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Animal and Plant  
Health Inspection  
Service

April 21, 2016

Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

Legislative and  
Public Affairs

Re: FOIA Request 2016-APHIS-02598

Freedom of  
Information

This reply is in response to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request you submitted to this office on February 29, 2016, seeking the following:

4700 River Road  
Unit 50  
Riverdale, MD  
20737-1232

- ***A digital/electronic copy of each of the APHIS employee newsletters produced during calendar years 2013, 2014 and 2015.***

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office conducted a search of its electronic files on March 4, 2016 and located records responsive to your request. After a review of the records, we've determined that they can be fully released to you.

Although no records were withheld or denied, you still have the right to appeal our response. If you choose to appeal, your appeal must be in writing and received within 45 days from the date on this letter. Please send appeal to:

Administrator  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Ag Box 3401  
Washington, DC 20250-3401

If you choose to Appeal, please refer to tracking number 2016-APHIS-02598-F in your appeal letter and add the phase "FOIA APPEAL" to the front of the envelope. To assist the Administrator in reviewing your appeal, provide specific reasons why you believe modification of the determination is warranted.

If you have any questions pertaining to this response, please contact Terry Henson at (301) 851-4086.

Sincerely,

Tonya G. Woods  
Director  
Freedom of Information & Privacy Act  
Legislative and Public Affairs

*Enclosure (PDF File)*

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## aphis supervisor of the year award

By Mike Booth

On January 10, APHIS hosted its third annual Supervisor of the Year Award Ceremony (**VIDEO**) in Riverdale, MD. During the event, the agency honored six outstanding supervisors with awards and recognized the role of APHIS supervisors as cornerstone positions essential to APHIS' success. Other APHIS offices—Fort Collins, CO; Kona, HI; Minneapolis, MN; and Raleigh, NC—joined the ceremony by video teleconference.

Of the six program award recipients, Michelle Wenberg of Policy and Program Development (PPD) was recognized as the 2012 APHIS Supervisor of the Year. Wenberg is chief of the agency's Budget and Program Analysis Staff. Her nomination represented a combined pool of the agency's smaller programs: Biotechnology Regulatory Services; the Office of Civil Rights, Diversity and Inclusion; International Services; Legislative and Public Affairs; and PPD.

Acting Administrator Kevin Shea said choosing one person out of such an exceptional group was a difficult task, but Wenberg's nomination stood out due to many examples of her sincere desire to develop and encourage employees.

The individual program award winners are:

- Peter (Rick) Kirsten, an Animal Care supervisory animal care specialist based in Michigan.
- Katherine Stoddard, a facilities manager for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services in Raleigh, NC.
- Kaipo Ng, a supervisory Plant Protection and Quarantine officer at Kona International Airport in Hawaii.
- Michael Kornreich, Veterinary Services' area veterinarian in charge for Pennsylvania and New Jersey.
- Phillip Mastrangelo, Wildlife Services State director for North and South Dakota.



*Phil Mastrangelo, Michael Kornreich, and Michelle Wenberg (left to right) participate in the panel discussion.*

*Continued on next page*

# students blaze career paths through agdiscovery

By Vivian Keller



*Ashli Jay participated in the 2010 AgDiscovery program at Iowa State University.*

It's a long way from the glitter of Miami to the friendly streets and fields of Ames, IA. But for Ashli Jay, a participant in the AgDiscovery program sponsored by APHIS and Iowa State University (ISU) in 2010, it's been a road happily traveled. The girl who was told in high school she was "too skinny and too small" to be a veterinarian for farm animals is now a sophomore studying animal sciences at ISU—and recently wrapped up a stint at the university's beef teaching farm.

Better yet: since July 2012, Jay has been working part time in the salmonella laboratory at APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL). "I don't know where I'd be if I hadn't gone to AgDiscovery," says Jay. "It's made a huge impact on me."

## [changing lives]

Jay is just one of many students across America whose lives and futures have been changed forever by APHIS' AgDiscovery outreach program. Designed to help middle and high school students learn about careers in plant and animal science, wildlife management, and agribusiness, AgDiscovery began in 2002 with 12 students. It started as a

collaboration between APHIS and Alcorn State University in Mississippi and has steadily grown.

In summer 2013, nearly 250 students will participate in AgDiscovery. APHIS programs will fund 17 schools that will host AgDiscovery's 2–4 week boarding sessions, featuring a mix of lectures, hands-on workshops, and field trips, many led by APHIS personnel.

Eleven of the host schools are 1890 land grant universities, including Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), where sophomore Nohely Gonzalez is in pre-vet studies.

"My grandfather told me to pick [a profession] that will help the world," says Gonzalez, a participant in FAMU's 2009 AgDiscovery program. Gonzalez's "aha" moment came during a hands-on session at the university's research farm, when she reached deep inside a pregnant cow. She'd always thought she wanted to be a vet, she says—feeling the head of the cow's unborn calf made her certain.

## aphis supervisor

*Continued from page 1*

At the awards ceremony, Acting Associate Administrator Peter Fernandez spoke about each of the honorees' strengths and qualities as a supervisor. Fernandez also remarked on one of the skills they all share in common—the ability to communicate effectively with their employees.

Following Fernandez, award recipients participated in a brief panel discussion to share their insights and advice regarding being a supervisor.

Acting Administrator Kevin Shea spoke too about the valuable role of APHIS supervisors and the importance of agency supervisory initiatives, including the development of the Leadership Roadmap and the "So you think you want to be a supervisor?" class for prospective supervisors.

The APHIS Supervisor of the Year awards began in 2010, as part of an initiative launched by former Administrator Cindy Smith to cultivate, train, and recognize supervisors in the agency.

APHIS congratulates all of our outstanding supervisors! ●



**see group photo of honorees**

*Continued on next page*

# career paths through agdiscovery

*Continued from page 2*

Gonzalez went on to become a two-time Ag-Discovery counselor and received a scholarship under the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program that provides her with full tuition, room, and board during her undergraduate years, as well as summer employment through USDA. She will work for USDA at least 4 years after completing her schooling—in the field, she hopes, “touching animals... and helping out small farmers.”

### [finding unexpected paths]

Sometimes AgDiscovery leads participants down unexpected paths. Taylor Thomas, a freshman wildlife conservation major at the University of Delaware, initially thought she'd work with farm animals or in a zoo. But

she realized during her 2010 AgDiscovery program at Kentucky State University that tending to domesticated animals was “a little too routine.” She found her calling on a behind-the-scenes field trip to an Ohio zoo.



Talking to a zookeeper, she learned that she could work with big cats in the field. “I never even knew this was an option [before AgDiscovery],” says Thomas. “I thought, wow, that is what I want to do!”

### [building new skills]

Training in leadership skills, learning to work in a group, and interacting with a culturally diverse group of students are among the many AgDiscovery perks cited by participants—as is making lasting contacts.

Sarah Bloomer is currently a North Carolina State University (NCSU) freshman considering a future as a veterinarian with a corporation or—as a result of two AgDiscovery summers at NCSU and FAMU—with USDA inspecting animals at the border. She met NCSU sophomores Thomas Privott (natural resources/political science major) and Jake Thompson (plant biology/English lit major) through the NCSU 2010 program. Bloomer and Thompson both now urge students at their former high schools to consider participating. “I talk about AgDiscovery all the time,” says Bloomer.

As for Ashli Jay, things continue to go well in Ames. She has always wanted to work for

USDA, she says, and loves her job at NVSL. In fact, she's starting to think that a laboratory job might ultimately be a better fit for her than a life tending farm animals. “It can get cold out there in the winter!” she says.

Whatever she decides, AgDiscovery has helped the girl who once asked “Iowa, now where is that?” find her place in the world: in the heart of America's Midwest, in agriculture. ●

## veterinary services netting good health for U.S. ornamental fish

By Mike Booth

Among the animals most people associate with agriculture, ornamental fish don't typically top the list. But, in Florida, the ornamental fish industry is an important economic engine that supplies most of the United States with aquarium fish, and it has a large number of international exports as well. Even in this underpublicized niche market, APHIS is there to protect American agriculture.

Kathleen Hartman, an aquatic epidemiologist with APHIS' Veterinary Services program, is based in Ruskin, FL, and specializes in orna-

mental fish. Hartman feels that every day is an opportunity to represent

APHIS to the public, prevent the spread of aquatic diseases, and support the ornamental fish industry.

"The word is out that APHIS is here to help, and people in the industry circulate my phone number. I receive phone calls from all over," Hartman said. "Recently, I got a call from

someone in Texas who wanted to ship fish to Israel."

Facilitating exports and inspecting imports are just some of Hartman's primary duties. She helps exporters understand and meet international regulations and works with accredited veterinarians so they can endorse export certificates. She also conducts site visits for producers who participate voluntarily in an APHIS program to assist exporters; the program helps exporters meet the guidelines for veterinary oversight that some importing countries require. At the port of Tampa, Hartman inspects fish and shipping documents, searching for signs of spring viremia of carp (SVC) virus. SVC is a contagious viral disease that affects a number of aquatic species and, due to its infectious nature, must be reported to the World Organization for Animal Health when cases are found.

### [fish schooling]

"Outreach and education are important factors in disease prevention," Hartman said. It starts with the training she provides for APHIS' aquaculture liaisons—veterinary medical officers who learn about general and

area-specific aquaculture disease concerns. Hartman also helped create aquaculture modules for USDA's National Veterinary Accreditation Program.

Because Hartman's office is within the University of Florida's Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory, occasionally she can also be found behind a lectern, teaching programs on aquaculture diseases and biosecurity to producers, veterinarians, and vet students.

"This is a unique position with plenty of opportunities," Hartman said. "There are opportunities to reach out, tell people where the program is going, lend marketability to our U.S.-produced fish, and help our exporters remain competitive in a global marketplace."

For more information on APHIS' aquaculture program, go to: [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_dis\\_spec/aquaculture/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/aquaculture/). ●



*Veterinary Services' Kathleen Hartman visits ornamental fish producers to help them meet international export regulations.*

# acting administrator kevin shea visits tuskegee university

By Gary Roush and John Scott



**Go Outside**  
[inside]

Click here to  
see larger image  
and caption.

If you ask about his recent speech and tour at Tuskegee University, Acting Administrator Kevin Shea will readily tell you that it was a memorable and inspiring experience—one that reaffirms the importance of building connections, working with underserved farmers, and honoring the history of those who have made strides for disadvantaged farmers and African-Americans.

“We need to serve all of U.S. agriculture,” said Shea. “It’s important that we maintain our relations with Tuskegee; continuing that powerful and historic relationship benefits APHIS, the university, and minority farmers.”

Shea traveled to Tuskegee University in Alabama to address the 70th Annual Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC) on December 4. Founded in 1942, PAWC’s mission is to promote equal opportunity and equitable access to scientific information and technology for sustainable development of agricultural communities and natural resources.

Shea spoke to the audience about the AgDiscovery program at Tuskegee and the wide range of scholarships and internships that APHIS has in place to foster diversity and attract minority students to careers in

agriculture. Among them is the Saul T. Wilson Scholarship, whose namesake retired from APHIS in 1989 and is currently professor emeritus at Tuskegee’s International Center for Tropical Animal Health. Wilson was instrumental in the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease from Mexico in the early 1950s.

Shea also updated PAWC attendees on a number of the cooperative agreements APHIS has in place with 1890s Land Grant Universities and other nonprofit groups to serve small and minority farmers and ranchers in the United States. APHIS has several cooperative agreements with Tuskegee, including one supporting efforts related to animal and plant health capacity building in Africa.

## [rich in accomplishments, past and present]

For Shea, the trip to Tuskegee was also a rewarding learning experience. As he visited with attendees and members of the university community, they highlighted some of Tuskegee’s many accomplishments.

- Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine has educated more than 70 percent of all African-American veterinarians.

- Much of the statistical modeling used for the 2005 Harvard Risk Assessment of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was conducted at Tuskegee’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, which is led by Dr. Tsegaye Habtemariam. The risk assessment has been used since 2001 to evaluate the effects of BSE mitigations implemented by USDA and the Food and Drug Administration.
- Tuskegee’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health is the only program in the United States where animal health and human health disciplines are interlinked under one college that programmatically emphasizes the One Health: One Medicine approach.

## [through the lens of history]

Shea also enjoyed the opportunity to tour Tuskegee’s campus, seeing the graves of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. He also visited the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. The site’s exhibits chronicle the exploits and achievements of the Tuskegee Airmen, who during World War II had to train separately from white pilots in order to serve their country.

*Continued on next page*

# speed and cooperation combat dog fighting

By Robert Willems



The dogs looked “beat-up” when they landed at the Indianapolis International Airport. That’s how U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials described them.

The two pit bulls had just arrived on a plane coming from the Dominican Republic, and they needed veterinary care. Their injuries,

however, immediately aroused suspicion. They appeared to be fighting dogs, but CBP

officers were initially uncertain about what to do or who had jurisdiction.

After making a number of calls, airport officials contacted APHIS’ Veterinary Services office in Indianapolis and spoke with Frank Wilson, the area veterinarian in charge for Indiana. Realizing that this might involve an Animal Welfare Act violation, Wilson reached out to his colleagues in Animal Care (AC). He called Rick Kirsten, an AC field supervisor, to ask for advice. That turned out to be a wise decision.

“This didn’t smell right to CBP,” Kirsten said. “Seeing the dogs’ wounds and their condi-

tion, I had a reasonable suspicion that it might be a dog-fighting venture.”

Kirsten and CBP officials relayed information to Agent Chris Golightly with USDA’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in Indiana. Golightly looked into the situation and quickly discovered that the dogs had been sent to a kennel in Muncie, IN. He contacted Muncie Police Department personnel, who investigated the situation and determined that the animals were indeed fighting dogs.

Police officers subsequently raided the kennel and confiscated 25 dogs, including the two from the Dominican Republic. The dogs were sent to several shelters for proper care. Officers also arrested kennel owner Rahsaan Ahmad Johnson.

On November 5, a Circuit Court jury found Johnson guilty of 14 counts of possessing an animal for use in an animal fighting contest, 1 count of promoting an animal fighting contest, and 7 counts of cruelty to an animal.

For those, like AC officials, who are involved in animal welfare efforts, this case is notable for its speed and cooperation. Remarkably, the initial detection, kennel raid, and arrest all took place in just 1 week.

Diane Tucker, a CBP officer at the Indianapolis Airport, summed it up this way: “To me, this proves if we work as a team with other agencies, for the greater good, we will have great results.” ●

## tuskegee

*Continued from page 5*

Steeped in a history that includes both the difficult and the triumphant parts of our Nation’s past — Tuskegee University today is an active and thriving campus. Yet, as Shea observes, there’s still much work to do.

“Tuskegee itself is very vibrant and energetic,” said Shea. “But, like some other rural communities, the surrounding areas still show the strain of poverty,” he added.

“APHIS does well working with many stakeholder groups. But a trip like this reminds me that we need to keep pushing to do a better job of reaching out to understand and serve the needs of disadvantaged farmers and ranchers,” said Shea. ●

# let me be clear: plain writing matters

By Beth Gaston

Why is plain language important? As public servants, plain language is a fundamental part of every job we do. We can't serve taxpayers well if they don't know what we are saying.

When we write clearly, the public can more easily understand and use the information we provide. And they can better follow what we ask them to do and what we require them to do.

Plain writing also makes good business sense for APHIS. If we craft clear documents, stakeholders submit forms with fewer errors; we have a better chance of gaining cooperation from others; and we spend less time explaining information that was unclear in the first place. Ultimately, if we don't communicate clearly, we can't be the premier organization that we want to be.

Writing clearly—at least for external audiences—is also required by law. Two years ago, President Obama signed the Plain Writing Act of 2010 into law. The Act requires Federal employees to use simple, easy to understand language in all new or substantially revised documents that:

- Provide information about any of our services and benefits;

- Are needed to obtain any of our benefits or services; or
- Explain how to comply with a program requirement that we administer or enforce.

## [how do I write clearly?]

First of all, consider the audience for your document and your reason for writing it. Plain language does not mean writing to any

particular grade level; it means crafting a document that is appropriate for the intended audience. Think about your key message—and state it clearly. Organize your document in a logical manner and use subheadings, lists, bullet points, and tables where it makes sense to do so.

*Continued on next page*

## top grade for usda

In July 2012, the Center for Plain Language issued the first report card for Federal agencies' efforts to comply with the Plain Writing Act. USDA received the highest grade Governmentwide for our implementation of the Plain Writing Act.

"This first Plain Writing Report Card helps ensure that government agencies are following both the letter and the spirit of the Act," said Annetta L. Cheek, chair of the Center for Plain Language. "Based on USDA's Web site, your two reports, and the very nice online training you now have, USDA seems to be doing a better job than many other agencies."

Plain writing is a key part of Secretary Tom Vilsack's efforts to make USDA first in public service and effectiveness. His strong support has been an important part of USDA's plain writing success.

The Center for Plain Language issued the report card to encourage the use of plain language in Government and business operations. One simple way to maintain our momentum with plain writing is for every USDA employee to ask "How's my writing?" when drafting, reviewing, and finalizing documents. ●

# census of agriculture: you can help spread the word

By John Scott



For other interesting statistics, click here to watch NASS' Ag Census video online.



During the next few weeks, America's farmers and ranchers will have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their communities by taking part in USDA's Census of Agriculture. And you can help by spreading the word about the Census to producers and other agency stakeholders.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts the Census of Agriculture every 5 years. It captures a complete count of all U.S. farms and ranches and those who operate them.

NASS mailed out Census forms in late December 2012, and responses are due by February 4, 2013. Producers also have the option to complete their forms online.

Census data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities—from Federal, State, and local governments to agribusinesses and trade associations. Companies and cooperators can use the information to determine the locations of facilities that serve agricultural producers. In addition, legislators often use the information when shaping farm policies and programs. And, of course, APHIS can use Census data to help make informed decisions about the future of our own efforts.

For more information about the Census, visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or call 1-888-4AG-STAT (1-888-424-7828).

Please help spread the word by sharing this information and link with producers and

stakeholders. When farmers and ranchers participate in the Census, they help grow the future of U.S. farms, shape farm programs, and enhance services for themselves and their communities. ●

## plain writing

*Continued from page 7*

Additionally, use the active voice and say WHO DID WHAT in that order. Here's the difference: "The soccer player kicked the ball" is active voice; "The ball was kicked by the soccer player" is passive voice.

Avoid hidden verbs. For example, use "analyze" instead of "conduct an analysis."

Use simple terms like "start" instead of "commence." And, avoid jargon, unnecessary technical terms, and excessive acronyms.

### [where can I find more resources?]

To learn more, you can visit the following Web sites for tips, training, and information.

**Federal Plain Language Web site**—This extensive Web site is the official Plain

Language site. It includes:

- Links to the Plain Writing Act and related Executive Orders;
- Guidance materials to help agencies comply with the law;
- Guidelines and examples for writers and editors;
- Information about free plain language training; and
- Tips and tools related to plain language.

**USDA Plain Language Web site**—This site includes:

- The USDA plain writing pledge;
- Links to the USDA Plain Writing Act Compliance Report;
- Lists of useful training; and
- Tools and checklists for writers and reviewers. ●

# aphis time capsule quietly waits



By John Scott

There it sits—a large gray industrial-looking metal cube. The APHIS time capsule patiently bides its time tucked in a corner of the agency library in Riverdale.

APHIS commissioned the capsule in 1995 as part of the dedication ceremony for the agency's new headquarters. It was featured

during the ceremony on September 13, 1995, and APHIS plans to open it

on April 2, 2022, to mark the agency's 50th anniversary.

This time capsule is no simple shoebox stuffed with leftover photos. It is a hulk of stainless steel, about 4 feet high and 4 feet wide and sealed with bolts. Despite its size and well-engineered look, it rests unnoticed by most agency employees who are likely unaware that we even have a time capsule. And even for those who once knew about it, the capsule has become a distant memory.

## [where to put it?]

As the information resource manager at the APHIS library in Riverdale, Eileen Welch is the time capsule's current host and unofficial guardian. Welch has a few guesses about its contents but can't remember for certain all of what's inside. Like most of the folks involved with the time capsule in its early days, though, she has one clear memory for sure: trying to figure out where to store it.

"I remember Terry Medley coming in and asking if we could find a place to keep it. Once they saw how big it was, they knew it couldn't be kept in any of the offices," said Welch.

## [built to last]

The APHIS time capsule is not only large but obviously built to last.

The 4-foot stainless steel cube weighs several hundred pounds when empty. It's airtight and waterproof. The top is gasket-sealed with a row of bolts running along each edge. A continuous wire passes through the head of each

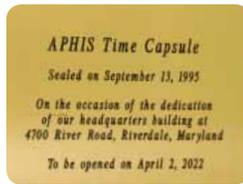
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## recent aphis retirees

APHIS had 31 employees retire in the third and fourth quarters of 2012. We congratulate each of them and wish them all the very best.

**Click here to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.**

To help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency, we plan to include similar lists of new retirees in future issues of the newsletter. ●



**Go Outside [inside]**  
Click to view larger images.

# time capsule

*Continued from page 9*

bolt to ensure no tampering. And, a valve—affixed on top—reveals that the container was pressurized with special gas to preserve its contents.

Tim Roland, now director for PPQ's Aircraft and Equipment Operations unit in Mission, TX, was part of the unit that built the capsule. He also sealed the capsule when he attended the building dedication in 1995. He remembers getting the request to build it from PPQ's Sid Cousins (retired), who chaired the time capsule committee.

"Sid told me the particulars about the cubic feet they wanted, and I asked him if they knew what they were asking for. He double-checked and that's what they wanted," Roland recalled with a laugh.

"Even after it was trucked to Riverdale, they said they didn't think it'd be that big," said Roland, who plans on being there when the capsule is opened.

### [a little bit of mystery]

So far, the capsule has been sealed for 17 years, and it will remain closed for 10 more. Not that long in the scheme of things. But

apparently long enough for memories to fade and a little bit of mystery to take its place.

So it would seem that the capsule is doing its job and successfully meeting its performance standards. For now, its purpose is simply to be forgotten.

When opened, however, it will provide us with an agency history lesson and the opportunity to reflect on our priorities, the tools we use, and the ways in which we go about our work. It will be interesting to see how these things change—or don't—in the face of time. ●

## agency calendar

The FY 2013 **APHIS Training and Development Calendar** provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted course-work competencies.

### february

Black History Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

**Rethinking Stress Webinar**, February 12; Visit AgLearn for more information or contact Todd Sazdoff by email (todd.sazdoff@aphis.usda.gov) or at (612) 336-3304.

### march

National Women's History Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

**Situational Self Leadership**, March 12–13, Riverdale, MD; Visit AgLearn for more information or contact Leslie Linneman by email (leslie.a.linneman@aphis.usda.gov) or at (301) 851-2889. ●



manager profile  
**with  
matt royer**

*Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)  
Executive Director,  
Field Operations*

**[what is your background?]**

I was born in York, PA, and thought for many years that I would become a veterinarian. During high school, I worked as a kennel boy and an assistant at small animal practices in York and for a few months in Saginaw, MI. While studying as a biology major at Penn State University, I helped in physics and cell biology laboratories. I received a PhD degree in plant pathology from Penn State in 1982. After graduation, I investigated foreign plant diseases in a containment facility and collaborated for 6 years with foreign scientists working with USDA's Agricultural Research Service at Fort Detrick, Frederick, MD.

**[how long have you been with aphis?]**

In 1989, I joined APHIS' Policy and Program Development staff and developed risk analysis standards. Two years later, I accepted a position with PPQ as the chief operations officer for Biological Assessment and Taxonomic Support.

**[most memorable APHIS experience?]**

My most memorable experience is probably during the first few years with Karnal bunt of wheat—after it was discovered in Arizona in 1996. The extreme dedication of many Federal and State employees to rapidly de-

velop science-based methods for survey and mitigation, to implement a national survey and containment effort, and to stand up a regulatory response was extraordinary. Many of the people I met while serving in the program are colleagues to this day.

**[priorities in the coming months?]**

With PPQ's reorganization plan, we will be consolidating the Eastern and Western Regions into one unit, Field Operations. As the executive director of Field Operations, I will be responsible for daily operations. I will be learning as much as possible about PPQ Field Operations and helping PPQ implement a "core functional workgroup" approach to doing business.

**[accomplishment most proud of?]**

In the work environment, it is leading PPQ's implementation of Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill. Many APHIS employees and members of the National Plant Board contributed time and served on teams to design a process that produced 1,000 projects. Between 2009 and 2012, these projects obligated \$157 million to State departments of agriculture, university cooperators, other Federal agencies, and nonprofit and tribal organizations. This was an extremely complex

effort that would not have been possible were it not for the dedication of these teams. I am very proud of the team members and feel privileged to have participated in this effort.

In the home environment, I am proud of my two sons who have permanent jobs and are happy.

**[hobbies?]**

Bicycling and taking hikes in the mountains of Colorado.

**[favorite movie?]**

*Lord of the Rings.*

**[last book read?]**

*The Little Drummer Girl* by John le Carré (dated but still a classic for the genre, from a book swap!).

**[favorite meal?]**

Seafood or anything prepared well. I enjoy trying dishes prepared with different chiles and other spices.

**[guilty pleasure?]**

Eating pizza, ice cream, dark chocolate (I keep a candy dish stocked in my office), or anything with salt and sugar. ●



# did you know ?



By Lisa Hightower

**Did you know** that undergraduate women outnumber men in land-grant agriculture programs?

A national study completed in 2012 of 70 land-grant universities found that undergraduate women enrolled in agriculture programs outnumber undergraduate men by more than 2,900 students in 2011. This study, conducted by the Food and Agricultural Education Information System, explored trends in the gender of undergraduate students enrolled in 14 agriculture academic areas at land-grant institutions from 2004 to 2011.

The rise in undergraduate women in agriculture academic areas is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 2004, undergraduate men outnumbered undergraduate women by more than 1,400. By 2008, the number of undergraduate women and men enrolled in agriculture academic areas were roughly equivalent. In 2009, undergraduate women outpaced undergraduate men by 249 students. This increase continued in 2010 and

2011, with enrollment numbers for undergraduate women growing each year. In 2011, the number of undergraduate women enrolled in agriculture academic areas exceeded the number of undergraduate men enrolled by more than 2,900.

This trend corresponds with an overall rise in women farm operators. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the number of women farm operators increased nationally by 19 percent—to 1,008,943—between 2002 and 2007. ●

## aphis publications sharing the aphis story

Whether a factsheet, brochure, or flyer, publications help us share APHIS' great story with our many customers, stakeholders, and partners.

Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) oversees the agency's publication review process to ensure that our products present accurate information clearly, engagingly, and concisely and meet USDA and APHIS quality standards. With that in mind, refer any publication intended for external

audiences—whether printed as hard copy or published electronically—to LPA for clearance and production. LPA will work with you through every step of the process in bringing a publication from concept to fruition.

For more on APHIS' publication process and key LPA contacts, please visit LPA's recently updated Intranet page at <http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/index.shtml> before initiating a project.

The page contains additional links to information you will find useful, including an updated factsheet on publications, LPA guidance for determining publication needs, detailed charts on the publications process for various products, and a Government Printing Office style quick reference guide. ●



wildlife services  
**taking a bird's  
eye view**

By Jordan Whitfield

Statistics show that wildlife management efforts at airports have contributed to a decrease in the number of bird strikes at airports. And this is certainly good news. However, other aircraft data is pointing researchers to another growing and related challenge: the number of bird strikes occurring at or above 3,000 feet above the ground is increasing.

At this higher altitude, aircraft are generally outside the immediate benefits of wildlife management efforts at airports. Reducing the number of bird strikes at these altitudes will likely require a different approach.

To take a closer look, a team of researchers recently decided to view the problem from a new angle—the bird's perspective.

### **[the bird's eye view]**

For their research, scientists with Wildlife Services' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) teamed up with researchers from Indiana State University and Purdue University.

Using their knowledge of bird visual systems, the team devised an experiment that would test the ability of Canada geese to see aircraft with different lighting and paint schemes. Based on the team's experiment, researchers determined that using lights to make aircraft more visible could help reduce bird strikes.

The researchers measured the response of geese to the approach of radio-controlled model aircraft: one that resembled a standard civil aircraft (approximately 9 feet in wingspan) with lights on, the same aircraft with lights off, and another radio-controlled aircraft that resembled a raptor in form and paint scheme.

Each of the experiment's aircraft—whether lights on, lights off, or the predator-styled aircraft—elicited similar anti-predator responses from the geese, suggesting that the birds treated the aircraft as predators and sought to avoid a collision. However, one of the key findings from the experiment was that the birds responded sooner to the aircraft with lights on.

### **[an important next step in research]**

By focusing on bird visual ecology and its influence on bird behavior, researchers are taking an important next step in reducing bird-aircraft collisions.

"Birds see so much differently than humans do," said Bradley Blackwell of the NWRC. "So we can't translate our own perceptual understanding to the problem of birds avoiding aircraft."

Specifically, birds have different visual systems than humans, and this research is the first to

take that fact and their natural anti-predator behavior into account.

"Because Canada geese will respond to approaching aircraft as a potential threat, the theory behind how animals respond to predators is very applicable, and we can enhance this response via lighting," said Blackwell.

By combining research findings on the visual capabilities of Canada geese with research about responses to approaching aircraft, the scientists hope to lay the groundwork for collaborations with industry to develop new aircraft designs. These new designs could prompt birds to respond sooner, providing more time to avoid collisions midair.

The team plans to conduct further research with other bird species commonly involved in strikes to determine how they respond.

"This is only the first step," said Blackwell. "In addition to lighting, we also want to understand how to manipulate aircraft paint schemes so that birds find them easier to detect. It's exciting work." ●

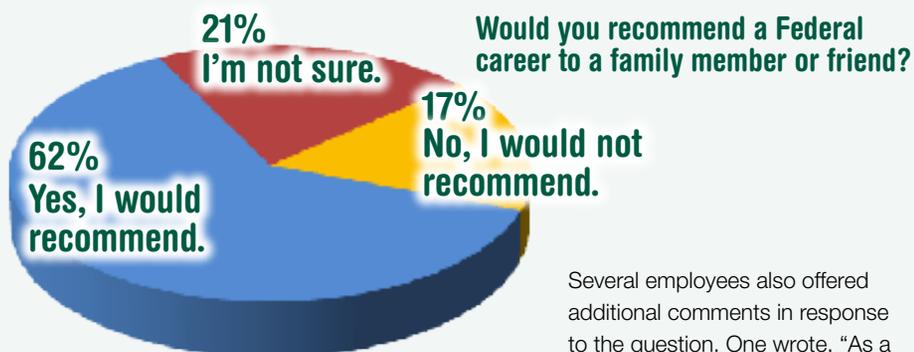


*Bird strikes have gained increased notice since the "Miracle on the Hudson," the emergency landing of US Airways flight 1549 in 2009 after Canada geese were struck by the aircraft and ingested into the plane's engines.*

## question of the day

In our last newsletter, we asked employees, "Would you recommend a Federal career to a family member or friend?"

Of those who responded, here's the percentage breakdown of how they answered..



Several employees also offered additional comments in response to the question. One wrote, "As a second, third, and fourth career,

I have found working for the Federal Government to be greatly rewarding. The ability to move throughout the Government without penalty is incomparable!"

### [next question please]

Many people start the New Year by setting goals or making resolutions for themselves. Sometime they make resolutions focused on their personal lives or on health and fitness goals. And, sometimes they set new goals related to work and their careers.

Are you making a New Year's resolution for 2013?

- Yes, I am making a New Year's resolution.
- Yes, I am making a New Year's resolution specifically related to work.
- No, I am not making a New Year's resolution.

What is your resolution? As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate!

Click here to take part in the poll:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YM2K6WJ>



## workers' compensation program changes benefit employees and agency

The agency's Workers' Compensation Program has made recent changes to improve its operations. Together, these improvements will benefit employees and help streamline the agency's management of claims.

The primary purpose of the Workers' Compensation Program is to facilitate wage replacement, medical care payments, and return-to-work efforts for agency employees who sustain compensable work injuries.

Many of the recent improvements stem from a business process improvement project conducted in 2012. The project included goals of optimizing and streamlining the Workers' Compensation Program and reducing its cost. Additional improvements are planned for 2013 according to Tara Jones, who joined APHIS last year as the APHIS Workers' Compensation Program manager.

### [improving employee resources]

To enhance its employee outreach, the **Workers' Compensation Program** has revised its Web pages and created an employee help desk that is accessible by phone (855-804-7310) or by email at OWCPHelpDesk@aphis.usda.gov.

The revised Web pages now include helpful links to frequently asked questions, new AgLearn training for supervisors, and additional information resources for employees and supervisors.

### [other changes for the better]

APHIS' Workers' Compensation Program has taken other steps as well to create a more unified agency structure for processing and managing claims and to enhance supervisory engagement and understanding of the program.

Here are few of the changes:

- Agency workers' compensation coordinators will begin using ECOMP—the U.S. Department of Labor's online system for processing and managing claims. This electronic system will improve program efficiency and increase the speed of claims processing.
- The agency's national program manager is conducting monthly conference calls with APHIS workers' compensation coordinators

*Continued on next page*

# symposium highlights

## “native lands, native ways”

By Gail Keirn



*Alongside numerous wildlife professionals, 18 Native American students participated in the Wildlife Society's 2012 annual conference. APHIS' Wildlife Services program and the agency's Native American Working Group helped fund student travel and registration.*

Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest have cared for and managed the land for thousands of years through traditional practices that are essential to many cultural customs and ceremonies. At this year's Wildlife Society Annual Conference in Portland, OR, organizers focused on Native American conservation by hosting a half-day symposium titled Native Lands, Native Ways: Indigenous Conservation in the Northwest. Participants shared native perspectives on wildlife management, tribal politics, and modern tribal management.

The Wildlife Society's Native People's Wildlife Management Working Group sponsored the symposium. And APHIS was there, too. Wildlife Services (WS) and APHIS' Native American Working Group helped coordinate the event and—along with others—provided travel and registration funding for 18 Native American students to attend.

“Wildlife Services continues to support Native American students interested in natural resource management careers by providing them with opportunities like this to meet and interact with wildlife professionals,” says Daniel Gossett, a supervisory biological science technician at WS' National Wildlife Research

Center in Fort Collins, CO. Gossett helped organize the symposium.

“The students had the chance to share their knowledge about their native culture and to participate in discussions about wildlife management, sustainability, and natural resource conservation in the Pacific Northwest,” says Gossett.

The symposium focused on wildlife and environmental management from an indigenous perspective, with an emphasis on restoring watersheds and undamming rivers in the Pacific Northwest.

Traditionally, indigenous communities define the natural world and processes as sacred; for these communities, having dam-free rivers is essential to their cultural identity, well-being, and livelihoods. The symposium included presentations on the process and impact of undamming rivers; managing sensitive and culturally significant wildlife species on tribal lands; monitoring fish populations; managing intertribal fisheries; and understanding the legal processes and sovereignty issues that impact Native American communities in the Pacific Northwest.

For more information on the symposium or the APHIS Native American Working Group, please contact Daniel Gossett by phone, (970) 266-6284, or email at [daniel.n.gossett@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:daniel.n.gossett@aphis.usda.gov).

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## workers' compensation

to share the latest information and updates related to the Workers' Compensation Program.

