey Fort Collins, CO
Eric Grant Riverdale, MD
Mavis Harrison Minneapolis, MN
John Johnson Fort Collins, CO
Marilyn Miller Patagonia, AZ
Ruth Peterson Minneapolis, MN
Phyllis Piper Washington, DC
James Pullin Fort Collins, CO
Thomas Rippy De Witt, MI
Leslie Vissage New Brighton, MN

office of the administrator
Kenneth Johnson Washington, DC

plant protection and quarantine
Glen Ball, Jr. Yuma, AZ
Bonnie Bradshaw Boise, ID

Godfrey Chun Honolulu, HI
Jorge Cortez Mission, TX
Lisa Durrance Winter Haven, FL
Cheryl Galida Fort Collins, CO
Thomas Giles Nogales, AZ
William Guyton Miami, FL
David Lance Otis AFB, MA
Arturo Lierra San Juan, PR
Rodriguez Boise, ID
Rob McChesney Orlando, FL
Nube McDermott Sacramento, CA
Margie Napier Mission, TX
Julian Peralez, Jr. Texarkana, TX
Kenneth Pierce Los Indios, TX
Norma Smith Raleigh, NC
Deborah Stewart Phoenix, AZ
Ernest Storm Miami, FL
Dawn Thomas Tampa, FL
Joseph Ulmer Houston, TX
Nicholas Voronov

veterinary services
James Amend Austin, TX
Vincent Baxter Fort Collins, CO
Carol Beiler Ames, IA
Richard Bertz St. Cloud, WI
Roger Brannian Ames, IA
Linda Comerchi Anchorage, AK
Diego Fridmann Riverdale, MD
Anita Hansom Ames, IA
Deborah Hicks Anchorage, AK
Debra Hinrichsen Riverdale, MD
Carolyn Johnson Ames, IA

Delores Johnson Austin, TX
Donna Jones Fort Collins, CO
Rita Kester Nogales, AZ
Clara Lewis Flowood, MS
Terry Luckau Fort Collins, CO
Michael McDole Cheyenne, WY
Donald Mclean Harrisburg, PA
Thomas Myers Riverdale, MD
Francis Okino El Segundo, CA
Karen Ray Pickerington, OH
Lyne Riley Woodstown, NJ
Christopher Robinson Jr. Riverdale, MD
Anthony Smith Riverdale, MD
Catherine Smith Indianapolis, IN
Michael Stine Beckley, WV
Mary Tinker Boise, ID
Kevin Varner Austin, TX
John Wile, Jr. Orient Point, NY

wildlife services
Juanita Crawford Auburn, AL
Michael Demers Great Falls, MT
Gordon Gathright Fort Collins, CO
Jeffery Glans Fort Collins, CO
Alvin Harris Malaga, NM
Nita Hiryak Almyra, AR
Michael Medeiros Concord, NH
Vivian Prothro San Antonio, TX
Mark Tobin Fort Collins, CO
John Vickrey Dallesport, WA
Mahlon Watten Yakima, WA
Scott Williamson Lihue, HI
Debra Sime was in junior high when it happened. As millions of racehorse fans watched in horror, the star filly Ruffian broke down with two shattered leg bones—right in the middle of a televised match race with 1975 Kentucky Derby winner Foolish Pleasure. Ruffian could not be saved, and Sime was baffled.

“I couldn’t understand why she needed to be euthanized,” says Sime. “I wrote a school paper about it so I could understand it.” That quest set her on a lifelong path in the service of animal welfare: at APHIS as an Animal Care (AC) Veterinary Medical Officer and inspector, at international equestrian events, and even at last year’s Olympic Games in Brazil.

Sime grew up in Minnesota’s Iron Range, a land of harsh winters and few farms. But Walter Farley’s Black Stallion books captured her imagination early on, and working with horses quickly became her dream.

In 1995, after earning university credits in both her home state and North Dakota—while also learning to ride and jump, and internning on a racehorse farm—Sime received her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Iowa State University. Because it turned out to be physically difficult for the 5’1” Sime to perform some vital examinations horses need, animal care on the road or in rio—
a life serving animal welfare

By Vivian Keller

Debra Sime during her time volunteering for the Rio Olympics.
a life serving animal welfare

Continued from page 1

in 2004 she chose the U.S. Government over a private veterinary practice and came to AC, where she has worked ever since.

