



## APHIS News for States

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The November issue of *APHIS News for States* includes contributions from our new National State Liaison Jake Hegeman. Jake and I will be working together to continue to foster enhanced communication with States. His contact information has been added to the left-hand column of the newsletter and you can read more about him in this issue.

Hallie Zimmers  
APHIS' National State Liaison

## APHIS News for States

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## APHIS Strengthens its Commitment to State Communications with a Second State Liaison

In late October Jake Hegeman joined APHIS as the second National State Liaison. Working with Hallie Zimmers, Jake will be developing relationships with all State partners to help foster better communication between APHIS and the States. Jake will be focusing on expanding day-to-day communications as well as the development of longer-term processes to increase collaboration and the exchange of information between the States and APHIS.

Jake joins APHIS after four years as senior regulatory counsel at a state government affairs consulting firm in Arlington, Virginia. In this capacity he focused on developing consensus State-Federal processes to address emerging environmental sustainability issues. Jake's contact information is available at the top of the newsletter in the left-hand column.

## Beagle Brigade Resumes Duties at the San Juan Airport

Until 2003, when responsibilities were transferred to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP), APHIS' team of trained agricultural

detector dogs (commonly known as the “Beagle Brigade”) was responsible for approximately 75,000 seizures of prohibited agricultural products yearly at over 20 U.S. airports. Following this hiatus, the Beagle Brigade has resumed work in certain APHIS locations.

On September 29, two APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) agricultural detector dog teams initiated inspection operations at the San Juan, Puerto Rico Airport. The teams operate at pre-departure gate areas to search for prohibited agricultural plant material (mango, guava, spondias (jobo), and other prohibited fruits) in passengers’ hand-carried luggage. The San Juan teams are in addition to established canine teams in Hawaii for passenger and express package clearance for movements into the continental United States.

While CBP has primary responsibility for the detection of illegal agricultural products crossing international borders, APHIS continues to be responsible for inspections of passengers, cargo and conveyances originating in Hawaii and Puerto Rico destined to the U.S. mainland.

PPQ Officers use Beagles to assist in the detection of unauthorized plant items that can harbor pests and diseases. Beagles are ideally suited to this task because of their highly developed sense of smell (some 40 times more sensitive than that of humans) and their innate sense of curiosity.

Following an extensive 8-12 week training program where they learn to identify the smell of prohibited items, the Beagles and their PPQ handler begin work. Trained Beagles typically identify prohibited items with nearly 90 percent accuracy after two years on the job. Most Beagle Brigade dogs work 6-10 years and work through the baggage of 6-8 flights per day. APHIS Beagles live in kennels during their working years, but typically retire as pets with their human handler.



APHIS Puerto Rico Canine Officer Jorge Torres and his dog Bingo search for prohibited agricultural items.

## New Resource for Live Animal Import/Export Questions

APHIS’ Veterinary Services (VS) program has set up a new email address to respond to the increasing number of live animal import/export inquiries the program receives. The goal of the new email address, which was established in October, is to provide more efficient and effective customer service to VS’ many stakeholders. Anyone who has a question about the program’s live animal import/export regulations can simply email [VS.Live.Animal.Import.Export@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:VS.Live.Animal.Import.Export@aphis.usda.gov).

A team of veterinary program assistants check the electronic inbox throughout the day and forward any inquiries to the appropriate staff experts for responses. People can still call VS’ National Center for Import and Export, but phone messages generally don’t provide enough detailed information and inquiries sometimes get forwarded to the wrong people by mistake. This can cause frustration for callers who oftentimes get passed around trying to find the right Federal Agency that handles live animal import/export issues.

The program assistants checking the email inbox know who is in the office and who is on travel or leave, so inquiries don't get lost and responses aren't delayed. People also tend to put more detail into written responses, making it easier to identify which expert should address the inquiry. When responding electronically, program experts can also provide additional information by including links and attachments. For more information about VS' live animal import requirements, please go to: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import\\_export/animals/live\\_animals.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/live_animals.shtml).

## **APHIS' Fourth Quarter Trade Accomplishments**

In the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2008, APHIS retained, expanded and opened markets worth more than \$27 million. In addition, the Agency was instrumental in releasing 78 shipments that were held at overseas ports.

Shipments can be detained at foreign ports of entry for a number of reasons. In many cases, foreign authorities may have a question about a phytosanitary or veterinary certificate. In other cases they may be incorrectly interpreting their own requirements for the product in question. Successful efforts by APHIS to release these shipments and resolve any issues contributed to more than \$4 million in goods being sold to foreign markets.

APHIS continually seeks to open new markets for U.S. products overseas. In the fourth quarter, APHIS opened ten new markets worth an estimated \$5 million annually. These markets include cervids and cervid semen to Canada, pet birds and breeding swine to Columbia, bovine semen to Mongolia and Peru, California pomegranates to Korea and California strawberries to China for the Olympics and Special Olympics.