- APHIS has developed a mandatory AgLearn module on workers' compensation for managers and supervisors.
- The agency has incorporated language specific to workers' compensation into the performance plans of APHIS managers and supervisors to enhance engagement and accountability.

## volunteer spotlight danielle koski and jennifer lamoreux



*Danielle Koski*



*Jennifer Lamoreux*

### **[employee name and program]**

Danielle Koski, Biological Science Laboratory Technician, Center for Veterinary Biologics, Ames, IA

Jennifer Lamoreux, Biological Science Laboratory Technician, National Veterinary Services Laboratories, Ames, IA

### **[volunteer organization]**

One Heart Equestrian Therapy

### **[organization mission]**

One Heart Equestrian Therapy offers therapy to individuals demonstrating physical, cognitive, mental, or emotional limitations and special needs. The organization makes equine-oriented and domestic animal-oriented activities available in a compassionate, safe, and professional manner.

### **[volunteer activities]**

Lamoreux began volunteering with One Heart in 2003 as a side-walker and horse leader. In 2005, she became a certified riding instructor through the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA)—now known as the Professional Association of

Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). In 2011, Lamoreux was selected as the Region 7 PATH Intl. instructor of the year.

Koski began volunteering with One Heart in 2007 as a side-walker and horse leader. In 2009, she also became a NARHA-certified riding instructor.

Both Lamoreux and Koski teach therapeutic riding classes and volunteer in other ways, where needed. Whether it be side-walking with clients during class, training therapy horses, entering client data into the computer, feeding horses, staying in touch with volunteers, scheduling clients for classes, or leading a therapy horse during class—they do it all. They are often at the One Heart stable sweeping aisles, mucking stalls, or simply organizing tack. In the last year, Lamoreux and Koski helped One Heart provide services for more than 40 clients, each of whom have their own unique challenges and goals.

Lamoreux and Koski also volunteer by helping One Heart clients participate in the Iowa Equestrian Special Olympics. They help pack up all the gear, trailer horses to the event,

and take care of them at the show. They also organize riders, volunteers, and horses to make sure everyone is safe and having fun. This year, they were able to help more than 20 riders compete in over 40 events at the Special Olympics.

### **[time given]**

One Heart rides for 6 weeks in the spring, 6 weeks in the summer, and 6 weeks in the fall. During the riding sessions, Lamoreux and Koski teach classes 3–6 hours a week and volunteer where needed for an additional 8–12 hours a week. During the summer and winter, they also give 2–6 hours a month helping organize files and taking care of horses.

### **[organization web site]**

[www.onehearthorses.org](http://www.onehearthorses.org)

### **[employee email]**

[danielle.m.koski@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:danielle.m.koski@aphis.usda.gov)  
[jennifer.a.lamoreux@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.a.lamoreux@aphis.usda.gov) ●

worktip

# prepare yourself for global learning

By John Scott

APHIS is a global organization. Agency employees are regularly in direct contact with stakeholders and agricultural officials in other countries. Additionally, our own workforce has become increasingly diverse as employees from various cultures and heritages have joined the agency.

So wouldn't it be helpful to have a convenient and effective tool to learn about other cultures and the countries we come in contact with? Fortunately, we do. It's called **GlobeSmart®**.

GlobeSmart is an online educational tool that can help improve your ability to work effectively with people from other cultures—whether they're fellow APHIS employees or agency stakeholders.

APHIS has made GlobeSmart available to all employees at no cost. To access the site, new users need only register using their work email address and set up an account and password.

The Web site offers a short introductory video explaining its features, or you can just jump in and explore the site's content on your own.

The site features "Learning Paths" that provide detailed information about other countries and short activities to help improve your skills in interacting and communicating with others and successfully bridge cultural differences.

The site also includes a self-assessment tool that helps you identify your work style preferences and compare them with the preferences often found in other specific countries and cultures. ●

## art and agriculture competition begins

Grab your sketchbook, paintbrush, or other art gear and get started. USDA has launched its second annual Art & Agriculture Competition, and entries are due by March 30, 2013.

The competition is open to all active USDA employees, full-time or part-time, and to employees on term or seasonal appointments.

To enter, employees must submit both a completed entry form and photograph of the artwork being entered. Both must be submitted through the Cultural Transformation Web site by the deadline.

All forms of art including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, textiles, and ceramics are accepted. Artwork may be in any 2-D or 3-D fine art media (not including video or craft kits). Each work of art must be submitted under one of 10 themed categories.

For more details and entry requirements, please visit USDA's **Art & Agriculture Competition Web pages**. ●



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## animal care partnership helps make gains with ohio dog breeders

By David Sacks

Animal Care continues bolstering its efforts to help current USDA licensees and registrants better adhere to Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations and to make sure that individuals obtain an AWA license if they need one.

In Ohio, tips from the public and a recent partnership with a dog breeder association are helping program efforts on both fronts.

### [finding unlicensed kennels]

In January and February, Animal Care's Eastern Region Office received information from concerned citizens alleging that more than 100 kennels in northeastern Ohio were selling puppies to pet stores without the required USDA license. Supporting the claims, the tipsters provided health certificates and pet store sales records for the kennels in question.

In response, several Animal Care inspectors began the laborious task of researching the situation. In this predominately rural area, this meant driving to each kennel, contacting the individual responsible for the breeding operation, determining if the kennel required an

AWA license, and advising the breeder of the requirements for licensing under the AWA.

After learning about Animal Care's efforts, the Ohio Professional Dog Breeders Association (OPDBA) reached out to lend a hand. OPDBA contacted Carolyn McKinnie, a supervisory animal care specialist, and offered to help get kennels licensed.

Pairing the industry group with Animal Care is different than the traditional model of

*Continued on next page*



*Animal Care's Carolyn McKinnie speaks with attendees about AWA requirements.*

# gains with ohio dog breeders

*Continued from page 1*



enforcing AWA licensing requirements, and Animal Care hopes this approach will help make inroads in Ohio's rural communities. The partnership highlights the shared goal of making sure that the animals receive humane care and treatment.

## **[partnering to license]**

Animal Care reviewed its list of kennels, worked through some procedural challenges, and then informed OPDBA of 40 kennels that likely needed Federal licensing. With this information, OPDBA is conducting meetings and coordinating an AWA licensing drive to make sure the kennels comply with the AWA. Animal Care provided OPDBA with information and license application kits to distribute.

As Animal Care receives license applications, its inspectors will conduct standard prelicense inspections to make sure that the kennels meet the Federal standards for humane care. Kennels that pass prelicense inspections will receive AWA licenses; those that do not and that continue to sell puppies will face possible legal scrutiny.

"This partnership will go a long way in reassuring the public that all commercial dog breeders must meet Animal Welfare Act standards so that their animals receive humane care and treatment," said Elizabeth Goldentyer, director

of Animal Care's Eastern Region. "This will improve conditions for these dogs and will also allow Animal Care to reserve its scarce resources for truly problematic facilities."

## **[partnering to educate]**

In February, Animal Care employees again partnered with OPDBA by participating in its annual seminar and trade show. In addition to promoting AWA licensing, the Animal Care employees used the opportunity to conduct other AWA outreach with the nearly 300 people who attended.

McKinnie was joined by her Animal Care colleagues Laura Blanton, Shannon Sebera, and Jeremy Steele. They handed out license application kits and other materials, including information about how breeders can create contingency plans to protect their dogs and themselves during emergencies.

They also featured a "data logger" display at their booth. Data loggers enable users to effectively measure temperature and humidity in facilities. In Ohio, weather concerns can be an issue, especially since many kennels in the Amish and Mennonite communities operate without electricity.

Steele gave a presentation on Animal Care's compliance program, during which he

discussed the need for licensees to recognize problems in their kennels and take immediate action. His talk was well-received. Breeders also stopped by the Animal Care booth to ask questions throughout the seminar and trade show.

"All in all it was a great day," said McKinnie. "We continue to make strides in the breeder communities in Ohio, and I'm excited about the changes in attitudes that are occurring."

Dr. Tony Forshey, State veterinarian for Ohio, is also pleased with the partnership—especially now as the State works to develop its own commercial dog breeding regulations. He commended Animal Care for collaborating with Ohio veterinary officials, noting in particular that McKinnie sits on the State's advisory board that is developing Ohio's regulations.

"This has been a great opportunity for Ohio to work together with USDA," Forshey said. "As we develop our regulations, we want them to mesh together with USDA's."

The goal on both the State and Federal side is for the breeders to give proper care to the dogs. Forshey said he will continue working with Animal Care to ensure that Ohio kennels achieve regulatory compliance once the State regulations take effect. ●

# wildlife services on the trail of feral swine

By Carol Bannerman



*Wildlife Specialist Ron Jones runs telemetry off a high point near Tucumcari, in eastern New Mexico. This technology allows wildlife personnel to check trap monitors or locate Judas pigs in free-ranging groups or sounders more efficiently.*

When you're fighting an invasive pest, knowing where and how to find it is an important part of the job. The New Mexico Cooperative Feral Hog Task Force, led by Wildlife Services (WS), is using one technique to locate feral swine that takes advantage of the animals' social nature.

In New Mexico, feral swine populations have expanded from just 2 counties to at least 17 in less than 7 years. Locating these small groups, dispersed over a 60,000 square-mile area, presents a tough challenge. With the January 2013 release of APHIS contingency funds, WS initiated a cooperative, multiagency partnership in New Mexico. The aim of the pilot project is to eliminate feral swine from key areas of the State. An important part of this effort is the expanded use of the "Judas technique" to locate invasive feral swine. The technique—so-named because of its biblical reference—uses a "betrayor" animal to locate others of its kind.

The Judas technique involves placing a radio transmitter on an animal and releasing it. The outfitted animal seeks out others. By tracking and locating the "betrayor," biologists can then euthanize the feral swine herd—known

as a sounder—that the outfitted swine has found.

WS-New Mexico has used the Judas feral swine technique for 3 years in a limited way, with one Judas sow and one to two technicians to locate it. Now, as an expanded effort, the ongoing pilot project can use several Judas sows outfitted with ear tag transmitters and has additional wildlife specialists capable of tracking them. Because boars remain solitary in general, most Judas swine are the more sociable sows, which will travel up to 8 kilometers to unite with a new sounder (swine grouping).

### [an effective combination]

A combination of Judas swine, ground staff, and trail cameras proved effective during a late March aerial operation in New Mexico using a helicopter.

"In a few days of flying, we removed 56 feral swine—around 32 percent were located with the help of two Judas sows," said WS District Supervisor Brian Archuleta.

During the effort, WS employees found that some swine would hunker down unobserved

in dense vegetation. Using an improved antenna-mount on the helicopter, the team could pinpoint the Judas swines' location; then, hovering at 20–40 feet, the helicopter's downwash flushed the swine out.

Other projects and studies show that, as a wildlife management method, the Judas technique can substantially increase the number of invasive animals removed, decrease the cost of control efforts, and increase the types

*Continued on next page*

[inside] **APHIS**

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Photo sources: Animal Care, S. Dinh (PPQ), S. Geiser-Novotny (VS), T. Hall (WS), C. Jones, R. Maple (MRPBS), R. Santos (LPA), B. Thompson (MRP).

*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit:

[www.aphis.usda.gov/inside\\_aphis/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/).

## veterinary services

# good news for U.S. cattle producers

By Mike Booth

APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) helped score a major victory for American cattle producers at a recent meeting of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

More than 9 years after the first cow with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was found in the United States, the OIE voted during its general session meeting to upgrade the U.S. risk status from "controlled" to "negligible." The May 29 announcement follows the earlier recommendation made by an OIE scientific commission to upgrade the U.S. status.

With the change, APHIS anticipates that we can overcome some of the longstanding trade barriers imposed by certain countries.

"It's taken a lot of persistence and dedication by our technical staff to reach this point," said VS Deputy Administrator John Clifford.

The upgraded status recognizes that there is less threat of the disease spreading among the domestic cattle herd due to USDA's effective surveillance and control methods.

Following the announcement, Secretary Vilsack released a statement saying:

"This is a significant achievement that has been many years in the making for the

United States, American beef producers and businesses, and Federal and State partners who work together to maintain a system of interlocking safeguards against BSE that protect our public and animal health. This decision demonstrates OIE's belief that both our surveillance for, and safeguards against, BSE are strong."

The OIE is the international body recognized by the World Trade Organization for recommending science-based standards for the safe trade in animals and animal products. OIE member nations strive to bring their own standards in line with the organization's science-based international standards in order to control the spread of disease and keep trade markets open. OIE risk status recognition carries a great deal of weight with the international community in negotiating trade requirements and opening new markets.

Negligible risk is the lowest risk level under the OIE Code. Countries with this risk status have conducted extensive surveillance and testing in domestic cattle and have instituted all of the necessary mitigation measures to reduce the risk for BSE exposure and spread. ●

## feral swine

*Continued from page 3*

of terrain where individual animals are taken. In the final stages of eradication projects, the Judas technique can also help find the last remaining target animals or confirm a project's success.

WS-New Mexico is evaluating the use of radio telemetry transmitters, which cost approximately \$200 each. This technology could potentially save thousands of dollars in States like New Mexico where feral swine densities are low and scattered over a large geographic area.

The Judas technique has brought success in other wildlife work as well. WS evaluated this method for invasive nutria control in the Delmarva (see the **Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project Web site**). Additionally, the technique helped control invasive lake trout in Yellowstone National Park, and one researcher has suggested its use to help eradicate Asian carp. ●

# 2012 trade accomplishments recap

The past few years have been the best for farm exports in our Nation's history. During fiscal years (FY) 2009 through 2012, U.S. producers generated more than \$478 billion in agricultural exports. In 2012 alone, they reached \$135.8 billion—the second highest total on record.

These export figures mark an historic economic achievement for our Nation's farmers, ranchers, and agribusiness. And, for that same reason, they are notable for APHIS as well. They firmly remind us of the word "service" in our agency's name and of our valuable role in the vitality of U.S. agriculture. Working with producers and many other partners in government and industry, APHIS consistently contributes to the success of U.S. producers and ranchers.

In FY 2012, in cooperation with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, APHIS successfully negotiated and resolved 150 animal and plant health issues involving U.S. agricultural exports with a total estimated market value of \$2 billion.

## [highlights]

- Establishing a pilot program that led to the resumption of log exports from Virginia and South Carolina to China. This helped preserve total U.S. log exports to China, which were valued at \$807.4 million in calendar year (CY) 2012.
- Concluding negotiations that allow exports to Mexico of U.S. eggs intended for processing (\$45 million/year) and putting poultry exports to Kuwait and Turkey (\$15 million/year) back on track after concerns about avian influenza.

During 2012, live-animal exports continued to increase. As one of many examples, exports of live swine, poultry, and horses to China totaled \$60 million in CY 2012—nearly a 40-percent jump over CY 2011.

Buyers from Turkey, Russia, Canada, Mexico, Kazakhstan, and countries in South America and the Middle East also increased their imports of live cattle last year—reaching nearly 120,000 cattle in FY 2012—while new markets emerged. Turkish and Russian purchases alone during FY 2012 were valued at roughly \$300 million.

*Continued on next page*

## 2013 employee viewpoint survey

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is conducting the new 2013 Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) of Federal employees. The survey, which runs into early June, has been sent to randomly selected Federal employees. An estimated 26,000 USDA employees have been asked to participate.

If selected, you are encouraged to take part; EVS participation is confidential and completely voluntary. Survey results provide valuable information and insight for Federal agencies. OPM will provide survey results to APHIS in November 2013. ●

# 2012 trade accomplishments

*Continued from page 5*

## **[keeping shipments moving]**

In FY 2012, APHIS overseas personnel successfully secured the release of 324 detained shipments of U.S. agricultural products, ranging from cherries to cotton, worth more than \$41 million.

Additionally, through our export certification programs, we helped prevent such issues from arising by ensuring U.S. agricultural products meet the health requirements of specific overseas markets before they arrive. In FY 2012, we issued more than 41,500 export certificates for live animals and just over 167,000 for animal-related products. Our automated Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking system produced a record 580,000 certificates for plant-based exports.

## **[tuning our systems for speed]**

Under the agency's business improvement initiatives, we shortened the average amount of time needed to develop import-related regulations by 77 days last year. We also dramatically decreased the time needed to complete risk assessments and regulatory changes for imports of plants and plant products, from an average of more than 5 years per case to an average of 597 days. That's a reduction of nearly 71 percent.

In a related development for imports of animals and animal products, a final rule we published last year brings lists of regions recognized as free of or affected

by specific diseases straight to our Web site, where they can be amended through a faster notice-based process instead of extended rulemaking. ●

## trade progress in 2013

Here are some highlights so far for 2013.

- In February, Japan agreed to permit the import of U.S. beef and beef products derived from cattle less than 30 months of age. The result: an industry-estimated \$500 million in exports of U.S. beef to Japan in CY 2013.
- In February, APHIS officials reached agreement with Iraqi officials on export certification requirements for U.S. dairy cattle shipments. The annual market value is projected to be more than \$60 million.
- In late February, the World Organization for Animal Health recommended that the United States' risk classification for bovine spongiform encephalopathy be upgraded to negligible risk. If approved, the status upgrade will greatly support U.S. efforts to increase exports of beef and beef products.
- In April, APHIS announced the opening of export markets to Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia for day-old chicks and hatching eggs, increasing U.S. exports by an estimated \$25 million a year.
- In April, APHIS announced the arrival of the first shipment of U.S. Anjou pears to China. U.S. pears are now available for the first time to Chinese consumers. USDA expects China to become one of the top five export destinations for U.S.-grown pears within the next two seasons. ●

# did you know ?



**Did you know** that in FY 2012 APHIS employees donated more than 21,400 hours of leave under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program? A total of 1,153 agency employees donated the leave to assist other employees in need.

APHIS personnel also stepped up last year to help employees affected during Hurricane Sandy. Through an emergency leave bank specifically established in response to the hurricane, agency employees donated an additional 2,310 hours of leave.

**[more about leave donations]**

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program allows Federal employees to donate unused accrued annual leave and restored annual leave to other employees who need leave due to medical emergencies.

Donated leave can make a significant positive impact on the lives of coworkers and their families.

Employees who want to participate in the program—either as a donor or a recipient—must meet certain criteria to be eligible. Additionally, for eligible donors, there are specific rules about what kind of leave and how much can be donated.

Eligible recipients should coordinate applications through their immediate supervisors and understand the rules about using donated leave and when to apply.

For detailed information about the program and donating or receiving leave, visit the **Voluntary Leave Transfer Program Web pages**. You can also contact Cindy Hadlich at (612) 336-3310 or [cindy.l.hadlich@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:cindy.l.hadlich@aphis.usda.gov).

## recent aphis retirees

In the first quarter of calendar year 2013, APHIS saw 33 employees retire from among its ranks. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best as they enter their post-APHIS years.

**Click here** to see a full list of recent APHIS retirees.

To help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency, we plan to include similar lists of new retirees in each newsletter.

By John Scott

# plant protection and quarantine new jersey wins battle of the beetle



By Rhonda Santos



(left to right) Plant Protection and Quarantine's Vic Harabin joins Lynn Fleming (NJ Department of Environmental Protection), Richard Gerbounka (Mayor of Linden, NJ), Madeline Flahive (Rutgers Cooperative Extension), and others during a ceremonial tree planting.

After more than a decade, the State of New Jersey is free of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). At a ceremony held on March 14, Federal and State agriculture officials announced that the State's long-running battle against the invasive insect is over. The beetle was first discovered in Jersey City in October 2002. State and Federal officials then found trees infested with the beetle in Carteret, Woodbridge, Linden, and Rahway.

Eradication efforts involved removing 21,981 trees from the regulated areas within Union, Middlesex, and Hudson Counties. The trees removed from Middlesex and Union Counties alone produced 15,000 tons of wood chips that were converted to 18.6 million Kilowatt-hours of electricity through a partnership with Covanta Energy Company. This was enough electricity to supply 10,300 households for 3 months. Nearly a third of the trees lost have since been replanted. Foresters replanted with a variety of non-host species, with each tree chosen specifically to meet the site requirements.

New Jersey is the second State to declare eradication from the beetle. ALB was successfully eradicated from Illinois in 2008 and from

the town of Islip on Long Island, NY, in 2011. An area is declared free of ALB after all the infested trees are eliminated and surveys are negative for active signs of beetle activity or its presence.

"It took a real commitment by our Federal, State, and local partners to reach eradication in New Jersey," said Plant Protection and Quarantine's ALB Project Manager for New Jersey, Elisandra Sanchez.

"We should all be proud of this—I know I'm glad for PPQ and proud of all the people that have worked here as a team," said Sanchez.

On April 5, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced the successful eradication of ALB from Canada. Eradication was recently announced for the New York City boroughs of Manhattan and Staten Island on May 14.

*Continued on next page*

## ALB early detection and what you can do

Early detection is essential, and the best line of defense is you. Just as the program encourages the public to inspect their trees, APHIS employees are encouraged to do the same. The sooner an infestation is reported, the sooner the program can launch efforts to quickly contain and isolate an area from further destruction. Since ALB can attack trees in any State, millions of acres of our Nation's hardwoods—

including national forests, State parks, and neighborhood trees—are at risk.

What can you do? Take 10 minutes to check trees in your own yard and around your neighborhood. Look for the top two most concerning signs—round "exit" holes on tree trunks and branches, and the beetle itself. You can learn more at

[www.asianlonghornedbeetle.com](http://www.asianlonghornedbeetle.com).

# plant protection and quarantine recycling hurricane tree debris to stop pest spread

By Rhonda Santos

When Hurricane Sandy came ashore, it took down trees in three States with established Asian longhorned beetle (ALB)-regulated areas—New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts. In its wake, the hurricane left an overwhelming amount of debris material, literally overnight. With an estimated 20,000 trees downed in parks and natural areas alone, New York was hardest hit in terms of tree loss.



*Plant Protection and Quarantine's Joe Gittleman inspects chip size with contractor.*

The hurricane created more than just a tangled mess; it presented the Cooperative New York ALB Eradication Program with a significant challenge: making sure that tree debris was handled according to State and Federal regulations to prevent the beetle's spread.

In every ALB-affected State, regulated material—which includes potential host items like tree debris—may not be removed from quarantined areas unless accompanied by a permit authorizing that movement.

Thankfully, as part of its hurricane response, New York City began collecting all tree debris at various locations around the city. The goals were to steer its movement, to chip it, and to reuse the chipped material as mulch, landfill cover, or biofuel.

APHIS' ALB program staff in New York worked approximately 360 staff hours on the initial regulatory response for the cleanup efforts. Through April 30, the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program issued 1,299 limited permits to move about 133,600 cubic yards of regulated material from New York City sites to approved processing facilities outside ALB-regulated areas.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of its personnel, the cooperative program eliminated the risk of the beetle's spread to other areas. The program continues working in partnership with State and local partners on the remaining hurricane debris. ●

*Continued from page 8*

## battle of the beetle

With more areas winning the fight against the beetle, the ALB eradication program remains hopeful that complete eradication is possible.

In New Jersey, APHIS worked cooperatively with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, as well as each affected municipality and the citizens. ALB eradication programs continue to operate in the States of New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio. ●

# aphis hosts stakeholder meeting

By Hallie Zimmers

On April 11, APHIS hosted a packed stakeholder meeting in Washington, D.C. About 120 participants turned out to listen to Acting Administrator Kevin Shea talk about the agency's budget; specifically, stakeholders were interested in hearing what recent funding cuts mean for APHIS' programs and services and how we're planning for the future. To view video from the meeting, [click HERE](#).

In addition to the stakeholders who attended the meeting in person, another 278 participants from across the country joined the meeting via live Web cast. And agency employees tuned in to the Web cast using viewing rooms set up in Riverdale, Raleigh, Fort Collins, Minneapolis, and Ames.

To kick off the meeting, Shea spoke about Federal budget cuts, pointing out that the agency will need to make some tough decisions and prioritize program activities. Shea told stakeholders that, instead of making those decisions in a vacuum, APHIS leadership wants stakeholder insights and perspectives.

He also announced the agency's intent to draft a new strategic plan, and he made it

clear that stakeholder feedback was the first step in the process.

During his remarks, Shea later spoke about the current antiregulatory climate, acknowledging that traditional regulatory approaches can be inflexible and untimely. He noted that APHIS is looking at ways to be more flexible, responsive, and creative. As an example, he referred to Veterinary Services' decision to stop rigidly focusing on State disease status while carrying out its brucellosis and tuberculosis programs.

Additionally, Shea talked about the need for more public-private partnerships, and he pointed to the European grapevine moth eradication program as a successful example.

Following his remarks, Shea took questions for more than an hour. Stakeholders commented on and asked about a variety of topics, including: pest and disease surveillance, exports and trade facilitation, animal welfare, invasive species, and Wildlife Services' aquaculture and aviation programs. ●

## in memoriam

Since shortly before the New Year, our agency has lost several members of the APHIS family. We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

### animal care

Earnest Johnson      Houston, TX

### marketing and regulatory programs business services

John Capehart      Riverdale, MD

### plant protection and quarantine

Sherry Cornwell      North Charleston, SC  
Kerry Bryan      Albuquerque, NM  
Willis Yamaguchi      Kahului, HI

### veterinary services

Emmanuel Mdurwa      Riverdale, MD  
Maria Stephenson      Newburgh, NY  
John Owens      Richmond, VA

### wildlife services

Clint Caskey      Blair, OK  
Melvin Fortner      Hazelton, ND  
Travis Tumbleson      State College, PA



Click to watch video of the stakeholder meeting.



## manager profile with **barbara thompson**

Chief Financial Officer  
for Marketing and  
Regulatory Programs,  
MRPBS

### [what is your background?]

I was born in Washington, D.C., but our family moved quite a bit when I was young. My father was a Lutheran minister for a while, which included a job with Radio Voice of America. Our family lived in Africa for about a year when I was 4, while Dad scouted out locations for radio towers in Ethiopia.

### [how long have you been with aphis?]

A long time! I began working for APHIS in 1978. I was a cooperative education student for 2 years, working a semester then returning to school for a semester. I enjoyed working for APHIS and stayed on after I graduated from the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

### [most memorable APHIS experience?]

There have been many. I would say getting the opportunity to help establish the APHIS user fee programs back in the early 1990s. It was fairly early in my career, and I had the opportunity to work with the Administrator at that time, Bob Melland. I worked closely with Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) also and attended meetings with Congressional staffers

and higher levels of management at the former U.S. Customs Service as APHIS worked to implement the new agricultural quarantine inspection user fees.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

About a year and a half ago, APHIS switched over to using the new accounting system (the Financial Management Modernization Initiative, or FMMI) that the Department had purchased to replace the aging Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS). It has been a challenging transition for our APHIS financial and budget folks. My priority for the rest of the year is to continue to find ways to provide additional training and information to our users to help them be able to use FMMI more easily.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

No *one* accomplishment comes to mind. I've very much enjoyed making a career of working in APHIS. The mission is something we can all be proud of, and our employees are dedicated and are a great group of people to work with.

### [hobbies?]

I enjoy anything to do with gardening... planning, planting, pruning, weeding, and building stone walls and patios. I also enjoy practicing yoga and hiking.

### [favorite movie?]

It's hard for me not to get hooked into watching *Star Wars* if I'm flipping channels and see it playing.

### [last book read?]

I have a long commute, so I listen to books on CDs (I keep saying "books on tape," so I date myself!). Last book was *The Bucolic Plague* about the trials and tribulations of two New York City dwellers who buy an old, rundown mansion in upstate New York and become goat farmers.

### [favorite meal?]

It is hard to pick just one. Slow-cooked beef shortribs served over mashed potatoes or polenta with a hearty red wine is always good!

### [guilty pleasure?]

Watching several back-to-back episodes of *What Not To Wear*. ●



## veterinary services helping pigs take wing to china

By Sunny Geiser-Novotny and Jack Ellithorpe



*Aircraft personnel prepare to load the pig shipment bound for China.*

Veterinary Services' (VS) Colorado area office received a request last summer to inspect an export quarantine facility in northeastern Colorado for the quarantine and testing of a swine shipment bound for China. Originally, the swine were scheduled to leave from O'Hare International Airport in Chicago; however, the broker later requested approval of a temporary export inspection facility and that Denver International Airport (DIA) be approved as a temporary port of embarkation. The broker cited concerns about undue stress on the animals if they were shipped from Colorado to Illinois and then to China.

To help, VS jumped right in and started working with others on the pieces that needed to come together. The Colorado office inspected and approved the proposed temporary export inspection facility. Additionally, VS collaborated with the broker, freight forwarder, airline, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and DIA Port Authority to approve DIA as a temporary port of embarkation.

### **[clean bill of health]**

To be eligible for export to China, swine must undergo a barrage of tests for 7 different pathogens prior to a 30-day isolation period. Swine are then retested for 8 separate pathogens at a minimum of 15 days into the isolation period.

VS' Colorado office worked closely with the accredited veterinarian and facility managers to schedule testing and inspection of the animals and to coordinate the needed international health certificate.

### **[barcodes and crosschecks]**

The swine were identified with barcode tags that were preloaded into Mobile Information Management software (MIMs) and scanned upon final inspection; the scan crosschecked the inspected swine against the test results list and the health certificate.

The shipment was the accredited veterinarian's first introduction to using MIMs technology. VS personnel in Colorado have since begun working with the veterinarian to use this same technology to increase the efficiency of tuberculosis testing.

### **[flying pigs]**

In late November, VS personnel in Colorado inspected the swine at the export inspection facility and were there for the aircraft inspection, the unloading of swine from the trucks, and their loading onto the aircraft at DIA.

A total of 1,051 gilts and boars departed DIA in the shipment. They had an uneventful trip despite mechanical problems with the

aircraft's ventilation unit and a delay during a layover in Anchorage, AK. VS personnel in Anchorage stepped in to monitor the animals and the aircraft's temperature during refueling and a change of flight crew. Even with freezing temperatures, the veterinary medical officer and a representative of the shipping firm had to open and close the aircraft doors to maintain a suitable temperature for the animals.

In China, the exported U.S. swine will be used to multiply a great-grandparent herd of about 1,200 animals. After approximately 4 years of production, this herd will produce around 3 million commercial swine. The Chinese importer valued the shipment at \$1.6 million.

"Overall, the entire process went smoothly. It was an exemplary collaborative effort," said VS Western Region Director Mark Davidson.

The shipment was the first successful large animal export out of DIA for VS' Colorado office. The support that the Colorado office received from area offices in Alaska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Ohio, and Illinois was vital to making the effort a success. ●

# aphis team still driving on the transformation highway

By Alisa Robinson

Early in his administration, Secretary Vilsack challenged USDA to transform into a high-performing, customer-focused organization. APHIS accepted the challenge wholeheartedly; Agency Administrator Gregory Parham wrote an open letter to stakeholders, acknowledging customer complaints about slow approval processes for licenses and permits. He promised that the agency would make changes to many of its long-standing processes.

Following this promise, APHIS formed the Certification, Accreditation, Registration, Permitting, and Other Licensing (CARPOL) team to analyze and document the agency's CARPOL-related processes and recommend solutions that not only meet customers' needs, but also improve the overall delivery of APHIS products and services.

The CARPOL team focused initially on the permitting business processes in several agency units: Biotechnology Regulatory Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, and Veterinary Services. The team worked closely with those programs to carry out a thorough business process assessment of their current procedures for issuing permits.

The CARPOL team examined 20 APHIS systems and identified more than 400 processing steps as potential candidates for streamlining. Key areas for improvement included: standardizing CARPOL data and business rules, combining individual program functions into broader APHIS functions, and increasing stakeholder communication and involvement.

The CARPOL team is now turning its attention to APHIS certification and accreditation activi-

ties. A newly formed CARPOL Certifications and Accreditations Working Group has begun assessing business processes associated with certifications and accreditations. The assessment includes looking at emerging technology to better support agency employees. The group's efforts will ultimately ensure the success of the larger CARPOL goal: helping APHIS make good on the Administrator's promise to stakeholders. ●

## agency calendar

### june

The FY 2013 **APHIS Training and Development Calendar** provides updated info for agency training courses; it includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

Laboratory Ergonomics Webinar; June 12 at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. ET. Register via Aglearn.

### july

The management team for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services will make a site visit to APHIS' Minneapolis, MN, facility; July 16–18.

### august

National Plant Board Annual Meeting; August 4–8; Louisville, KY. ●

## volunteer spotlight stephanie dinh, thomas hall, and robi maple



Stephanie Dinh



Thomas Hall



Robi Maple

APHIS' JoAnn Cruse, Stephanie Dinh, Todd Felix, Thomas Hall, and Robi Maple were honored last fall for their extraordinary volunteer efforts outside of the workplace. Each was a recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award. We thought it only fitting that they also be featured in the newsletter's Volunteer Spotlight.

The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation issues the awards to recognize the best in American spirit, and to encourage all Americans to improve their communities through volunteer service and civic participation.

Awards are given to individuals, families, and groups that have demonstrated an outstanding level of service as measured by their total number of hours volunteered during a 12-month period.

In recognition of their efforts, we are highlighting Dinh, Hall, and Maple in this issue; Cruse and Felix will be featured in the next.

### [employee name and program]

Stephanie Dinh; Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer; San Diego, CA

### [volunteer organization]

The USS Midway Museum

### [organization mission]

The USS Midway Museum is a living tribute to the legacy of those who serve America in uniform. The museum serves as an historical and educational venue for visitors of all ages, including K-12 students who are inspired by Midway University's acclaimed science, technology, engineering, and math education programs.

### [volunteer activities]

Since 2010, Dinh has been a docent and an educator in the Youth Live It & Learn It education program. She also volunteers as a safety officer, providing safety monitoring while guests, staff, and other volunteers are onsite. Additionally, as an American Red Cross-certified health and safety instructor, Dinh trains and certifies other museum safety team volunteers in first aid.

### [time given]

Dinh averages 25 hours a month and has accumulated over 1,000 hours as a volunteer.

### [organization web site]

[www.midway.org](http://www.midway.org)

### [employee email]

[stephanie.dinh@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.dinh@aphis.usda.gov)

### [employee name and program]

Thomas Hall; Staff Wildlife Biologist; Wildlife Services; Fort Collins, CO

### [volunteer organization]

Hall volunteers with several organizations: U.S. Geological Survey, Breeding Bird Survey (BBS); Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC); Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA); and the Poudre School District Mountain Schools.

### [organization mission]

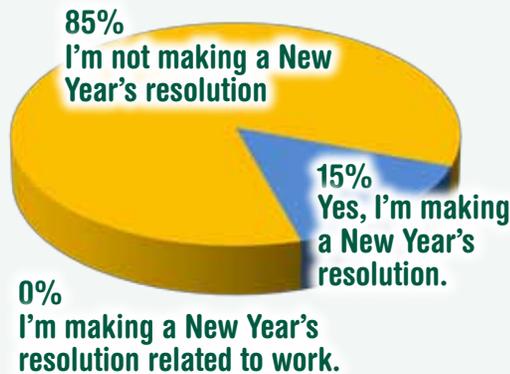
The BBS is a long-term, large-scale, international avian monitoring program initiated in 1966 to track the status and trends of North

*Continued on next page*

## question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “Are you making a New Year’s resolution for 2013?”

Of those who responded, here’s the percentage breakdown of their answers.



