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U.S. Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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APHIS' International Services:

Serving APHIS Worldwide



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Cover photo: Helping underdeveloped nations deal with avian influenza is part of IS' mission. Here, IS employees are facilitating an avian influenza simulation exercise in El Salvador.

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The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—an action-oriented agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—works with other Federal agencies, Congress, the States, tribes, foreign governments, agricultural interests, and the general public to carry out its mission: Protect the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources. APHIS' International Services (IS) supports this mission in an international environment by: (1) safeguarding the health of animals, plants, and ecosystems in the United States; (2) facilitating safe agricultural trade; (3) ensuring effective and efficient management of internationally based programs; and (4) investing in international capacity-building through various training programs abroad to enhance technical, administrative, and diplomatic skills and competencies.

International Services in Brief

IS' mission is to protect and promote U.S. agricultural health through internationally based animal and plant health expertise. That expertise safeguards the health and value of American agriculture as well as promotes its safety in



Eradicating foot-and-mouth disease and other foreign animal diseases before they get established in the United States is an important part of IS' work. Here, an IS veterinarian trains foreign counterparts on how to examine sheep for FMD.



IS employees work with foreign service nationals in preclearance programs worldwide. Here, inspectors are checking pears for mealybugs in Tokyo.

global trade. IS builds on its strengths and diversity to initiate and enhance sustainable animal and plant health programs.

IS operates with a civil service staff in Washington, DC, and has in 32 countries diplomatic representation that includes APHIS Foreign Service Officers and Foreign Service Nationals. Employees have a wide range of skills, including scientific, technical, and administrative capabilities that assist in implementing IS' mission and strategic plan abroad and within the United States. These professionals include veterinarians, plant health specialists, entomologists, epidemiologists, program specialists, and other administrative and program support personnel.

IS Strategic Plan

The IS strategic plan aligns with APHIS' and USDA's strategic plans and, where appropriate, with elements of the Department of State's strategic plan. IS' strategic plan includes seven action areas: (1) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Management, (2) Safeguarding, (3) Screwworm, (4) Fruit Fly, (5) Foreign Animal Diseases and

Pests, (6) Tropical Bont Tick, and (7) Agricultural Quarantine Inspection and Preclearance Activities.

By resolving trade issues, workers in IS' SPS Management action area gain and maintain U.S. access to foreign markets that may be threatened or constrained by SPS barriers. SPS barriers are any measures that protect animal and plant life and human health from harmful diseases, organisms, or pests. Moreover, through its SPS activities, IS increases global acceptance and utilization of international agricultural health standards based on sound science, provides technical assistance to developing countries to help them meet their SPS agreement obligations, and ensures safe agricultural trade in the global marketplace.

Through safeguarding strategies designed to anticipate and reduce the risks posed by exotic pests and diseases, IS personnel provide agricultural health information to assist in foreign-based risk-mitigation processes and onsite assessment and response to emerging pest or disease conditions in foreign countries. Safeguarding also addresses technical



In Taiwan, greenhouses where *Phalenopsis* spp. orchids are grown get inspected every year. (Photo by Yen-Chi Chen, D.V.M., an agricultural scientist in Taiwan.)

capacity-building to enhance foreign governments' capabilities in surveillance, monitoring, response, epidemiology, and international reporting. Furthermore, IS employees working in this action area access global agricultural information to assist in performing risk-pathway analysis (estimating the likelihood of the establishment of a disease or pest). IS personnel also cooperate with foreign governments and



To help train American veterinarians in diagnosing foreign animal diseases without actually bringing them into the U.S. mainland, IS employees give classes at the high-biosecurity Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. This lab is located on a tiny island not far from New York City.

international organizations through surveillance, prevention, control, and eradication of animal and plant diseases and pests of interest to the United States.

IS' screwworm program comprises several initiatives that prevent, control, and eradicate screwworm from the Americas. Screwworm is a fly whose wormlike larvae feed on the wounds of warmblooded animals, weakening or killing them. IS' screwworm program works to establish a permanent, sustainable sterile-fly barrier at the Darien Gap in Panama; operate a state-of-the-art sterile-screwworm production facility with sufficient capacity to preserve this barrier; and control and eradicate any screwworm outbreak that poses a potential risk to the United States, which has been screwworm free since 1966.

IS' fruit-fly action area focuses on preventing Mexican fruit fly and related species from becoming established near the U.S.–Mexican border. In addition, IS also operates a Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) program in Central America and Mexico. This work involves establishing and maintaining a fly-free barrier in Central America as well as modern sterile-Medfly production facilities in Mexico and Guatemala that are used for preventive release programs and remedying any fruit-fly outbreaks inside our borders. The exotic fruit-fly safeguarding system is an integrated approach that releases sterilized male fruit flies to breed with wild females. The resulting progeny are sterile. This effort helps protect \$7.2 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products from fruit-fly outbreaks.

Preventing foreign animal diseases (e.g., foot-and-mouth disease and classical swine fever) from entering the United States and identifying emerging animal diseases and pests both play a critical role in IS' strategic plan. IS personnel are working on the prevention of high-profile diseases such as avian influenza and less well-known actions such as eradication of the tropical bont tick from the Western Hemisphere. This tick

is a vector for heartwater, a serious infectious disease in ruminants. This tick species can also contribute to increased levels of dermatophilosis (a primarily tropical infectious microbial skin disease of animals).

Agricultural quarantine inspection and preclearance activities ensure that proper inspection and surveillance occur to prevent the introduction of harmful pests and diseases at U.S. ports-of-entry. To lessen the burden on U.S.-based inspectors, one IS program facilitates the movement of international travelers and agricultural goods by inspecting and preclearing passenger baggage and agricultural commodities at international points of origin, thereby reducing the risk of introducing foreign animal diseases and plant pests into this country. Another operation involves maintaining and/or cooperating in inspections at quarantine road stations and airports in northern Mexico to prevent the introduction of fruit-fly host material. IS also collaborates with the Department of Defense to prevent exposure to agricultural pests and diseases associated with the movement of military equipment, cargo, and household effects returning to this country after overseas deployment.



Screwworms like this one lay their eggs in the open wounds of all warmblooded animal species. To keep screwworms out of the United States, IS manages facilities in Panama and Mexico where screwworms are sterilized. The sterilized insects, which are later released, mate but produce no viable offspring. (USDA–Agricultural Research Service photo by John Kucharski.)