[a life on the road]
The rigors of an AC inspector’s life are many. Sime is responsible for 58 Animal Welfare Act (AWA) licensee sites in Minnesota and Wisconsin; most are associated with research facilities. Like the majority of AC inspectors, she is usually on the road, driving from 2 to 6 hours for just one inspection. It’s a life of cars and hotel rooms—and, depending on licensee personalities, one that can try an inspector’s patience. But Sime keeps her focus on gently helping her licensees understand and comply willingly with AWA regulations.

“Service is the last word in APHIS’ name,” says Sime. “You always have to know what you’re doing and who you’re doing it for. I’m a consultant first and a regulator second. If [AWA licensees] understand what they’re doing and why, it [complying with the AWA] won’t be a burden to them.”

In particular, Sime points out to research facilities that if they meet AWA requirements, it’s easier for them to meet standards imposed by the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International.

[animal welfare 24/7]
Sime regularly goes above and beyond her inspector’s job in promoting animal welfare. She’s helped AC’s horse protection team develop technical tools to detect illegal practices at Tennessee Walking Horse shows. She also volunteered for APHIS emergency duty at an Iowa animal shelter after the 2008 floods, and in 2015 served twice on APHIS avian influenza field teams.

Sime extends her good works—and her love for horses—to her private life. She’s helped test horses at U.S. Equestrian events and recently shadowed veterinarians at the Fédération Equestre Internationale World Cup Jumping and Dressage Finals.

Last year, Sime fulfilled a long-time ambition when she helped test horses for doping at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. “Every horse [I sampled] was clean,” she says. “They were totally beautiful…and seeing the Paralympics at the end was humbling. I saw people [with major disabilities] ride and do it very well.”

That same year, the American Veterinary Medical Association chose Sime to be among the first four AVMA member veterinarians ever to participate in the Animal Welfare Judging/Assessment Contest (AWJAC). The annual university-based contest has participants compare and judge the welfare status of animals in contrasting conditions—in Sime’s case, dogs, guinea pigs, chickens, and sheep. Sime aced the challenge.

Participation in the contest has helped move Sime toward a significant career goal: becoming a Diplomate in the American College of Animal Welfare. It’s one of the highest honors in her field and a logical extension of what her research into racehorse injuries taught her years ago as a teenager: that understanding, and helping others understand, is the key to doing what’s best for the animals we live with.

“All I’ve ever wanted to do is understand,” says Sime. “I think I’ve ended up where I belong.”

Sime (second from the left) pauses for a group photo with the team of international volunteers for the Rio Olympics.
reporting work-related incidents, accidents, injuries and illnesses

By Holly O’Brien

On any given day, more than 8,000 APHIS employees are at work throughout the United States, its Territories, and 29 other countries. They work in offices and laboratories, homes and field locations, regulated facilities, ports, and more. Agency employees are often on the go, traveling by foot, motor vehicle, aircraft, horseback, and public transportation. And they are increasingly connected electronically, exposing them to ever-changing work conditions and a growing number of distractions.

Unfortunately, during all of this activity, employees can sometimes experience work-related incidents, accidents, injuries, illnesses, and other unexpected events.

[reporting is vital]
While it may be unusual and worrisome when such events occur, it is imperative that employees report them. The Agency’s goal is to make employee reporting of such incidents the routine response and not the exception. Efforts are underway to raise awareness of the types of incidents that require reporting and the associated steps and timelines.

In June, the Agency’s Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Division (EMS-SD)—along with Designated Agency Safety and Health Official (DAHSO) Robert Huttencrocker—sent an email to all APHIS employees clarifying employee and supervisor roles and the timelines for reporting these events and any work-related hospitalization, near miss, or fatality. Additionally, EMSDD introduced enhancements to the Online First Report of Incident, Accident, Injury, or Illness tool on the My.APHIS internal web pages.

That same month, EMSDD saw a spike in reporting with supervisors reporting 80 incidents—more than any other month to date.

“I think the spike was due to our efforts to raise reporting awareness,” said APHIS Safety and Health Program Manager Jim McKee. “We need reports within 2 hours of certain incidents so we can meet Federal requirements. We depend on employees and supervisors to communicate in a timely manner.”

From January 1 through August 4, 2017, APHIS supervisors reported 400 work-related incidents, accidents, injuries, and illnesses.

