



The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

"Protecting American agriculture" is the basic charge of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). APHIS provides leadership in ensuring the health and care of animals and plants. The agency improves agricultural productivity and competitiveness and contributes to the national economy and the public health.

The professional APHIS workforce strives to meet the needs of an ever-expanding customer base. We use state-of-the-art technology to keep up with trends in agriculture and international trade and other pertinent issues. All of our work enhances the ability of the United States to buy and sell agricultural products in the international marketplace and fortifies our abundant, safe, and diverse food supply.

APHIS has five major program areas: Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), International Services (IS), Veterinary Services (VS), Animal Care (AC), and Wildlife Services (WS). In carrying out the APHIS mission, employees in these program areas perform the following functional activities:

Safeguarding Our Borders

APHIS safeguards U.S. borders against the entry of foreign agricultural pests and diseases. At airport terminals, seaports, and border stations, PPQ officers inspect international conveyances and the baggage of passengers for plant and animal products that could harbor pests or disease organisms. At international airports, detector dogs in APHIS' Beagle Brigade help find prohibited agricultural materials. PPQ officers also inspect ship and air cargoes, rail and truck freight, and package mail from foreign countries. At animal import centers, APHIS veterinarians check animals in quarantine to make sure they are not infected with any foreign pests or diseases before being allowed into the country.

Overseas, APHIS operates preclearance programs to eliminate pests in some imported products right at the source. IS officials stationed in foreign countries maintain a comprehensive information network on the status of animal and plant pests and diseases around the world.

Combating Pests and Diseases

IS officials also conduct cooperative agricultural pest and disease control and eradication programs in foreign locations, such as the screwworm eradication program in Central America and foot-and-mouth disease program zone in Panama and Colombia.

In this country, APHIS searches for and monitors animal and plant pests and diseases. If foreign pests get past our border defenses, APHIS quickly takes emergency actions to eliminate the threat to U.S. agricultural productivity.

In cooperation with State animal health agencies, VS employees combat certain domestic animal diseases, including cattle and swine brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, pseudorabies in swine, and scrapie, a disease of sheep and goats. WS employees work with their State counterparts to monitor certain wildlife diseases like rabies and Lyme disease.

PPQ fights certain domestic plant pests, including boll weevil and gypsy moth, in programs that emphasize biological control and integrated pest management. To prevent the spread of certain domestic plant pests, APHIS cooperates with and provides technical assistance to State plant health agencies.

Through health certification of animals and plants and agricultural products for international shipments, we facilitate agricultural exports. APHIS helps negotiate other countries' entry requirements for U.S. agricultural products and assists U.S. agricultural exporters by providing health certificates for their goods.

Caring for Animals

Through enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act, APHIS enhances the care of animals used in research and exhibition, sold in the wholesale pet trade, and transported commercially. APHIS also enforces the

Horse Protection Act to prevent the use of cruel practices to accentuate the gait of show horses. The agency's objective is to bring people into compliance with these laws, and APHIS works with USDA-licensed dealers and exhibitors toward this end. However, when individuals violate APHIS' standards and regulations or show little concern for the welfare of animals protected under these laws, APHIS makes certain that the individuals are prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

APHIS ensures that veterinary biologics—animal vaccines and related products—are safe, pure, potent, and effective. VS laboratory technicians check test samples of production runs of manufacturers licensed by the VS Center for Veterinary Biologics in Ames, IA. Any biologics that don't meet Federal standards are kept off the market.

Protecting the Environment and Managing Wildlife Damage

One of the most important new trends in agriculture is the development of the agricultural biotechnology industry. APHIS protects the environment by analyzing the potential effects of introducing genetically engineered organisms, such as a squash plant whose genetic characteristics have been modified to incorporate resistance to specific plant viruses. If, after careful review, APHIS scientists determine that such an introduction will not be harmful, they issue a permit for the organism's release and interstate movement. In this area, APHIS works closely with its counterparts in the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration.

The WS program responds to requests by farmers, the public, private companies, airport managers, and other Federal and local government agencies that need help in dealing with wildlife damage on private or public property. WS has the authority to assist in solving problems that are created when wildlife causes damage to agricultural, urban, or natural resources. WS also assists with wildlife problems involving threats to human health and safety and the survival of threatened or endangered species.