In addition to new markets, APHIS also works to expand existing markets for U.S. agricultural commodities. During the fourth quarter, APHIS negotiations resulted in expanded market access for seven commodities worth more than \$12 million. Market expansion efforts included wheat to Pakistan, stolons to Mexico, horses to Australia and Japan, and bovine semen to Bolivia. A number of countries also lifted state-level bans on U.S. poultry exports that had been imposed as a result of low-pathogenic avian influenza detections.

One of the most important things that APHIS does is help to maintain existing markets, especially when a country changes their import requirements or there's a pest or disease status change in the United States. In order to retain access to export markets, APHIS negotiates new import conditions or protocols, provides information about U.S. pest or disease control programs and presents scientific information. During the fourth quarter, APHIS' efforts helped to retain more than \$10 million in export markets, including germ plasm exports to China, poultry genetics to Ecuador, equine and bovine genetics for the European Union market, honey bees to Japan, peas and lentils to India, and apples to Taiwan.

## **APHIS-CBP Joint Taskforce Information Exchange**

APHIS and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) set up a Joint Task Force in spring 2007 to evaluate the effectiveness of our agriculture programs and develop recommendations for improvements in areas identified by stakeholders and Government oversight agencies. The Joint Task Force in turn gains the perspective of State partners and other stakeholders through the Agriculture Quarantine Inspection (AQI) Partnership Council.

In order to ensure that the Task Force is as effective as possible, it's critical that the National Plant Board (NPB) be kept up-to-date on the latest activities and have the opportunity to provide input. To that end, APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program is establishing a mechanism to brief the NPB following key meetings.

The most recent Joint Task Force meeting was held on Nov. 3, and PPQ has a call scheduled with designated NPB representatives on Nov. 20 to share information from that call and help prepare for the upcoming Partnership Council meeting on Dec. 9. The December Partnership Council meeting will be immediately followed by a two-day

Task Force meeting Dec. 10-11. To ensure information sharing occurs, APHIS will schedule a separate call with NPB representatives to brief them and get their feedback. In addition, anytime information is posted to the Joint Task Force Web site, PPQ will also provide information to the NPB for posting to its Web site. Through these efforts, PPQ helps to further support the exchange of information on AQI activities.

## APHIS to Hold 5 Bovine Tuberculosis Listening Sessions

APHIS is convening five public meetings this December to solicit input from stakeholders across the nation on innovative ways to address the challenges faced by APHIS' bovine tuberculosis (TB) program. The meetings will be formatted as listening sessions that will utilize a small group format designed to maximize discussion and provide a diverse set of perspectives on issues such as responding to outbreaks, improving surveillance, and developing useful, effective regulations.

Registration for the sessions begins at 7:00 a.m., and the sessions run from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. as follows:

**Lansing, MI: Monday, December 8**

Holiday Inn South Convention Center, 6820 South Cedar Street, Lansing, MI

**Minneapolis, MN: Wednesday, December 10**

Hilton Minneapolis, 1001 Marquette Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN

**Austin, TX: Thursday, December 11**

Hilton Garden Inn Austin Downtown, 500 North IH 35, Austin, TX

**Sacramento, CA: Friday, December 12**

Sheraton Grand Sacramento Hotel, 1230 J Street, Sacramento, CA

**Washington, DC: Tuesday, December 16**

Washington Marriott at Metro Center, 775 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, DC

Please see [www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot\\_issues/bovine\\_tuberculosis/bovine\\_tb.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/bovine_tuberculosis/bovine_tb.shtml) for more information, or contact Dr. Alecia Naugle, Program Manager, National Center for Animal Health Programs, at 301-734-7569 or E-mail [Alecia.L.Naugle@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Alecia.L.Naugle@aphis.usda.gov).

## North American Rabies Management Plan and Feral Dog Vaccination

On October 3, 2008, APHIS signed the North American Rabies Management Plan (NARMP) along with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Navajo Nation, and representatives from Canada and Mexico. The plan seeks to strengthen communication and cooperation among the parties.

One unique aspect of the North American plan includes efforts to prevent the spread of rabies in feral dogs. In 2001, APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) program, CDC, and the Navajo Nation in Arizona met to discuss rabies control for feral dog populations on Tribal nation property. Bait studies on feral dogs and their likeliness to consume the baits began in 2003. Placebo baits were hand fed to the dogs by WS, CDC, and Navajo Nation personnel and volunteers. In 2005, 253 feral dogs on the Navajo Nation reservation received the oral rabies vaccine (ORV). This number increased to 354 dogs in 2007.

