



USDA Homeland Security Efforts

May 2004

Shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, USDA formed a Homeland Security Council within the Department to develop a Department-wide plan and coordinate efforts among all USDA agencies and offices. Efforts have focused on three key areas: food supply and agricultural production, USDA facilities, and USDA staff and emergency preparedness. In addition, USDA has worked closely with the rest of the Administration and Congress during the creation of the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Highlights include:

Protecting U.S. borders from invasive pests and diseases

USDA continues to enhance prevention efforts to keep foreign agricultural pests and diseases from entering the United States. Eighteen new veterinarians have been added to the agricultural quarantine inspection staff at borders and ports of entry to ensure strong preparedness programs are in place to protect U.S. agriculture and 20 new food import surveillance officers have been added to ports of entry. Approximately 2,600 members of the border inspection force have been transferred to DHS. In close consultation with DHS, USDA will continue to train inspectors and set policy for plants, animals and commodities entering the U.S.

In March 2004, DHS, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Border Patrol (BP) announced the 2004 Arizona Border Control Initiative to achieve operational control of the Arizona border and to support the DHS priority mission of anti-terrorism, detection, arrest and deterrence of all cross-border illicit trafficking. The initiative calls for more cooperation between DHS, the Department of Interior and USDA Forest Service in allowing more access to border public lands. Forest Service resource managers are working within environmental laws to enhance the BP's effectiveness without disturbing the environment. Forest Service Law Enforcement personnel are assisting BP in deterring illegal activities on National Forest System lands.

The Department continues to maintain Forest Service Law Enforcement personnel along the hundreds of miles of contiguous National Forest System lands on the Nation's northern and southern borders.

Protecting the health of farm animals, crops and natural resources and ensuring successful rapid responses to animal and crop disease outbreaks and pest infestations

USDA has amended its regulations under the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002¹ to allow provisional registration certificates to be issued pending completion of security risk assessments for individuals and entities possessing select agents or toxins. This provisional measure, which gives additional time for the U.S. Attorney General to complete security risk assessments, was needed to ensure that research, diagnostic, and educational programs were not disrupted. Provisional certificates of registration were issued to 75 entities, although 17 were exempt from regulations and 18 were withdrawn.

USDA has created a National Surveillance Unit within its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Services program. The unit will provide a focal point for the collection, processing and delivery of surveillance information that is needed in order to make risk analyses and take action.

(1) Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002; Public Law 107-188.



The unit will design surveillance strategies and coordinate and integrate surveillance activities, working collaboratively with other APHIS programs, state counterparts and stakeholders. This integrated approach will provide data and information necessary to guide actions to protect the health and enhance the marketability of the Nation's livestock and poultry.

In an effort to develop a more comprehensive approach to animal health surveillance, USDA appointed a national surveillance system coordinator. The coordinator will work with the national surveillance effort and will also implement the enhancements recommended by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture's Animal Health Safeguarding program.

The Department has worked with land-grant universities and State veterinary diagnostic laboratories around the country to create plant and animal health laboratory networks that have increased our capability to respond in an emergency.

USDA developed guidance documents to help remind farmers and ranchers of steps they can take to secure their operations. Information was posted on the USDA web site and distributed through the USDA Extension system to reach every county and parish in the Nation. USDA upgraded security efforts at USDA State and county offices, including a web-based tracking system for disaster reporting, maintaining databases of fertilizer, food, feed and seed listings, and coordinating with State and county Emergency Boards to assist during an emergency.

USDA held its 100th Foreign Animal Disease course in September 2003 for Federal and State veterinarians from all 50 States to help States better prepare for accidental and intentional introductions of foreign animal diseases. USDA continues to conduct emergency preparedness satellite seminars to share vital information for Federal and State veterinary officials and emergency planners, military representatives and academia on emergency preparedness. USDA has provided \$43 million to states, universities and tribal lands to increase homeland security prevention, detection and response efforts.

USDA developed the National Animal Health Reserve Corps to mobilize close to 300 private veterinarians from around the United States to assist locally during an emergency.

In March 2004, USDA released a compact disc, "Food Security: The Threat to American Livestock", developed in conjunction with Auburn University, which addresses emergency preparedness and brings homeland security issues to the forefront for private veterinary practitioners and other agricultural first responders as they conduct their daily activities. It offers comprehensive information on infectious disease threats to livestock, animal disease awareness briefings, standard veterinary medical information for diagnosing such diseases and emergency information gathering and reporting mechanisms. Additionally, this new information resource outlines routine biosecurity measures for on-site farm visits, recommends emergency response plans and suggests disease monitoring methods.

The Department has upgraded its Cooperative Extension Disaster Education Network systems and website with homeland security information.

USDA is spending \$25 million to develop rapid tests for agents that pose the most serious threats to our agricultural system. Some examples are foot and mouth disease, rinderpest, and soybean and wheat rust.

Assuring a safe food supply

USDA enhanced security at all food safety laboratories and expanded their capability and capacity to test for nontraditional microbial, chemical, and radiological threat agents.

USDA established an Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness to serve as the lead coordinator in the development of the infrastructure and capacity to prevent, prepare for, and respond to an intentional attack on the U.S. food supply.

USDA prepared and distributed food security guidance documents to meat, poultry and egg products processors, transporters, distributors, and consumers.