After developing agreements with governmental and private-sector cooperators in response to specific requests for assistance, WS provides help to prevent or reduce wildlife damage through two approaches: technical assistance and direct control. WS' biologists help farmers, ranchers, and all Americans learn how to live with wildlife.

In all of APHIS' activities, employees analyze the environmental impacts of the agency's programs to make sure that they comply with environmental laws and regulations.

Leading Scientific Research and International Standards Setting

APHIS has many programs that conduct research on plant and animal health issues. The agency takes the lead when working with groups, panels, and other organizations designed to enhance animal or plant health. Several APHIS programs participate in setting international standards for phytosanitary and zoosanitary issues that support trade in the global marketplace. Because trade agreements like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the North American Free Trade Agreement encourage free and open trade, animal and plant health standards are vital to protecting a country's agricultural resources from exotic pests and diseases.

The National Veterinary Services Laboratories include several facilities in Ames, IA, and the high-security biocontainment Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory on Plum Island, off the coast of New York's Long Island. VS' laboratories analyze blood, tissue, and environmental samples to promote disease tracking and identification. Veterinarians who specialize in diagnosing foreign diseases seldom seen in U.S. animals help APHIS epidemiologists in the field find the cause of a disease outbreak as quickly as possible.

The Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH), headquartered in Fort Collins, CO, provide information and technical services for animal health and other agricultural interests. CEAH is made up of three individual centers working together. The Center for Animal Disease Information and Analysis collects, manages, analyzes, and disseminates information critical to APHIS programs. The Center for Animal Health Monitoring delivers factual reports and data about animal health, welfare, production, product wholesomeness, and the environment. The Center for Emerging Issues researches and assesses, with a view toward the future, animal health and other agricultural issues to facilitate informed decisionmaking.

The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), also in Fort Collins, functions as WS' research arm. The Center is a world leader in developing tools and technologies to aid in resolving conflicts between people and wildlife. NWRC research activities emphasize socially acceptable methods that reduce or stop wildlife damage effectively and economically, minimizing risks for people, wildlife, and the environment.

In existence since the 1920's, the Center is the only research facility in the world devoted exclusively to the study of wildlife damage control. In Fort Collins and at NWRC's field stations in eight States, professional employees specialize in wildlife biology, chemistry, physiology, biological and physical science technology, statistics, computer programming, and

electronic engineering. NWRC leverages resources by forming cooperative ties with universities, non-profit research facilities, and other public and private research entities. NWRC has achieved an integrated, multidisciplinary research program that is designed to provide scientific information and solutions to wildlife damage problems.

The Center for Plant Health Science and Technology in Raleigh, NC, has recently been established by PPQ. The Center is the hub in PPQ's network of plant protection centers, satellite laboratories, stations, and the National Biological Control Institute. It is designed to provide the best possible scientific and technical support for the management of phytosanitary issues critical to protecting plant resources and facilitating agricultural trade.

Work includes analyzing pest introduction pathways and pest spread as well as strategic approaches to pest exclusion, performing pest risk assessments and mitigating damage caused by plant pest and disease incidents, and assembling and delivering state-of-the-art technologies and methodologies that improve the effectiveness of plant health programs. Center personnel maintain collaborative working partnerships with Federal and State agencies, academic institutions, and the private sector to accomplish work through facilitation and active participation in problem solving.

For More Information

APHIS has an open-door information policy. We encourage people to learn about our activities, and we try to share as much information as possible.

The USDA visitor center and outreach program at Riverside is located in APHIS headquarters building in Riverdale, MD. The visitor program helps visitors to better understand USDA's role in an expanded global trade environment. The center is a branch of the USDA visitor center located in Washington, DC. It is open during normal business hours and is the central contact point to receive domestic and international visitors to the Riverside complex. The staff provides assistance with information exchange, training programs, meetings, conferences, and other learning experiences.

The visitor center's learning laboratory has information on many topics. Learning modules provide basic sanitary and phytosanitary concepts on international standards and organizations and how the United States interprets those standards in its own decisionmaking process.

For additional information on APHIS, visit our Web page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> or write to USDA, APHIS, Unit 1, Distribution Center, 4700 River Rd., Riverdale, MD 20737-1232.

APHIS brings food to your table, stimulates global economies, safeguards our Nation's agricultural resources, and protects and enhances its ecosystems. In short, when America sits down for dinner, APHIS helps set the table.