### Are you making a New Year’s resolution for 2013?

A few employees offered comments about their resolutions. One wrote about setting a goal of “Getting into shape and taking better care of myself.”

Another offered a frank opinion: “New Year’s resolutions are proven to fail. They

are often unrealistic and difficult to maintain. I find it better to have ‘life goals’ that can be pursued, tweaked, and celebrated daily.”

Our thanks to everyone who responded to the last issue’s question

### [next question please]

APHIS program activities are diverse—covering many animal and plant health issues, animal welfare, biotechnology, and wildlife damage management. Our agency’s efforts reach a wide range of people, and the issues we work on appear regularly in the media.

With this in mind, we ask:

*How often do you encounter APHIS or agency issues during your non-work hours? For example, do you see our agency issues in the news you read, or do APHIS-related topics come up during conversations with friends or family outside of work?*



- I often encounter APHIS-related topics outside of work.
- I sometimes encounter APHIS-related topics outside of work.
- I almost never encounter APHIS-related topics outside of work.
- I never encounter APHIS-related topics outside of work.

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential. Click here to take part in the poll: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q9CS3V2>

## volunteer spotlight stephanie dinh, thomas hall, and robi maple

*Continued from page 14*

American bird populations. The BBS involves experienced birders that can identify birds by sight and song.

The Audubon Society sponsors over 2,000 CBCs worldwide that take place annually from December 14 to January 5 with tens of thousands of volunteers. Started in 1900, CBC is now the longest running citizen science survey in the world; its data provides critical information on wintering bird population trends.

Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II is a project to collect data on the distribution, abundance, habitat use, and breeding phenology of avifauna breeding in Colorado. Partners include many agencies and organizations such as USDA’s Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

Poudre School District Mountain Schools exist to support and inspire every child to think, learn, and care, and to graduate prepared to be successful in a changing world.

### [volunteer activities]

Hall conducts three BBS routes each year. These are 25-mile routes with 50 stops where

every bird seen or heard in 3 minutes is recorded; it takes about 6 hours to complete.

Hall also conducts two to three CBCs every year and is the leader for the Fort Collins CBC. CBCs are 15-mile diameter circles where volunteers count birds in a 177-square-mile area. The 2012 Fort Collins CBC had 71 volunteers and counted about 40,000 birds of 96 species. For Hall, the highlight was calling an Eastern Screech-Owl in to about 3 feet.

Hall assists the Mountain Schools in the Poudre River Ecology Program and with wildlife classroom activities. He also participates in BBA efforts by recording all breeding bird activity at selected sites.

### [time given]

Hall annually averages about 50 hours for the BBS; 60 hours for the CBCs; 25 hours for the BBAs (completed 2007-2012), and 25 hours for Poudre School District.

### [organization web site]

[www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs](http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs)  
<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

## volunteer spotlight

# stephanie dinh, thomas hall, and robi maple

*Continued from page 15*

[www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org](http://www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org)  
[www.psdschools.org](http://www.psdschools.org)

### [employee email]

thomas.c.hall@aphis.usda.gov

### [employee name and program]

Robi Maple; Labor Relations Specialist;  
Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business  
Services; Fort Mill, SC

### [volunteer organization]

Boy Scouts of America, Palmetto Council,  
York District, Pack 275

### [organization mission]

The Boy Scouts of America mission is to serve others by helping to instill values in young people and prepare participating youth to make ethical choices during their lifetime while achieving their full potential.

### [volunteer activities]

Maple volunteers as a den leader and cubmaster. He organizes and runs weekly meetings for his Cub Scout den and organizes

pack activities—such as food drives, fundraising, pack meetings, the Pinewood Derby, and camping trips—for around 100 Cub Scouts.

Pack 275 has collected clothing each year for the Rock Hill Children's Attention Home, which provides emergency shelter and nurturing services to abused, abandoned, and neglected children in South Carolina.

Each year, Maple's Cub Scout pack also participates in Scouting for Food, collecting donations for a local food pantry that serves needy families. In 2012, the pack collected more than 7,500 pounds of food.

### [time given]

Maple has volunteered more than 400 hours since becoming a leader with the Cub Scouts.

### [organization web site]

[www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)  
[www.palmettocouncil.org](http://www.palmettocouncil.org)

### [employee email]

robi.a.maple@aphis.usda.gov ●

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## plant protection and quarantine raising wasps to battle acp

By John Scott

At first glance, they look a little like party tents. But inside entomologist Dan Flores' insectary cages, there's no picnic going on. Instead, the tents are abuzz with thousands of tiny wasps.

The wasps, *Tamarixia radiata*, are being raised as biocontrol agents to fight the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Dan Flores and others at the agency's Mission Lab facility are targeting ACP because they threaten U.S. citrus. ACP spread a damaging disease called Huanglongbing or citrus greening disease.

Since 2007, Flores has devoted a lot of attention to the beneficial wasps, studying their impact on ACP and devising ways to raise more of them to help reduce ACP populations. Flores imported the first stock of wasps in 2009 from Pakistan and began releasing wasps in 2011.

Thanks to a unique collaboration with volunteer Master Gardeners, Flores and his team have recently seen a real surge in their wasp-rearing efforts.

### [raising the numbers]

One of the project's ongoing challenges has been to produce enough wasps to put a dent in the ACP numbers.

The wasps reproduce by laying eggs beneath immature ACP. They parasitize immature ACP and feed on them; this is how they reduce the psyllid's population. To raise enough of the beneficial wasps, you need to have a supply of immature ACP.

*Continued on next page*



PPQ's Andrew Parker prepares to release a vial of wasps.

# raising wasps to battle acp

*Continued from page 1*



ACP naturally gather around the new shoots of citrus plants. Early on, Flores experimented with using greenhouse plants to rear the wasps, but the wasp yield wasn't high enough. The potted citrus didn't provide enough new shoots for the ACP and wasps to thrive in larger numbers.

So he began exploring field-rearing methods and developed an approach that uses insectary cages to boost the number of wasps produced.

Here's how it works: In residential neighborhoods, Flores and his team of technicians trim a citrus tree, which triggers new growth; lemon and lime trees produce the most new shoots when trimmed. ACP in the area are naturally drawn to the new shoots to lay their eggs. As the immature ACP develop, technicians cover the tree with an insectary cage and introduce about 1,000 wasps to reproduce and feed on the ACP. Within 5 to 6 weeks, the caged wasps produce on average about 11,000 wasps per tree. Technicians remove the tent, and the beneficial wasps disperse and seek more ACP.

## **[finding answers in the RV park]**

After developing the field-rearing approach, the next challenge for Flores' team was find-

ing the manpower to put it into action. As it turns out, the solution was in the region's RV parks, where Flores has found an amazing source of volunteers and citrus trees.

---

***“When the cages go up, it's like putting up a marketing billboard.”***

**—Dan Flores**

---

The RV parks are home to many “Winter Texans” who have permanent homes elsewhere but come to soak up the south Texas sun during the winter months. Among them are a fair number of Master Gardeners, who volunteer through extension offices to provide plant advice to members of the public. In addition, many of the RV parks were formerly citrus groves and still have citrus trees.

Last February, Flores and his team installed their first insectary cage using volunteers. The initial plan was to install eight in the spring and eight more this fall. But already, local interest has grown so much that they've installed 18 cages.

“When the cages go up, it's like putting up a marketing billboard,” said Flores. “Neighbors and other people come up and ask what it is and how they can get one.”

Flores expects that interest will continue to grow and even more cages will be installed to produce the wasps. Plans are already underway to introduce cages in neighboring counties.

Recent data seem to indicate that the rising number of released wasps is having a positive effect. The combined survey data for FY 2012 and FY 2013 show that an estimated 39 percent of the region's ACP were parasitized by the beneficial wasps. Estimated figures representing just the last 8 to 9 months show an even higher rate of 66 percent.

“I just saw the numbers last week. It's very, very exciting. I'm speechless,” Flores said. ●



*(Above) PPG's Andrew Parker covers an insectary cage; (opposite), Rupert Santos examines a tented tree.*

# farewell for gregory parham

By John Scott

On August 16, APHIS hosted a small gathering to honor and say farewell to former Administrator Dr. Gregory Parham. In June, Dr. Parham was officially sworn in as USDA's Assistant Secretary of Administration.



*(Above) Dr. Gregory Parham shakes hands with Administrator Kevin Shea at the portrait's unveiling. (Opposite) Parham smiles as his image joins the ranks of other previous APHIS Administrators.*

While Administrator, his leadership contributed greatly to APHIS accomplishments and to steadying the agency during a time in which many other Federal agencies struggled. Widely respected throughout APHIS and USDA, Dr. Parham remains much admired for his insightful management, keen intelligence, and his open and friendly manner.

With his characteristic enthusiasm, Dr. Parham embraced the agency's mission, which he proudly described as noble, global, and mobile.

Current Administrator Kevin Shea worked closely with Dr. Parham for years and is quick to praise his friend and colleague.

"I have known some people who were highly intelligent and some others who demonstrated extraordinary character. And I have known others who acted with tremendous compassion and decency. But I have never known anyone who had all of these qualities like Greg does. It was an honor and a privilege to serve as Greg's associate and APHIS was lucky to have his leadership," said Shea.

It's easy to find others, too, who share respect for Dr. Parham and the distinctive talent and bright outlook he brought to the Administrator's Office.

"Greg has an amazing ability to make his job seem easy while understanding the intricacies and challenges the rest of us face in our jobs. I feel very lucky to have worked for him and I know that each of us benefitted from his leadership at APHIS," said Marilyn Holland, deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services.

"Greg is a true leader," said John Clifford, deputy administrator for Veterinary Services. "He has high standards and is a very thoughtful and caring leader. He encourages risk-taking and provides the support that employees need to thrive."

During the recent gathering, APHIS unveiled a portrait photograph of Dr. Parham. In his honor, the image is now displayed—along with the portraits of other previous agency Administrators—in APHIS' Washington, D.C. conference room and outside of the Riverdale, MD, training suite. ●



## deadline nears extension of benefits to married gay and lesbian employees

Following a recent Supreme Court decision, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has directed all Federal agencies to extend benefits to Federal employees and annuitants who have a legally married same-sex spouse. Please be aware that the enrollment deadline for such currently married employees is fast approaching.

With the decision, all legally married same-sex spouses are now considered eligible family members under a self-and-family-enrollment. The children of same-sex marriages will be treated just as those of opposite-sex marriages and will be eligible family members according to the same eligibility guidelines.

Same-sex marriages are currently recognized in 13 States and the District of Columbia. Benefits coverage is available to a legally married same-sex spouse or annuitant, regardless of the employee or annuitant's current State of residency.

### [deadline information]

USDA's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees who are already legally married

have until August 26, 2013 (i.e., 60 days from June 26th date of the ruling) to make immediate changes to their Federal Employee Health Benefits enrollment. For employees more recently married—specifically, those married following the June 26th decision—the 60-day enrollment window begins on the date that the employee legally married.

### [more information and contacts]

For more details, including information about enrollment processes and effective dates of coverage, please view the following **benefits Q&A guidance document**.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the **Benefits Specialist** for your program. ●

## in memoriam

Our agency lost several members of the APHIS family from April through June of this year. We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

### plant protection and quarantine

Kerry Bryan                      Albuquerque, NM

### veterinary services

Susan Vogt                      Fort Collins, CO

### wildlife services

Melvin Fortner                      Hazelton, ND  
Travis Tumbleson                      State College, PA

## legislative and public affairs

# prospects for a farm bill in 2013

By Abbey Fretz

Every 5 years or so, Congress writes new agriculture policy known as the “Farm Bill.” Usually, people outside of agriculture don’t hear about the Farm Bill, but this year was different. After the U.S. Senate passed its Farm Bill in June, the House of Representatives voted down a bipartisan committee version.

### [farm bill limbo]

The House was able to regroup and pass its Farm Bill in July, but the prospects for a Farm Bill in 2013 remain in limbo. The Senate bill differs from the House-passed bill, which means a select group of Senators and Representatives will need to work out the differences in a conference committee.

The agreed-upon bill must then pass the full House and Senate and be signed by the President to become effective. However, leaders in the House have not been willing to begin that process.

### [what does this mean for APHIS?]

Unlike many other USDA agencies that need Congress to pass a Farm Bill so they can continue to carry out their programs, APHIS generally operates under permanent laws that don’t need to be reauthorized. However, there are a number of provisions in the not-yet-

passed 2013 Farm Bills that are of interest to the agency. These involve: a provision for permanent authority to annually release funding for Section 10201 plant pest and disease projects and to increase funding to that program; a requirement that APHIS develop an alternative certification program for trichinae;

codification of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network; and a provision making it illegal to attend an animal fighting event.

To view the entire list of Farm Bill provisions that may impact APHIS, visit the **Congressional News page** on the APHIS Portal. ●

## personal benefits statements go paperless

Beginning this year, your annual Personal Benefits Statement will no longer be mailed to your home. Instead, statements are now available online only.

Every year, the National Finance Center generates a Personal Benefits Statement to provide an overview of all of your Federal benefits. Previously, statements were mailed in April; now, they are available electronically through your Employee Personal Page (EPP).

To view this year’s statement, log in and visit your **MyEPP page**. Your MyEPP page is also available through the **APHIS Portal** with no additional login needed.

Please take the time to review your annual statement. It has helpful information about:

- Annual compensation
- Leave balances
- Health and life insurance
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Retirement system
- Social Security/Medicare deductions
- Dental and vision insurance
- Long-term care insurance
- Flexible spending account

Benefits amounts, such as retirement and TSP annuities and length of service dates are estimates. If you are considering retirement, please contact your **Benefits Specialist**. ●

wildlife services  
**using mice to tackle the brown tree snake**

By Scott Moore

Look, up in the sky—it's a bird, it's a plane, it's a...parachuting mouse?

Over the next 16 months, up to 40,000 dead mice baited with acetaminophen will be raining down on an area of Guam around Andersen Air Force Base. It's all part of a Wildlife Services (WS) effort to combat invasive brown tree snakes (BTS) and prevent their spread to other areas of the Pacific Rim, including Hawaii.

An estimated 1–2 million BTS live on the western Pacific island and cause significant damage. BTS cause power outages that

annually result in at least \$1 million in damages and lost economic

productivity. Additionally, the snakes have wiped out nine native bird species, five lizard species, and two bat species on the U.S. territory—and led to other unwelcome ecologic changes on Guam. If the snakes reach

Hawaii, the impact could be \$2 billion per year, in addition to the damage they would inflict on the State's native fauna and flora.

**[harmful stowaways]**

BTS were accidentally introduced to Guam after World War II, probably as stowaways on U.S. military cargo ships. With no natural predators, BTS have become abundant, with an estimated 20 or more per acre of jungle, among the highest snake densities ever recorded. "There really is no other place in the world with a snake problem like Guam's," said Daniel Vice, WS assistant State director in Hawaii, Guam, and the Pacific Islands.

WS has been conducting operations to reduce damage caused by BTS since 1993. By using dozens of personnel, canine-detector teams, snake traps, and other measures, USDA, the U.S. Departments of Defense and the Interior, and other State and local partners have removed more than 150,000 BTS, preventing the snakes' potential spread aboard aircraft or cargo departing from Guam. As a result, no live BTS have been detected at Hawaiian ports-of-entry in nearly 20 years.

**[the achilles heel]**

Meanwhile, the WS National Wildlife Research Center has found the snakes' Achilles heel: acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol™. In 2010, WS conducted a pilot project involving aerial distribution of the toxicant in the upper forest canopy where the snakes spend much of their time.

To get the snakes to take their medicine, WS puts an 80-milligram tablet inside each mouse carcass and then hand-drops the mice from a helicopter. Each mouse is fitted with a biodegradable streamer designed to snag onto branches in the dense tree canopy surrounding Andersen Air Force Base, a major cargo movement site on the northeast corner of the island.

Unlike most snakes, BTS will readily eat a dead mouse. A BTS that ingests a single acetaminophen tablet will die within about 24 hours in a humane manner similar to carbon monoxide poisoning.

*Continued on next page*



*WS' Robert Aguero removes a brown tree snake from a trap.*



# brown tree snake

*Continued from page 6*

## [snake mail]

Though the BTS project comes in response to a specific request by cooperators and addresses a significant problem, the WS plan drew some negative attention.

An email campaign filled the inboxes of the APHIS Administrator's office and WS officials with tens of thousands of messages. The campaign was a reminder that APHIS programs often operate in challenging environments, where agency stakeholders bring many different perspectives to our work.

"I thought if there was anything that wouldn't have a constituency, it would be snakes," Administrator Kevin Shea said at an employee Town Hall meeting in April.

In the emails, people expressed concerns for the snakes and about the potential impact on other species that might ingest the acetaminophen. However, studies have shown that the plan will have minimal impact on other animals—in large part because the snakes have already wiped out most of the other species that might be at risk.

To learn more about BTS, check out the program's **BTS Web pages** and "**Brown Tree Snake, An Invasive Reptile**" factsheet. ●



*WS' Jacob San Nicholas places toxicant for brown tree snakes.*

## feds feed families 2013: time is running out

There's still time to help feed local families this summer by participating in the 2013 Feds Feed Families campaign!

The campaign runs through August 28, and Federal employees at all locations are invited to take part. The goal is for each employee to "strive for 25" and donate 25 pounds of food or more.

To participate, place your donations in designated collection boxes at your worksite. In Riverdale, boxes are located in the lobby and in program areas throughout the building. In the field, check with your local program. You can also make donations directly to local food banks of your choice.

For a list of program contacts and other campaign information, visit the **APHIS Feds Feed Families SharePoint site**. For information on items needed most, read **this guide**.

Since its start in 2009, the Feds Feed Families campaign has helped collect over 15 million pounds of food and non-perishable items. Last summer, Feds Feed Families collected more than 7.2 million pounds of food, with USDA collecting the largest number of donations. This year, we're counting on you to help collect even more! ●

# did you know ?



By John Scott

see the next page for more chicken news

**Did you know** that raising chickens in U.S. urban environments is gaining in popularity?

To better understand this growing phenomenon, Veterinary Services' (VS) National Animal Health Monitoring System conducted a study and issued its report **Urban Chicken Ownership in Four U.S. Cities**. Published last April, the report focuses on four U.S. metro areas: Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City.

Because urban chicken flocks are not part of the commercial poultry industry, little information is available about them. By improving our understanding of urban flocks, we can be better prepared for damaging disease outbreaks, such as avian influenza or exotic Newcastle disease.

Here are a few of the study's highlights:

- Overall, 0.8 percent of all households owned chickens. Chickens were owned in 4.3 percent of single-family homes

on 1 acre or more. For all other housing types, the percentage with chickens ranged from 0.1 percent in New York City to 1.3 percent in Miami.

- While less than 1 percent of households had chickens, nearly 4 percent of households without chickens planned to have chickens within the next 5 years, illustrating the growing acceptance of urban farming.
- Overall, about 4 out of 10 respondents were in favor of allowing chickens in their communities and would not mind if their neighbors owned chickens (44.4 and 39.3 percent, respectively). Denver had the highest percentage of respondents in favor of allowing chickens in the community (62.5 percent). In each city, younger respondents were more in favor of allowing chickens in their communities than were older respondents.
- Although over half of respondents (55.6 percent) believed that chickens in urban

areas will lead to more illnesses in humans, about two-thirds of respondents in Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City and three-fourths of respondents in Denver believed that eggs from home-raised chickens are better for you than eggs purchased at a grocery store.

For more information and the complete study, click **Urban Chicken Ownership in Four U.S. Cities**.

[inside] **APHIS** John Scott, Editor  
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john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov

Photo sources: APHIS, C. Clark (WS), J. Cruse (PPQ), A. Eaglin (LPA), T. Felix (WS), D. Flores (PPQ), G. Keirn (LPA), USDA.

Inside APHIS is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit:  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/inside\\_aphis/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/).

# “chicksbook” app wins people’s choice award

By Natalie Loggans

What do you get when you combine backyard chickens with NASA, APHIS, and a team of app developers from Bulgaria? The answer: an award-winning app designed to help backyard poultry farmers improve the health and productivity of their flocks.

In April, NASA held its **International Space Apps Challenge for 2013**. This annual event brings together international teams of volunteers to create open-source apps that address specific challenges submitted by groups and Federal agencies. For this year’s collaborative, 2-day long “code-a-thon,” more than 1,400 volunteers from around the world participated, taking on 58 different app projects that were part of the event.

And although its availability for general use is still pending, the award-winning backyard chicken app certainly captured people’s attention.

### [the chicken challenge]

By far many of the event’s app projects were space related, but others—such as the APHIS-submitted Backyard Poultry Farmer project—targeted more earthly needs.

Recognizing the NASA event as a unique opportunity for innovation, Terri Gallagher—APHIS’ chief information security officer based in Fort Collins, CO—contacted alumni from her APHIS leadership development group and requested app ideas for the event.

Larry Rawson—veterinary medical officer in Hawaii and fellow alum—responded, suggesting a challenge to promote bird biosecurity. With an assist from Jennifer Bowman, who works in the chief information officer’s unit in Fort Collins, Rawson put together **the proposed project’s specifications**. The specifications gave developers a basic blueprint of what the app should do.

“Our vision was to encourage collective action to bring awareness of poultry management delivered to any mobile device around the globe,” said Gallagher.

“People need to know where to go and who to contact for pertinent local information on poultry husbandry and health issues. An app could also help tell them where to purchase feed and supplies, as well as local ordinances on keeping poultry in an urban setting,” added Gallagher.

### [clucking call to arms]

APHIS submitted the proposed app project, and NASA accepted it, officially adding it to **the list of event app challenges**. By the time the event was over, 25 teams from all over the world had answered the clucking call to arms with home-grown backyard poultry apps.

During the challenge, an APHIS team of three remained on call to answer questions from, and give support to, app developers.

### [people’s choice award]

In the end, not only did the APHIS poultry challenge result in some stellar chicken apps, but the chosen winner of the backyard poultry challenge—an app called **ChicksBook** created by a Bulgarian team—also won the overall People’s Choice award for the entire event. The award was determined by popular votes cast via Twitter.

Considering the code-a-thon’s major focus on technology and outer space, it’s notable that an app assisting poultry owners on the

*Continued on next page*



wildlife services

# going green, it's the small things that count

By Gail Keirn



*By adding a new steam line connection between buildings, the NWRC Green Team reduced facility carbon dioxide emissions by more than 450,000 pounds annually. Green Team members (clockwise): Melissa Warrick, Charlie Brocious, Steve Greiner, and Jon Schneider.*

Climate change, pollution, habitat loss...it's easy to get discouraged when you hear about the challenging environmental issues we face today. Finding ways to prevent or reduce these impacts on our planet can seem insurmountable. But when "going green," it's often the little things that count.

Employees at APHIS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) in Fort Collins, CO, are doing their part to make the little things add up for positive change. NWRC employees have established their own "Green Team" aimed at making the workplace more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable.

The Green Team has also joined forces with others in the local community and is a proud member of the City of Fort Collins' ClimateWise program. The ClimateWise program's goal is to make Fort Collins a world-class community through climate protection, environmental stewardship, and economic vitality. In 2011 alone, the conservation efforts of ClimateWise members saved more than

\$13 million and reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 149,000 tons.

For its part, the NWRC Green Team organized and led small projects such as adding recycling bins and automatic light switches to offices. In addition, the team looked at larger projects that could have more significant impact.

One such project has saved the Federal government \$50,000 in annual utility costs and reduced NWRC's annual carbon dioxide emissions by more than 450,000 pounds. Through what has been dubbed the "Boiler Tie-In Project," NWRC put a steam line connection between two adjoining buildings on its 43-acre campus. The new connection increases energy efficiency by allowing an underutilized boiler to be used by both buildings. The boiler provides steam for laboratory washing systems and autoclaves.

"The boiler project has been a huge success," said Melissa Warrick, NWRC's facility

*Continued from page 9*

## chicksbook app

practical matters of managing and caring for their birds garnered so much attention and so many votes.

"When our team heard that the People's Choice award went to an app answering our backyard poultry challenge, we felt like we really accomplished our goal of promoting agricultural awareness," said Gallagher.

While APHIS has no control over future development and marketing of the app, keep a bird's eye view on your app stores. Chicksbook just might come clucking to a smart phone near you. ●

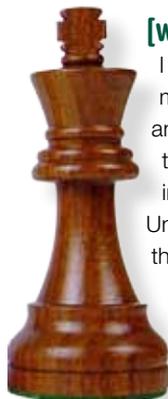
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manager profile  
with  
**gary washington**



APHIS Chief Information Officer  
Marketing and Regulatory  
Programs Business Services



**[what is your background?]**

I grew up in Washington, D.C. I served in the military for 10 years with the U.S. Air Force and spent 4 years in Europe. After leaving the military, I earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Strayer University and did some graduate work at the University of Maryland. I have 29 years of experience in information technology with the military, private sector, and Federal government—including my work at the Office of Management and Budget that I enjoyed as well.

**[how long have you been with aphis?]**

I've been with APHIS for 5 months.

**[most memorable APHIS experience?]**

Since I'm new to APHIS, my most memorable experience has been simply arriving here as the chief information officer. I look forward to having many memorable experiences here.

**[priorities in the coming months?]**

Ensuring APHIS information technology continues to support the APHIS mission and reaches its full potential and scope.

**[accomplishment most proud of?]**

No one accomplishment outshines the other. Leading with integrity and commitment and being a good person.

**[hobbies?]**

I love ballroom dancing and participating in the competitions. I love to go to the gym. I enjoy philosophy and the game of chess.

**[favorite movie?]**

*Gladiator.*

**[last book read?]**

*The Leadership Muse* by Linda Cureton.

**[favorite meal?]**

My favorite meal is a bone-in rib eye steak with baked potato and broccoli.

**[guilty pleasure?]**

No guilty pleasures. I like walking my dog. I enjoy being a good husband, being helpful to other people, and being a good person. I also enjoy and cherish spending time alone. And, I like good wine. ●

*Continued from page 10*

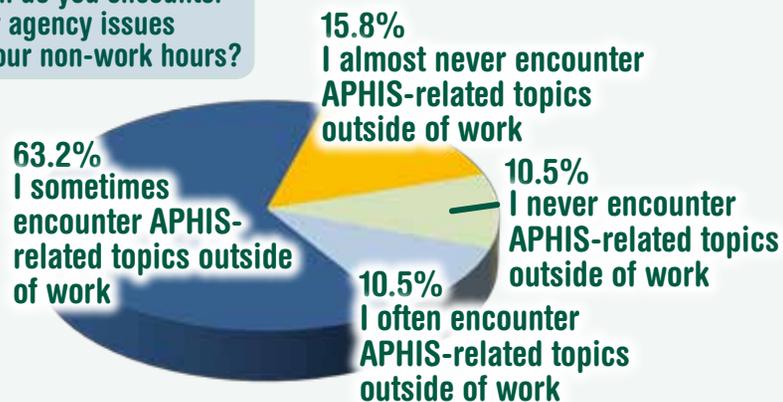
# going green

operations specialist and Green Team member. "It's resulted in a 24-percent annual reduction in energy use at the NWRC facility. Given our success with this project, I know the Green Team is eager to find other innovative ways to promote environmental stewardship."

To some, these changes may seem small. But, if others join in the effort and look for similar opportunities for improvement, our environmental future could be a whole lot brighter. To learn more, please contact Steve Greiner, chair of the NWRC Green Team at [steven.j.greiner@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:steven.j.greiner@aphis.usda.gov). ●

## question of the day

How often do you encounter APHIS or agency issues during your non-work hours?



One commenter added: “APHIS is everywhere. Seriously. It’s one of the fun things about working here—you can see what we’re doing in the world around us.”

Our thanks to everyone who responded to the last issue’s question.

### [next question please]

As we near September 30th and the end of the FY 2013 performance cycle, agency supervisors and employees alike will soon be thinking about their upcoming performance appraisals.

Some employees look forward to annual performance appraisals and enjoy receiving feedback from supervisors about their work. Others are more neutral or don’t look forward to them at all.

*Do you look forward to annual performance appraisals?*

- Yes, I look forward to performance appraisals.
- I feel neutral about performance appraisals.
- No, I don’t look forward to performance appraisals.

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/HFXTQNP](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HFXTQNP)

In our last issue, we asked employees, “How often do you encounter APHIS or agency issues during your non-work hours?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

## agency calendar

### september

National Hispanic Heritage Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

### FY 2013 APHIS Training and Development Calendar

provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

**Workplace Networking Webinar;** September 10, with 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. (ET) start times; register via AgLearn; contact Tanya Briscoe at [tanya.c.briscoe@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:tanya.c.briscoe@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

**Is This Safe to Lift? (Manual Materials Handling) Webinar;** September 11, with 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. (ET) start times; register via AgLearn; contact Ginger Dorsey at [ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

**Tribal Consultation Training Webinar;** introductory course; September 17 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 pm (ET); register via AgLearn.

Veterinary Services’ Professional Development Staff posts an updated **training calendar** that features upcoming VS training opportunities and points of contact.

**General Use Pesticide Workshop;** September 25–26; PPQ Professional Development Center, Frederick, MD; contact Rick Etzel at (240) 529-0264 or [richard.w.etzel@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:richard.w.etzel@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

FY 2013 performance cycle ends September 30.

### october

National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

**Writing Up!** followup course to Introduction to Plain Language; October 1 at 9:00 a.m. (ET); Riverdale, MD; register via AgLearn; contact Marilyn Miller at [marilyn.s.miller@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:marilyn.s.miller@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

PPQ Employee Development Toolkit (EDT) will be available beginning October 1 on PPQ’s Professional Development Center’s Intranet site. The EDT will help PPQ employees navigate the individual development plan (IDP) process. Contact Todd Dutton at (240) 529-0272 or [todd.dutton@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:todd.dutton@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.

Deadline for establishing FY 2014 performance plans is October 30.

### november

National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month. Watch your email for event announcements.

Deadline for submitting FY 2013 performance ratings to Human Resources is November 15.

Annual leave use/lose reminder: Annual leave subject to possible restoration must be scheduled either in writing or via WebTA by the close of pay period 23, which ends on November 30, 2013. For more information, contact Nella Roberts at (301) 851-2910.

Benefits Open Season runs from November 11, 2013, to December 9, 2013. ●

## volunteer spotlight joann cruse and todd felix



JoAnn Cruse



Todd Felix

In this issue, we follow up on our previous spotlight, completing our feature on APHIS employees who earned the President's Volunteer Service Award last fall.

Please join us in congratulating Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) JoAnn Cruse and Wildlife Services' (WS) Todd Felix. Both were honored for their extraordinary volunteer efforts outside of the workplace.

### [employee name and program]

JoAnn Cruse; State Plant Health Director; PPQ; Madison, WI

### [volunteer organization]

Zwingli United Church of Christ and the German-American Partnership Program

### [volunteer activities]

Cruse volunteers in a number of ways in her community, through her church, and with local Swiss heritage activities. In 2011, she participated in a week-long mission trip to Tennessee, where she helped repair a home damaged by flood. She also teaches Sunday school and is a member of the chime choir and senior vocal choir. In her community, she volunteers at a food pantry and as a Girl Scout leader.

Cruse and her family participate as a host family through a German student exchange program. They have hosted students for short

visits and, last year, hosted a German "daughter" for half of the school year. Additionally, Cruse has played roles in theater productions—*Heidi* and *Wilhelm Tell*—related to her Swiss heritage.

### [time given]

Cruse volunteered 60 hours for her church mission trip, 185 hours for the German exchange program, 137 hours for church activities, and 125 hours to ethnic theater productions, the food pantry, Girl Scouts, and school organizations.

### [organization web sites]

[www.goethe.de/ins/us/lp/prj/gapp/enindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/lp/prj/gapp/enindex.htm)

<http://personalpages.tds.net/~zwingli/index.html>

[www.swisstown.com/festivals](http://www.swisstown.com/festivals)

### [employee email]

[joann.m.cruse@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:joann.m.cruse@aphis.usda.gov)

### [employee name and program]

Todd Felix; Wildlife Biologist; WS; Lakewood, CO

### [volunteer organization]

The Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) and the American Lung Association in Colorado

### [organization mission]

CMC's mission is to connect people with the Colorado mountain experience. CMC is the premier membership organization providing human-powered mountain adventures that are safe, enjoyable, and environmentally responsible.

The mission of the American Lung Association is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Each year, the Colorado chapter runs a week-long summer camp—called "Champ Camp"—for children ages 7–14 with asthma.

### [volunteer activities]

As a Certified Climbing Guide (Certified by the American Mountain Guides Association), Felix uses his knowledge and expertise to teach other CMC members to safely enjoy rock and ice climbing. Felix serves as the Chair of the technical climbing section, where he teaches and oversees all rock and ice climbing courses for the Denver group of the CMC; he instructs more than 100 students each year.

An asthmatic himself, Felix appreciates the opportunity to show kids that they need not be limited by asthma; they can still engage the outdoors and be extremely active.

*Continued on next page*

# recent aphis retirees

In the second quarter of calendar year 2013, APHIS had 36 employees retire from among its ranks. We wish them all the very best as they enter their post-APHIS years.

## April–June 2013

### Animal Care

Lynn Bourgeois	Raceland, LA
Warren Striplin	Gilbert, AZ

### International Services

Gary Greene	Guatemala—GT
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### MRP Business Services

Barbara Lutz	Minneapolis, MN
Daniel Reid	Tulsa, OK

### Plant Protection and Quarantine

Betty Bryant	Raleigh, NC
Susan Doerfler	McAllen, TX
Mary Douglass	North Charleston, SC

Victor Harabin	Raleigh, NC
John Jensen	Cocoa, FL
Bruce Lewke	The Hague—NL
Jacquelyn MacCagnan	Fort Collins, CO
James Petit De Mange	Frederick, MD

Kevin Picha	Fort Collins, CO
James Stewart	Wendell, NC
Rosindo Tejada	Honolulu, HI

### Veterinary Services

Robert Best	Ames, IA
Mary Bjornsen	Fort Collins, CO
Robert Breitag	West Bend, WI
Terry Fultz	Ames, IA
Irene Hess	Fort Collins, CO
Theresa Houlihan	East Lansing, MI
Susan Johnston	Fort Collins, CO
Kami Lancaster	East Lansing, MI
Alan Palen	Newburgh, NY
James Provo	Greensboro, NC
Judith Rodriguez	Fort Collins, CO
Joan Sawicki	Orient Point, NY
Dean Stevens, Jr.	Ames, IA
April Wells	Riverdale, MD
John Wilcox	Shelbina, MO

### Wildlife Services

Judy Cogburn	Port Allen, LA
Jeffrey Green	Fort Collins, CO
Marie Hatter	Fort Collins, CO
Philip Robinson	Oklahoma City, OK
Willie Tradewell	Jena, LA ●

*Continued from page 13*

## volunteer spotlight joann cruse and todd felix

Each year, Felix organizes a group of 10–20 volunteers to provide 75–100 kids with a rock climbing experience at Champ Camp. The campers learn how to manage their asthma at Champ Camp, and they love the rock climbing.

### [time given]

Felix gives more than 300 hours of his time each year to the CMC. For the American Lung Association’s Champ Camp—a once-a-year, week-long event—Felix takes the whole week off work to provide 40+ hours of service during camp week. Before camp, he also spends many hours organizing a large group of camp volunteers.