One—a motor vehicle accident reported on a Friday by Wildlife Services State Director for Washington and Alaska Mike Linnell—required EMSSD employees to hustle after hours to meet requirements.

“We often run into time zone challenges with headquarters being on the east coast. The willingness of Jim McKee, Marquess Commodore, and everyone else involved showed a very high level of commitment and professionalism for which I am grateful,” said Linnell.

To aid with timely reporting, EMSSD is exploring the possibility of allowing supervisors with Agency-provided iPhones to access the online report tool using those devices.

[reporting leads to improvement]
When employees report an incident, it helps respond to immediate needs and it helps the Agency plan for safety. EMSSD evaluates the data collected through the reporting tool to make safety improvements where needed.

Continued on next page
Based on previous reports, we’ve already made changes to procedures for our Veterinary Services and Wildlife Services employees who use needles and are exposed to teeth and bones to help reduce the incidents of accidental puncture wounds,” said Branch Chief for EMSSD’s Safety Health and Environmental Protection Branch Richard Walker. “It’s all good progress, but our work continues.”

Employees and supervisors are encouraged to visit the online first report tool. For questions about reporting requirements, contact Jim McKee at james.e.mckee@aphis.usda.gov or 301-436-3115.

These days we do so much of our work electronically by email and by phone. For many, email is the primary way of communicating with others—which means it’s important to make a good impression and keep your signature block simple and professional.

As a reminder, here is the Agency guidance concerning email signature blocks. They should include only the following:

- Name
- Job title
- Organization
- Office address
- Phone number(s)
- Email address

Signature blocks must not include graphics, quotes, sayings or slogans that express personal opinions, views, or religious themes.

When necessary, the confidentiality statement below should be included at the end of the email messages.

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTE: The preceding email message contains information that may be confidential, proprietary, or legally privileged, and may constitute non-public information. This message is intended to be conveyed only to the intended named recipient(s). If you are not an intended recipient of this message, do not read it; instead, please advise the sender by reply email, and delete this message and any attachments. Unauthorized individuals or entities are not permitted access to this information. Any disclosure, copying, distribution or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information, except its delivery to the sender, is strictly prohibited and may be unlawful.

For more information, please read the APHIS policy on email. If you have additional questions, contact the APHIS Technical Assistance Center (ATAC).

Phone
877-944-8457, option 1 - US toll free
919-326-7896, option 1 - International

Email
help@aphis.usda.gov
On a typical day, Dan Gossett gets up early. The animals housed at Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) depend on him and his staff to be up and moving. Gossett is the supervisory biological science technician (animal) at NWRC’s headquarters in Fort Collins, Colorado.

As “right hand” to the Center’s attending veterinarian, Gossett helps oversee the work of biological science and veterinary professionals responsible for the daily feeding, husbandry, and veterinary medical care of the captive animals at the Center’s headquarters and field stations.

While his staff feed and water the animals, Gossett often begins his day fielding phone calls from his animal care specialists about facility and staffing issues or unexpected animal needs. Each day is a busy day, with many animals to care for and many mouths to feed.

“At any given time, NWRC’s Animal Care Unit is responsible for the care of several hundred to several thousand animals housed at NWRC facilities. The animals include wild mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, but there are also traditional laboratory animals such as mice and rats,” says Gossett.

Working with wildlife is challenging, but also very rewarding. Gossett and his animal care staff (not the same as APHIS’ Animal Care program) ensure the animals housed on site are healthy and active. Specialists spend a lot of time addressing special housing or caging needs, species-specific diets, enrichment, and other animal welfare needs.

“We provide quality care to our animals so that we can provide quality animals to our researchers,” says Gossett. “The facilities we have for housing and caring for animals are excellent.”

In addition to the care and feeding of animals, Gossett and staff are also available to assist with veterinary procedures, such as anesthesia, sampling, radiology, ultrasound, and surgery. And they provide immobilization and euthanasia training to Wildlife Services employees and outside entities.

Working with so many animals means that Gossett and staff cover a lot of ground, literally.

The NWRC’s headquarters campus includes a 28-acre Outdoor Animal Research Facility with 19 outside animal buildings and 4 related support structures. The headquarters campus also includes 2 large indoor animal holding buildings containing 22 animal rooms, 4 simulated natural environment rooms, and a 2,500-square-foot biosafety level 3 suite. There is also a surgery suite, 2 necropsy rooms, food preparation rooms, veterinary treatment rooms, a quarantine room, a pharmacy, a digital imaging suite, an incinerator, a fabrication shop, and 2 cage wash areas.

