



United States
Department of
Agriculture

March 8, 2005

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC
20250

Dear Colleagues,

This is to bring you up-to-date on improvements we are making in the APHIS cooperative agreement process. In the fall 2004, concerns regarding the process were brought to my attention. I subsequently directed Agency personnel to work with cooperators to examine the current agreement process and methods, specifically looking for areas where improvements and changes could be made. Three overall recommendations emerged from the study that we finished in February 2005. They are, improve consistency across the Agency especially in training and guidance, streamline the process, and explore other opportunities. The final report from the study is now complete and is enclosed. It provides details about the recommendations and the findings and methodology of the study.

Based on early feedback from cooperators and Agency employees before the study was completed, the following actions are already underway: 1) a new position is being created in the Agreement Services Center dedicated to training and communication; 2) planning has started on an annual meeting between APHIS personnel and cooperators to share and exchange information; and 3) APHIS will no longer require cooperators to submit reports that exceed OMB guidance, unless a waiver is obtained.

We established a working group to move the recommendations into the action and implementation stages. The group will work closely with our Agreements Services Center and the Agency leadership through the Program Leaders Group to ensure the recommendations are fully developed and implemented. Earlier this month, the working group met with the study authors and completed a knowledge transfer meeting to ensure the working group is well-versed in the study data, understand the findings, and is clear on the recommendations.

I hope you will take the time to look at the report and support the ASC and working group as they move forward with this very important project. Implementing the recommendations and commitments can only improve the cooperative agreement process for both APHIS and our cooperators, while enhancing program delivery goals and objectives. Please visit the CAPIT website at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/capit for improvement and implementation updates.

Please direct any questions you may have to the co-leaders of the working group, Stephen Kidd (301) 734-5771 and Donna Ford (301) 734-5752.

Sincerely,

W. Ron DeHaven
APHIS Administrator

Enclosure



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