### [organization web site]

[www.cmc.org](http://www.cmc.org)

[www.lung.org/associations/states/colorado/events-programs/champ-camp.html](http://www.lung.org/associations/states/colorado/events-programs/champ-camp.html)

### [employee email]

[todd.a.felix@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:todd.a.felix@aphis.usda.gov) ●

*To help you keep track of staff changes throughout the agency, we plan to include similar lists of new retirees in each newsletter.*

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## wildlife services keeping ground squirrels from missile silos

By Scott Moore

Build a better mousetrap, the saying goes, and the world will beat a path to your door. And anyone trying to prevent rodent damage may soon beat a path to Gary Witmer's door.

Witmer is a wildlife research biologist and project leader at the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC). In his 22 years at APHIS, he has worked on an array of projects designed to minimize damage to forestry and agriculture, with a recent focus on native and invasive rodent species. He has designed rodent management strategies in Cuba, Kenya, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States and participated in invasive rodent eradications in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific.

His most recent work—which attracted the attention of the *Smithsonian* magazine blog— involves the protection of nuclear missile silos in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming from the damaging actions of Richardson's ground squirrels. The foot-long rodents have tunneled extensively throughout the prairie States—and

under the fences surrounding hundreds of underground silos that house Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles. In addition to setting off security sensors, the ground squirrels have burrowed under foundations, undermined road beds, and gnawed on cables.

Witmer, Wildlife Services' (WS) Rachael Moulton, and former colleague Jenna Swartz

*Continued on next page*



*WS scientists are studying Richardson's ground squirrels to prevent damage at U.S. missile sites.*

# ground squirrels



Continued from page 1

have been involved in this project for about 3 years. To figure out a solution for their military stakeholders, the WS team first had to understand the behavior of their adversaries. At deactivated launch and missile alert facilities in Montana, the researchers observed ground squirrel colonies, excavated their burrows, and studied the animals' behavior.

"I've always been interested in biology," says Witmer. "I like the applied part of what we do. I'm customer-oriented. I like helping stakeholders solve problems."

WS captured dozens of the rodents and took them to NWRC headquarters in Fort Collins, CO. There, in a dirt-filled lab, Witmer's team challenged the squirrels' ability to get over, under, or through various barriers to reach a food reward. Richardson's ground squirrels are omnivores, but Witmer says they seemed especially motivated by peanut butter, oatmeal, cantaloupe, apples, and cheese.

The researchers' first barriers failed the squirrel-proof test. Below ground, the squirrels used their claws and teeth to tear through fabric similar to steel wool, and they squeezed through metal chain-link fencing with 1-inch mesh. Eventually, Witmer achieved success with buried metal sheets and gravel-filled

trenches. "The squirrels aren't comfortable walking on pea gravel, because it gives way, and they also can't burrow into it because it keeps caving in," Witmer said.

Above ground, the squirrels also easily defeated the first few barrier attempts. The researchers eventually found that polycarbonate plastic proved too slippery for the rodents to scale. The clear sheets also adhere to military security requirements that any above-ground barrier be transparent.

In November, Witmer began testing a combination of the most successful barriers at a missile silo mockup located on Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana. He is also hoping to test the effectiveness of a novel, rodenticide bait station developed by research colleagues in New Zealand.

"It's tough to keep rodents out of anything," Witmer says, noting that an effective barrier has "got to be very well built, because [otherwise] they will figure out a way to beat it."

Click [HERE](#) to view an APHIS video on YouTube about Witmer's research. ●



Click to view an APHIS video on YouTube about Witmer's research.

The logo for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), featuring a large red star with a blue outline and a white center, and the letters "CFC" in blue. Below it, the text "Combined Federal Campaign" is written in red. The background shows a crowd of people.

**Talk to a CFC keyworker today!**

[inside] **APHIS** John Scott, Editor  
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Photo sources: APHIS, J. Amend (VS), E. Clark (VS), A. Eaglin (LPA), C. Fall (IS), C. Franklin (PPQ), K. Law (PPQ), K. Miller (MRPBS), National Wildlife Research Center (WS), M. Palm (PPQ), M. Stephens (VS), USDA, Veterinary Services.

*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit:  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/inside\\_aphis/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/).

## administrator shea engaging with employees

By John Scott

Over the past several months, Administrator Kevin Shea has been meeting with employees from across agency programs to hear first-hand about their work and their challenges.

Since his appointment as Administrator in June, Shea has engaged in a series of events with employees. These include town hall meetings, field site visits, and small group listening sessions—both in person and by videoconference.

To date, Shea has traveled to Harrisburg, PA; Laredo, TX; Minneapolis, MN; Plum Island, NY; and Raleigh, NC. Using videoconference, he also sat down with employees in both Honolulu and Maui, HI.

“We had a cross section of employees participating—intermittent employees, permanent part timers, full-time technicians, officers, supervisors, and myself,” said Plant Protection and Quarantine’s Hawaii Port Director Noel Hashimoto, who participated in an August videoconference.

“We had a chance to speak and interact with Kevin which was great! And it was very interesting, engaging, and informative to hear

his replies from the perspective of his position as Administrator,” added Hashimoto.

In addition to these forums, Shea continues to reach out and listen to employees through the APHIS portal. As he posts new blogs and audio messages, he routinely checks out incoming feedback and comments.

With 2014 just around the corner, he is planning additional visits to regional and field locations in the coming year. Shea plans to keep listening to employees and learning how he can support them to ensure that APHIS thrives. ●



Administrator Shea visits with employees in Laredo, TX. Shown here (left to right): Gerardo Gonzalez, Kevin Shea, Jo-Emma Ortiz, Gabriel Rosales, and Eduardo Salinas.

## recent aphis retirees

In the third quarter of calendar year 2013, APHIS had 17 employees retire. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

### July–September 2013

#### Animal Care

Randall Ridenour Yakima, WA

#### International Services

Yvette Perez Marcano Buenos Aires, Argentina

#### Plant Protection and Quarantine

Joan Grafton Sanford, FL  
Pamela Meek Raleigh, NC  
Richard Miller Queens, NY  
David Thornton Lanai City, HI

#### Veterinary Services

Mark Carroll Cynthiana, KY  
Michael Greenlee Austin, TX  
Herman Morgan, Jr. Rayne, LA  
Leslie Personett Maryland, NY  
David Warner Raleigh, NC

#### Wildlife Services

Diane Benfiet Bismarck, ND  
Kathleen Fagerstone Fort Collins, CO  
Albert Little La Grange, NC  
Carla Oswalt Jackson, TN  
Kelly Parker Caldwell, ID  
James Schmidt, II Dagoon, AZ ●

# alternative strategies showing results in animal care

By Christa Anderson

## creating non-regulatory solutions

Animal Care's (AC) Comprehensive Compliance Analysis and Planning (CCAP) pilot project is tapping the benefits of non-regulatory solutions to improve licensee compliance. Using educational outreach, AC is helping licensees guide themselves back into compliance with the Animal Welfare Act.

AC's six-member Compliance Team developed the CCAP pilot project. AC formed the team in 2012 specifically to identify creative strategies to meet program goals. ●

"Our best ideas come from the field," says Animal Care (AC) Regional Enforcement and Compliance Specialist Laura Blanton.

In this case, the idea Blanton is talking about is an innovative pilot project called Comprehensive Compliance Analysis and Planning (CCAP). It's proving to be a win-win-win for all involved—yielding benefits for Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulated animals, their owners, and AC inspectors alike.

The project grew out of field inspectors telling AC's Compliance Team that some AWA licensees who have been continually cited for noncompliances would be receptive to participating in educational meetings—meaning collaborative sessions designed to share information and discuss how to troubleshoot problems.

For AC, the project is about providing educational outreach that goes well beyond simply citing noncompliant items on an inspection report.

### [how it works]

CCAP works like this: after AC personnel identify a potential candidate, an agency com-

pliance specialist reviews the facility's 3-year history, and reaches out to explain CCAP and ask if the facility would like to participate in the educational program. If so, the facility's regular inspector and a compliance specialist visit and spend time going over educational materials.

Next, they do a "walk-through" that serves as an educational moment. AC personnel and facility operators discuss identified problems and ask facility owners how they could not only solve them, but maintain compliance long term.

AC's questions during CCAP site visits tend to be open-ended. As Compliance Specialist Jeremy Steele explains, no solution is one-size fits all. "The point is for facilities to come up with solutions that will work long term," says Steele.

### [signs of success]

Since CCAP's launch in May 2013, there have been promising signs of success. One facility's citations for noncompliance dropped from 11 to 1 after participating in CCAP, and another went from 13 to 0.

In yet another example, a facility was identified for the pilot project because its compliance had steadily declined over several years. A site visit revealed a basic lack of understanding among the owner, staff, and volunteers about licensure expectations. AC's home inspector and compliance specialist addressed this in a group setting, and the facility developed a self-inspection plan that now involves a volunteer conducting monthly inspections not only to identify noncompliances but develop ways to correct them.

The result? The facility has now undergone two routine AWA inspections with AC identifying no noncompliances.

### [solutions, results, and efficiency]

Under the CCAP pilot project, facilities are tailoring their own solutions, regulated animals are receiving improved treatment, and AC's inspection process is gaining efficiency.

"We can tell (facilities) time and again what they need to fix, but if we can get them to do

*Continued on next page*

## veterinary services clean-up CREWS get busy

By John Scott



(Top to bottom/ Left to right) Randy Ellzey, Cynthia Morales, Jack Shere, Matt Shere, Susan Stromback, Beth Wittenbrader, Joe Woltanski, J.J. Haney, Phil Marriott, Jeb Boyd, Billie Mack, Dallas Meek, and Angie Roering. Other team members not shown here are Steve Jenkins and Leslie Chandler.

For many people, a trip to the Florida Keys means clear water, relaxing beaches, and brilliant sunsets. But for the crews of Veterinary Services (VS) employees who traveled to Florida to clean up a long-retired animal import center, the Keys meant hard work, hand tools, and sore muscles.

This past spring, two separate VS crews each completed 2-week work rotations reclaiming the former Harry S Truman Animal Import Center (HSTAIC) from overgrown vegetation and years of damage.

VS closed the doors on the Harry S Truman Animal Import Center in 1999, retiring the facility after 20 years of service in protecting U.S. animal health. Located on Fleming Key—adjacent to Key West—the center had been an active 80,000 square-foot quarantine facility leased from the Navy.

At the time it closed, it was in need of costly repairs, and its value as a worksite had been supplanted by newer animal import centers located closer to international shipping ports and airports.

After closing, the 16-acre site remained mostly untended as APHIS and Navy officials intermittently discussed its maintenance needs.

### [rolling up the sleeves]

Over the years, vegetation gradually overtook the grounds, and fences and structures fell into further disrepair. Vandals, wildlife, and weather compounded the damage. Early bid estimates for grounds clean-up alone came in at more than \$320,000. Recent bids obtained by the Navy doubled that amount.

With the situation worsening, VS management decided to form a plan and act. To save money and return the closed facility to a more secure and maintained condition, the program chose to roll up its sleeves and do the clean-up itself using work crews of VS employees.

With its goals of keeping the project cost-effective and safe, VS had to carefully manage many logistical details. After soliciting and selecting volunteers, the program first ensured that employees were properly prepared and trained to safely handle tools and materials.

*Continued on next page*

*Continued from page 4*

## strategies showing results

that on their own, it immediately impacts animal welfare and our bottom line,” said Steele.

But even with the successes so far, AC is clear on the point that CCAP doesn't replace enforcement. Blanton sees it as a support function of the inspection process. When compliance specialists reach out to potential participants, they make them aware that if AC personnel notice a direct noncompliance—something that poses an immediate threat to an animal's welfare—the visit reverts to a traditional inspection.

Even so, as the AC Compliance Team reaches out to more facilities, they're finding that many are receptive to the program's new outreach effort, especially since word about its success with other licensees is beginning to spread. ●

# crews get busy

*Continued from page 5*

For the project, employees used hand tools, chainsaws, chippers, and other power equipment. Each crew included a trained safety officer and was well-supplied with the necessary

safety equipment, such as eye and ear protection, foot gear, hard hats, and gloves.

Additionally, both crews included an employee certified as a pesticide applicator.

The first crew began its rotation on April 15, and the second crew followed with another 2-week shift beginning

April 29. Two additional crews are tentatively scheduled to complete overlapping rotations this January.

Among other things, crews tackled clearing vegetation, repairing fences, and securing door and window access points. They also decommissioned larger equipment, such as

generators and incinerators, including properly disposing of operating fluids and batteries. To date, clean-up crews have filled 30 dumpsters with debris.

“It was tough, tough work,” said Dallas Meek, VS’ team leader for the first crew onsite. “We had the highest temperatures they’ve had that time of year since the 1800s...Our crews really stepped up and worked hard,” said Meek.

## [stretching the dollars]

Throughout the project, VS has worked to stretch dollars as much as possible and to maximize the agency’s savings. Based on current estimates, the program anticipates that it will save about half of what it would have cost if they had used outside contractors.

To minimize costs, VS used rental equipment and borrowed tools from other APHIS work-sites in Florida. They also limited the purchase of equipment to smaller items—like chainsaws and shears—that will be later redistributed to other agency sites.

U.S. military personnel from the Navy, Army, and Coast Guard provided assistance as well. The Naval Air Station–Key West helped coordinate accommodations for VS crews at nearly a quarter of the price compared to other local rates. The Coast Guard made dining facilities available. And, the Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School located nearby provided water and opened its mess hall to VS work crew members for lunches.

## [making a good impression]

“Our crews were all about getting the job done and everyone pulled their weight. It was an impressive group,” said Melburn Stephens, VS’ team leader during the second rotation. Stephens was pleased by their progress, and apparently the crews made an impression on others as well.

“One of the best compliments came from the Commander of the Naval Station,” said Stephens. “He saw all we got done and made a point of telling us, ‘You all did a good job here.’” ●



*(Left to right) Dan Newsom, Mel Stephens, Chip Ricky, Able Perez, Paul Smiley, Casey Mitchell, Patty Fox, Andy Esparza, Jennifer Reynolds, Heather Bisette, Randy Snyder, Barry Bell, Berto Lopez, Manny Gonzalez, A.C. Welsch. Other team members not shown here are Carla Perry Harbour and Virginia Rodriguez.*



## julie cooper: guiding employees in the right direction

By Mandi Frederick

When Julie Cooper began in her role as Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services' (MRPBS) Ombudsman, the position was brand new to APHIS. Since then, Cooper has helped many APHIS employees navigate through MRPBS when they've needed assistance with administrative issues.

While employees should first use established procedures and work through their regular service providers—such as their contacts in human resources, financial management, and administrative services—they can turn to Cooper in instances when additional assistance working with MRPBS is needed.

Cooper often assists employees in locating the best point of contact to address their issue.

"Sometimes employees just don't know where to go for assistance. While I don't have all the answers, I can direct employees to the appropriate person to address their questions or concerns," says Cooper.

For example, she's guided employees needing to change their designated life in-

surance beneficiaries and helped others who were struggling with new automated systems.

Employees can also contact Cooper if they are dissatisfied with the service received from MRPBS; this includes instances when they haven't received a reasonable explanation about why a certain process or procedure

can't be used to meet their needs or if they weren't provided an appropriate alternative solution.

Employees needing assistance can reach Cooper by phone at (301) 851-2873 or e-mail at [julie.f.cooper@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:julie.f.cooper@aphis.usda.gov). ●

## touring plum island

In September, Administrator Kevin Shea traveled to Plum Island Animal Disease Center to tour the facility and meet with international veterinarians participating in animal disease training.

As part of its international capacity-building efforts, APHIS hosts veterinary officials from other countries at the Center. Peter Fernandez (left), International Services' Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Alfonso Torres (right), Professor and Associate Dean for Public Policy at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, led Shea on the tour

and discussed the Center's coursework and operations. Below, Torres explains a wall chart showing clinical signs of African swine fever and classical swine fever. ●



# did you know ?



By Christa Anderson

**Did you know** that before APHIS established the Animal Care (AC) program 25 years ago, Veterinary Services (VS) enforced the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Horse Protection Act (HPA) in addition to carrying out livestock disease programs?

The advent of AC—at the time called Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care (REAC) because it included what would eventually become Investigative and Enforcement Services—meant time and people devoted exclusively to seeing the AWA and HPA tenets carried out.

Among the many significant results of creating a program dedicated to animal welfare is the decrease in the number of “random-source dealers”— meaning entities licensed under the AWA to sell dogs/cats obtained from pounds, shelters, auctions, or any person who did not breed and raise the animals on his/her premises.

In 1988, approximately 180 people held such licenses. Now, there are five AWA-licensed random-source dealers in the United States. Although many factors contributed to the decline, two high-profile cases involving AC in the 1990s successfully proved that dozens of dogs held by such dealers were actually pets that had been stolen. The dogs were returned to their owners as a result of AC’s efforts.

“You won’t find stolen dogs in research anymore,” said Robert Willems, assistant regional director of AC’s Eastern Region Office, and one of the first VS employees who volunteered to move to the new REAC program in 1988. “It wasn’t common back then, but we did find them.”

Congress passed the AWA in 1966 after national media coverage drew attention to the fact that Americans’ pets were being stolen and sold to research facilities. ●

## in memoriam

Our agency lost two members of the APHIS family from July through September of this year.

We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Gary Meek Raleigh, NC

### plant protection and quarantine

David Szanyi Winter Haven, FL

# aphis capacity building triumphs in gambia, senegal

By Vivian Keller

It couldn't be—or could it? At first, Dr. Ousman Abdullah Barra Jobe, principal veterinary officer for the Upper River Region of the Gambia, didn't suspect that the terrible disease killing his area's cattle could be a scourge no Gambian farmer had seen for 40 years. But when he attended an APHIS workshop for 16 African veterinarians in Banjul on transboundary animal diseases, he saw pictures of sick cows that looked disturbingly familiar and he reconsidered.



*An assessment team holding a meeting with farmers at Niamina Dankunku (Central River Region), the most affected village.*

In a decisive demonstration of the benefits of APHIS' international capacity-building efforts, his concerns were swiftly confirmed—and help from APHIS and its international partners was on the way.

The culprit was contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP)—a highly infectious bacterial disease that attacks the respiratory

systems of cattle. It is a historically dreaded affliction. USDA established the Bureau of Animal Industry in 1884 in large part to combat the disease. Although CBPP was eradicated in the United States in 1892, it still occurs in Asia, the Middle East—and Africa, where the death toll among infected animals can be as high as 80 percent.

CBPP had not been reported in Gambia since the early 1970s, so safeguards had been relaxed: sporadic surveillance eventually took the place of vaccination.

Confidence in the Gambia's invulnerability to CBPP ran so high that when Jobe initially aired his concerns with colleagues at the Banjul workshop—conducted by staff from APHIS in collaboration with the sanitary/phytosanitary (SPS) advisor for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and USDA in early June 2012, and funded by the U.S. African Command—he met with considerable skepticism.

But Jobe persevered. Blood from affected Gambian cattle was collected and sent to neighboring Senegal's Laboratoire National

d'Elevage et de Recherches Vétérinaires (LNERV), a regional reference laboratory. In early August, tests confirmed the presence of CBPP. Subsequent investigation would reveal that cattle recently imported from Mali and Mauritania, where CBPP is endemic, had likely reintroduced the disease.

APHIS and its partners moved swiftly to help. After LNERV notified the World Organization for Animal Health of the outbreak in September, a team of experts from APHIS, USAID, and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization visited the infected areas a month later to assess the situation and determine a response.

In November, the disease was also confirmed in Senegal, which surrounds the Gambia on Africa's west coast and had also been CBPP-free for decades.

After consultations between the national veterinary services of both affected countries, organized by APHIS and the USAID/USDA

*Continued on next page*

# capacity building triumphs

*Continued from page 9*



*B. Jebang, director of Gambian Central Veterinary Laboratory, examining a sick animal.*

SPS advisor, each launched a vaccination campaign. The countrywide campaign in the Gambia has so far immunized 250,000 “eligible” cattle—healthy animals more than 6 months old.

Seventeen times larger than its neighbor, Senegal opted for a “ring vaccination” campaign, which controls disease within a limited area and is targeting about 170,000 cattle.

Although the spring of 2013 brought reports of two new CBPP outbreaks in the same Senegalese district where the disease first appeared, no new cases have been reported since.

That is good news for West Africa’s cattle—and a triumph for APHIS’ efforts to help other countries cope with animal disease.

“This is an excellent example of tangible outcomes from

capacity-building work. Direct lines of impact like this aren’t always possible to draw,” said Karen Sliter, International Services’ Regional Manager for Europe, Africa, Russia, and the Near East.

For the farmers of the Gambia and Senegal, those lines could not be clearer—or mean more. ●



*International Services’ Cheikh Fall (left in white shirt) examining a sick animal in a Niamina Dankunku village (Central River Region).*

## agency calendar

### january

**The APHIS Training and Development Calendar** provides listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted competencies.

Veterinary Services’ Professional Development Staff posts an updated **training calendar** that features upcoming VS training opportunities and points of contact.

**Workplace Networking Webinar**; January 14, 10:00 a.m. to noon (ET); register via AgLearn; contact Tanya Briscoe at tanya.c.briscoe@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

**Mentoring—Building Professional Networks Webinar**; January 16, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (ET); register via AgLearn; contact Wendy Johnson at wendy.t.johnson@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

**Effective Meetings Using Live Meeting Webinar**; January 29, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. (ET); register via AgLearn; contact Mirdza Fernandez at mirdza.m.fernandez@aphis.usda.gov for more information.

### february

National Black History Month. Watch your email for events and announcements. ●



## manager profile with **jacek taniewski**

*Director for Animal Export  
National Import Export Services,  
Veterinary Services (VS)*

### [what is your background?]

I was born and raised in small town called Suwalki in the northeastern part of Poland.

I am a 1983 graduate of the Academy of Agriculture and Technology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Olsztyn, Poland. I was in practice until my departure to the United States in the fall of 1989. I landed in New Jersey with one suitcase and \$600 dollars in my pocket. For 9 years, I worked odd jobs, including gas station attendant, handyman, painter, fixer-upper, and veterinary technician.

I am single father, blessed with the challenges of raising a 17-year-old daughter.

### [how long have you been with aphis?]

I started my Government career in 1998, with the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service in Russellville, AL, as the inspector in charge of the one of the largest (1.4 million pounds a day) poultry slaughter plants in the United States. I joined APHIS/VS in 2003 as the regional trade coordinator in the National Center for Import and Export. In this role, I was responsible for international negotiations



with Asian and Pacific countries involving live animals and animal germplasm.

Currently, I am working as a director for animal export. I am managing VS' Animal Export unit. I provide expertise for formulating policies, standards, regulations, and procedures for the export of live animals and germplasm from the United States.

### [most memorable APHIS experience?]

Crazy trip to Russia in December of 2007 where we opened ☺ the market for U.S. cattle. I also got food poisoning during negotiations and ended up in the embassy infirmary. And later that week on my way home, I was stranded at the Moscow airport for almost 24 hours.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

At work, to finish revising export regulations and to work with my coworkers on operational implementation of VS' reorganization. In private life, I coach my daughter to be ready

for college next year. I am also coaching myself to cope with her college departure.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

As a foreign graduate, I am very proud of passing the American Veterinary Medical Association Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates certification program in 1998 (while working full-time) and obtaining my license to practice veterinary medicine in the State of New Jersey.

### [hobbies?]

Cooking and meat smoking.

### [guilty pleasure?]

Fluffy cheesecake with strawberry topping.



### [favorite movie?]

*The Fifth Element* and *Foyle's War*

### [last book read?]

*Secret Wars of Mosad*, by Yvonnick Denoël.

### [favorite meal?]

Homemade fettuccini Alfredo with garlic and mushrooms or roasted duck with apples. ●



# keeping employees safe and trade moving in Mexico

By Darya Chehrezad

Imagine the challenges of working in a foreign country where your colleagues are spread across 2,000 miles, often in very remote locations. Add to that serious, ongoing security concerns and accompanying restrictions on travel, as well as many other complicating factors, and you will have some idea of the day-to-day realities facing more than 200 International Services (IS) employees in Mexico.

Over the last 3 years, drug cartels have been a major source of violence in the country. Keeping our employees safe is paramount

and requires a great deal of collaboration with the U.S. Department of State (DOS).

Due to ongoing safety concerns, in November 2012 DOS regional security officers (RSOs) proposed

significant travel restrictions on U.S. Government employees in Mexico, which would have limited most of APHIS' trade, safeguarding, and preclearance programs.

"Our employees in Mexico help facilitate a large amount of two-way trade every year that benefits both U.S. and Mexican producers," said Ken Miller, APHIS' security branch chief. Recognizing the programs' importance to Mexico and U.S. markets, Miller and IS personnel met with the RSOs to discuss alternatives that would keep employees safe and working. The meeting was a success—the RSOs modified the travel restrictions and created a "Live There, Work There" policy.

This policy recognizes that employees from the same area as their workplace are at a greatly reduced risk based on a number of factors. Some of these factors include familiarity with higher risk zones and a clear understanding of safe driving routes and emergency services in the area.

To further ensure employee security, APHIS and the RSOs continually assess threats to personnel and determine if, where, and how operations can continue. When violence increases in a given area, all parties evaluate the risk to employees, consult, and—if necessary—recommend that APHIS leadership suspend operations. Before resuming activities, APHIS security personnel and the respective RSOs re-evaluate the area's security.

## [training employees]

APHIS and the RSOs have also developed comprehensive emergency training for all Mexico-based employees. The training focuses on implementing risk mitigation strategies, procedures, and protocols and using devices such as GPS trackers and personal locator beacons, which alert APHIS, DOS, and U.S. and Mexican military in an emergency.

Although they faced and overcame some early logistical obstacles, Miller, IS personnel, and RSOs Fernando Matus and Jorge Becerril traveled to Uruapan, Michoacán, and Tapachula, Chiapas in July to train employees.

"The need to keep our employees safe while they work comes above all else," said Miller. "Continuous dialogue with our partners is a key piece of that effort."

Despite the challenges they face every day, IS employees in Mexico remain resilient and dedicated to the agency's mission. APHIS will continue doing all it possibly can to ensure that personnel remain safe, a commitment that Administrator Kevin Shea has reiterated to employees. ●



*International Services employees at the comprehensive emergency training in Uruapan.*

## volunteer spotlight mary stephens



Mary Stephens

As an APHIS employee, Veterinary Services' Mary Stephens contributes daily to the health of U.S. agriculture. And outside of work—as a volunteer for several ag-related organizations—she contributes even more to agriculture as well as to her local community and to youth development.

Stephens was recently honored with a President's Call to Service Award for her extraordinary volunteer efforts. She received the award in recognition of her lifetime volunteer service.

### [employee name and program]

Mary Stephens, Animal Technician, Veterinary Services, New York

### [volunteer organization]

Southern Shepherds 4-H Club; Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers Association; Pine Plains Future Farmers of America (FFA); Agriculture in the Classroom—Literacy Week.

### [organizations' missions]

4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults. Southern Shepherds' mission is to help prepare young shepherds to be responsible adults.

Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers' mission is to promote locally as well as American-grown lamb and wool.

The Pine Plains FFA is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

Agriculture in the Classroom—Literacy Week promotes reading and brings agriculturally themed books and resources into thousands of classrooms and libraries throughout New York State.

### [volunteer activities]

As a 4-H leader of Southern Shepherds, Stephens has planned meetings, educational events, field trips, and fitting and showing clinics, as well as assisted with a food booth during the New York Sheep and Wool Festival.

Stephens is on the board of directors for the Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers Association and manages the sheep breed display barn at the New York Sheep and Wool Festival.

For the FFA, she has judged district and sub-district Career Development Contests and supplied lambs for educational displays.

During National Agriculture Literacy Day, Stephens visits and reads to a class of second graders.

### [time given]

Stephens has been a 4-H leader for 11 years and given well over 3,000 hours of support to participating youth. She has been on the Sheep and Wool Growers Association board of directors since 2003, spending 2,700 hours promoting and supporting local sheep producers. As an FFA alumnus, Stephens has donated numerous hours to support the future of agriculture. She has volunteered as a reader for Agriculture in the Classroom for the past 10 years.

### [organization web sites]

Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Growers Association:

[www.sheepandwool.com](http://www.sheepandwool.com)

Dutchess County-4H:

[www.ccedutchess.org](http://www.ccedutchess.org)

Pine Plains FFA:

[www.pineplainschools.org/webpages/cmaceil/news.cfm?subpage=839086](http://www.pineplainschools.org/webpages/cmaceil/news.cfm?subpage=839086)

Agriculture in the Classroom:

[www.agclassroom.org/ny/programs/literacy.htm](http://www.agclassroom.org/ny/programs/literacy.htm)

### [employee email]

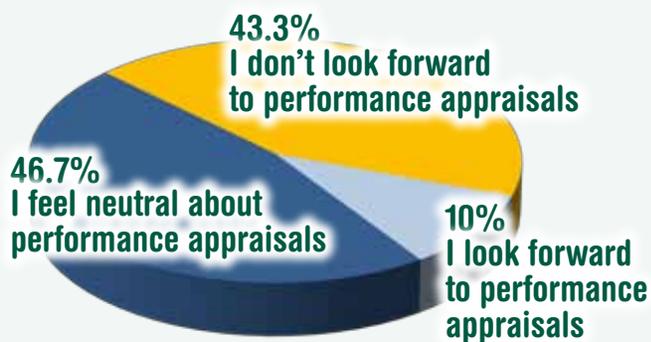
[mary.c.stephens@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:mary.c.stephens@aphis.usda.gov) ●

## question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “Do you look forward to annual performance appraisals?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received. Our thanks to everyone who responded to the last issue’s question.

Do you look forward to annual performance appraisals?



### [next question please]

According to the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results, 54.7 percent of APHIS participants in the survey have been with APHIS for 11 or more years. The results would suggest that the agency is a workplace that employees find worthy of investing a sizeable portion of their careers.

With that in mind, we ask: *How many years do you anticipate working for APHIS?*

- 1–3 years
- 4–5 years
- 6–10 years
- 11–14 years
- 15–20 years
- More than 20 years

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click **HERE** to take part in the poll.

**For more APHIS results from the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, please visit the APHIS portal.**

## work tip updating your contact information

By Mike Booth

Tis' the season to update your contact information and learn how to leave an out-of-office message for your email account and VoIP phone. Your customers, coworkers, and stakeholders will appreciate your holiday thoughtfulness when you're out of the office!

Enjoy these quick tips with a cup of hot cider!

### [contact information— outlook/global address book]

1. Open <http://addressbookupdate> in Internet Explorer.
2. Log in using your Windows (Domain/VPN) user name and password.
3. Edit your contact information.
4. When you're finished, click the “update” button in the bottom-right corner of the window.
5. Changes will be reflected in the USDA Global Address List within 2 to 3 days.

### [out-of-office email message]

1. In Microsoft Outlook, select the “file” tab at the top.
2. Select the “Info” tab on the left.
3. Click on the “Automatic Replies” button.
4. Select the “Send Automatic Replies” button and select your departure and return dates (if known).

5. In the available space, write a message for people within your organization and one for people outside your organization. (There are separate tabs for each group of people).
6. Message tips: Mention your return date, if you'll be responding to email while you're out, and who to contact (with their contact information) for immediate assistance.

### [out-of-office phone message]

1. From your VoIP phone, press the “messages” button. You will be prompted for your passcode followed by the # key.
2. For setup options, press 4.
3. Follow the voice prompts to change your standard greeting and record a message.
4. Message tips: Say when you'll return, if you will be checking your voicemail while you're gone, and who to contact (with their contact information) for immediate assistance.

Questions? Call ATAC at (877) 944-8457, option 1—United States toll free, or (919) 855-7888, option 1—International. Or, email [aphisremedy@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:aphisremedy@aphis.usda.gov). ●

## plant protection and quarantine **pop stops trouble before it begins**

By Gary Roush



*PPQ Ranger Ken Law in South Africa*

For the past 3 years, Ken Law has served as a full-time “Ranger,” but not of the Lone, Power, or Texas variety—rather, as more of the preclearance kind.

Law and nine other ranger colleagues work for Preclearance and Offshore Programs (POP), a unit under Plant Health Programs within Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ).

In addition to a host of other offshore safeguarding activities, POP provides preclearance, certification, and treatment services overseas for approved plant-based commodities, with the goal of excluding foreign plant pests and diseases before such shipments ever arrive at a U.S. port of entry.

POP’s activities are carried out at the request of foreign entities—such as flower bulb packers in the Netherlands or citrus cooperatives in South Africa—in cooperation with the exporting country’s national plant protection organization. In return, the exporter association is required to fund all expenses incurred by POP staff assigned to carry out a particular mission.

### **[the work of a ranger]**

Rangers take on foreign TDY assignments lasting anywhere from 2–4 months. POP also draws from a roster of qualified PPQ officers to fill assignments as needed.

The work may include monitoring overseas fumigation, hot water dip, or irradiation pest mitigation treatments; conducting joint inspections of approved fruits, vegetables, or flower bulbs at foreign facilities; and/or certifying that products and facilities meet all PPQ requirements. Commodities that have undergone treatment and/or preclearance overseas may then enter the United States with only minimal inspection upon entry, eliminating potential delays at port.

POP specialists are also sent on short-term assignments to foreign ports to certify—at a shipping company’s expense—that a vessel’s refrigeration capabilities meet all regulatory requirements for in-transit cold treatments to mitigate pest risks of agricultural cargo within the ship’s holds.

It is typically less expensive to treat a shipment of produce while in transit, and the

resulting time savings ensures a longer shelf life for the product.

### **[the global life]**

Although foreign TDY assignments often involve long hours, unpredictable lengths of stay, and unfamiliar languages, food, and accommodations, the opportunity to serve and protect American agriculture while in a foreign locale may have a certain appeal to qualified individuals with a hint of wanderlust.

As for Ken Law, he is currently wrapping up a 3-month assignment in Thailand, overseeing inspection and irradiation treatments for longans and mangosteens bound for U.S. markets. Other ranger assignments have taken him to South Africa to inspect pears and citrus, to Argentina to oversee fumigation of blueberry exports, and to Patagonia for cherry inspections, as well as to foreign ports to conduct cold treatment ship certifications.

Law is looking forward to the challenge of his next POP assignment, wherever in the world that may take him. ●

# claire franklin: entering **new** benefits territory

By Ruth Goldberg



*APHIS' Claire Franklin (right) and her partner, Katherine Derr*

In a great example of preparation meeting opportunity, Claire Franklin was the first APHIS employee to take advantage of the new Federal benefits available to same-sex married couples, enrolling in a self-and-family Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) plan. Claire has been with the agency since 2002, working as a data technician for Plant Protection and Quarantine's Citrus Health Response Program. She also serves on the Integrated Plant Health Information System Change Control Board. Prior to joining USDA, she worked for 4 years with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as an office automation specialist.

## **[tested by healthcare costs]**

Claire met Katherine Derr, her partner, about 20 years ago as members of an eclectic band called Waking Giants; Claire was the drummer and Katherine the lead singer. Eventually, the band broke up, and the two lost touch, but after the group reunited in 2005, they became a couple.

