



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA Publishes Final Rule to Help Facilities Be Better Prepared for Emergencies

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21, 2012--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending its Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations to require all licensed and registered facilities to develop a contingency plan for emergencies so they can better protect their animals in disaster situations.

"Over the years we learned that many registered facilities do not have adequate contingency plans for natural disasters and other emergencies," said APHIS Acting Administrator Kevin Shea. "This rule will give USDA licensees and registrants a greater awareness and understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard their animals and APHIS will provide guidance as needed while giving regulated entities the flexibility to develop a plan that works best for them."

Under the rule, APHIS will give facilities the flexibility to develop a plan that works best for them and their animals. Each contingency plan will need to:

- identify types of emergencies common in the local area;
- identify common emergencies that could occur at their particular type of facility;
- outline specific tasks that the facility staff will undertake in an emergency situation;
- establish a clear chain of command for all employees to follow;
- identify materials and resources that are available at that facility or elsewhere; and
- ensure that all pertinent employees are trained on the plan.

This rule becomes effective on January 30, 2013. A written plan must be in place at all USDA-licensed and -registered facilities by July 29, 2013, and all employees must be trained on the plan by September 27, 2013.

APHIS enforces the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The AWA requires that minimum standards of care and treatment be provided for certain animals bred for commercial sale, used in research, transported commercially or exhibited to the public. It excludes those animals raised for food or fiber. Persons who operate facilities in these categories must provide their animals with adequate care and treatment in the areas of housing, handling, sanitation, nutrition, water, veterinary care and protection from extreme weather and temperatures. For more information on the inspection and enforcement processes, visit APHIS' animal care website at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/.

With Agriculture Secretary Vilsack's leadership, APHIS works tirelessly to create and sustain opportunities for America's farmers, ranchers and producers. Each day, APHIS promotes U.S. agricultural

health, regulates genetically engineered organisms, administers the Animal Welfare Act, and carries out wildlife damage management activities, all to help safeguard the nation's agriculture, fishing and forestry industries. In the event that a pest or disease of concern is detected, APHIS implements emergency protocols and partners with affected states and other countries to quickly manage or eradicate the outbreak. To promote the health of U.S. agriculture in the international trade arena, APHIS develops and advances science-based standards with trading partners to ensure America's agricultural exports, valued at more than \$137 billion annually, are protected from unjustified restrictions.

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