And that’s just the headquarters’ campus. Many of NWRC’s field stations also include animal holding facilities.

These facilities give NWRC scientists a unique opportunity to study wildlife species in semi-
When it comes to truly experiencing the variety of agency stakeholders, Hallie Zimmers has one of the best seats in the house.

In her role as an advisor for State and stakeholder relations, Zimmers facilitates what are known as the annual sector meetings between plant and animal industry groups and APHIS senior leadership. In all, it's a rigorously paced schedule of 18 separate industry group meetings. Each one providing a window into the thoughts of agency stakeholders through their feedback, questions, and compliments.

As APHIS Administrator, Kevin Shea began hosting annual sector meetings 5 years ago with the goal of engaging more directly and regularly with industry to discuss their priorities, challenges, and emerging needs. APHIS now hosts separate sector meetings with eight livestock groups and ten plant groups.

The benefits for APHIS and for industry are mutual. During meetings, agency leaders gain insight into what it will take to carry out the APHIS mission to promote and protect the various agricultural sectors. And APHIS leaders cultivate a more face-to-face relationship with industry.

Typically, the meetings last 3 hours, and the bulk of the conversation is guided entirely by the participating industry group. They shape the topics and the discussions, including how much time they want to spend on each issue.

Zimmers often gets feedback from participants about the value of the sector meetings.

Some topics warrant only a quick mention, while others go much longer.

Continued on next page
They urge APHIS to “keep hosting these meetings.”

For her, the meetings are a boon as well. They help shape Zimmers’ efforts throughout the year, whether she is coordinating trips for the Administrator or steering relevant information to industry. “The meetings help me understand the diversity of issues these groups face,” says Zimmers.

**A few questions with Hallie Zimmers**

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**What do you find most surprising about the sector meetings?**

Zimmers: You can never underestimate the value of meeting face to face. The discussions that take place around a table and the issues that can be worked through when you’ve got leadership from industry and APHIS together is always impressive in terms of what can be accomplished and resolved.

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**How do you think these meetings benefit APHIS?**

Zimmers: APHIS’ goal is to help industry be profitable. We’re a regulatory agency but the regulations that we publish are really to help industry battle pests and disease. As our Administrator often says, we don’t want to take any actions where the cure is worse than the disease. This is our leadership’s opportunity to hear from everybody, get their feedback, get their input, and make sure that the actions we are taking are supporting industry’s ability to be profitable while protecting American agriculture.

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**What is most rewarding to you about attending these meetings?**

Zimmers: It’s rewarding to see the discussions that take place, but overall it makes me proud to work for APHIS because of how our senior leaders communicate with and engage industry. I think this approach sets APHIS apart from many other regulatory agencies. It’s rewarding to see how much our leadership truly cares about supporting industry and helping them feed and clothe the world, as our Administrator would say.

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**Do the meetings ever get contentious?**

Zimmers: I would say generally no because you’ve got enough time to really talk through the issue. Does that mean there’s always 100 percent agreement on approach? No, but by and large we’re talking through challenges, developing strategy, and listening, and that is really good for fostering relationships and identifying a path forward.

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**What does APHIS do after the meetings?**

Zimmers: Since the meetings started five years ago, APHIS has been documenting the commitments that result from each discussion and sharing those with the participants in follow up letters. It’s important for us to be accountable and say this is what we heard and here’s what we can do about it. It also helps ensure everyone has the same set of expectations because some commitments can be accomplished relatively easily and others—especially those related to trade or pest and disease program activities—may require long-term effort.
Did you know that APHIS has a new and improved platform for hosting and viewing internal videos?

The APHIS Video Hub launched a few months ago and is steadily growing its inventory of videos available for employees to view. The initial launch was quiet as agency staff learned more about the system’s features and developed employee support materials.

The new video hub is a real step up for the agency, and it is packed with features that will improve the employee viewing experience with internal video. It also increases the agency’s ability to reach employees with video and to integrate clips with internal agency web pages.

[where to go and what’s new]

To visit the APHIS Video Hub, you need to be logged in and connected to the agency network. Here’s the link: APHIS Video Hub.

Feel free to visit, click around, and explore. Or, if you like, you can learn more by viewing the short clip Overview of the APHIS Video Hub.