One of their big challenges has been health insurance. Katherine works as an office manager in a private company with limited health benefits that cost \$400 per month; the couple found themselves with significant medical

debt that could have been avoided if they were married. "We [Federal employees] have great insurance," says Claire, "and I wasn't able to put her on it." When they heard that the Supreme Court would be ruling on the Defense

of Marriage Act (DOMA), they knew they wanted to be ready if the opportunity arose for Katherine to qualify as Claire's family member in an FEHB plan.

*Continued on next page*

## **extended benefits: get informed**

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 26 that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was unconstitutional, APHIS' Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services team immediately mobilized to notify employees that Federal benefits now extend to all employees and annuitants in a legal marriage. Thus, same-sex couples are eligible for the same benefits as opposite-sex couples.

The interpretation of the law was treated as a qualifying life event, meaning that employees already in a legal same-sex marriage had 60 days (in this case, until August 26) to enroll in or change their enrollment in the health benefits programs, including life insurance, dental and vision insurance, and long-term care.

While only a handful of APHIS employees changed benefits packages during the special open enrollment period, now all legally married employees have the same options. Same-sex marriage is now permitted in Washington, D.C., and 14 States—California, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington; however, benefits coverage applies regardless of the employee or annuitant's State of residency. More than a dozen countries also have legalized same-sex marriages.

For more information on benefits programs and enrollment, visit **MRPBS' benefits Web pages.** ●

# new benefits territory

*Continued from page 16*

## [married—and not married]

The idea of marrying in Washington, D.C., where same-sex marriage is legal, “just kind of came up.” The couple had always talked about seeing the annual cherry blossoms, but had never done it. In the spring of 2013, Katherine announced they would finally be making that trip, “...and oh, by the way...we should get married when we’re there.” That made perfect sense to Claire. In April 2013, they were married on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Claire and Katherine reside in Sarasota, FL, where same-sex marriage is expressly prohibited by the Florida Constitution. This means they are not legally married in their home State—not guaranteed hospital visitation rights or property inheritance rights, and they face other limitations. They participate in their county’s domestic partnership registry, but it is limited in scope and does not apply outside the city limits.

## [preparedness meets opportunity]

Still, when the Supreme Court ruling came down in June, they were ready with their D.C. marriage license, and a recent Internal

Revenue Service decision means they can also file a joint tax return. “My marriage is finally treated the same as opposite-sex marriages, and I get to be equal to my straight

married coworkers. This will have a tremendous impact on our lives and on my personal experience as a USDA-APHIS employee. Thank you!” ●

## employees earn excellence award



Mary Palm



Laurene Levy

In August, the American Phytopathological Society (APS) honored Plant Protection and Quarantine’s (PPQ) Laurene Levy and Mary Palm with the Society’s Excellence in Regulatory Affairs and Crop Security Award. The award was in recognition of their outstanding contributions to regulatory plant pathology, crop security, and trade enhancement efforts.

The Society cited Levy and Palm’s combined efforts to prepare for and respond to significant quarantine programs such as *Phytophthora ramorum*, the USDA

response to soybean rust, citrus greening, daylily rust, gladiolus rust, citrus black spot, plum pox virus, and *Ralstonia solanacearum* Race 3 Biovar 2.

APS praised Levy and Palm—along with the work of their APHIS colleagues and cooperators—for helping to ensure that the United States has the tools, training, and diagnostic systems needed to respond to significant plant disease emergencies.

For more about APS and Levy and Palm’s award, visit the **Society’s Web pages.** ●

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## aphis trade accomplishments

APHIS employees work hard every day to keep U.S. agriculture healthy, productive, and profitable. Judging by the fiscal year (FY) 2013 figures and accomplishments, the efforts of APHIS and its many partners are adding up to success for U.S. producers and for the U.S. economy.

It was another record-breaking year for U.S. agricultural exports, contributing to what President Obama called in his State of the Union address “the strongest five-year stretch of farm exports in our history.”

For FY 2013, U.S. agricultural exports increased by \$5 billion, bringing the total value to approximately \$141 billion and supporting nearly one million U.S. jobs, all the while helping to feed the world.

APHIS played a key role in resolving 194 trade-related issues, including high-impact BSE-related issues—**see page two sidebar BSE and Trade**. The result is \$2.7 billion in new markets opened and existing markets retained or expanded.

These accomplishments represent not only APHIS’ longstanding work to retain, open or

reopen markets, but also the agency’s daily efforts to facilitate trade.

For example, last year, APHIS issued nearly 113,000 certificates for animal exports and almost 174,000 certificates for animal product exports. On the plant side, we and our State and county cooperators issued more than 605,000 Federal phytosanitary certificates, with our automated system producing the vast majority—95 percent. In addition, APHIS overseas attachés worked to obtain the release of about \$34 million worth of agricultural shipments detained at foreign ports.

*Continued on next page*



*For FY 2013, U.S. agricultural exports increased by \$5 billion, bringing the total value to approximately \$141 billion.*

# trade accomplishments

*Continued from page 1*

## [key accomplishments and more]

Here are some of the key accomplishments for FY 2013. For more details and information, read the **SPS Accomplishments Report, Fiscal Year 2013**.

- Reopening markets in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia for U.S. hatching eggs and day-old chicks (\$20 million/year).
- Regaining access for poultry and poultry products to China, Japan, and Taiwan—valued at \$529.4 million, \$175.4 million, and \$128.4 million, respectively. This represents significant progress in reducing avian influenza-related restrictions.
- Extending a pilot program to continue the export of logs from Virginia and South Carolina to China; addressing China's pest-related concerns about log shipments from several other States, accounting for \$578 million in exports.
- Obtaining the first-ever market access for U.S. pears to China, a market valued at \$2.7 million. USDA expects China to become one of the top five export destinations for U.S. pears.

Additionally, APHIS worked with trading partners and U.S. growers to identify practical, technical solutions that would allow us

to retain access to other valuable markets for U.S. crops. Examples include:

- Reaching agreements with South Korea allowing the export of U.S. cherries (\$74 million/year) and the continued export of California citrus (\$150 million/year).
- Gaining approval for the export of all cherry varieties to Japan, including ones produced under a systems approach that has been widely adopted in the Pacific Northwest and California (\$15 million/year).
- Continuing the European grapevine moth program's success in California.

The program's industry-driven approach enables the continued export of U.S. grapes (\$844 million/year) and protects California's grape and tree fruit industry valued at \$5.7 billion.

APHIS continues business process improvements to better ensure that U.S. importers and exporters can move at the speed of commerce. In FY 2013, the agency shortened the amount of time it takes to develop import-related regulatory actions by well over a year. APHIS also completed 22 commodity-import pest-risk analyses representing potential new market access for a total of 39 country-commodity combinations. ●

## bse and trade

*Continued on page 4*

In 2013, the World Organization for Animal Health's upgraded the United States' bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) status to negligible risk, reinforcing for trading partners that our BSE surveillance activities and safeguards are strong.

Veterinary Service and International Services employees worked diligently over the

course of 10 years to achieve the reclassification to negligible risk, and APHIS is now seeing the benefits of these efforts as it reopens valuable trade markets for U.S. producers. For example, APHIS recently restored the \$25 million market in Indonesia for U.S. beef and beef products, as well as the \$150 million Indonesian market for U.S. meat and bone meal.

## wildlife services

# snowy owl numbers surge

By Mike Booth

This winter a sudden increase in the number of snowy owls expanded the owl's range far and wide. Known as an "irruption," the population surge is presenting challenges for Wildlife Services (WS) damage management efforts at airports from the Midwest to the Northeast and as far south as Florida on the eastern seaboard.

Mike Begier, national coordinator for WS' airport wildlife hazards program, said minor irruptions are common in the northern tier of the United States and are observable as natural population fluctuations. But it has been more than 40 years since the last major irruption occurred, driving the raptors farther into the South. Some scientists believe an overabundance of food sources may have created the population boom.

And now as these territorial raptors are divvying up available hunting ground, they are coming up short. This winter, sightings of snowy owls have been reported in Arkansas, Florida, and even Bermuda.

The snowy owl is the largest owl in North America and can cause major damage to aircraft. Before the irruption year, between 1990 and 2012, the Federal Aviation Administration reported 84 collisions between snowy

owls and aircraft, totaling 147 hours of aircraft down time and \$440,000 in damage.

WS is partnering with **Project SNOWstorm** to track the owls' migration to learn more about their general movements, feeding, and habitat use. WS personnel recently assisted the project by placing GPS trackers on snowy owls at Martin State Airport near Baltimore, MD, and at the Philadelphia International Airport.

Since human health and safety is the basis for WS' focus on this issue, the program hopes to use the collected data for collision prevention efforts at airports. Early data illustrate the magnitude of the irruption and WS' response. During fiscal year 2013, WS managed snowy owl issues at airports in 10 States and relocated or dispersed 63 raptors. In the first half of fiscal year 2014, the program addressed issues in 19 States and relocated or dispersed 584 snowy owls. ●



*Wildlife Services' Jenny Dzimielna works with owl researcher Scott Weidensaul to fit a backpack transmitter for tracking.*

### irruption basics

*For more info, see [www.projectsnowstorm.org](http://www.projectsnowstorm.org)*



- Irruption of a natural population: to undergo a sudden upsurge in numbers especially when natural ecological balances and checks are disturbed.
- The 2013 irruption is the largest the East Coast has seen in 40–50 years.
- Snowy owls are attracted to airports because the areas typically resemble tundra habitat.
- Snowy Owl Diet: An adult may eat more than 1,600 lemmings per year and may supplement its diet with rabbits, rodents, birds, and fish.
- Size/Weight: 3.5 to 6.5 pounds, 20-28 inch body with a 4.2 to 4.8 foot wingspan.

# grand opening in los angeles



By Workabeba Yigzaw

On February 6, APHIS held a grand opening for its new Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station and Animal Import Center.

The facility was built to better meet import needs in the Los Angeles area and as part of the agency's larger effort to ensure that all inspection stations are brought up to APHIS standards. With the new building, the agency also seized the opportunity to combine two Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) work units—plant inspection station and Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance employees—together under one roof.

Each year, plant health safeguarding specialists inspect a large volume of plants that are mailed, carried, and shipped into the United States by brokers, travelers, and nursery owners. In fiscal year 2013, the Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station inspected over 108 million imported plants—not to mention seeds and other plant material presented for inspection.

The new facility is also home to Veterinary Services' Animal Import Center staff, which includes veterinarians, animal health technicians, and document examiners. They supervise importation and quarantines for livestock, poultry, and zoo animals entering through Los Angeles International Airport. In addition, the VS staff handles import inspections, endorses

international health certificates, conducts on-farm pre-export inspections, and supervises the export of horses, livestock, and zoo animals, as well as the export of dogs and cats to certain rabies-free countries.

## [good for agriculture and the environment]

The new facility was designed and constructed to meet the agency's work needs and also green-building certification standards (LEED Silver) that are good for the environment.

Design features include:

- Low water-use fixtures and services;
- Native landscaping;
- Laboratories and inspection rooms;
- Increased dock space to serve more trucks of all sizes (from vans to 53-foot trucks) simultaneously; and,
- Space to conduct training for partners in Customs and Border Protection (CBP), stakeholders, and other cooperators.

The grand opening of the Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station and Animal Import Center also provided an opportunity to celebrate USDA's partnership with CBP, the California Department of Agriculture, stakeholders, and industry representatives. ●

*Continued from page 2*

# bse and trade

Administrator Kevin Shea has made it one of his top goals to eliminate all remaining trade barriers from the first BSE detection in the United States in December 2003. For more, visit the **BSE and Trade** section of the Administrator's Vision and Goals portal pages.

The \$6.2 billion in exports of U.S.-origin beef and beef products during calendar year 2013 far surpasses the \$3.9 figure for 2003; however, 20 trading partners still maintain BSE-related restrictions preventing the importation of all U.S. beef, beef products, and live cattle.

We will continue to work closely with our partners in USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, as well as the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, to leverage our negligible BSE risk status and open more doors for U.S. agricultural exports. ●



*PPQ Botanist Jamal Al-Henaid answers questions about plant material for tour groups during the grand opening.*

# this survival guide is for you

By John Scott



visit the  
**survival guide  
for program  
planning and  
management**

As APHIS employees we often wear many hats at work. We get asked to step into new projects, take on unfamiliar tasks, or to help rethink and revamp existing programs or activities.

Do any of these sound familiar?

- You've been asked to help justify a budget but don't know what information to provide.
- You have a new suggestion regarding field work but aren't sure about the environmental implications and how to learn more.
- You're assigned to help evaluate a project's progress but aren't clear about first steps.

The new **Survival Guide for Program Planning and Management** provides valuable information on these topics—and more!

The Survival Guide offers helpful information on all facets of program and project planning. Plus, it provides useful information on the other critically important parts of your work cycle: evaluating and monitoring results.

## [what's inside]

As a resource tool, the Survival Guide meets you right where you are, and it's organized to help with your specific needs. For example, if you're a new or aspiring manager, the guide offers a full range of resources—comprehensively breaking down all the pieces and parts of planning, evaluating, and monitoring.

Or, if you're a seasoned manager looking to revitalize a program and you want information specifically about performance metrics, the guide covers that too.

And, if you're part of a new project team and your role is to lead the team through some key decision points, then the Survival Guide's "decision support" section is for you.

Developed by APHIS' Policy and Program Development, the Survival Guide is organized by topic and easily navigated as a reference manual. Sections contain straightforward explanations, examples, and key point summaries.

## **Survival Guide for Program Planning and Management**

### **Planning**

- Decision Support
- Developing Basic Program Rationale
- Strategic Planning
- Operational Planning
- Project Management Overview
- Budget as a Management Tool
- Rulemaking
- Environmental Compliance

### **Evaluation and Monitoring**

- Performance Metrics and Measures
- Business Process Improvement
- Comprehensive Program Reviews and Monitoring
- Evidence of Review and Evaluation

Visit the **Survival Guide** online today! ●

# phony pallets pose pest problems

By Gary Roush



*Sample stamp, courtesy of Carolina Inspection Services, Inc.*

What do Nike shoes, Gucci purses, Rolex watches and wood packaging materials (WPM) have in common? They have all been the target of counterfeit activities. And although wood pallets with counterfeit markings may not be as stylish as a Rolex, they can still be costly—especially to U.S. agriculture and natural resources.

WPM containing residual insect eggs/larvae has been responsible for many introductions of exotic forest pests—including emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle—into the United States. To prevent further spread of exotic forest pests through WPM, APHIS and fellow signatories to the International Plant Protection Convention abide by a 2002 agreement that requires all WPM—with certain specific exemptions—used in international commerce to be heat-treated or fumigated with methyl bromide.

After treatment, each piece of WPM must be stamped with a two-letter code indicating the manufacturing country, the type of treatment used, and a unique number identifying the specific WPM manufacturer (see illustration).

These stamps visually indicate to port authorities worldwide that the wood used to transport an imported shipment has been treated to mitigate against forest pests.

Under Memorandums of Understanding with APHIS, the American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC) and the National Wooden Pallet and Container Association, working in collaboration with 23 accredited independent third-party agencies, monitor compliance with the program's requirements at approximately 5,100 WPM manufacturers nationwide. The third-party agencies continually audit how much treated wood each manufacturer produces or purchases, and compare that figure against the company's invoices for completed pallets.

### [not playing by the rules]

Unfortunately, sometimes companies—both here and abroad—choose not to play by the rules. Some try to save money by cutting corners and shipping unmarked or fraudulently marked, untreated WPM. If incoming WPM arrives at a port unmarked, port officials

have the authority to refuse entry of the entire shipment.

WPM counterfeiting can take various forms. For example, a WPM manufacturer may use its legitimate stamp to mark untreated WPM. Such a violation by a domestic manufacturer can result in the company's suspension from the certification program for up to 180 days, along with enforcement action by APHIS. APHIS alerts its overseas counterparts whenever it finds evidence of fraudulently marked foreign WPM.

There have also been instances when a WPM manufacturer has engaged in blatant counterfeiting by stealing or forging the stamp of a legitimate stamp owner—a violation of both the Plant Protection Act and trademark law. The largest penalty to date for trademark violation resulting from WPM counterfeiting was an almost-\$1 million civil judgment issued against a New York packing freight company.

*Continued on next page*

# vmo observer information with personality

The **VMO Observer**—a Veterinary Services’ SharePoint page—offers something for non-veterinarians and veterinarians alike and is well worth a new bookmark in your web browser.

For agency veterinarians, it provides helpful information, discussions, and advice about animal disease investigations.

The site connects employees with resources for efficient and effective animal disease surveillance, diagnosis, and response.

And, for non-veterinarians, the site serves up interesting stories from the field—stories that capture the challenges, insights, and, at times, even the humor that comes with the job. Recent posts include: **“What’s the Magic Word? Wickenburg!”** and, **“The Pleasure of Working on a NAHMS Study.”**

The VMO Observer provides a balanced blend of professional insight and personal

observations; it also gives employees a place to share expertise and tap the network of fellow agency animal health professionals.

Site content is reviewed by a team of volunteer moderators with help from a cadre of subject matter experts. ●



## phony pallets

*Continued from page 6*

In another instance, a pallet company was marking its goods using a stolen stamp taken by an employee from his previous employer. In a Texas case, a man in charge of a wholesale grocery’s shipping operations tried to save time and money by forging a copy of a legitimate stamp and using it to mark untreated pallets that moved back and forth across the border. His counterfeit-ing scheme was uncovered because the impression made by the bogus stamp was significantly smaller than a legitimate one; he had copied the design from a shrunken image that appeared in an advertisement.

### **[stopping counterfeit stamps]**

APHIS’ Investigative Enforcement Services (IES) has investigated more than 100 cases of domestic WPM fraud. IES first works to determine if there is fraudulent activity. If there is substantial evidence indicating so, IES may send the case to USDA’s Office of the General Counsel for formal administrative action. In cases with strong evidence of willful and knowing fraud, the Office of Inspector General or the Department of Justice may pursue criminal charges. A former president of ALSC was recently quoted as saying “In every case we know about, APHIS’ involvement has stopped illegal activity immediately.” ●

# 2014 farm bill signed into law

By Abbey Fretz

On February 7, President Obama signed into law the long-awaited Agricultural Act of 2014, better known as the 2014 Farm Bill. After several years of congressional debate, agencies across USDA are now focused on implementing Farm Bill programs across the country.

A number of provisions in the Farm Bill will strengthen APHIS' core mission of protecting U.S. agricultural and natural resources by better allowing us to protect plant and animal health.

Two key Plant Protection and Quarantine programs were strengthened in the bill: The 2008 Farm Bill Section 10201 program and the National Clean Plant Health Network were combined and given additional funding. Together, these programs give APHIS extra tools—such as, research to improve plant pest identification; enhanced efforts against fruit flies; and increased study of honey bee pests and diseases—and they help strengthen our partnerships to further the agency's mission.

The Farm Bill strengthens other APHIS programs, too. It gives Animal Care new authority that will better allow it to focus resources on those animals most at risk of being mistreated or harmed. It provides support for our new national strategy to stop feral swine from damaging agriculture and natural resources. And it codifies the National Animal Health Laboratory Network while authorizing a funding increase for the program.

The bill provides additional tools and resources to combat citrus greening and other devastating citrus diseases. This is a top priority for APHIS, and the Farm Bill gives our partner USDA agencies additional resources to dedicate to long-term research priorities to address this devastating disease.

## [USDA's implementation plan]

USDA has created a working group to develop and carry out a coordinated plan for implementation of the law. APHIS, in turn, has a working group made up of representatives of each impacted program and headed by Associate Administrator Mike Gregoire.

It is essential that we work with stakeholders as we begin thinking about how to implement our Farm Bill provisions. To that end, APHIS held two listening sessions in mid-March to begin gathering input from interested groups. We'll also be working closely with our impacted programs to make sure we bring the same level of dedication and creative thinking to implementing the bill.

## [more information]

For more information on these and all of APHIS' Farm Bill provisions, you can visit the portal's Congressional News–Farm Bill page. Go to the **Congressional News page** and select Farm Bill from the list of Legislative Topics on the left. There, you'll find summaries of the provisions of interest to APHIS, along with the legislative language. ●

# field representatives added to amt

Good internal communications helps keep APHIS performing at its best. That means making sure that information is shared and that issues are surfaced from throughout the agency. With this in mind, the agency has recently added field representatives to the APHIS Management Team (AMT).

Previously, the AMT consisted of the APHIS administrator, the associate administrator(s), and the deputy administrators from each APHIS program area. Now, the AMT also includes five representatives for field employees. By adding field representation to the AMT, the goal is to mutually enrich both AMT leadership efforts and APHIS field operations—making certain that key information is traveling in both directions between the AMT and the field.

The current AMT field representatives are: Rebecca Bech (Plant Protection and Quarantine), Rich Chipman (Wildlife Services), Andrea Morgan (Animal Care), T.J. Myers (Veterinary Services), and Mark Prescott (International Services).

During monthly AMT meetings, the field representatives weigh in on discussions and provide perspectives from the field; plus,

there's a standing agenda item for them to introduce issues that they've heard about from field employees.

Employees are encouraged to contact their AMT field representative to raise questions, comments, or concerns. ●

## agency calendar

### may

National Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Watch your email for events and announcements.

**The APHIS Training and Development Calendar** provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and descriptions of targeted coursework competencies.

Veterinary Services' Professional Development Staff posts an updated **training calendar** that features upcoming VS training opportunities and points of contact.

Boston Asian longhorned beetle eradication ceremony; May 12; Arnold Arboretum, Boston, MA; Contact Christie Bertone ([christie.a.bertone@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:christie.a.bertone@aphis.usda.gov)) for more information.

### june

Ergonomics Webinar: Is This Safe To Lift? (Manual Material Handling); June 11; Register via **Aglearn**; Contact Ginger Dorsey ([ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov)) for more information.

### july

National Plant Board Meeting, July 27–31; St. Louis MO. ●

# did you know?



By John Scott

**Did you know** that the estimated annual price tag of feral swine damage and control costs in the United States is more than \$1.5 billion?

That's a mighty big number and so is the estimated U.S. population of feral swine. There are approximately 5 million feral swine nationwide, with free-ranging populations present in at least 39 States. California, Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas have the highest populations.

The sheer number of feral swine alone makes them a formidable foe. Add to this the variety of damage they can cause and the disease risk they pose, and the situation gets even more troublesome.

Feral swine eat and destroy field crops such as corn, milo, rice, watermelon, spinach, peanuts, hay, turf, and wheat. They are also efficient predators and, given the opportunity, prey upon young livestock, other small animals, and the eggs of ground-nesting birds. The prey of these indiscriminate eaters includes threatened and endangered species.

*Continued on next page*



**visit the  
feral swine  
page on the  
vision and goals  
portal page**

## national program set to launch

With \$20 million in newly appropriated funding, APHIS is launching the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program. The program brings a national focus to the issue—strategically and collaboratively hitting the problem of feral swine more effectively than previously possible.

Wildlife Services (WS) will provide oversight to the APHIS program, with much of the funding going to WS State offices, and will develop programs to address feral swine by building State partnerships, leveraging additional resources (local, State, and Federal), and coordinating the many State partnerships for maximum impact and cost effectiveness. WS also will conduct research to enhance feral swine activities and collect biological samples for disease detection.

APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) and International Services (IS) programs will also play roles in the national program. For example, VS will be involved with conducting disease diagnostics and managing livestock disease data, and IS will lend its experi-

ence dealing with issues that cross U.S. borders to the north and south.

The national program's initial focus will be to stem the leading edge of feral swine's spread and then systematically reduce their populations. One of the primary steps will be to ensure that WS has an established an operational feral swine control program within each State where feral swine are present.

With broader partnerships, the new national program will also be better positioned to strengthen control operations in a cost-effective manner. For example, the program plans to develop and use regional teams for aerial control operations; the aerial teams can serve the needs of multiple States, decreasing financial costs.

To learn more about feral swine and APHIS' current work, visit **Wildlife Services' feral swine page** and APHIS **feral swine management playlist on YouTube.** ●

# navy dolphins make humanitarian splash in croatia— with aphis help



By Vivian Keller



*U.S. Navy dolphin handlers conducting training in southern Croatia.*

Croatia's press made instant celebrities of the six U.S. Navy mine-seeking dolphins trolling Dubrovnik's harbor last fall. But the dolphins' trans-Atlantic journey, and their humanitarian mission, could not have taken place without the adroit diplomatic maneuvering and technical expertise only APHIS could supply. That expertise came in the form of Marc Gilkey, International Services' (IS) assistant regional manager for Europe, Africa, Russia, and the Near East; Xavier Mennig, IS agricultural specialist; and Sara Kaman, senior veterinary medical officer with Veterinary Services (VS).

The undertaking was a worthy one. Under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Defense's Humanitarian Mine Action Program, the U.S. Navy had offered to help Croatia's armed forces train and search along the country's coast for unexploded harbor mines—relics of previous conflicts. Chief among the Navy's tools was a team of trained dolphins, whose biological sonar makes them uniquely effective at locating sea mines.

The concept seemed relatively simple: Fly the dolphins directly from their Navy Marine Mammal Program home in San Diego, CA, to Dubrovnik—an historic seaport and prime Croatian tourist attraction—for de-mining exercises starting in late September 2013.

But in mid-July, the plan ran into major hitches. Earlier that month, Croatia had become the European Union's (EU) 28th member. That meant Croatia now had to abide by certain EU regulations—which, among other things, designated only Zagreb, the country's inland capital, as a Croatian port of entry cleared to receive live animal imports. Further, Croatia's Ministry of Agriculture had submitted a detailed export health certificate for the dolphins to VS—and VS staff had never negotiated a certificate with Croatia for that species before.

So the defense attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Zagreb turned straight to APHIS and Gilkey, who used Mennig's careful deciphering of the complex EU regulations on live animal imports as his guide to action.

*Continued on next page*

## did you know?

*Continued from page 10*

In addition, their rooting of vegetation destroys native plants, clearing the way for invasive ones to re-vegetate damaged areas.

Their wallowing activities contaminate water supplies and impact water quality. And feral swine can destroy livestock and game fences and consume livestock feed and protein supplements.

Making matters worse, feral swine have been known to carry or transmit over 30 diseases and 37 parasites that can be transmitted to livestock, people, pets, and wildlife. For U.S. livestock producers, the disease risk posed by feral swine could be costly.

If a foreign animal disease, such as classical swine fever or foot-and-mouth disease, were to enter the United States, feral swine could spread the disease to domestic swine or other susceptible animals. Such diseases would be extremely difficult to eradicate if established in feral swine populations. Another concern is the potential reintroduction of diseases—such as pseudorabies and swine brucellosis—that have previously been eradicated from U.S. livestock. ●

## volunteer spotlight rey-michael olea



Rey-Michael Olea

### [employee name and program]

Rey-Michael Olea  
Smuggling Interdiction and  
Trade Compliance Officer  
Plant Protection and Quarantine  
Kenner, LA

### [volunteer organization]

The Krewe of the Knights of Sparta.

### [volunteer activities]

Mention the city of New Orleans and usually one of the first things that comes to mind is Mardi Gras. To the outsider, Mardi Gras looks like a parade of organized chaos with never ending fun. Each parade, however, is carefully planned by a group called a krewe. Often the krewes are social organizations. And many—like The Krewe of the Knights of Sparta, of which Olea has been a member for 5 years—also adopt a cause to support. The Krewe of the Knight of Sparta holds numerous social functions each year to raise money for and awareness of cystic fibrosis in children. The functions include a fish fry, the Sparta Soiree and Auction, a classic car show, and the Spartan Stomp Summer Dance and Auction.

Each year, the organization picks a ceremonial king to reign. For 2013-2014, Olea served as King of Sparta in addition to his usual organizing and participation in krewe events. The krewe also selects other royalty for the year,

including a prince and princess of Sparta. Last year, the honorary prince and princess—both diagnosed with cystic fibrosis—assisted during events and helped raise disease awareness.

### [time given]

Olea has been involved for 5 years and reigned as king for one year, 2013-2014.

### [organization web site]

The Krewe of the Knights of Sparta:  
[www.knightsofsparta.com](http://www.knightsofsparta.com)

### [employee email]

[rey.m.olea@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:rey.m.olea@aphis.usda.gov) ●

## navy dolphins

*Continued from page 11*

Although Gilkey's initial request for an exemption to allow the dolphins to travel directly to Dubrovnik was rejected, he made headway on the certificate by enlisting the help of Kaman. A 22-year APHIS veteran who has negotiated health certificates for everything from oysters to giraffes, Kaman soon found herself discussing extensive lists of marine animal diseases and certifications with her Croatian and Navy counterparts. Within just a few weeks, she had worked out terms that all could agree to for what she calls "my first dolphins." Meantime, the port-of-entry issue was resolved after Gilkey suggested that Dubrovnik be temporarily

designated a military airfield, paving the way for a nonstop dolphin flight.

The exercise went off on schedule—and swimmingly. After arriving in Dubrovnik on a Boeing C-17 Globemaster to the flash of media cameras, the dolphins quickly got down to business, searching the Adriatic for mines with Croatian and U.S. military divers and staff in tow. And the IS/VS team that helped make it possible was able to take pride in a job well done. "In a way, we were our own pod of dolphins, looking for mines in international waters," says Gilkey. "The key was teamwork. And the result...clear sailing." ●

# recent aphis retirees

Between October 2013 and early March 2014, a total of 80 employees retired from the agency. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

## October 1, 2013–March 8, 2014

### animal care

Irene Fernandez	Riverdale, MD
Gary Goldberg	Shrewsbury, MA
Robert Willems	Raleigh, NC

### biotechnology regulatory services

Levis Handley	Riverdale, MD
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### international services

Carolyn Cohen	Riverdale, MD
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### legislative and public affairs

Lawrence Hawkins	Sacramento, CA
Bevelyn Whitfield	Riverdale, MD

### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Drusilla Dukart	Minneapolis, MN
Leigh Eberhart	Minneapolis, MN
Annette Perry	Riverdale, MD
Barbara Recktenwald	Lakewood, CO
Anthony Santituro	Raleigh, NC
Lissa Scott	Riverdale, MD
Michael Thomas	Fort Collins, CO

### Plant Protection and Quarantine

Ramon Benavides	Mission, TX
Dollina Brown	Wilmington, NC

Susan Ellis	Philadelphia, PA
Randolph Foster, III	Phoenix, AZ
Tom Kalaris	Fort Collins, CO
Charles Izumi	Hilo, HI
David Kaplan	Riverdale, MD
Roger Lamp	Raleigh, NC
Paul Larkins	Raleigh, NC
Joanne Martin	Amityville, NY
Victor Mastro	Otis AFB, MA
Charles McNeal, Jr.	Fort Collins, CO
Arthur Medeiros, Jr.	Kahului, HI
Robert Meinders	Urbandale, IA
Henry Odom, Jr.	Frederick, MD
Joseph Ploski	Phoenix, AZ
David Renz	Wilmington, OH
Linda Schepers	Raleigh, NC
James Schoenholz	Raleigh, NC
Michael Simon	Riverdale, MD
John Stein	Riverdale, MD
Paul Sugibayashi	Honolulu, HI
Robert Vlasik	Mcallen, TX
Dawn Wade	Frederick, MD
Randall Wilkinson	Beltsville, MD

### policy and program development

Eva Ring	Riverdale, MD
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### veterinary services

John Akin	Hope, AR
Lowell Anderson	Des Moines, IA
Suzette Anderson	Ames, IA
David Bartling	Fort Collins, CO
Gary Baudino	Brownsville, TX
Steven Bengtson	Fort Collins, CO
Kevin Cassidy	Fort Collins, CO

Stephen Clemmer	Fort Collins, CO
Sandra Copenhaver	Helena, MT
Garry Cracraft	Cynthiana, KY
Teresa Dudis	Delavan, IL
Eleanor Eagly	Ames, IA
Janice Eifling	Ames, IA
Eldon Halvorson	Kenmare, ND
Barbara Hedberg	Ames, IA
James Hill	San Angelo, TX
Stormy Jones	Riverdale, MD
Billy Kasney	Fort Collins, CO
Elizabeth Lussier	Dryden, NY
Daniel Martinez	Zapata, TX
Tom Mclarty	Mutual, OK
Barbara Miller	Albany, NY
Jane Mussey	Madison, WI
Cornelis Noordermeer	Lafayette, AL
Joseph Odziana	Mattawan, MI
Carlos Soto Alberti	San Juan, PR
Ronald Uherka	Kissimmee, FL
Melvin Vermeesch	Port Huron, MI
James Williams	Lakewood, CO
Mark Wilson	Ames, IA

### wildlife services

Jerry Blue	Little River, SC
Frank Boyd, Jr.	Auburn, AL
Richard Christian	Waupun, WI
George Cornelius	Albuquerque, NM
Curtis Cruse	Lebeau, LA
Ronnie De Los Santos	San Antonio, TX
Nancy Gaines	Athens, GA
Mark Mayberry	Port Angeles, WA
William Nelson	Reserve, NM
Donald Rodriguez	Pueblo, CO ●

## information technology division

# the ABCs of the IT strategy

By Scott Moore



***“...we must continually think about what the future will bring.”***

***—Gary Washington, APHIS, CIO***

Coming soon to a computer screen near you: The APHIS Information Technology Strategic Plan.

Roughly every 5 years, APHIS looks ahead to its tech future, mapping a course of action to manage information technology (IT) activities and deliver services to both APHIS employees and agency customers. The resulting IT Strategic Plan gives employees and those who interact with the agency—customers, partners, and stakeholders—an idea of what to expect, technology-wise.

“As technology changes and our customers expect quicker solutions and better access to information, we must continually think about what the future will bring,” said APHIS Chief Information Officer Gary Washington.

The latest IT Strategic Plan—aligned with the USDA and APHIS overall strategic plans, as well as USDA and Office of Management and Budget directives—was developed by a team that includes the agency’s IT Leadership Advisory Council. The APHIS Management Team subsequently reviewed and approved the draft strategic plan, which was shared in March with IT specialists. They, in turn, will be involved in creating an operational plan

to ensure that IT projects and work actively support the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan, which is expected to be finalized this spring.

The APHIS IT Strategic Plan will have four goals:

**Enhance technology to better serve customers.**

To do this, APHIS will increase the availability of information. This includes enacting standards for data sharing and making available high-volume data (what tech types call “big data”) to support leadership decisionmaking. APHIS also is working to extend access to cloud-based services and establish an agency-wide electronic/digital signature system. In addition, the agency plans to make its interfaces more user-friendly for those on the go: increasing the use and capability of a variety of mobile applications and devices and allowing employees to deploy a virtual desktop no matter where they work.

**Unify IT service delivery and products/services.**

Unifying disparate data sources promises to increase security, deliver more timely

service, and even reduce costs. Already, data housed in Minneapolis and Raleigh have been migrated to the National Information Technology Center in Kansas City, MO; data currently housed in Riverdale, Ames, and Fort Collins will be migrated by December 2014. APHIS also intends to modernize its communications strategy—integrating voice, video, and data telecom capabilities—and expand the technical ability of USDA agencies to work within the same network and to share data.

**Secure APHIS IT data and systems.**

This includes investments in file and message encryption, and advanced cybersecurity tools that adhere to the privacy principles of USDA, APHIS, and our customers, partners, and stakeholders.

