Suzan Holl   (301) 734-6464
Jerry Redding (202) 720-6959

USDA EXPANDS WEB-BASED PERMIT SYSTEM

WASHINGTON, July 3, 2006--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service today expanded its new electronic permitting system to include online applications for permits issued by Veterinary Services' National Center for Import and Export.

APHIS ePermits is a Web-based system designed to improve and expedite the permitting process. Under ePermits, applicants can apply for permits, track applications and receive notifications, as well as copies of their permits--all through the Internet.

This system will save customers a tremendous amount of time and effort. APHIS first launched ePermits on April 3. At that time, certain permits applications from APHIS' plant protection and quarantine and biotechnology regulatory services programs were made available online. This latest expansion of ePermits will allow customers to apply for several frequently requested VS permits online. In addition, access to BRS notification applications has been expanded to include all registered users.

APHIS' ePermits is already an award-winning service. In early June, the American Council for Technology selected ePermits as a winner of its 2006 Intergovernmental Solutions Awards for demonstrating a commitment to progress through technology. APHIS ePermits was one of six federal and state winners of this prestigious award.

In addition to online applications, ePermits also features a payment engine capability so individuals can pay permit application fees by credit card, when applicable, as part of the online process. This feature is designed and operated in a way to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of applicant information.

Under the ePermits system, users must first register with USDA's eAuthentication system. The eAuthentication system is used by USDA agencies to enable individuals to obtain accounts that allow access to certain USDA Web applications and services through the Internet. Instructions for registration are provided on the eAuthentication Web site, www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/index.html. For more information on ePermits, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/permits/learn_epermits.shtml.

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Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS news release page at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/newsroom. Also, anyone with an e-mail address can sign up to receive APHIS press releases automatically. Send an e-mail message to lyris@mdrdlyriss10.aphis.usda.gov
and leave the subject blank. In the message, type subscribe press_releases.