As a viewer, here are some of the new features you will see:

• Easy-to-use controls for playing and fast-forwarding clips,
• Closed captioning for accessibility,
• A rich search function that combs through video titles, descriptions and closed caption/transcript files for each clip,
• Assigned categories making it easier to browse for content, and
• Comment/rating options enabling employee feedback

[increasing video clips]

Uploading a video to the APHIS Hub is pretty simple. We anticipate that the number of posted clips will grow and that APHIS programs will develop new ways to incorporate video in their communication efforts.

Each program has designated points of contact to ensure that uploaded clips are cleared/approved prior to making them available for other employees to view.

For more information, visit the APHIS Video Hub help page where you will find instructional documents, a list of program contacts, and soon an online form for requesting permission to upload video.

aphis in memoriam

Since the previous issue of Inside APHIS, we have lost one member of the APHIS family. We will miss him, and our thoughts go out to his family and loved ones.

Plant Protection and Quarantine
Richard Hansen Fort Collins, CO

new user poll

Visit My.APHIS and participate in the new user polls posted every two weeks.

Are you looking forward to your performance appraisal for the year?

Upcoming Question: Does the new school year make your work-life balance easier or more difficult to manage?
new employees—catching up one year later

By John Scott

Inside APHIS recently caught up with several employees who joined the agency about a year ago. Aside from wishing them a happy (work) anniversary, we wanted to check in and ask them a few questions about their first year with APHIS.

Brandon Bloomberg
Training Technician, PPQ, Frederick, MD
Started: April 2016

What have been the highlights/high points of your year with APHIS?
Being a critical part of my team in the Leadership Development Unit and having my input valued by fellow team members and my supervisor.

What has surprised you most during your year with APHIS?
The way employees are valued and communication within the organization has made me feel valued and informed.

What suggestion(s)/advice would you have for someone else starting a job with APHIS?
To be open-minded. I came from an organization that had managers and supervisors who pretended to care about you—but when they got what they wanted, they forgot about the employees who helped them out.... Being around people in APHIS who care about their employees has been eye opening for me.

What are you looking forward to in your second year?
What I look forward to the most is improving and contributing to the success of our team and APHIS.

What have been some of the biggest hurdles, difficulties, or challenges in your first year here?
The biggest hurdle for me was the adjustment to being valued and treated like a person instead of a number. Being part of a team instead of a stepping stone to someone else. Also, knowing that my co-workers and leadership care about their employees and their safety.... It almost feels like a stray dog being accepted by a loving family.

Jessica Gowins
Veterinary Medical Officer; Animal Care; Territory—New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont
Started: August 2016

What have been the highlights/high points of your year with APHIS?
As a Veterinary Medical Officer, I am charged with ensuring that the welfare of animals is upheld. As an animal lover this is very important to me. Being able to see animals in various settings, as well as being able to access facilities with exotic animals, has definitely been a highlight this first year on the job.

What has surprised you most during your year with APHIS?
I can’t pinpoint any real surprises. I received

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an initial orientation to APHIS my freshman year of college and continued involvement through my undergraduate, graduate, and vet school years. During those years, I was exposed to the different facets of Animal Care and that helped me during this first year.

**What suggestion(s)/advice would you have for someone else starting a job with APHIS?**
Find a great mentor who can guide you.... Take as many opportunities to work with team members and other people in your program as possible. So much can be learned from on-the-job experiences....

**What are you looking forward to in your second year?**
Working on more team inspections. I think it would be a positive experience for me to join other teams within Animal Care and attend conferences that provide information that could be used to enhance my skills as an inspector.

**What have been some of the biggest hurdles, difficulties, or challenges in your first year here?**
I think learning my facilities and the licensees/registrants has been the biggest challenge. It is so important to form relationships with facilities that allow for the inspection process to also include opportunities to educate.

**What suggestion(s)/advice would you have for someone else starting a job with APHIS?**
I would suggest to always look at every inspection or meeting as a learning experience. We work with so many types of people and programs that you can always learn something new. Also, keep your communication lines open. Whether it’s answering your phone, checking messages, or keeping up with e-mails, it’s super important to be available to our stakeholders and to other co-workers.

**What are you looking forward to in your second year?**
I hope to continue to expand my knowledge on new program diseases and keep up to date on the research involved with them.