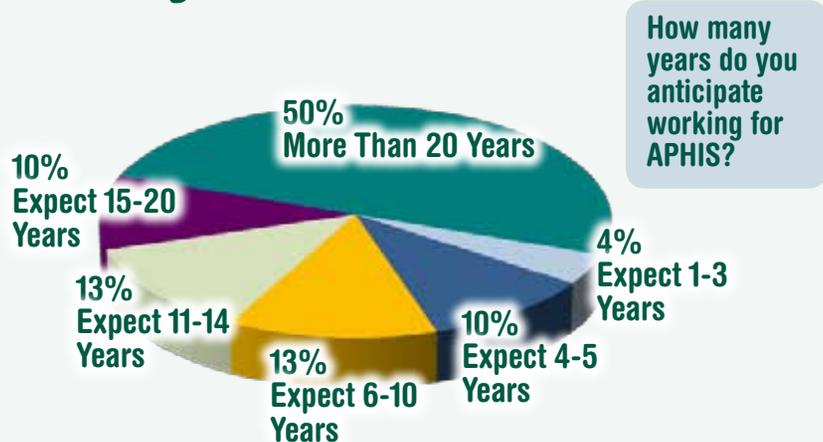
**Build an effective cadre of highly skilled IT professionals.**

To stay abreast of current issues, standards, and trends, APHIS needs to acquire, develop, and retain IT talent, and ensure that the best-equipped teams are on hand to effectively carry out business objectives. ●

## question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “How many years do you anticipate working for APHIS?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.



### [next question please]

In APHIS, some employees work on projects that cross agency program lines, while others find that all of their time and attention is devoted to working within a single program.

As a result, employees may vary in the ways they understand APHIS’ many achievements and all the important work that we do.

With that in mind, we ask: *How much do you know about APHIS programs other than your own?*

- Nothing at all
- A little bit
- A fair amount
- A lot

As always, your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click **HERE** to take part in the poll. ●

## wildlife services this class is a blast

By Carol Bannerman

Wildlife damage management is a discipline that is both science and art, and requires practical field experiences as well as traditional classroom study. At 21 universities throughout the country, Wildlife Services (WS) employees teach 32 courses on how to reduce the negative impacts of wildlife while conserving or enriching the positive aspects.

lab that is sure to make a lasting impression. It was a real blast—literally.

### [outdoor classroom]

Mississippi State University (MSU), where Godwin is an adjunct professor, recently received the gift of a \$1.4 million, 550-acre

*Continued on next page*

Most of these courses incorporate field and lab activities where students either participate in or observe actual WS operations on the properties of private or governmental cooperators. In an increasingly urban and technological America, the hands-on, real-world skills taught by experienced WS specialists sometimes provide students with their first field encounters. Students often rate the courses or individual labs highly—some saying that they are the most useful that they’ve taken.



*Standing atop a beaver dam, Wildlife Services’ (WS) Johnny Carter (center with hard hat) shows students how to string wire to detonate charges for dam removal. WS State Director Kris Godwin (right of Carter) watches the preparations.*

Kris Godwin, WS director in Mississippi, concluded her curriculum last fall with a field

# this class is a blast

Continued from page 15



video

watch video of beaver dam removal

property near Starkville, MI. The University has developed a management plan to use the Andrews Forest and Wildlife Laboratory for a variety of learning experiences, including forestry, wildlife, and other classes. WS wildlife technician Johnny Carter will work with Misty Booth, an MSU forest supervisor, on clean-up projects and to remove beaver and their dams that negatively impact the property.

In typical WS multitasking fashion, the parcel's management work was integrated into a class last November. Godwin, Carter, and Booth took the graduate and undergraduate students to the Andrews lab and demonstrated trapping techniques to prevent overnight beaver dam reconstruction, which is not uncommon. Although dams are sometimes manually removed with hand tools, the final demonstration was much more dramatic.

### [learning is a blast]

WS has a cadre of certified specialists skilled in the safe and effective use of explosives to remove beaver dams that can cause exten-

sive flooding—and damage—to timber, fields, and transportation infrastructure.

As the accompanying video shows, a stream's flow can be immediately released, relieving upstream flooding, by removing a dam. Watch what happens just moments after Carter's "Fire in the Hole" call, which has to be one of the most memorable closings to a college course ever recorded.

Similar WS cooperative teaching efforts take place in Georgia, Indiana, New York, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and other States. While some past students have joined WS after graduation, this isn't the only potential benefit.

Regardless of whether they pursue a career in wildlife services, natural resources, or some other field, all of the participating students gain a deeper understanding about wildlife conflicts and APHIS' efforts to manage them. ●

## in memoriam

We lost several members of the APHIS family from October 2013 through early March of this year.

We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

### plant protection and quarantine

Debra Lissau Idaho Falls, ID  
Ashima Sengupta Riverdale, MD

### veterinary services

James Earl East Lansing, MI

### wildlife services

Saidor Turman Fort Stockton, TX  
Marlyn Riggs Enterprise, OR

## animal care answering the call



*Animal Care's Alex Andricos (right) works with a licensee to prepare a bird for transport.*

### special thanks to

**AC Team Members:** Alex Andricos, Laurie Gage, Kathy Garland, Bev Hicks, and Jeannie Lorang

**Investigative and Enforcement Services:** Jose Pelayo

**AC Regional Staff:** Kevin Dennison, Bob Gibbens, E.B. Meek, and Tanya Tims

Sometimes a single phone call can make a very big difference. It was the end of the work day in the Western Region office when Animal Care (AC) received such a call from a concerned lieutenant with the Las Vegas Police Department.

The lieutenant called AC to request help with an urgent situation at the Las Vegas Zoo, where there had previously been some animal welfare issues. A variety of factors had caused the zoo's owner to close the facility the previous week, and the officer was concerned that its animals were in jeopardy. The sole caretaker—the owner—had limited resources for feed and was struggling to provide basic care to the facility's more-than 300 animals.

The situation was dire, and AC responded by immediately dispatching a team of employees to the zoo. Despite the sense of urgency of the situation, the team needed to approach the owner diplomatically. They had to find an agreeable solution that quickly addressed the animals' immediate needs, but there was also concern that if the situation got more complicated, the delay could further harm the animals.

APHIS personnel met with the owner and were able to guide the situation toward a productive solution: They would assist the owner with the zoo's closure and animal relocation. This strategy provided more direct overall support for the animals' welfare than would any type of traditional enforcement action. And it provided a permanent resolution to the existing enforcement issues.

### [busy two weeks]

With a plan in place, the APHIS team went to work tending to the facility's collection of mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish. AC staff ensured that the animals—which ranged from flamingos, to cougar, to chimpanzees, to Gila monster, and more—received appropriate care, food, and medical attention.

In addition to providing needed care, AC tapped its extensive network of facilities and organizations to help find new homes for the animals. "We put out an all-points bulletin," said Elizabeth Meek, AC assistant regional director.

Meek and others were impressed with the response. Zoos, sanctuaries, rescue organizations, and other Animal Welfare Act licensees

from far and wide stepped up to adopt and transport the animals.

AC employees spent long hours on the phone making arrangements with the new owners. And AC regional staff worked with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other State offices to coordinate permits needed to move animals, some of which were endangered species.

With the constant buzz of activity also came attention from news media. AC staff on the ground conferred with Legislative and Public Affairs and handled the media interest, which dwindled as animals were steadily relocated.

In all, the team was onsite for nearly two weeks. AC—along with its many partners—completed the relocations by October 9. Meek credits their success to the hard work and dedication of team members and to the diverse collection of people and organizations that got involved.

"A lot of animals lived because people put their differences aside for the sake of the animals," said Meek. ●



## manager profile with wendy jin



Wendy Jin, Branch Chief  
Eastern Compliance Assurance  
Biotechnology Regulatory Services  
Raleigh, NC



### [what is your background?]

I grew up in the southeast part of China; I earned my BS in biology and an MS in plant breeding from China. I graduated from Iowa State University with a PhD in plant physiology and molecular biology. I spent most of my career in industry prior to joining APHIS.

### [how long have you been with aphis?]

I joined APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) in 2008.

### [most memorable APHIS experience?]

My colleague and I delivered our first biotechnology inspection training in March 2009. I could never forget the hugs I received from field inspectors at the last day of the training before they left. It is encouraging and comforting to know that we were helpful.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

I am currently on my developmental detail assignment with the Office of the Deputy Administrator, Marketing

and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS). The work I do here in MRPBS is totally outside of my backyard, and I have absolutely enjoyed my detail so far. My priorities are to learn as much as I can and deliver the best products and services.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

I have recruited a large number of employees throughout my career. To watch my staff developing themselves, learning new skills, technical or otherwise, and having the ability and confidence to take on more responsibilities.

### [hobbies?]

Hiking, gardening, and learning acupressure to promote wellness.

### [favorite meal?]

It is hard for me to pick just one. I love to eat! Seafood.



### [guilty pleasure?]

Watching the entire season of *House of Cards* when it is released.

### [favorite movie?]

*The Shawshank Redemption*

### [last book read?]

*Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* by Robert Quinn. ●



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## animal care new technology keeps an eye on violations

By Tanika Whittington

You may already be familiar with microchipping, branding, and tattooing as ways of identifying horses and other animals. But have you heard about Animal Care's newest high-tech method for identifying horses?

The resulting photographs—along with any prior violation records, pedigree registrations, and other information—are stored electronically in the scanner. Because no two irises are alike—not even in identical twins—the images are an accurate way to identify horses presented for inspection.

Animal Care's Horse Protection program is using iris scanners as part of the agency's efforts to end horse soring—the practice of intentionally inflicting pain to horses' limbs to accentuate their gait so they will score higher at competitions.

### [the benefits]

The use of iris scanners came in response to the USDA Office of the Inspector

*Continued on next page*

First used by the program in 2013, the hand-held scanners simply and accurately identify horses before they are inspected at walking horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions.

### [how it works]

The scanners contain specialized cameras that allow inspectors to photograph the iris of a horse's eye. An inspector positions the camera about 12–14 inches from the animal's eye, exposing it to light that is approximately equal to the brightness of a sunny day.



*An inspector uses an iris scanner to identify a horse prior to show.*

## international capacity building

# training in pakistan offers opportunities

By Ben Kaczmarski and John Scott



*Ben Kaczmarski leads a discussion during training in Pakistan.*

Training abounds at APHIS. The agency routinely provides employees with professional development courses, offers classes through AgLearn, and coordinates mentoring opportunities with fellow colleagues. APHIS even hosts animal- and plant-related training courses for international groups visiting the United States.

However, there are some kinds of training that are less than routine and that take agency employees down a very different road. One recent training landed APHIS' Ben Kaczmarski on such a road—a narrow, dusty road in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Kaczmarski travelled to Pakistan as a presenter for a distance learning program administered through APHIS' International Services (IS) and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

"On the way to class, the driver warned that the road was about to change," said Kaczmarski, who works on the agency's Regulatory Analysis and Development staff. "I thought he meant that we were taking a new route. He meant that we were about to go off pavement."

For Kaczmarski—and APHIS' Lottie Erikson, who presented a training session just prior to him—the training road in Pakistan brought other unexpected moments and opportunities as well.

### [training for a future]

IS and FAS began the training initiative in 2011 to support Pakistan's efforts to develop a plant health program consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) standards. Since the program's launch, APHIS has provided three training modules: a general overview; an introduction to the WTO's principles, standards, and terminology; and an overview of the ways in which APHIS responds to a request for market access for a new commodity. Each module includes an online training component followed by live training sessions hosted in country.

The training program offers several layered benefits to Pakistan's agricultural efforts. It helps build relations between Pakistan's agricultural and technical staffs and between Pakistan officials and APHIS—as well as other U.S. partners. And by putting the

*Continued on next page*

*Continued from page 1*

## new technology

General's 2010 audit of the Horse Protection program. The audit recommended revising and enforcing regulations to prohibit horses disqualified as sore from competing in all classes at horse shows, exhibitions, or other horse-related events. The audit also recommended regulatory changes to require that each horse be clearly and uniquely identified by a reliable, objective, and permanently attached or embedded device.

By pairing a unique iris image with other records, the scanners help Animal Care prevent disqualified horses from being reentered. Horse owners and trainers are far less likely to attempt reentering an event—or entering subsequent prohibited events—knowing that an iris scan would pull up stored records and alert an inspector to a prior violation.

Iris scanners also benefit horse buyers and sellers. Iris scans can alert buyers if a particular horse has been sored previously and disqualified. Similarly, sellers can use the scanner to demonstrate to potential buyers that a horse has not been sored. ●

# training in pakistan

regulatory training into action, Pakistan agricultural officials hope to benefit their country through stabilized local economies, an enhanced agricultural infrastructure, and expanded opportunities to participate in international trade.

## [bridging language and culture]

While the training is fairly standard, the circumstances aren't.

"I've had experience with plant health training in the U.S. and other countries and have had experience teaching in Pakistan, but this was my first go-round developing and narrating an online module," said Lottie Erikson, an export analysis coordinator with the agency's Plant Protection and Quarantine program. Her narrated module was used to prep participants prior to the live training.

"My narration was dubbed into Urdu. When I arrived for the first day of exercises, my students' comment to me was 'Memsahib, your Urdu is very good!'" said Erikson.

Kaczmariski has his share of stories, too.

"On the second day of training, we had just wrapped up a passionate discussion about when we should consider a plant pest to be high risk. As we finished, the local imam made the noonday call to prayer," said Kaczmariski.

"It was about 100 degrees that day. The class stopped, and participants filed outside to face east and pray. I turned to one of my colleagues, and she just smiled and said, 'I guess someone's saying we need a break.'"

Despite the linguistic and cultural differences, both Erikson and Kaczmariski were encouraged by how quickly the class picked up some of the more advanced aspects of bilateral trade. During trade negotiation simulations, participants came up with original and culturally specific solutions that fell within WTO parameters.

"I lived in Pakistan for several years, but I had forgotten how almost every exchange is based on negotiation," said Erikson. "Everyone enjoyed the fast-paced negotiations with spectators cheering on the sidelines as if we were all at a hotly contested cricket match."

## [on a good road]

Kaczmariski and Erikson are both optimistic about the long-term success of the ongoing training initiative.

"Nothing is easy when it comes to trade, but there is definitely cause for hope here," said Kaczmariski. "They have potential markets for mangoes in the EU. And they have a really good tangerine species with the chance to take advantage of international interests in that, too."

In the meantime, the training will continue preparing the way for more opportunities. In the coming months, the program is offering participants training modules on pest risk assessments and risk communication. ●



*Participants review class materials during a session*

# fy 2015 appropriations update

By Michelle Wenberg

In mid-May, the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees for Agriculture marked up our Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Appropriations Bill. Later that month, the two bills made their way through Full Appropriations Committee markups in both bodies.

The Senate markup provides \$872.414 million for APHIS, an increase of \$50.693 million above our current appropriation of \$821.721 million. Most of the increase funds a USDA-wide initiative to decentralize its General Services Administration (GSA) rent account (providing \$42.567 million for APHIS).

Highlights from the Senate markup include:

- \$2 million in new funding to address porcine epidemic diarrhea virus.
- A new line item for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network that contains \$10 million; \$6.7 million was previously included in APHIS' Veterinary Diagnostics line item, and \$3.3 million was previously funded in the National Institute of Food and Agriculture portion of the bill.
- A \$2 million increase for the National Rabies Management Program, for a total of \$26 million.

- A \$1 million increase for Biotechnology Regulatory Services, for a total of \$19.223 million.

The House markup provides \$867.505 million for APHIS, an increase of \$45.784 million above our current appropriation. Like the Senate markup, most of the increase in the House markup funds the decentralized GSA rent for FY 2015.

The House provided the following funding increases:

- \$3.5 million in new funding to address porcine epidemic diarrhea virus.
- \$2 million for Overseas Technical and Trade Operations, for a total of \$22.114 million, to help resolve sanitary and phytosanitary trade issues and open new markets for U.S. agricultural products.
- \$500,000 for the National Veterinary Stockpile, for a total of \$4.222 million.
- \$5 million for the Citrus Health Response Program, for a total of \$48.5 million to address citrus greening disease.

While these markups represent mostly good news for APHIS, neither bill has yet

been passed on the Senate or House floor. As it currently stands (as of September 19), Congress passed a Continuing Resolution at FY 2014 funding levels that would be in effect through December 11, 2014. The bill is now on the President's desk, where he is widely expected to sign it. ●

## training calendar

The **APHIS Training and Development Calendar** provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and course descriptions.

For more information, visit the **Center for Training and Organizational Development SharePoint site**. ●



visit the **My.APHIS Congressional News page** for the latest updates

## plant protection and quarantine

# snails intercepted



By Abby Yigzaw



*Patrick Marquez, a PPQ entomology and malacology identifier, poses with banana rasp snails intercepted on an arriving international flight.*

On July 1, inspectors at Los Angeles International Airport intercepted a shipment of 67 banana rasp snails belonging to the snail family Achatinidae. The Giant African snail, which is considered one of the world's most damaging snail species, is in the same snail family.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials discovered the shipment and sent samples to APHIS' Los Angeles Plant Inspection Station for identification.

Patrick Marquez, a Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) entomologist and malacologist, identified the snails and sent digital photos for final confirmation to Fred Zimmerman, APHIS' Acting National Malacology Specialist.

Zimmerman confirmed that they were banana rasp snails. After notification, CBP seized and destroyed the shipment. ●

## my.aphis—(re)designed for you

APHIS recently launched its redesigned My.APHIS portal pages with a fresh look, new features, and more resources.

My.APHIS makes it easier for you to find the resources you need.

### [what's new and how is it better?]

Visit the new pages today and you'll see the difference.

- Improved navigation that makes it easier to find information, resources, and news.
- A display that is optimized for use on mobile and tablet devices.
- New and expanded content areas—including an Employee Resources tab with helpful content from Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services, such as HR, financial, administrative, and IT information.
- News Feeds—continuously updated for the latest news media clips, agency information, and Congressional news.
- A search function that taps the My.APHIS site and the APHIS intranet and external Web pages.
- A new “Let Us Help” option for your questions and for suggesting additional content.
- An upgraded blog, making it easier to comment and provide your feedback to Administrator Kevin Shea's posts.
- A new “Support” tab, which provides quick access to contact information for key agency offices and resources, such as ATAC, Facilities, Travel, and Procurement. ●



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**My.APHIS**  
now

# recent aphis retirees

Between March 9 and July 31, 2014, a total of 57 employees retired from the agency. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

## March 9–July 31, 2014

### animal care

Judy Davis	Ogden, UT
Ruth Elder	Fort Collins, CO

### biotechnology regulatory services

Karen Green	Riverdale, MD
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### international services

Richard Pacer	Riverdale, MD
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### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Deborah Aghamiri	Riverdale, MD
John Daugherty	Minneapolis, MN
Sharon Hudoba	Minneapolis, MN
Herbert Jordan	Columbia, SC
Tracy Ramthum	Seattle, WA
Diane Riggsbee	Raleigh, NC
Thomas Thorne	Fort Collins, CO

### plant protection and quarantine

Cecilia Beamish	Orlando, FL
David Benner	Davie, FL
Jane Berkow	Riverdale, MD
Nada Carruthers	Albany, CA
Kevin Connors	Bloomington, MN
William Cousens	Miami, FL
John Dooley, III	San Francisco, CA
Jeffrey Grode	Washington, DC
Meredith Jones	Riverdale, MD
Linda Mandel	Long Beach, CA
Guy Nagai	Lihue, HI
Mary Negron	Glynco, GA
Henry Nishikawa	Lihue, HI
Alberto Rivera Ortiz	Ponce, PR
Alida Rogstad	Tampa, FL
Patricia Rufini	Wallingford, CT
Frank Salantri	Riverdale, MD
Barbara Sowell	Biloxi, MS
Jonathan Staples	Albany, NY
Arnold Tschanz	Riverdale, MD
Gayle van de Kerckhove	Seattle, WA
Lloyd Yoshina	Hilo, HI

### veterinary services

Kathleen Akin	Lincoln, NE
Gary Colgrove	Riverdale, MD
Randall Crom	Riverdale, MD
Virginia Di Giallonardo	Fort Collins, CO
Thomas Dressel	Madison, WI
Elizabeth Enciso	Holt, MI
David Hopson	Jefferson City, MO
Dennis Ihrig	Maquoketa, IA
Katherine Jeffrey	Fort Collins, CO
Albert Lawrence	Fort Collins, CO
Philip Marriott	Raleigh, NC
Peter Merrill	Riverdale, MD
Susan Miller	Selah, WA
Betty Real	St. Paul, MN
John Rohret	Ames, IA

### wildlife services

Joseph Carpenter	Chinook, MT
Stanley Colton	Denton, MT
Earl Hodnett	Riverdale, MD
Barbara Messineo	Fort Collins, CO
Gregory Phillips	Fort Collins, CO
Keel Price	Las Cruces, NM
Gary Rushane	Paris, ID
Robert Samuelson	Olympia, WA
Michael Thomas	Roundup, MT ●

## veterinary services ojinaga port activities resume

By Ian Perrin

On June 23, Veterinary Services (VS) personnel were cleared to resume port activities for animal imports at the livestock facility in Ojinaga, Mexico.

The facility had been closed since August 2012 due to recurring security concerns and local violence. During the closure, VS employees conducted inspections on the U.S. side of the border at a temporary facility established in Presidio, TX in October 2012.

Prior to resuming livestock inspections in Ojinaga, APHIS officials ensured that appropriate steps were taken to provide for the ongoing safety and security of employees working at the facility. The necessary safety improvements resulted from a collaborative effort involving APHIS and officials in Mexico, other USDA agencies, the U.S. Department of State, and industry.

The Chihuahuan Cattlemen's Association, for example, completed site improvements such as upgrading the facility's perimeter fencing, signage, lighting, and secure access points.

Additional safety measures were implemented, including coordinating routine facility patrols, providing employees with personal locator/tracking devices, and constructing a safe room equipped with emergency supplies and communication devices.

APHIS officials are pleased that these improvements—along with others—will both safeguard agency employees and enable the movement of healthy livestock through the facility. ●

## in memoriam

Our agency lost several members of the APHIS family from early March through July of this year.

We will miss them all. Our thoughts are with their families.

### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Michael Fuchs Riverdale, MD  
Laura Mackenzie Riverdale, MD

### plant protection and quarantine

Carol Milanese Albany, NY  
Lloyd Richards Honolulu, HI

### wildlife services

David Baumgartner Hazelton, ND  
Gary Rehm Eads, CO  
Robin Venuti Richfield, UT  
Daniel Vice Barrigada, Guam

Sadly, we also note the death of our former APHIS colleague and friend, Paul Eggert who passed away in July.

To read more about Paul's life and the remembrance written by his daughter, please click here to see **Administrator Shea's July 22, 2014 message to employees.** ●

# aphis eFile town hall

By Alisa Robinson

On July 1, APHIS' Certification, Accreditation, Registration, Permits, and Other Licenses (CARPOL) team hosted the first APHIS eFile Town Hall meeting for all agency employees. APHIS eFile is the planned agencywide information technology (IT) system that will consolidate several current systems—specifically those that support the agency's issuance of CARPOL-type authorizations.

By consolidating these systems and using a simple, streamlined Web-based system, APHIS is aiming to reduce the burden on agency stakeholders/applicants. APHIS eFile is a complex project that will affect many programs and existing systems. It will be rolled out in phases and will take between 3 to 5 years to complete.

"This is a great chance for us to make a great leap forward in the IT world," said Administrator Kevin Shea.

Developing APHIS eFile is "a test of our ability to come together...for the benefit of everyone in the agency," Shea added.

In addition to Shea, other presenters at the town hall included Associate Administrator Michael Gregoire, APHIS Chief Information

Officer Gary Washington, as well as leadership for the four program areas impacted by APHIS e-File—Andrea Morgan (Animal Care), Michael Firko (Biotechnology Regulatory Services), Osama El-Lissy (Plant Protection and Quarantine), and John Clifford (Veterinary Services). During the meeting, a panel of subject matter experts from each of the affected agency programs also responded to employee questions.

"It's important that we get this right," said Gregoire, who is overseeing the APHIS eFile project. He—along with the CARPOL team members—recognizes that APHIS' IT systems are extremely important to the day-to-day functioning of agency programs.

As the project moves forward, Gregoire promised to keep employees informed and engaged with the project. ●

## agency calendar

### september

National Hispanic Heritage Month. Watch your email for events and announcements.

North American Plant Protection Organization Biological Control Working Group Meeting; September 9–11; Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico.

Plant Protection and Quarantine Tabletop Incident Command System Exercise; September 10; Phoenix, AZ.

Ergonomics Webinar: Laboratory Ergonomics; September 10; Register via AgLearn; Contact Ginger Dorsey ([ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ginger.e.dorsey@aphis.usda.gov)) for more information.

**Working at the Speed of Trust;** September 16; 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m (CT); Minneapolis, MN.

**Leading at the Speed of Trust;** September 17–18; 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. (CT); Minneapolis, MN.

Swine Enteric Coronavirus Disease International Meeting (Veterinary Services and Stakeholder Sponsored); September 23–25; Chicago, IL. ●

## wildlife services **researching airfield land use**

By Jhana Marquez



*Converting airport grasslands to biofuel, solar, or wind production may not only provide more environmentally sound alternative energy sources, but also increase revenue for airports and reduce the local abundance of wildlife hazards to aircraft.*

During summer, “mow the lawn” appears on many people’s list of weekly to-dos. For most, putting the time and money into mowing an acre or two of grass isn’t such a big deal. But for airport land managers who are responsible for cutting hundreds of acres of grass, it is an expensive and daunting task and has safety implications for the aircraft that take off and land.

Thirty-nine to fifty percent of airport properties in the United States are covered by grass. These grasses make the perfect home for certain wildlife species that are responsible for thousands of collisions with aircraft—or wildlife strikes—each year.

To reduce bird populations, airports spend thousands of dollars a year cutting, reseeding, and maintaining these grasslands. In addition to the expense, the laborious upkeep thwarts industry initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **[researching alternatives]**

To address these issues, Wildlife Services’ National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is

researching alternatives to turf grass that are less expensive to maintain and attract less hazardous wildlife.

“The purpose of these projects is to find alternatives that won’t attract hazardous wildlife and won’t put an economic drain on airports,” said Travis DeVault, NWRC’s Ohio Field Station leader. So far, NWRC has tested several options that include planting switch grasses (biofuel) and installing solar panels on airport lands.

The U.S. Department of Defense is funding a switch grass project on six military airbases to evaluate its effect on bird populations. “Switch grass is a viable alternative to turf grass because it’s hardy, it’s inexpensive to maintain, and it can be harvested as a forage crop,” said DeVault. But does switch grass reduce the presence of wildlife at airports?

Many critics are concerned that agriculture, regardless of type, will attract unwanted birds to airfields. NWRC’s research, however, suggests that some crops can reduce the presence of birds and subsequent wildlife strikes.

NWRC hopes to use this research to help the industry develop land management policies that will keep the flocks away and produce a yield.

### **[here comes the sun]**

To promote green living, the Federal Aviation Administration asked NWRC to test solar panel facilities at airports and to gauge their success at repelling wildlife. NWRC, in collaboration with the University of Mississippi, has observed more birds in areas with solar arrays than in the grasslands; however, the birds are less hazardous than those found in the grasslands. Solar arrays could play a major role in efforts to design and operate greener, safer airports.

“We want the airports and airbases to have options,” said DeVault.

What works for one airport may not work for another as climates, land restrictions, and resources vary by location. For this reason, NWRC will continue to explore more options for airports to consider. ●

## plant protection and quarantine **making an export supersystem**

By Vivian Keller

How do you make APHIS' State and county cooperators truly happy? You make their lives easier and save them money. And if you're Christian Dellis, supervisor for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program's Export Services, that means you offer them the Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking (PCIT) system.

The cooperators who issue some 75 percent of the Nation's phytosanitary certificates for plant and plant product exports—and APHIS' own staff—benefit from a system that zips along at the speed of international agricultural commerce, reduces costs, and enhances security to boot.

It wasn't always like this. In the early 2000s, applications for PPQ's phytosanitary certificates—documents attesting to the health of U.S. plant and plant products exported to foreign countries—were four-part forms filled out with typewriters or by hand.

Because APHIS and its cooperators processed the forms in different locations countrywide, tracking the overall volume of

documents was impossible—and it could take 2 weeks just to trace a problematic certificate to the officer who had issued it.

Enter Dellis, whose first move was to contact the cooperators who actually handled the paperwork and find out what, exactly, they needed from a new system. Based on their input, in 2005 he launched a nascent PCIT system as a simple tracking device for PPQ certificates. And, crucially, he kept talking with cooperators about what they wanted.

Nine years and 3,000 tweaks later, PCIT is a Web-based giant that handles all phases of the PPQ phytosanitary certificate application and issuance process.

Thousands of industry applicants and hundreds of Federal and State duty stations now use the system. In fiscal year (FY) 2014 so far, APHIS and its cooperators have issued more than 600,000 certificates.

There's more. PCIT provides a link to PEXD, a repository of foreign countries' phytosanitary import requirements. It also allows applicants

to pay online through one source—an innovation that Dellis says is cooperators' favorite feature. "Once they had this," Dellis says, "they moved away from the existing systems they had."

Cooperators saved precious resources, too. Thanks to PCIT billing efficiencies, says Dellis, one California county did not have to replace two retirees and was able to hire an additional inspector instead.

### **[security and speed]**

Fraud bedevils the export certificate business, but PCIT currently provides ways to detect it that have helped foreign officials catch dozens of fraudulent documents this year.

Security and speed will both be enhanced with the advent of Electronic Phytosanitary Certification (ePhyto), a new PCIT function that automatically transfers phytosanitary certificate data directly to the governments of foreign countries receiving U.S. exports.

*Continued on next page*

# did you know ?

By Joelle Hayden



**Did you know** that pork is the world's most widely eaten meat, followed next by chicken and closely after that by beef?

With this in mind, it's easy to see why the swine industry places a premium on keeping a steady and healthy flow of animals to market. Losses due to disease or other causes can have a significant impact on the industry.

The highest losses in the pork production process occur within 3 or 4 days of animals' births, and they can be substantial. It can cost a producer approximately \$900–\$950 a year to keep a sow. If a sow gives birth to 20 piglets during the year, the cost per pig is \$45 to \$48; however, if a sow has 25 piglets, the cost per pig falls to \$36 to \$38.

Unfortunately, the swine industry is dealing with a serious challenge to piglet survival—porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv) and other swine enteric coronavirus diseases (SECD). Industry has estimated that PEDv has killed about 7 million piglets and caused tremendous hardship for American pork producers. Over the past year, consumers have seen pork prices rise in stores by almost 10 percent.

While industry took the lead in addressing PEDv when it first showed up, USDA and State animal health authorities are now playing a greater role in monitoring these diseases, tracing their spread, and advising on best practices to address and control them.

On June 5, APHIS issued a Federal Order requiring producers, veterinarians, and diagnostic laboratories to report new detections of SECD, including PEDv, to the agency or State animal health authorities. Since the Federal Order was issued, 188 SECD-positive premises have been identified in 17 States.

The Federal Order also requires producers with swine affected by any of these viruses to work with their veterinarians or State or APHIS veterinary officials to develop and implement a plan for appropriately managing the virus in their herds. APHIS is providing \$26.2 million in funding to combat these diseases. Together, these steps will reduce virus shed in affected animals, address disease spread, and enable continued movement of animals for production and processing.

For more information, including a Q&A, visit the **SECD Web page**. ●

## export supersystem

*Continued from page 10*

Transmitting certificate data this way brings more credibility, integrity, and safety to the U.S. export system while reducing fraud and certification costs for exporters, according to Michael Perry, the PPQ export specialist who handles PCIT's day-to-day operations.

"There will be no more waiting for documents to arrive to clear a shipment, or doubts about the legitimacy of paper documents," Perry says. "In the end, it's a big win for industry and for APHIS."

The ePhyto function also represents one more step toward a new PCIT goal—making the system entirely paperless as it moves toward eventual integration into the new APHIS eFile system. Meantime, Dellis and Perry will keep hearing what users have to say. "Because we listened," says Dellis, "we came up with a system that is what people needed it to be"—the recipe for PCIT's success. ●

## volunteer spotlight mary lou berninger

### [employee name and program]

Mary Lou Berninger  
Microbiologist  
Veterinary Services  
Plum Island, NY

### [volunteer organization]

Girl Scouts of Suffolk County;  
Mattituck Presbyterian Church

### [volunteer activities]

For the past 9 years, Berninger has been a Girl Scout leader. She leads one troop that has reached the Senior level in scouting and a second troop of Cadette Scouts.

She's been with both troops as they have progressed upward, beginning in kindergarten as Daisy Scouts. Berninger mentored the girls as both troops earned their Bronze Awards and the Senior troop earned their Silver Award.

The Girl Scouts of Suffolk County's mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. Berninger's goal has been to encourage the girls to learn the importance of community service and to fully participate in Girl Scout

activities, whether earning badges, camping, or attending fun, local events.

Both troops have served the local community by preparing cookies for a homeless shelter, participating in food drives at grocery stores, helping at community historical societies, and cleaning up local beaches.

In addition to scouting, Berninger volunteers at her church and co-teaches Sunday school class for first and second graders, whom she describes as "a bunch of adorable and energetic kids." She also helps with children's church and with leading confirmation.

### [time given]

For her Girl Scout activities, Berninger volunteers more than 100 hours each year. At her church, she volunteers about 90 hours during the year.

### [organization web site]

<http://www.gssc.us/>  
[www.mattpres.com/](http://www.mattpres.com/)

### [employee email]

[marylou.berninger@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:marylou.berninger@aphis.usda.gov) •

## animal care partnering for diversity

By Tanika Whittington

It's been said that diversity is the key to success. If so, then the Animal Care program and the National Zoo have launched a new internship program that holds a promise of success for both organizations.

This fiscal year, Animal Care and the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoo formalized a summer intern cooperative program—the National Zoo Intern Program—that promotes outreach and workforce diversity.

Zoo and Animal Care officials collaborated to develop internship opportunities that would improve the diversity programs for both organizations. Begun as a pilot program in 2012, the program is now in full swing with six students participating.

The intern program provides college students a chance to learn about Federal career options, zoological husbandry, and the Animal Welfare Act. Interns participate in the program, working full-time for a

*Continued on next page*

## plant protection and quarantine **stopping maine's gypsy moth— one letter at a time**



By Greg Rosenthal

When the forest-defoliating gypsy moth invaded northern Maine's pristine Baxter State Park in 2008, APHIS State Plant Health Director Terry Bourgoin took it as a powerful wake-up call. He serves on Plant Protection and Quarantine's

Gypsy Moth Working Group, which aims to prevent the spread of this destructive pest of hardwood trees and shrubs.

"We know how it got there—gypsy moths had laid egg masses on heavy tree removal equipment that came into the park from infested areas in southern Maine," Bourgoin said. "Those eggs hatched, and a whole new infestation began. It really brought home the critical need for outreach and education to all industries that could move the gypsy moth."

To help prevent similar incidents, Bourgoin's office sent out letters to moving and recreational vehicle (RV) companies. The letters politely but firmly alerted the companies to APHIS' regulations requiring that any outdoor household items or vehicles in gypsy moth

quarantine areas moving to non-quarantine areas be inspected for gypsy moth egg masses. If found, those masses must be removed. The letters referred company officials to APHIS outreach resources such as [YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com](http://YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com), which has a factsheet and inspection checklist that, by law, must be completed, signed, and carried by the drivers.