The Navajo Nation's feral dog project works toward U.S. goals to prevent the spread of specific rabies variants in carnivores and to eventually eliminate virus variants at the local, regional, and national level. In many parts of the world, rabies transmitted via dogs remains a significant public health threat. This project enhances international relationships by providing valuable information and research about rabies control in feral dog populations. The coordination among APHIS, CDC, and the Navajo Nation

Management and the NARMP. For more information about APHIS' efforts to stop the spread of rabies, go to: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/oral\\_rabies/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/).

## Managing Predators to Protect Endangered Species

Predators can have a severe impact on rare and endangered species through predation and competition. They may also increase the risk of extinction of prey populations when combined with catastrophic events, such as hurricanes and disease outbreaks. However, the removal of predators to conserve rare and endangered species often places wildlife managers and the public in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between removing a charismatic predator or conserving an endangered species. While some predators, such as brown treesnakes or rats, receive little affection from the public, others, such as raptors and wolves, are held in high esteem.

In a soon to be published book chapter, APHIS' Wildlife Services employees discuss the benefits and challenges surrounding predator management to protect endangered species.

The chapter is part of a larger book titled "Endangered Species: New Research," which is expected to be published in spring/summer 2009. For many years, WS has been involved in predation management efforts to protect rare and endangered species including sea turtles in Florida, Kirkland's warblers in Michigan, Steller's eiders and Aleutian cackling geese in Alaska, migrating salmon in Washington, and the desert tortoise in California.

The authors stress that predator management is more likely to succeed if it is:

- applied by skilled/trained personnel,
- timed so the most favorable impact can be achieved,
- applied with sufficient intensity,
- combined with predator population information to optimize the timing, distribution and intensity of management efforts, and
- adaptable to changing circumstances through time.

For an advance copy of the book chapter, please email Dr. Rick Engeman at [richard.m.engeman@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:richard.m.engeman@aphis.usda.gov).

## APHIS Feature: Veterinary Regulatory Support Program

With a name like Veterinary Regulatory Support (VRS) you might think that VRS would be housed under APHIS' Veterinary Services program. The VRS team actually falls under the Agency's Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program to assist with the regulation of imported agricultural products. VRS is responsible for providing scientific advice and expertise at ports of entry across the nation to prevent the introduction of infectious, contagious, or communicable diseases of livestock into the United States through imported animal products.

VRS has a field force of 17 Agriculture Quarantine and Inspection Veterinary Medical Officers strategically assigned to cover U.S. ports of entry where concentrations of foreign cargo activity and international travelers are at their highest. Although the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is responsible for protecting our nation's borders, CBP follows APHIS regulations, directives and policies to determine what agricultural products can enter the country and what products pose a risk and should be refused entry.

VRS veterinarians provide regional oversight to ensure the appropriate and consistent handling of animal materials at U.S. ports of entry. They also provide technical advice and assistance to CBP Agriculture Specialists by helping them to determine U.S. entry requirements based on the disease status of the country of origin for animal products and by-products imported through cargo, passenger baggage or mail services. In addition, VRS is the lead office for the oversight between CBP and PPQ on matters

concerning the regulation of international garbage, including compliance agreements with companies for handling and processing regulated garbage.

For more information about VRS or to identify the VRS office covering your State, please see the VRS brochure:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/content/printable\\_version/VeterinaryRegSupport2007.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/VeterinaryRegSupport2007.pdf).

## Vacancies in APHIS

All Agency vacancies are posted on the APHIS Web site. To view the entire list of APHIS vacancies go to [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov). Under Related Topics click on Find a Job in APHIS. The positions highlighted below are for relevant positions that are at the GS-13 level and above.

**Position:** [Interdisciplinary VMO/Microbiologist](#) (Biosafety Manager)

**Location:** Ames, IA

**Pay Plan:** GS-0403, 0701-12/13

**Who May Apply:** All U.S. citizens

**Position Closes:** Nov. 17, 2008

**Position:** [Veterinary Medical Officer](#)

**Location:** 2 vacancies – Riverdale, MD

**Pay Plan:** GS-0701-13/14

**Who May Apply:** All U.S. citizens

**Position Closes:** Nov. 17, 2008

**Position:** [Agriculturalist](#)

**Location:** Riverdale, MD

**Pay Plan:** GS-0401-14/15

**Who May Apply:** All U.S. citizens

**Position Closes:** Nov. 21, 2008

**Position:** [Wildlife Biologist](#)

**Location:** Riverdale, MD

**Pay Plan:** GS-0486-11/13

**Who May Apply:** All U.S. citizens

**Position Closes:** Nov. 21, 2008

**Position:** [Veterinary Medical Officer](#) (Epidemiologist)

**Location:** Indianapolis, IN

**Pay Plan:** GS-0701-13/13

**Who May Apply:** All U.S. citizens

**Position Closes:** Nov. 24, 2008

**Position:** [Supervisory Chemist](#)

**Location:** Ames, IA

**Pay Plan:** GS-1320-13/14

**Who May Apply:** All U.S. citizens

**Position Closes:** Dec. 01, 2008