**What have been some of the biggest hurdles, difficulties, or challenges in your first year here?**
It was definitely challenging to learn all of the various program regulations and become an expert on them in such a short time. Animal disease traceability was specifically difficult.

**What have been the highlights/high points of your year with APHIS?**
I have really enjoyed attending a variety of training courses and interacting with other APHIS employees from around the country. Together, we collaborate on a topic and learn from each other’s experiences.

**What has surprised you most during your year with APHIS?**
I was most surprised at how much time we spend out in the field and with our stakeholders. It is a rarity that I get a full day working at my official duty station.
Jessica Scelba
Animal Health Technician (AHT), Veterinary Services, Indiana; previously a term AHT in Oklahoma during highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak
Started: July 2016

What have been the highlights/high points of your year with APHIS?
I have gotten to experience two different States and their dynamics within the agency. I also had the opportunity to travel and work with different animal disease programs. I spent two deployments in Texas and worked with both tuberculosis (TB) and cattle fever tick. Here in Indiana, I have gotten to learn more about TB, scrapie, and equine piroplasmosis.

What has surprised you most during your year with APHIS?
I was pretty prepared with my expectations of holding a Federal job, so I don’t think very much surprises me at this point.

What suggestion(s)/advice would you have for someone else starting a job with APHIS?
Be willing to move and travel to experience different programs within the agency. Take advantage of all of the opportunities that this agency can offer you.

What are you looking forward to in your second year?
More growth and opportunities within APHIS.

What have been some of the biggest hurdles, difficulties, or challenges in your first year here?
Learning how to manage people with different personalities while on a deployment.

Duane Wood
IT Specialist, Marketing and Regulatory Programs – Business Services, Riverdale
Started: July 2016

What have been some of the biggest hurdles, difficulties, or challenges in your first year here?
Getting accustomed to the culture here and how the processes work, but it’s smooth sailing now.

What have been the highlights/high points of your year with APHIS?
Coming into the Information Technology Division and working on the Video Teleconference (VTC) team.

What has surprised you most during your year with APHIS?
How nice, helpful, and resourceful most of individuals are.

What suggestion(s)/advice would you have for someone else starting a job with APHIS?
If you’re looking for a fast paced environment, it’s not for you, Ha-ha. The majority of the staff here are very welcoming and will help you as best they can to get you what you need.

What are you looking forward to in your second year?
More growth and opportunities within APHIS.
manager profile

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[what is your background?]
I was born and raised in Marion, VA. I earned my B.A. degree in Biology from Carson-Newman College, which is located in Jefferson City, TN. From there, I went on to earn my M.S. in Entomology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

[how long have you been with aphis?]
I have been with APHIS for almost 21 years now. In 1996, I started as a Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) officer in Miami, FL. While in Miami, I also served as a back-up entomology identifier. Then, in 1999, I was selected for the area identifier (entomologist) position located in Fort Lauderdale, FL. In 2004, I joined the National Identification Services staff in Riverdale, MD.

[most memorable aphis experience?]
It’s hard to pick just one. But, I would say that my most memorable experience in APHIS would have to be a collection of many different experiences with the people that I have encountered throughout my career in PPQ. I’ve had the opportunity and privilege to work with so many great employees over the years.

[priorities in the coming months?]
My number one priority at this time is to continue focusing on the National Identification Services’ efforts on implementing various process and program improvements. Over the past year, we have been undergoing a pretty aggressive hiring and reorganization initiative in order to enhance our overall pest identification program.

[accomplishment most proud of?]
There are a number of accomplishments both personal and professional for which I am extremely proud. However, I would have to say that my greatest accomplishment is being a husband and father.

[last book read?]
The Lost Order by Steve Berry

[guilty pleasure?]
Chocolate

[favorite meal?]
I would have to say a good steak.

[favorite movie?]
The Godfather

[hobbies?]
These days, mostly reading and watching sports. However, I’ve been known to pick up a fly rod, or a golf club on occasion as well.

David “Scott” Neitch
Director, National Identification Services.
Plant Protection and Quarantine

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on My.APHIS.
The art of tracking wildlife has come a long way from the days of looking for prints in the dirt. Today, using Environmental DNA, or eDNA, scientists are able to do some of the sleuthing and tracking from the lab.

In February, National Public Radio (NPR) featured a story (radio and web) about such efforts by scientists at APHIS’ National Wildlife Research Center. STORY: “Scientists Get Down and Dirty With DNA to Track Wild Pigs.”