USDA issued instructions to its field and laboratory personnel specifying actions that are to be taken when DHS raises the Homeland Security Advisory System threat level to Orange or Red.

USDA coordinated with other Government food agencies to develop prevention, detection and response procedures to protect the Nation's food supply. USDA completed vulnerability assessments for domestic and imported meat, poultry and egg products. Results from these assessments are being used to develop strategies and countermeasures to reduce or eliminate the potential risks at vulnerable points along the farm-to-table continuum.

USDA hired new Import Surveillance Liaison Inspectors, who are stationed around the Nation at Import Houses and ports of entry to enhance surveillance of imported products.

USDA developed a food security plan and has conducted training for employees, veterinarians, and inspectors on threat prevention and preparedness activities.

USDA food safety labs have a lead role in the formation of a network that integrates the Nation's laboratory infrastructure and surge capacity at the local, State and Federal levels.

USDA implemented the National Consumer Complaint Monitoring System, a surveillance and sentinel system that monitors and tracks food-related consumer complaints 24/7 and serves as a real-time, early warning system of a potential attack on the food supply.

USDA conducted and participated in numerous drills and exercises at the Federal and State level to hone response procedures.

Protecting research and laboratory facilities

USDA is spending \$88.2 million for security assessments, background investigations, physical security upgrades and additional security personnel at research and laboratory facilities. Security assessments of all USDA BSL-3 and most other laboratory facilities have been com-

pleted. Based on these findings, USDA is implementing security countermeasures. Furthermore, all USDA laboratories with select agents and toxins are in compliance with the requirements of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002¹.

All positions at USDA laboratories, Federal or non-Federal, are being examined to establish their public trust level and to identify the appropriate level of background investigation required. USDA has also developed policies and procedures for non-citizens working in USDA facilities, including name traces, background investigations, and a centralized tracking system. USDA also supports efforts to increase security at the university laboratories that it funds.

Emergency preparedness and response

A Department-wide National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS), based on the successful system utilized by USDA's Forest Service, is being implemented. This system includes incident command and control systems, coordination systems, training and qualification systems and publication management systems.

On February 28, 2003, President Bush signed Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, which established a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management to be managed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). On March 1, 2004, DHS Secretary Tom Ridge announced the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Nation's first standardized management plan with a unified structure for Federal, State, and local lines of government for incident response. USDA's NIIMS uses the same systems within USDA for incident management as those standardized for the Nation under NIMS.

USDA developed additional security procedures for use when the threat of terrorist attacks, as determined by the Homeland Security Advisory System, increases. This approach was integrated with the Administration-wide Liberty Shield initiative.

USDA created APHIS Emergency Coordinator positions throughout the United States. Ten out of 14 officers have been

hired to date. These officers will work closely with state animal health and emergency management officials to ensure the efficiency of each state's system for rapid detection of foreign animal diseases, and will assist the states with all aspects of emergency preparedness.

APHIS oversaw the distribution of \$7.7 million in Emergency Management and Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) Surveillance funds. These funds were disbursed to States and Native American tribal nations to help enhance their emergency preparedness, surveillance programs, and laboratory networks.

USDA's APHIS Emergency Operations Center (AEOC), a world-class facility used to coordinate and support emergency response in APHIS, was completed. The AEOC, which enhances APHIS' ability to provide leadership during national emergencies, was used as a focal point during the Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak, the monkey pox outbreak, and the confirmation of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada.

Protecting other infrastructure

USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement continues to conduct security assessments of research facilities and air tanker bases nationwide.

USDA's Forest Service continues to enhance efforts to protect National Forest System lands and facilities, including dams, reservoirs, pipelines, water treatment plants, power lines and energy production facilities on Government property.

Securing information technology

USDA reviewed and conducted tests of all USDA network systems to assess threat levels.

USDA upgraded the security status of key IT personnel and conducted training and planning sessions to strengthen the Department's continuity of operations plans.

The Department enhanced the monitoring and surveillance of its telecommunications network and assisted with offsite facilities enhancement to prepare for emergencies.

Continuity of operations

Full and complete continuity of operations policies and plans are developed for all USDA agencies and offices. Alternate work places have been upgraded and improved to avoid disruption in the work of USDA. USDA's National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) is being expanded Department-wide and training in NIIMS is being extended to include more employees.

Audits and investigations

USDA launched an aggressive initiative to identify and protect USDA physical and cyber-based assets; prevent USDA assets from being used against the U.S., and preclude USDA programs from being used to finance terrorism.

USDA's Forest Service Law Enforcement continues to participate with Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Terrorism task forces Nationwide on investigations related to domestic terrorism.

Seventeen audit reports have been issued and 27 audits that impact homeland security are currently in the process of being completed. The audits review existing controls, identify potential vulnerabilities and recommend additional measures to protect USDA assets and resources. USDA is also participating in interagency audit efforts at the Federal level to ensure that Governmentwide and cross-agency vulnerabilities are addressed.

USDA has initiated 47 criminal investigations related to counterterrorism and homeland security activities and participates in efforts to target businesses transferring money overseas to terrorists groups.

In fiscal year 2003, USDA's Office of the Inspector General issued 7 audit reports relating to homeland security and investigations yielded 17 indictments, 23 convictions, and \$2.5 million in monetary results.

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