"RVers love the fun adventure of traveling cross-country," Bourgoin said. "But if they don't check for egg masses, we could have repeat performances of Baxter State Park across the Nation."

Bourgoin doesn't intend to let that happen. ●

## partnering for diversity

*Continued from  
page 12*

minimum of 8 weeks. It is a rewarding opportunity for participants with a background and interest in the fields of animal science, zoological husbandry, and veterinary medicine.

APHIS supports the interns by providing housing and salary, but participants are employed by both Animal Care and the National Zoo. Selected interns come from the Pathways Student Intern application process, with the agency conducting outreach through the Minorities in

Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences program and other minority-serving programs and institutes.

After an initial orientation at APHIS, the interns work onsite at the National Zoo with zoo curators, zookeepers, and other employees. The interns perform duties such as cleaning, feeding, and observing animals. Additionally, each intern is participating in a research project that addresses the biology and husbandry of the animals with which they are working. ●

# agdiscovery 2014

By Ian Perrin



*Students pose for a team photograph as part of the AgDiscovery program at North Carolina State University, which ran June 16–27.*

APHIS kicked off this year's AgDiscovery sessions on June 2 at Fort Valley State University in Georgia. The AgDiscovery program—now in its 12th year—takes place at 17 universities across the United States.

Counting this year's 262 participants, AgDiscovery organizers estimate that they've reached approximately 1,500 students since the program began.

The collaborative program provides students with challenging educational opportunities in agriculture, focusing on areas such as entomology, veterinary sciences, plant pathology, and horticulture.

As an outreach program, the goal is to educate and develop students for careers in

fields such as animal science, agribusiness, plant pathology, and others.

The sessions—ranging in length from 2 to 4 weeks—ran this year from June 2 through August 2, providing participants with hands-on experiences that they will remember for years to come. ●



*Shown above, students enjoy a teambuilding exercise during the AgDiscovery program at Kentucky State University, which took place June 15–28.*

Photo sources: Animal Care, G. Bartman (PPQ), D. Bergman (WS), B. Bumpas (FAS), OCRDI, D. Root (MRPBS), USDA.

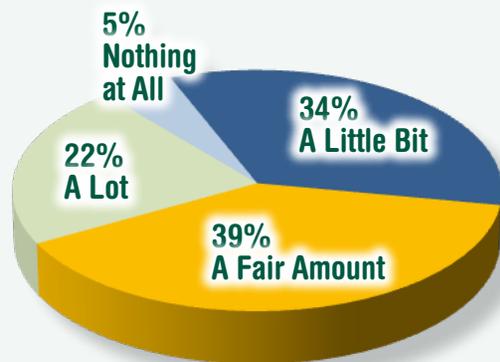
*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, please visit:  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/inside\\_aphis/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/inside_aphis/)

## question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “How much do you know about APHIS programs other than your own?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.



**How much do you know about APHIS programs other than your own?**

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

### [next question please]

We’re all a little different in how we work. Some folks are morning people, and they arrive at work early ready to march through their to-do list. Other people hit their work stride later in the day and get more work done in the late afternoon or evening.

With that in mind, we ask: *When is your most productive part of the day at work?*

- Early morning
- Morning
- Middle of the day
- Afternoon
- Late afternoon
- Evening

Feel free to add your comment explaining why.

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LQ2763B>.

## reducing the pain in reporting accidents

By Misty Leilani Cordeiro

APHIS’ Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Division plans to unveil a new online system for reporting on-the-job accidents. For employees, the new system will reduce the pain and paperwork sometimes associated with the current reporting process.

Set to launch next winter, the system will decrease the time spent filling out forms and expedite the process overall. Employees will access the system online and—following its simple navigational prompts—enter the information needed. Using the employee’s input, the system logs the incident and can automatically generate a workers’ compensation form if desired.

If an employee chooses to apply for workers’ compensation, he or she simply hits the “submit” button. The appropriate form is then forwarded directly to APHIS workers’ compensation managers and the U.S. Department of Labor. Correspondence will primarily be handled through the system, where employees can easily log in for updates.

USDA’s Forest Service launched a similar automated system as a pilot project 8 years ago. Based on the project’s success, USDA plans to implement the new system across all of its agencies.

### [tracking to improve]

In addition to improving how the agency manages individual incidents and serves employees’ needs, the new system offers another benefit. It will better enable USDA and APHIS to track and monitor accident reporting and put that information to use.

APHIS safety officials will review data related to accidents and injuries, especially those that reoccur, to provide better safety management for everyone. For example, officials could use the collected data to help identify areas where additional employee safety training is needed or where operating procedures should be revised.

Watch your email for launch dates and training information. ●

# calling 911 in case of emergency

By John Scott

## VoIP Phones—

Voice over Internet Protocol phones transmit audio signals via the internet instead of using traditional phone networks.

Hopefully you'll never need to make an emergency call, but it's important to be prepared and know what to do just in case.

If you need emergency services and you're calling from an APHIS VoIP phone in Riverdale or at a hub office, all you need to do is dial 911 for help.

The VoIP systems at APHIS headquarters and hub locations—Riverdale, Ames, Fort Collins, Minneapolis, and Raleigh—do not require 911 to be preceded by any other number to place the call.

With the exception of the agency's offices in Ames, all 911 VoIP calls made from these locations will be directed to a 911 dispatcher. At Ames, 911 VoIP calls are first routed to facility guards. Because of Ames' gates and campus size (550 acres), the guards must intervene to efficiently direct any responding emergency services to the scene.

For employees in Riverdale, Fort Collins, and Raleigh, a 911 call on a VoIP phone also triggers an automatic notification that is sent to other responders in the building. Notifications alert onsite responders so that assistance can be provided as quickly as possible.

APHIS Safety and Health officials are working on establishing similar onsite notification systems at other hub locations.

## [more info—please read]

Don't let embarrassment get the better of you. If you dial 911 accidentally, please remain on the line and simply explain your error. If you hang up without speaking to anyone, an emergency dispatcher will attempt to call you back. And if you do not answer, the dispatcher will send emergency personnel to your location—wasting valuable resources and possibly costing APHIS money. ●

## think about location, location, location

If you are working from home—or from a location other than your office—avoid using your VoIP phone to call 911. Instead, use a local land line or a mobile phone if available. Be aware that, if you use your VoIP office phone, you will need to inform the 911 dispatcher of your location.

If you are in the office and need to call 911 for someone else offsite—such as a child or other family member at home—avoid using your VoIP phone. Use a mobile phone if possible. Be aware that, if you use your VoIP office phone, you will need to inform the 911 dispatcher about the location of the emergency. ●



David M. Root, Chief Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) Employee & Management Relations Branch

## manager profile with **dave root**

### [what is your background?]

I grew up in rural mid-Michigan. We farmed nearly 1,000 acres and raised about 250 head of beef cattle. I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force right away and spent nearly 6 years as an airborne Russian/Spanish crypto-linguist. Following military service, I “joined” the U.S. Postal Service, where I worked for almost 19 years in a variety of labor and managerial positions.

### [how long have you been with aphis?]

I transferred to APHIS in 2007 as a senior employee relations specialist. Sixteen months later, I accepted the position of branch chief for what was then APHIS Employee Relations.

### [most memorable APHIS experience?]

In 2007, I traveled to the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Plum Island to present training. The daily “commute” from Old Saybrook, CT, was 45 minutes via ferryboat (each way) across Long Island Sound, and then a short trip by bus to the facility. I was greatly impressed with the Veterinary Services mission.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

Acclimating to our new workload tracking system—LERIS (Labor and Employee Relations Information System). We will also continue providing conduct and performance-based training to customers and new employees.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

In 2011, APHIS Employee Relations engaged in a Business Process Improvement project to streamline the services we provide to our customers. We’ve accomplished much in the last 3 years, yet we continue to find ways to improve. I’m truly honored to have the opportunity to work with so many dedicated, talented people within MRPBS.

### [favorite meal?]

Sushi: While I prefer to have someone make it for me, I enjoy making it at home as well.

### [guilty pleasure?]

White Chocolate Truffles: I try to keep them available for customers!

### [hobbies?]

Gardening: Our flower garden was stunning this year. Red is my favorite color, and I enjoy subtle shades of our red flowers.



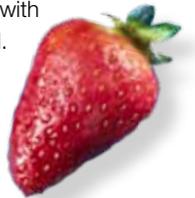
Jelly-making: I’m an avid cook, baker, and jam/jelly-maker. My mom encouraged me to make pancakes when I was 8 years old, and I’ve loved cooking since then. I enjoy “jamming” and typically share several dozens of jars (in a variety of flavors) with friends and family year-round.

### [favorite movie?]

Avatar

### [last book read?]

I’m currently reading Marilee Adams’ *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*. I’ve found it very insightful. ●



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## plant protection and quarantine helping tribes with biocontrol agents

By Jhana Marquez and Vivian Keller

Native American ranchers in Montana constantly battle invasive weeds that crowd out the grazing grasses their cattle need. But through partnerships with APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, the Tribes have found that tiny foreign insects—a biocontrol arsenal—can help them win this struggle.

### [battling the weeds]

Weeds such as leafy spurge and spotted knapweed have grown in Montana and on adjacent reservations for generations. Although herbicides, grazing, and mechanical controls such as plowing can help manage invasive weeds, biological control agents—such as insects sourced from Europe and Eurasia—are increasingly popular among some Tribes.

Carefully screened by PPQ and its research partners, these “biocontrol agents” use the area’s invasive weeds as a nursery where they lay eggs. After the larvae hatch, they nibble on the target weeds, stunting their growth and development.

Although the concept seems simple, getting the system to work requires ongoing coordination between the office of PPQ’s State Plant Health Director for Montana, Gary Adams, a multitude of weed specialists, and participating Tribes, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Blackfeet Nation, the Fort Belknap Indian Community, the Chipewawa-Cree Tribe, the Crow Nation, the Northern Cheyenne Nation, and the Sioux/Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation.

PPQ works with natural resource specialists from each Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to gather insects established in Montana or other States. Cooperatively, they release and monitor the insects in areas with significant weed infestations, in hopes that these insects will establish populations of their own and serve as a reservoir for the Tribes to use in future.

PPQ helps monitor these catch-and-release sites, called insectaries. The program also gives funding to the Indian Nations

*Continued on next page*

# partnering with tribes

*Continued from page 1*

Conservation Alliance (INCA) to support these efforts, along with workshops that teach participants how to identify target weeds, handle equipment and insects, and pursue alternative control methods. For their part, the Tribes place and maintain the insectaries, making sure they remain free from pesticides and safe from animals—all with the goal of becoming self-sustaining biocontrol practitioners.

## [getting results]

Surveys attest that, over time, the insects are doing their job. A case in point is the Fort Belknap Indian Community, which has collaborated for many years with PPQ to identify sites for insectaries and release insects that attack leafy spurge. By 2006, the weed's presence had dramatically diminished on the reservation. Even though leafy spurge resurfaced after a 2011 flood damaged the community's insectaries, PPQ, INCA, and the Tribes have continued their efforts and hope to have the weed under control again within a few years.

In the meantime, Adams and his team are strengthening current Tribal partnerships and reaching out to form new ones. "New

personnel working for some Tribes are just becoming aware that there's a biocontrol option out there," says Adams. "Although it may be a slow process, it can be a long-term, cost-effective solution" to keeping Native herds and economies thriving.

In the end, he says, the best indicator of PPQ's success is how his staff works with the Tribes toward a goal everyone agrees on: protecting Indian Country's agriculture and "keeping the stewards of the land on the land." ●

## partnerships reach wide

PPQ works with many Tribal communities outside Montana on biocontrol agents. In Arizona, for instance, the program uses weevils to help the Quechan Tribe cope with giant salvinia and a parasitic wasp to control Asian citrus psyllid on Cocopah Tribal lands.

Since 2002, PPQ's Idaho office has funded the Nez Perce's highly regarded biocontrol facility, which rears agents in gardens, greenhouses, and laboratories; redistributes them from field sites; and works with State and county officials to advance biocontrol activities.

Over the years, Oregon's PPQ staff has provided the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation with training and redistribution materials for 20 species of biocontrol agents, targeting 12 different weeds. PPQ Nevada has partnered with the State Department of Agriculture to provide weed biocontrol agents to the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians. PPQ South Dakota supplies biocontrol support for leafy spurge and other weeds on nine reservations; and in Wyoming, PPQ cooperates with county weed and pest districts to conduct biocontrol activities on Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribal lands. ●

## getting to know **aphis associate administrator jere dick**

By Meghan Klingel



**In addition to Administrator Kevin Shea,** the agency's Office of the Administrator includes two other agency leaders who influence APHIS' day-to-day operations and its greater vision and goals.

As Associate Administrators, both Jere Dick and Mike Gregoire help shape our actions today and prepare APHIS for success in the future.

### **When did you start working for APHIS? What made you decide to start working here?**

I started working for APHIS in September 1988. After owning a clinical practice for 9 years in Pomeroy, WA, I wanted to share the skills I had developed in a broader public setting. One afternoon, an APHIS veterinary medical officer (VMO) stopped by my clinic, and we visited about his statewide work. He encouraged me to apply for the Public Veterinary Practice Career program, I was accepted, and the rest is a long journey through multiple jobs within Veterinary Services (VS) before I came to the Administrator's Office.

To help you get to know them a little better, we thought it would be interesting for you to hear from them in their own words. We sent each a set of questions and are sharing what we heard back.

In this issue, we feature Jere Dick, and in our next issue, we'll run Mike Gregoire's responses. ●

### **What are your priorities during the next few months as APHIS Associate Administrator?**

There are two associate administrators, and we both have our "spheres of influence" within the APHIS community. I focus mainly on issues related to VS, Wildlife Services, and International Services. I want to continue to better understand those programs this coming year by being involved in their key initiatives. In addition, I enjoy the challenge of working to find new efficiencies in our APHIS programs. Therefore, many of my new duties will focus on leading and monitoring such areas as

business process improvements, audits, operational plans, and the Administrator's Top Ten priorities.

### **What's your most memorable APHIS experience?**

I think my most memorable APHIS experience was working as the regional incident commander for 9 months during the exotic Newcastle disease outbreak in 2003. We have great employees in APHIS, and I was able to work side-by-side with many highly committed employees to tackle a very tough problem for the industry and States involved.

### **What's one thing that employees would be surprised to know about you?**

Most employees see me in a suit and tie during the work day. They're surprised to see pictures of me in boots and a cowboy hat enjoying my horseback rides in the wilderness areas of the Northwest. That is my quiet time!

*Continued on next page*

## getting to know **jere dick**

*Continued from page 3*

**What big changes do you see for APHIS employees as we move through the 21st century? What do you think employees need to be ready for?**

I think that rapid developments in technology and automation will continue to drive the way we do business. When I started as a field VMO in Montana, I stopped at a roadside telephone to check in with the office. There were no cell phones, no pagers, and no laptop computers. Laboratory testing was conducted manually on glass plates or on cardboard test strips. I can only imagine where we will be in the next 25–30 years. Broad and advanced skill sets will also be necessary as we work with industry and stakeholders. They are hiring highly skilled specialists, and we will need to be able to talk to them at their professional level during the performance of our duties.

**A leader must be equipped with the competencies necessary to perform his or her role. Which competency do you think is the most important one for a leader to have?**

I think both leading change and leading people will become more important in the

future. To make performing them even more challenging, those skills will have to be carried out in a “virtual” environment.

**What do you miss most about working in the field?**

I miss working with producers the most. They are the lifeblood of agriculture, and I always learned as much from them as they did from me. I am an outdoorsman, so I also miss working outdoors.

**How do your years of experience in private practice and working in the field shape how you approach your job as associate administrator?**

I think those years are invaluable in giving me a sound perspective of “operational feasibility.” Certain policies may sound good on the surface but may simply be too difficult to implement or too burdensome for industry.

**Using the experience you’ve gained with APHIS over the years, what advice do you wish you could go back and give yourself as a new APHIS employee?**

Be sure to take time off work and recharge regularly.

**How do you start your day? How does it end?**

I start and end my day with a prayer. Each day is a gift, and I hope to use it wisely.

**What’s the accomplishment you are most proud of?**

When asked this question, I know some might automatically think of their work accomplishments. However, I think I am most proud of my family and those things that I have been able to do to coach, mentor, and support them in their successes.

**How do you like to spend your time away from the office?**

In the outdoors, hiking, hunting, and fishing.

**What’s the last book you read?**

*Crazy Busy* by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.

**What is your favorite meal?**

My wife’s fried chicken and dumplings!

**When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?**

A forest ranger. ●

# getting a grip on carpal tunnel

By Ginger Dorsey

Although it's often associated with keyboarding and using a mouse, carpal tunnel syndrome isn't exclusively a computer-related injury. You may be at risk for developing symptoms even if your job involves mostly handling animals, driving, pipetting, or a host of other work tasks performed away from a desk.

Carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when the median nerve, which runs from the forearm into the palm of the hand, becomes pressed or squeezed at the wrist. The median nerve allows feeling and movement to parts of the hand.

This condition most often affects the hand and sometimes the forearm, but it can also spread up to the shoulder. Symptoms include:

- Pain in your hand, forearm, or wrist that awakens you at night.
- Occasional tingling, numbness, or a "pins-and-needles" sensation (similar to your hand "falling asleep").
- Weakness of the hand, leading to frequent dropping of items.
- Decreased sensation in the hand (more severe cases).

*Continued on next page*

## recent aphis retirees

Between August 1 and October 31, 2014, a total of 34 employees retired from the agency. We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

### August 1–October 31, 2014

#### international services

Beverley Barber Riverdale, MD  
Kelly Preston Tokyo, Japan

#### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Carolyn Ballard Shelbyville, KY  
Stephen Fuller Montgomery, AL  
Sandra Knutson Minneapolis, MN  
Lynn McDonald Minneapolis, MN  
Celeste Sickles Riverdale, MD  
Margaret Thorson Minneapolis, MN

#### policy and program development

Richard Fite North Hampton, NH

#### plant protection and quarantine

Jessie Baker Orlando, FL  
Cheryl B. Dean San Francisco, CA  
Ann Ferguson Portland, OR

Shirley Frazier Winter Haven, FL  
Carolyn Gethers Riverdale, MD  
Mateo Hernandez Edinburg, TX  
Kathleen Kral Jacksonville, FL  
Paul Pang Honolulu, HI  
Lorinda Purcell Raleigh, NC  
Donald Robbins Winter Haven, FL  
Carlos Rodriguez Mission, TX  
Alan Tamiya Honolulu, HI

#### veterinary services

Timothy Beattie Ames, IA  
Barbara Carmona Eagle Pass, TX  
Zona Gabbard Cambridge, OH  
Carl Grant Tuscaloosa, AL  
Phillip Lee Sumas, WA  
Dennis Page Riverdale, MD  
Regla Perez Miami, FL  
Jamie Snyder Raleigh, NC

#### wildlife services

Darlene Blaney Fort Collins, CO  
Cherri Golden Mississippi State, MS  
Brenda Harral Louisville, KY  
Howard Homan Bismarck, ND  
Jerry Twitty Yakima, WA ●

## former aphis administrator **harry c. mussman** passes away

By Scott Moore



Former APHIS Administrator Harry C. Mussman died November 7 in Houston, TX, at age 84. As APHIS' second Administrator, Mussman helped formalize the agency's role in managing pest and disease outbreaks.

Mussman joined APHIS in 1971 and served as Associate Administrator under Frank Mulhern between 1975 and 1977. As Administrator from 1980 until 1983, he defined the agency's organizational identity by formalizing the "APHIS Philosophy" of participatory management and articulating the agency's core values, responsibilities, and expectations. The result was an organizational climate that enabled employees to work at their highest potential while maintaining open communication with the agency's constituents and other interest groups.

During Mussman's tenure as Administrator, the agency dealt with several major foreign pest and disease outbreaks. Current Administrator Kevin Shea and others credit Mussman's leadership for the agency's successful response and for further defining APHIS' significance as an organization.

"In the early 1980s, there were three large outbreaks of African swine fever in Haiti, a highly-pathogenic avian influenza outbreak, and a big Medfly outbreak in California," said Shea. "Our success in those cases was important not only in the short term, but also helped demonstrate the need to expand the agency's role in helping other nations deal with plant and animal health problems before pests and diseases reach the United States."

Mussman also helped bring about government-industry consensus on a brucellosis eradication program, and he was chairman of the USDA Boll Weevil Policy Group, which guided development of the agency's successful cotton insect management effort.

Early in his career, Mussman was an instructor and director of the clinical pathology laboratory at Kansas State University, where he had earned two doctorates and a master's degree. After his work at APHIS, he became USDA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Education and Executive Vice President for Scientific Affairs. Mussman later headed a company that provided sterilization services to the medical device, packaging, and food industries. ●

*Continued from page 5*

## carpal tunnel

To minimize symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, you can:

- Use correct hand and wrist postures.
- Alternate tasks between the right and left hands.
- Redesign workstations, tools, or tasks.

For assistance with your ergonomic concerns, contact the APHIS Ergonomics Program at 301-436-3175 or submit a [request form](#) for an ergonomic workstation evaluation.

More information is also available at the [APHIS Ergonomics Program Web page](#). ●

animal care

# partnership keeps stakeholders informed

By Dave Sacks

Sometimes 1 + 1 = 1000.

Animal Care and one of its many stakeholder groups teamed up during the summer to host a webinar addressing animal welfare issues in biomedical research—resulting in 1,000 people directly involved in the care of laboratory animals gaining a better understanding of APHIS regulations.

The National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) seeks to provide a unified voice for the scientific community on legislative and regulatory matters affecting lab animal research. For the second year in a row, NABR presented a webinar on USDA regulatory oversight to its members.

Betty Goldentyer and Robert Gibbens, directors of Animal Care’s Eastern and Western Regions, respectively, fielded and answered the questions for USDA. They delved into the details of the Federal regulations while also focusing the webinar on how lab researchers and technicians can provide the best and most appropriate care to their facilities’ animals.

“Getting direct feedback allows us to determine the level of understanding on certain issues and gives us the opportunity to clarify things,” Goldentyer said.

“It helps us help them,” Gibbens added. “We can also better train our [veterinary medical officers] on these issues so that we’ll all be more uniform in our efforts.”

All facilities in the United States that use warmblooded animals for medical research and testing, including universities and cosmetic companies to name a few, must be registered with USDA. Animal Care upholds and enforces the Animal Welfare Act, which requires such facilities to provide their animals with humane care and treatment. Animal Care inspects these facilities to make sure they are adhering to the regulations, but as this webinar shows, the program also educates its registrants.

Universities, private research companies, and research vendors from all over the country tuned in to the webinar. Information shared during the webinar was subsequently provided to all NABR members and Animal Care’s inspectors.

“Getting the answers out in this public way helps increase confidence in Animal Care’s inspection system, and it allows us to speak in ‘one voice’ to a very valuable stakeholder group,” said Andrea Morgan, Animal Care’s associate deputy administrator. “Great audience participation and thoughtful

questions made this a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved.”

Above all, the webinar reinforced a passion for animal welfare shared by the regulators and the regulated community.

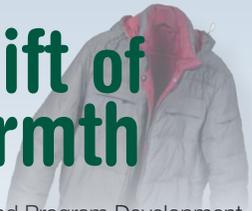
“While the regulations do need to be interpreted [by us] and followed [by the research facilities], we all care deeply about the animals,” Gibbens said. “And a webinar like this speaks to that fact.” ●

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***“Getting the answers out in this public way helps increase confidence in Animal Care’s inspection system”***

**—Andrea Morgan, Animal Care**

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## the gift of warmth

APHIS Policy and Program Development recently hosted a coat drive in Riverdale for the One Warm Coat/Vietnam Veterans of America Association to provide winter wear to homeless veterans.

APHIS employees in Riverdale stepped up and donated more than 120 new and used coats, as well as 50 pieces of outerwear (sweatshirts, hats, scarves, shoes, and gloves). Many thanks to all who contributed. ●

# veterinary services testing for salmonella in bearded dragons



for One Health  
information

By Mandi Frederick



Kristina Lantz (top) uses the MALDI-TOF Biotyper and Dana Barker (bottom) operates the Luminex 200 system to conduct tests at NVSL.

For years, reptiles and amphibians have been popular exotic pets. From kids fascinated with snakes to adults who are lizard connoisseurs, the number of homes in the United States that house slithery friends is increasing. But what some pet owners may not know is that these animals are natural carriers for *Salmonella*, often carrying several different varieties of the bacteria—called serotypes.

Although carrying the bacteria rarely sickens reptiles and amphibians, it can cause illness in people if the right precautions aren't taken. Such risks of exposure to disease highlight the importance of the [One Health](#) initiative, which recognizes that the health of the environment, animals, and people are deeply connected. The One Health concept brings together physicians, ecologists, and animal health professionals in addressing public health threats.

Just this past spring, APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) joined efforts in response to a *Salmonella* outbreak.

NVSL assisted the CDC with an epidemiological investigation after a cluster of outbreaks in people of *Salmonella* Cotham and Kisarawe, two very rare serotypes. During interviews, CDC found that 83 percent of those infected had contact with reptiles. Further questioning indicated that bearded dragons could be the source. CDC officials then visited pet stores and breeders where the people affected had purchased bearded dragons. They collected fecal, egg, and environmental samples and immediately contacted NVSL for help with testing the samples.

### [state-of-the-art testing]

Because lizards have *Salmonella* as part of their body's normal bacterial makeup, or "microflora," detecting these two very specific, very rare isolates is like finding a needle in a haystack. But as always, NVSL's state-of-the-art technology and laboratory personnel were up for the challenge.

For each sample, NVSL collected multiple bacterial isolates, often as many as 16. This initially produced more than 3,000 suspect

isolates—all needing to be identified to find out if they were, indeed, *Salmonella*.

Enter NVSL's new MALDI-TOF Biotyper.

Although its name is complicated, the MALDI-TOF is a machine that dramatically simplifies the process of locating isolates. The Biotyper software can analyze up to 380 bacterial colonies per run and quickly tell scientists which isolates are *Salmonella*, greatly reducing the time and expense associated with traditional identification methods.

After separating the *Salmonella* from the other bacteria, agency scientists still needed to determine the isolates' serotypes to see which, if any, were Cotham and Kisarawe. Once again, NVSL's cutting-edge technology came in handy.

### [matching the pattern]

Using a Luminex 200 molecular serotyping system, laboratory scientists were able to respond with speed. The Luminex system can look at up to 90 samples in a run, swiftly

Continued on next page

# aphis fleet management on a roll



By John Scott

APHIS employees spend a lot of time behind the wheel, logging thousands of miles each year. As you can imagine, all that driving comes with a sizeable price tag. To help curb costs and keep the agency rolling, APHIS took a closer look—starting in 2011—and found that our fleet management needed a tune-up.

The APHIS fleet had grown to more than 4,700 agency-owned cars/trucks/vans, a figure that didn't even include additional agency-leased vehicles. The number simply wasn't sustainable, nor was it a good use of taxpayer dollars.

## [looking under the hood]

To get back on track, APHIS has taken several steps to review and improve its fleet management. Beginning in 2011, APHIS' Program Leaders Group (PLG)—made up of the associate deputy administrators from each of the agency's programs—began reviewing the agency's fleet. And, more recently, APHIS launched a business process improvement (BPI) project to focus on fleet management, spanning fiscal years 2014–2015. The BPI

team includes employees from each of the APHIS programs with vehicles, plus staff from Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services (MRPBS) and Policy and Program Development.

Together, the team reviewed every step in the fleet management process—from purchasing vehicles, to maintenance, to the process for excessing or selling vehicles. It also validated the entire APHIS fleet inventory, program by program. And as the BPI team wrapped up its first year, it developed several products aimed at bringing clarity and consistency to the agency's fleet management. Among other things, these products—expected to roll out this year—include a roles and responsibilities document, an FAQ with essential information, a training curriculum, and other guidance materials.

Now in its second year, the BPI team will be focusing on APHIS' processes for reporting out on its vehicles and forecasting agency fleet needs.

*Continued on next page*

*Continued from page 8*

## bearded dragons

analyzing and recognizing the different serotype patterns—each of which is unique. NVSL scientists quickly identified the patterns present in the samples and found the rare *Salmonella* serotypes they were hunting for.

With APHIS' test results, CDC was able to confirm that pet bearded dragons were the source of the outbreaks. They also learned that these serotypes are very widespread in the pet bearded dragon population and have likely become part of its normal microflora.

After the investigation, CDC increased its outreach efforts to let pet owners know how to keep these rare *Salmonella* serotypes from spreading. NVSL also did followup testing for the affected bearded dragon breeders to help them implement *Salmonella* control measures in their hatching and rearing processes. ●

# fleet management

Continued from page 9

## [savings and improvement]

With the combined efforts of the PLG, the agency's fleet management community, and the BPI team, the agency is now on a good road. Since 2011, APHIS has reduced its fleet by more than 750 vehicles. And since 2012, APHIS has decreased its annual fleet operating cost by just over \$500,000. As the changes take greater effect, agency savings are expected to grow even more.

Two other improvements came out of this overall effort, and they are designed to keep the APHIS fleet pointed in the right direction.

The agency created a new vehicle allocation methodology (VAM) to ensure our fleet stays at the right level. The VAM sets criteria for the minimum amount of miles a vehicle must be driven each year and requires each program to develop a fleet management plan every year, along with a plan for allocating its vehicles.

Also, APHIS now has a new policy and process for reviewing inventories and transferring vehicles between programs before purchasing new cars. The policy has already yielded real benefits.

When Wildlife Services (WS) needed 55 vehicles for the new feral swine program, the program looked internally to see what they already had in their inventory that wasn't being fully utilized—and they asked other programs to do the same. As a result, WS purchased only 33 new vehicles and obtained 22 from within APHIS' existing fleet.

## [down the road]

Going forward, the agency's associate deputy administrators will play a more active role in managing their respective fleets—including vehicle purchases, allocations, and disposals. The PLG will also review the entire agency fleet on a semi-annual basis to ensure APHIS stays on track.

If you have any fleet-related questions, please contact Fleet Manager Skip Bradford by email ([ronald.f.bradford@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ronald.f.bradford@aphis.usda.gov)) or by calling 612-336-3419. You can also visit the MRPBS [Fleet Management Services SharePoint page](#) for more information. ●

## in memoriam

From August 1 through October of this year, our agency lost two members of the APHIS family.

We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

### veterinary services

Lawrence Stotelmyre Ames, IA

### wildlife services

Justin Mann Lucile, ID ●

[inside] **APHIS** John Scott, Editor  
(301) 851-4068  
[john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov)

Photo sources: B. Morningstar (VS), W. Stokes (AC), M. Tadle (PPD), A. Torres (Cornell University), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on [My.APHIS](#).

volunteer spotlight  
**katy vernon**



**[employee name and program]**

Katy Vernon  
Animal Care Inspector  
Animal Care  
Missouri

**[volunteer organization]**

Jamaica Medical Mission; First United  
Methodist Church, West Plains, MO

**[organization mission]**

Begun 15 years ago, the mission and its  
associated clinic offer medical services  
and provide medicine to the residents in  
Falmouth, Jamaica.

**[volunteer activities]**

Vernon helped doctors, nurse practitioners,  
and nurses at the mission clinic with pro-  
cedures and with dispensing medications.  
She also instructed patients on the use and  
precautions of medications.

**[time given]**

Vernon volunteered for 8 days during the  
mission trip.

**[organization web site]**

[www.fumcwestplains.com](http://www.fumcwestplains.com)  
[www.umcburg.org](http://www.umcburg.org)

**[employee email]**

[katy.h.vernon@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:katy.h.vernon@aphis.usda.gov) ●

## helping those in need in jamaica

By Katy Vernon

I knew I'd be helping people when I  
joined a local church's medical mission  
to Jamaica. I just didn't know that one of  
the biggest benefactors would be myself.

As an inspector with Animal Care, I  
help ensure the welfare of the animals  
regulated under the Animal Welfare Act  
and Horse Protection Act. I travel daily to  
zoos, commercial dog breeding kennels,  
and other licensed facilities throughout  
Missouri, making sure they are provid-  
ing proper care and adhering to Federal  
regulations.

I learned about the medical mission  
from a neighbor, and I was intrigued.

The mission and its associated clinic were  
started by Dr. Wallace Carpenter and his  
wife, Diane, 15 years ago to offer medi-  
cal services and provide medicine to the  
residents in Falmouth, Jamaica. The First  
United Methodist Church of Warrensburg,  
MO, organizes trips to the mission, and the  
volunteers always come back with great  
stories. So I decided that I'd like to be a  
part of it. Being a veterinary technician, I  
thought I'd have some skills that the medi-  
cal teams could use.

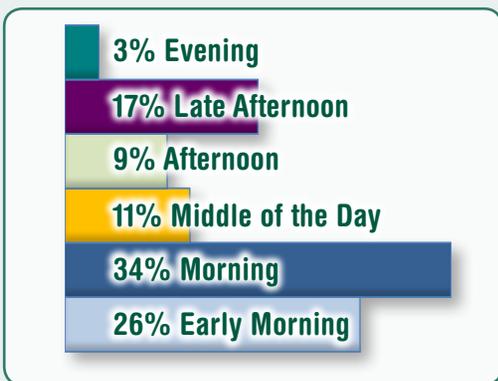
In February, a group of us from West  
Plains, MO, set out for Falmouth. We  
could only take carry-on bags on our flight

*Continued on next page*

# question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “When is your most productive part of the day at work?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.



**When is your most productive part of the day at work?**

Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

### [next question please]

Some people are extroverts and feel more comfortable in groups and actually get energy from being in a group setting. Others identify more as introverts and prefer more individual time to reflect and recharge. And some people feel that they are a balance of both..

With that in mind, we ask: *Would you say that you are an introvert, extrovert, or a blend of the two?*

- Introvert
- Extrovert
- Blend of the Two

Feel free to add your comment explaining why.

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/55R6XB5> ●

*Continued from page 11*

## helping in jamaica

because our checked baggage allotment was used for medical supplies. During my week in Jamaica, I assisted the clinic’s doctors in any way I could, including dispensing medicine and helping with some medical procedures.

The people who came to the clinic were all different ages, and they began arriving each day at daybreak. Many came from surrounding areas using whatever transportation they could. Some waited up to 8 or 9 hours to see a doctor, but none complained. They were friendly and so grateful to be there. In the United States people get cranky if they have to wait in line, but there was none of that at the clinic.

The patients had such love for the doctors. They would hug, and talk, and smile. I was struck by the affection they showed and their resourcefulness. They are poor but make do with what they have. Some families live in shacks made from metal or plywood sheets that wash ashore. They work very hard to get by, and that made a big impact on me. It has made me far more grateful for all that I have.

During the time I was there, we tended to 750 patients. If not for the clinic, those patients

would not have received much-needed treatments and medications. Volunteers also taught carpentry skills, visited children in local orphanages, and repaired desks and bookshelves at the mission’s school.

My friends kidded me by saying that I was going to Jamaica to lay on a beach. But it was so much more rewarding than that. Without question, it was an experience I’ll never forget.

Serving others in need is life-changing, and I think I understand that now more than before.

Note: The mission has an ongoing need for common medications—such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, allergy/sinus medication, vitamins, antifungal skin creams, and antibiotic creams. Non-medical items are also needed, including school supplies, prescription eye-glasses, soap, and other personal care items.