Wildlife Services (WS) employees Morgan Wehtje and Brian Archuleta, as well as former employee Kelly Williams, were interviewed for the piece.

eDNA refers to DNA collected from an environmental sample—such as soil or pooled water—rather than from an individual organism. eDNA has largely been used to track aquatic organisms, but WS scientists at NWRC are now using the material to track terrestrial species, like feral swine, Burmese pythons, and Nile monitor lizards, from New Mexico to Florida.

Working with partners—including the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado State University—NWRC collects and analyzes eDNA samples that help locate hard-to-track animals. In turn, NWRC shares this data with WS field operations staff, who use the information when conducting wildlife management activities.

NWRC’s Dr. Toni Piaggio is responsible for the eDNA program. Piaggio said the NPR piece generated additional press and attention for NWRC’s wildlife research efforts.

“This is a wonderful tool when you’re looking for sparse populations of species that may be difficult to find due to their low numbers, especially invasive or endangered species,” Toni said. “You don’t have to put your hands on the animal, you just have to take water samples.”

By Amanda Sutker
David Kerr has a passion for agriculture. Descended from a long line of family farmers, he’d probably say it’s in his blood. By day, Kerr works as a technician for Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Karnal bunt program in Arizona, currently the only State with fields that remain quarantined for the fungal disease of wheat.

As part of his PPQ responsibilities, Kerr works directly with wheat producers to explain the program goals and conduct wheat field surveys. He collects samples to test for Karnal bunt, visually screens samples sent to him from fields throughout the United States, and ensures wheat’s safe movement in commerce. He believes that coming from a farm background helps him better relate to the producers he regulates.

Kerr’s work keeps him busy, but his dedication to agriculture really becomes apparent when State Fair season rolls around. That’s when he is most likely to be found reconstructing once again the Kerr Farm Tour exhibit created by his parents 47 years ago.

**[farm raised]**

Kerr grew up on a medium-size dairy farm that his parents, Bobbie and John Kerr, operated for many years in Buckeye, Arizona. As an adult, David Kerr later operated his own small dairy farm in Arizona for about 30 years. While no longer a working dairyman, he is grateful for the farming heritage that past generations handed down to him.

In 1951, Kerr’s parents began showing their own animals at the Arizona State Fair. John Kerr, now deceased, was a well-known sheep judge and eventually was appointed as the Fair’s livestock director. Bobbie Kerr was inspired by a model farm display she saw at a fair in Los Angeles, which led to the Kerr’s creating their first Kerr Farm Tour installation in 1970.

Kerr’s parents solicited the sponsorship of the Arizona Milk Producers Association, which continues to sponsor the farm tour. David fondly recalls many weeks in his youth helping his parents staff the farm tour at both the 21-day Arizona State Fair and 4-day Maricopa County Fair. Working the Fairs was long considered to be the family’s annual vacation.

**[carrying on the tradition]**

In 2010, after his aging parents had to retire from the project, David Kerr and his wife Glenda stepped up to carry on the Kerr Farm Tour tradition.

Kerr’s indoor farm tour is filled with animal pens and exhibits inside mini barns that have beckoned generations of fairgoers to experience a nostalgic glimpse of small-farm life. Visitors learn where the food on their plates and the milk in their glass come from. Kerr’s farm tour features both baby and adult animals housed in pens large enough for the animals to express their natural movements, which spectators wouldn’t experience if the animals were haltered or more tightly penned.

While visitors may find the farm animals cute and fun to watch, posters throughout Kerr’s displays deal frankly with the fact that farmers raise these animals as a business to provide consumers with milk, eggs, meat, and fiber. Informative signage highlights farm facts:

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for example, one notes that a fertilized chicken egg is a self-contained unit that holds everything necessary to bring a chick to life in just 21 days, save the necessary heat from its mother. As a new addition to the exhibit, the Kerr’s plan to install a large-screen television this year to play video clips demonstrating modern-day dairy practices.

Touring the exhibit, many older visitors comment that “My grandparents had a farm just like this!” However, Kerr finds it is increasingly rare that younger visitors have had any on-farm experience to inform them of basic facts of agricultural life. Kerr has also noticed an upsurge over the past decade of fairgoer interest in farm issues, as consumers increasingly want to know more about the origins of the food on their plates.