If you would like to donate items, please contact:

**First United Methodist Church**  
141 E. Gay Street  
Warrensburg, MO 64093  
Phone: 660-747-8158 ●

# did you know ?



**Did you know** that all APHIS employees have an important connection to New Orleans? And it has nothing to do with the city’s famous food, music, or Mardi Gras. It’s about your biweekly statement of earnings and leave.

For all APHIS employees, these statements are generated by our payroll office, the National Finance Center (NFC), located in New Orleans. The statements contain valuable information about your earnings, withholdings, leave, and allotments.

As an employee, you are responsible for the accuracy of the information on your statement. So it’s a good idea to visit your Employee Personal Page (EPP), available online at NFC’s [MyEPP Web site](#), and view your statement to make sure it’s accurate.

Links for MyEPP and other helpful resources are also available on the [My.APHIS Web site](#).

## [things to check]

### Leave

- Are your leave balances correct, and do they match those in WebTA?
- Annual Leave: Is the balance going to be

more than 240 hours at the end of the leave year? If so, talk to your supervisor about options available for your “use or lose” time.

- Is the annual leave maximum carryover (“Max. C/O”) amount correct? Most full-time employees can carry over 240 hours of annual leave from year to year.

### Mailing Address

- W-2 forms and other mailings are sent to the address listed on your statement. Is your address correct? If not, you can update it using the [MyEPP Web site](#).

### State/County/City Taxes

- Is the correct State/county/city tax being withheld (if applicable)?

### Benefits

- Review your benefits information (FEHB, vision, dental, life insurance, and optional life insurance) and the amounts deducted to make sure they are correct.

### Allotments

- If you have an allotment deducted from your paycheck, please verify the money is being deposited into the correct account at the appropriate financial institution.

### Time and Attendance (T&A)

#### — Check on webTA

#### Leave Data Section

- Do your leave balances in WebTA match those on your statement?
- Time-Off Award (TOA): If you have any unused TOA hours, is the correct balance shown in the Leave Data section?

#### T&A Profile Section

- Is your Service Computation Date correct?
- Is your personal leave ceiling correct? Most employees have an annual leave ceiling of 240 hours.
- Annual Leave Accrual Rate: Are you in the correct annual leave category (4, 6, or 8 hours)?

If you find errors with leave balances or information in webTA, please contact your supervisor or servicing program assistant for guidance. Similarly, if you spot errors on your EPP and/or on your statement, contact your supervisor and the Human Resources processing associate who services your program area. For a list of processing associates, visit the [Payroll/Personnel Processing Web page](#).

Remember—review your records every pay period and report any discrepancies quickly to minimize the impact of any errors you find. ●



*William S. Stokes  
Assistant Director  
Animal Welfare Operations  
Animal Care  
Raleigh, NC*

## manager profile with **william stokes**

### **[what is your background?]**

I grew up on a farm in Fern Creek, KY, raising mainly beef cattle and goats. I earned my B.S. degree from the University of Louisville and my D.V.M. (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) degree from The Ohio State University. I served in the Army Veterinary Corps for 7 years, where I completed a laboratory animal medicine residency and supported research on high-hazard viruses (including Ebola virus), bacteria, and toxins at the U.S. Army Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, MD.

I later transferred to the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and worked at the National Institutes of Health as the animal program director and attending veterinarian for two Institutes and as a center director at the U.S. National Toxicology Program.

### **[how long have you been with aphis?]**

I joined APHIS in June 2014.

### **[most memorable APHIS experience?]**

Since I've only been at APHIS a short time, I'd like to share an experience relevant to current APHIS emergency response goals.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I deployed and worked with a large staff of veterinarians and animal care personnel to rescue and shelter thousands of pets left behind after New Orleans was evacuated. Two weeks after the hurricane, we traveled into the eerily quiet dewatered city to survey and search for any remaining animals. Accompanied by a SWAT team, we were able to rescue additional animals from a research facility and safely complete the mission. All involved were rewarded with the joy of seeing families reunited with their rescued pets.

### **[priorities in the coming months?]**

I look forward to encouraging our field teams to continue improving animal welfare and compliance with the Animal Welfare Act. Our veterinary medical officers and animal care inspectors are uniquely positioned to leverage their extensive knowledge and experience to improve animal welfare through education, outreach, and inspections.

### **[accomplishment most proud of?]**

While serving at the National Institutes of Health, I worked with 15 Federal agencies and various stakeholder groups to establish criteria and processes for the validation and

acceptance of alternative safety testing methods that are more humane and use fewer or no animals. The subsequent validation and regulatory acceptance of over 60 alternative test methods has greatly reduced laboratory animal pain and distress and avoided the use of thousands of animals.

### **[last book read?]**

*Undaunted Courage* by Stephen E. Ambrose.

### **[favorite meal?]**

NC-style BBQ pork, fried okra, collard greens, corn bread, and banana pudding.

### **[guilty pleasure?]**

Ice cream and TV.

### **[hobbies?]**

Spending time with my family, visiting National Parks, canoeing, camping, and hiking.

### **[favorite movie?]**

*Apollo 13*. ●



## in this issue



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## plant protection and quarantine mobile apps— every picture tells a story

By Gary Roush

Imagine that a Girl Scout hiking along a Hawaiian beach spies a large beetle on a palm frond. Intrigued by the beetle's unusual horn, she launches the "Palm Pests" app on her smart phone. The app soon helps her identify the insect as a coconut rhinoceros beetle, an invasive species. She and her parents alert State officials about the find.

Meanwhile, a commercial crafts maker in Ohio is evaluating samples of imported potpourri for a new product he is designing. He wants to know what's in the mix. Using the "Dried Botanicals" app on his iPhone, he identifies the species in the samples and chooses the mix with the widest variety of floral elements.

Although both of these incidents are fictitious, the identification tools described are not.

They're very real and very cool.

### [there's an app for that]

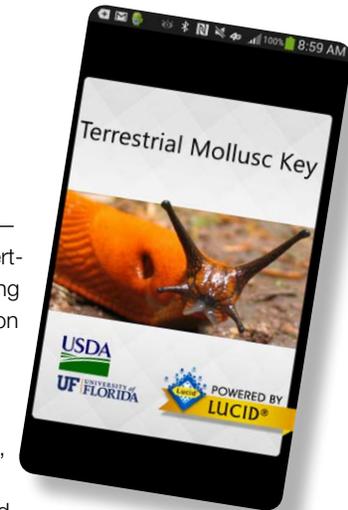
Last year Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Identification Technology Program (ITP) released 10 phone apps for both Android and

iPhones. The apps—adapted and converted from ITP's existing desktop identification products (see [ID Tools page](#))—help users identify specific plant pests, plant diseases, and noxious weeds. And, ITP expects to roll out more apps soon.

For example, to support President Obama's 2014 Memorandum, "Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators," ITP and its partners are developing "Bee Mites ID," for use in the field by entomologists, beekeepers, and others concerned about honey-bee health.

### [tech on your side]

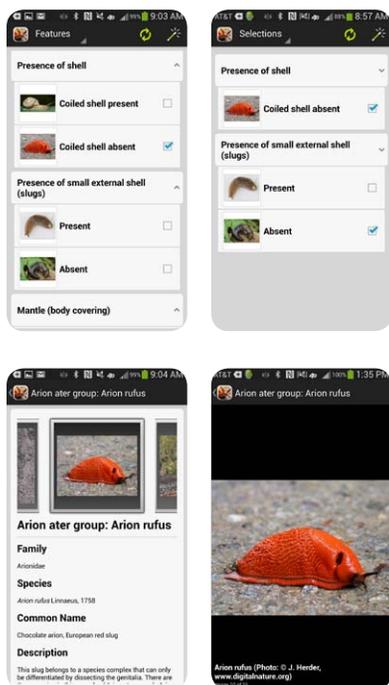
ITP's primary mission is to support the plant pest, disease, and noxious weed identification needs of APHIS officials and State partners



*Continued on next page*

# mobile apps

Continued from page 1



*The software interactively narrows down the possibilities, arriving eventually at the specimen's family or species.*

working to maintain the health of American agriculture and natural resources, as well as the flow of agricultural trade. This means ITP supports, among others, PPQ identifiers at Plant Inspection Stations, PPQ preclearance program staff stationed offshore, Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey officials, and participants in the National Plant Diagnostic Network.

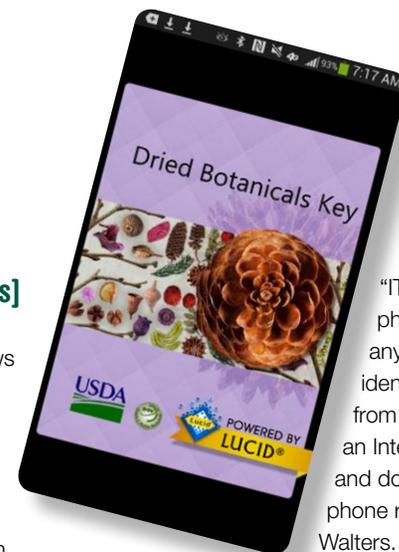
ITP's dedicated staff carries out their mission by developing a wide range of innovative, scientifically accurate, digital identification resources. In addition to mobile apps, ITP develops products such as screening aids, keys, pest factsheets, image galleries, and molecular diagnostics.

ITP collaborates with the Nation's expert entomologists, botanists, and plant pathologists to ensure the accuracy of their content, images, and keys. "Keys" are identification tools that, based on the features of an object, enable identifiers to use a process of elimination to pinpoint what the object is. Many of ITP's products, including all of its mobile apps, are built around the powerful Lucid matrix-based keys software platform developed by the University of Queensland.

## [flexible identification searches]

The big advantage of a Lucid matrix-based identification key is that it allows the user multiple access points to launch a search by choosing among any of a specimen's basic characteristics, (e.g., wing length, antennae shape, and body size), rather than having to follow a predetermined path required by more traditional, single-access identification keys. The user first selects a characteristic, then high-resolution photographs and illustrations pop up for comparison to the specimen. As each new choice is made, the software interactively narrows down the possibilities, arriving eventually at the specimen's family or species. The software does not require familiarity with botanical or anatomical terms, but expert users can employ their scientific knowledge to quickly drill down to the correct identification.

"In addition to serving the needs of government professionals, one of our main reasons for creating mobile phone apps is to empower non-experts—including students, educators, and the general public—with access at any time to expert information," said ITP Coordinator Terrence Walters.



"ITP's mobile phone apps liberate anyone seeking to identify a specimen from having to be near an Internet connection and do not even require phone reception," added Walters.

ITP's iPhone and Android phone mobile apps are free, and are available for download on the [ID Tools page](#).

## may is aphs coaching month

Visit [APHIS Coaching SharePoint Site](#) and learn more about how APHIS is celebrating International Coaching Week, May 18- 22, 2015.

You can register on the SharePoint site for events throughout the week.

Watch your email for more information.

wildlife services  
**helping SNOW,  
science, and  
airports**

By Carol Bannerman



Both the size and flight patterns of snowy owls make them hazardous when they locate to airfields. And, unfortunately, airfields are strong attractants to the visiting raptors.

During the 2013-14 surge in the owls' population—known as an irruption—Wildlife Services (WS) biologists trapped and relocated more than 100 snowy owls from airports where WS works to reduce aviation/ birdstrike hazards and cooperated with other biologists in moving even more (See [Inside APHIS, Vol. 1, 2014](#)).

An owl captured in January was this year's first owl caught and outfitted with a radio transmitter harness by WS-Michigan personnel for [Project SNOWstorm](#). The project, a collaborative effort involving numerous organizations and scientists, will provide valuable information on snowy owl behavior and movement.

Brian Washburn (shown right in tagging photo), of WS' National Wildlife Research Center, coordinated WS' efforts with Project

SNOWstorm, which provided three transmitter harnesses for owls captured during this past winter. Using multiple trap types, WS-Michigan biologist Aaron Bowden (shown in owl release photo) has caught 20 snowy owls in 2015, compared to 36 in last year's irruption.

Michigan DNR photographer David Kenyon and Michigan Public Radio documented this capture-release. (More details are available [here](#).)

**[follow the birds]**

You can follow the snowy owls trapped and released by WS-Michigan in conjunction with this effort by visiting the [Project SNOWstorm](#) site and looking for "Alma," "Prairie Rhonde," and "Buckeye." Other WS airport-captured owls have included Monocacy, Baltimore, Philly, and Amishtown.

Also, see Michigan Public Radio's [Unlocking the Secret World of the Snowy Owl](#). ●



# stay informed about aphis eFile

By John Scott

Progress continues as the agency works on developing its new APHIS eFile system. When complete, the system will provide APHIS employees and stakeholders with the benefits of a consolidated, streamlined, and flexible system for the agency's many certification, accreditation, registration, permitting, and other licensing (CARPOL) activities.

APHIS and its cooperators issue more than 500,000 CARPOL-type authorizations each year. Currently, eight separate information technology (IT) systems—as well as a number of manual processes—support these efforts. With APHIS eFile, APHIS seeks to improve efficiency through a more integrated solution.

### [what's the latest?]

APHIS eFile is a complex project that will affect many programs, so it's important for employees to stay both informed and involved.

Former Veterinary Services Chief Information Officer John Picanso recently joined the effort and will serve as the project's program manager.

The project's first priority will be to focus on the agency's permitting process.

Here are three key updates on the project:

1. APHIS awarded the development contract for the new system to a company called Phase One Consulting Group, Inc. The agency finalized the contract in September 2014 and began

development work in November. Work on the following program permitting tracks are underway:

- Plant Protection and Quarantine: fruits and vegetables
- Animal Care: live dogs

*Continued on next page*



## coming soon 101 critical days of summer

On May 20, APHIS' Raleigh office is hosting "The 101 Critical Days of Summer," an emergency preparedness fair for agency employees as well as North Carolina State University students, faculty, and alumni and area businesses.

The days between Memorial Day and Labor Day have been called the 101 critical

days of summer due to the peak in injuries and dangers associated with outdoor activities and extreme summer weather conditions. The fair is aimed at raising safety awareness and helping area employees learn about available community services.

Watch [My.APHIS](#) and your email for more information. ●

# animal care safety stand-down day

By David Sacks

Following an example set by the military, Animal Care conducted its first-ever Safety Stand-Down Day on March 23 so program employees could review overall safety practices and better understand the risks involved in their jobs.

The Animal Care Safety, Health and Wellness Council knows that stepping out of the everyday routine can be the best way for employees to assess safety issues on the job. For this reason, Animal Care scheduled no routine work on Safety Stand-Down Day; instead, program employees had uninterrupted time to refocus on job safety. “Animal Care managers see safety as a priority, so we used the day to make sure employees have all the tools necessary to be safe while performing their daily duties,” said Council Chair Natalie Cooper, veterinary medical officer in Arkansas.

Among other activities, field employees reviewed the Animal Care Safety and Health Manual, inspected their personal protective equipment, and reviewed updated zoonotic disease materials. One inspector even took her vehicle to the dealership for a safety recall, and while there a mechanic discovered

and repaired the vehicle’s worn suspension, improving its road safety.

## [hotlines and q&a sessions]

Throughout the day, the Council and its liaisons in each part of Animal Care hosted a telephone hotline and virtual question-and-answer session to respond to employees’ safety-related questions.

“This was a very positive event,” said John Lopinto, veterinary medical officer in New York who served as Council chair prior to Cooper. “We wanted all of our employees to reflect on the safety issues we are faced with every day because nothing is more important than that.”

By all accounts, Safety Stand-Down Day was a success and will undoubtedly pay dividends in the months and years to come.

“Whether you have been on the job for 25 years or just one year, it forced people to sit down and review the information available, which is always a good thing,” said Bryan Irwin, an Animal Care inspector in Texas. “I learned things that I didn’t know, and I also reviewed the things I already know.” ●

*Continued from page 4*

## aphis eFile

- Biotechnology Regulatory Services: notifications
  - Veterinary Services: meats, eggs, and dairy
2. The process of developing APHIS eFile will be lengthy. Its success depends on employees and programs actively engaging in the project throughout the entire process. Agency working groups, which include representatives from each program, are currently focused on important aspects of the permitting process.
  3. APHIS recently launched an updated [CARPOL/APHIS eFile SharePoint site](#). As the main information-sharing resource for the project, it’s the place to visit for updates, information, and to pose your questions.

APHIS eFile will be an essential part of the agency’s operations and a key fixture in the agency’s IT environment and business processes. During its development, be sure to stay informed and stay involved. ●

getting to know

# aphis associate administrator mike gregoire



APHIS Associate Administrators Mike Gregoire and Jere Dick help lead the agency's day-to-day efforts and work to shape our actions and goals for the future.

Both have worked with APHIS for some time and have collaborated with employees on numerous projects over the years.

### **When did you start working for APHIS? What made you decide to start working here?**

I started working for APHIS as a budget analyst in July 1978. I majored in political science and was interested in a public administration career in the Federal Government. I got a good score on the Federal civil service exam and that's how APHIS got my name and invited me for an interview.

### **What are your priorities during the next few months as APHIS Associate Administrator?**

My three top priorities in the coming months are to advance the agency's alternatives to rulemaking strategies, get the APHIS eFile implementation off to a good

start, and engage with employees to get their ideas on ways to continue to make APHIS a high performing organization and a great place to work.

But given their new roles, we wanted to help you get to know each a little better. In our last issue, we ran a question-and-answer piece with Jere Dick. In this issue, we feature Mike Gregoire who discusses his background, career development advice, and his tips for winter driving. ●

### **What's your most memorable APHIS experience?**

I've been lucky to have many great experiences in APHIS. One that stands out for me was working together with the Department of Justice and then going to the Supreme Court of the United States to hear oral arguments in the Monsanto Company versus Geertson Seed Farms case. The case involved a regulatory decision APHIS had made on genetically engineered alfalfa. I never imagined having that opportunity when I started here.

### **What's one thing that employees would be surprised to know about you?**

My career in food and agriculture began long before I joined APHIS. When I was a boy, my brother, mother, and I were pictured in a magazine advertisement for New York State applesauce. I worked my way through college as a stock clerk and assistant manager in a grocery store.

### **What big changes do you see for APHIS employees as we move through the 21st century? What do you think employees need to be ready for?**

I think the role that APHIS plays in contributing to global food security is going to be hugely important. Advances in agricultural technology and information technology will provide tools that we probably can't even imagine at this point. Employees will need to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments. I think employees will also need to be ready for many leadership opportunities and challenges in the coming years.

*Continued on next page*

# aphis associate administrator mike gregoire

Continued from page 6



**A leader must be equipped with the competencies necessary to perform his or her role. Which competency do you think is the most important one for a leader to have?**

Leaders get their work done through others, so to me leading people is the most important competency—that includes having a vision and goals, choosing the right people for the job, giving them the resources and support they need to get the job done, ensuring accountability, and celebrating their successes.

**As a native of Buffalo, NY, do you have any winter driving tips—especially for D.C. area employees?**

Telework and stay off the roads if you can. If you have to drive, make sure your car has good tires, windshield wipers, and washer fluid. Wear your seatbelt. Drive slow to avoid going into a skid, and don't text and drive!

**Which of your prior jobs with APHIS has had the most influence on how you approach your job as Associate Administrator? In what way?**

My previous two jobs as deputy administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services and Policy and Program Development most

influenced how I approach my current job. Those jobs exposed me to and gave me an appreciation for the challenges of leading a program unit and a support unit. Both jobs involved using leadership skills and engaging with internal and external stakeholders, interagency partners, and senior policy officials to get things done—all of which are important aspects of the associate administrator job.

**Using the experience you've gained with APHIS over the years, what advice do you wish you could go back and give yourself as a new APHIS employee?**

Learn how your work contributes to the agency mission and be the best at it you can be. Take initiative. Avail yourself of the many opportunities APHIS has to offer to broaden your perspectives and experience. Those opportunities include training, developmental and collateral duty assignments, special projects, networking, mentoring and field trips, to name a few.

**How do you start your day? How does it end?**

I like to start the day by scanning the news and then thinking and preparing for what's ahead. That might include reading in preparation for meetings, thinking about how to

advance a particular project or bring an issue to resolution, or identifying key points I'd like to make in remarks I've been asked to give at an event. The last thing I do before I leave the office is look at the traffic map before I begin my commute home.

**What's the accomplishment you are most proud of?**

With my wife Jane, raising three great children. I'm grateful that APHIS family friendly policies made it possible to balance my work and family life.

**How do you like to spend your time away from the office?**

I love playing golf, ice hockey, and tennis and spending time with our family and friends.

**What's the last book you read?**

*The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara, a historical novel about the battle of Gettysburg.

**What is your favorite meal?**

Buffalo wings, of course.

**When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?**

A major league baseball player. ●

## veterinary services **avian influenza 101**



for latest news  
and information

By Kira Metz



*Veterinary Services' Chrislyn Wood collects a swab sample for testing.*

Avian influenza is again making headlines with recent detections in the United States. For many people following the news coverage, it's easy to get lost in the acronyms and abbreviations associated with the disease—HPAI, LPAI, H5N2, H5N8 and so on. And, as with most things, the fine points matter. Getting the distinctions is important to understanding the potential impact on U.S. agriculture and human health.

To disentangle common terms and provide basic information that will help you follow the latest news, we offer this brief overview about the disease.

Avian influenza (AI), known informally as bird flu, is an infectious disease spread by influenza type A viruses. The disease is a concern because it threatens birds in our food supply (e.g., chickens, turkeys, ducks, and quail).

AI predominantly affects birds but has been known to jump to people in rare, isolated cases—mainly overseas in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East—where people have been infected when working closely

with sick or dead birds. Currently, there is no evidence that AI can spread efficiently and in a sustained manner person-to-person. Eggs and poultry are safe to eat when cooked to recommendations.

AI spreads around the world through wild bird migration and the movement of infected birds. There are two main classifications of the AI virus in poultry: highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI). Pathogenicity is the ability of a virus to produce disease.

Generally, the HPAI strains cause severe disease and death in birds, and the LPAI strains cause only mild disease or no symptoms at all. Subtypes of the AI virus are classified based on two proteins on the viral surface: the “H” and the “N” protein. Each combination of these two proteins is considered a different viral subtype (e.g., H5N2, H5N8, etc.), and subtypes are further broken down into different viral strains from there. As with many kinds of infectious disease caused by viruses, the mutation possibilities of an AI virus are endless.

Some strains of AI are more deadly and more infectious than others. AI might go unnoticed in a wild bird population because ducks and geese are typically the carrier species and usually do not show signs of disease; however, when transmitted to densely populated domestic flocks, some AI strains can cause widespread disease and mortality. AI viruses in poultry with any viral subtypes that start with H5 or H7 are of particular concern because H5 and H7 subtypes can mutate from LPAI to an HPAI virus.

APHIS and State Departments of Agriculture have made good progress overseeing and regulating commercial bird movements in the United States to avoid transmission of disease. However, viral transmission from wild to domestic birds is more difficult to predict.

APHIS and its cooperators respond to U.S. outbreaks of AI with extensive investigations into the causative viral pathogen and with efforts to help prevent its spread. APHIS also

*Continued on next page*

## aphis publications FY 2015 deadline coming up

publications  
deadline  
may 21

As is the case with end-of-year procurement deadlines, there are also deadlines around the production of communications materials.

This year, all complete submission packages for FY 2015-funded publications are due to Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) by **May 21, 2015**.

This deadline applies to professionally printed publications (brochures, custom factsheets, etc.), as well as posters, displays, and other outreach materials that require contracted design work or printing services.

The deadline does not apply to standard APHIS factsheets published online only or to administrative publications (i.e., technical manuals or other materials used solely by USDA personnel and/or official cooperators).

LPA staff will work with you to develop and gather submission package materials. This includes discussing concept, drafting text, selecting photos, identifying funding, and completing the paperwork needed to start formal clearance and production.

**All of these steps must be completed before the May 21 submission deadline.**

So, if you have outreach needs, don't wait: Contact LPA today to get started.

You can direct requests to an LPA public affairs specialist or the designated publications contact for your program area. For a contact list and other useful resources about the publications process, go to [LPA's Publications page](#) on the APHIS Intranet. ●

## avian influenza 101



*Continued from page 8*

conducts ongoing outreach with poultry farmers and backyard flock owners to encourage them to practice good biosecurity and to report sudden bird deaths to veterinarians, the USDA, and State departments of agriculture.

The recent detections of HPAI began in mid-December 2014 and have included finds in U.S. captive wild birds, backyard poultry and commercial poultry operations. Fortunately, the strains detected in

the United States do not affect people and have only caused illness in birds.

Detection updates are posted regularly online. For updates and to read more about AI, visit [Veterinary Services AI Web page](#) or [USDA's new AI page](#).

And to learn more healthy poultry practices, visit APHIS' [Biosecurity for the Birds](#). ●



*Terry A. Morris  
Director  
Quarantine Policy,  
Analysis and Support  
Plant Protection and Quarantine*

## manager profile with **terry morris**



### [what is your background?]

I was born in Baltimore, MD. My dad had a house built on half an acre of Estep family land, and he moved the family and the family dog, Charlie (a Cockerpoo) to Dunkirk, MD, to live closer to our paternal grandparents.

As you may imagine, we loved Charlie, and when Charlie died, I wanted to know why. I asked my dad to pay money to help find out why Charlie died, but that was not an option in those days. As a result of this situation, I vowed, at the tender age of 6, to become a veterinarian.

I received my undergraduate degree in biology from then Salisbury State University in 1988 and my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, Blacksburg, VA, in 1993. After graduation, I worked for USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service for 7 years before accepting a position with APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) in Riverdale, MD.

### [how long have you been with aphis?]

In 2001, I joined VS and transferred to APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Veterinary Regulatory Support unit in 2007. In December 2012, I was promoted to the

position of director for PPQ's Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support staff.

### [most memorable aphis experience?]

Perhaps my most memorable APHIS experience is associated with my position as acting director for PPQ's Phytosanitary Issues Management. As acting director, I participated in the European Union Bilateral Meeting in Brussels. This was my first international trip (excluding Canada), and it afforded me the honor of representing APHIS as part of the APHIS delegation; it gave me the opportunity to refine my political savvy and negotiating skills, and it enabled me to enjoy Brussels after hours.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

There are many, including: working with my colleagues to enhance PPQ's Agriculture Quarantine Inspection program; implementing a Veterinary Medical Officer Exchange Program between PPQ and VS; and strengthening the working relationship between APHIS and Customs and Border Protection.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

Co-piloting this accomplishment with my



husband of 25 years: our son, David Alan Morris, Jr., 24, is my most proud accomplishment. As an only child, David Jr. — nicknamed "DJ" — has always been exceptional. Fitting into that category of being "a good spoiled" child, his childhood and adolescent years were fairly uneventful. He is now a graduate of the University of Maryland at College Park, working a fulltime job, engaged to a wonderful young lady, and working to build his own business in financial management. He continues to make his positive mark on society.

### [last book read?]

*The Mentor Leader* by Tony Dungy

### [favorite meal?]

Grilled salmon and broccoli.

### [guilty pleasure?]

Chocolate ice cream.

### [hobbies?]

Teaching the children (ages 5–12) that rotate through my church's Children's Church Ministry program; learning American Sign Language and to play the alto saxophone.

### [favorite movie?]

*Pretty Woman* with Julia Roberts and Richard Gere. ●



## veterinary services techs it to the next level

By Tanika Whittington

As part of APHIS' continuing effort to leverage technology, Veterinary Services (VS) has implemented an electronic signature service that allows the program to digitally streamline processes and eliminate paper-based processing.

e-SignLive, the newly adopted electronic signature technology, allows VS users to legally and securely sign and send documents—anywhere, anytime, from any Web-enabled device, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

### [saving time]

"This technology has reduced the [timing of] signing and sending of documents from days to hours," said VS' Patrick McFall, one of the project managers for the implementation.

The electronic signature eliminates the need to print, fax, scan, or ship documents, essentially replacing the pen and paper with an electronic "fingerprint." This "fingerprint" validates the integrity and authenticity of the signer and the document. With this technology, any change made after the document has been signed invalidates the signature, protecting the program against forgery and tampering with documents.

VS is the first APHIS program to implement electronic signature. The program is using it to improve how it handles the high volume of livestock crossing U.S. borders.

Livestock import and export involves multiple documents and signatures for each animal. VS has incorporated the electronic signature technology into its Veterinary Services Process Streamlining application, used to process both livestock imports and exports.

### [getting results]

The program is already seeing positive results. The technology is improving how quickly VS can move internal and external documents, conduct field transactions, locate animals, and track their movement.

"Although VS is the first [program] in APHIS to use this technology, other areas in the agency—like Plant Protection and Quarantine and the agency's Certification, Accreditation, Registration, Permits, and other Licensing (CARPOL) project—are already looking to integrate eSignLive into their applications," said McFall. ●

## in memoriam

From November 1, 2014, through February of this year, our agency lost four members of the APHIS family. We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

### animal care

Martha Hefner Raleigh, NC

### plant protection and quarantine

Jack Gable Buckeye, AZ

### wildlife services

Daniel Garcia, Jr. Alice, TX  
Marshall Murphy Leedey, OK

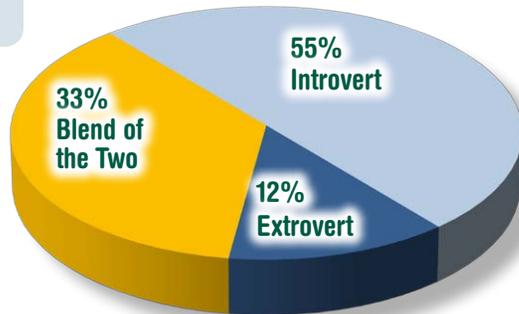
**Special Note:** We received word from the family of retired APHIS employee Terry Hall that he passed away on February 10, 2015. Terry, who retired from Policy and Program Development in 2011, was widely known throughout the agency for his dedication and his work each year with APHIS' Combined Federal Campaign efforts. ●

# question of the day

Would you say that you are an introvert, extrovert, or a blend of the two?

In our last issue, we asked employees, "Would you say that you are an introvert, extrovert, or a blend of the two?"

Here's the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.



Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

### [next question please]

Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in your work and lose track of time, especially if your workload is heavy and growing heavier. Other times, you may find that you just fall into a routine of not taking breaks, including not leaving your desk for lunch.

With that in mind, we ask: *What do you do most often for your lunch break?*

- I don't take a break
- Eat at my desk
- Eat lunch away from my desk
- I eat on the run
- Exercise

*Feel free to add your comments about your preference.*

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: [Question of the Day](#).

## working with velociraptors

Is it a rhea or a dinosaur?

Find out [here](#) by reading a story of grit and humor from the field.

For more stories, visit [VMO Observer](#), a Veterinary Services SharePoint site well worth a bookmark in your browser. The site offers something for non-veterinarians and veterinarians alike.

Please note that the site has recently moved, so if you already have it bookmarked, be sure to update the link. Click [here](#) if you'd like to subscribe to the biweekly VMO Observer digest email. Caution: Along with humor, some pages also contain case reports—some with graphic diagnostic images of animals. ●

# did you know ?



**Did you know** that the Presidential and Federal Records Act Amendments of 2014 have an important effect on how you can conduct official business for APHIS?

President Obama signed the new amendments on November 26, 2014. The following month, on December 29, 2014, USDA's Acting General Counsel Jeffery Prieto emailed a memo to all employees concerning the new law; on January 12 of this year, APHIS Chief Information Officer Gary Washington followed up with another all-employee e-mail that provided more details.

Here's what the new law means for APHIS employees.

### [what you need to know]

Employees may not use their personal or private email accounts or any social media format **for official business.**

This means you cannot copy, forward, text, or send official APHIS documents or official information from your government email to your personal or private email account. You also may not post official documents or information to any social media format.

Examples of personal or private accounts include, but are not limited to:

- Gmail
- Hotmail
- Zoho
- Yandex
- Outlook.com
- iCloud
- Yahoo
- Inbox.com
- Any other commercially available webmail/SMTP/IMAP-based email services

Examples of social media include, but are not limited to:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Tumblr
- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- Instagram

There are several exemptions to the law, including the following staffs and situations:

- Public Affairs and other staffs approved for legal and electronic dissemination of official information;
- APHIS employees who, in the course of their official duties, need to send documents or official information to vendors or contractors such as, but not limited to:
  - Statements of Work or Statements of Objectives;

- Reports on status or other official information required for the performance of the vendor or contractor's duties in support of APHIS;
- Agreements, memoranda, non-disclosure statements, etc., for signature;
- APHIS employees, who are teleworking or are on travel status and in the course of their official duties, need to send documents or official information to their personal or private account in order to be able to work. Employees are required to also copy their official government email with any official information or documents they send to their personal or private email.
  - Teleworking employees may print official documents and information when they telework.

The new law also created severe penalties for failure to follow its requirements. Intentionally sending official APHIS documents and information to your personal/private email account or posting on social media is a basis for disciplinary action, up to and including removal.

If you have any technical questions about the policy, please contact Michele Thomas, APHIS' Chief Information Security Officer at [michele.j.thomas@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:michele.j.thomas@aphis.usda.gov). ●

# recent aphis retirees

Between November 1, 2014, and February 28, 2015, a total of 86 employees retired from the agency.

We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

## August 1–October 31, 2014

### animal care

Manuel Adviento	Anaheim, CA
Frances Binkley	Fuquay Varina, NC
Kevin Bolin	Raleigh, NC
Charles Currer	Magnolia, TX
Doris Hackworth	Shackelfords, VA
Steven Nusbaum	Queensbury, NY

### international services

Edward Gersabeck	Riverdale, MD
Eleanora Lassiter	Riverdale, MD
Janice Rokos	Riverdale, MD

### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Gloria Benson	Minneapolis, MN
Carolyn Browne	Minneapolis, MN
Lan Anh Dao	Riverdale, MD
Donald Donnell	Ames, IA
Deborah Helseth	Minneapolis, MN
Lisa Roach	Minneapolis, MN
Joann White	Riverdale, MD

### plant protection and quarantine

Howard Baba	Honolulu, HI
Erick Babilonia	Edinburg, TX

Patricia Brown	Austin, TX
Wayne Claus	Beltsville, MD
Iris Colon	Carolina, PR
Joyce Cousins	Riverdale, MD
Stephanie Droke	Little Rock, AR
Peggy Goble	Prattville, AL
Shan He	Oakland, CA
John Helbig	Pierre, SD
Nancy Lebedzinski	Worcester, MA
Norma Lopez	Edinburg, TX
Carolyn Mallory	Riverdale, MD
Clemmie McCants	Sarasota, FL
Timothy Miller	Lincoln, NE
Stacey Peacock	Avon Park, FL
William Pearce, Jr.	Vero Beach, FL
Carlos Perez	Atlanta, GA
James Perkins	Harlingen, TX
Scott Redlin	Raleigh, NC
Eustorjio Rivas, Jr.	Edinburg, TX
Laura Rudd	Riverdale, MD
Alba Sanchez Montalvo	San Juan, PR
Lena Soileau	Riverdale, MD
Charles Tatham	Epping, NH
Clarence Toguchi, Jr.	Honolulu, HI
Sonia Valentin	Mayaguez, PR
Evelyn Vargas See	Gainesville, FL
William Wade, Jr.	Frederick, MD
Eileen Welch	Riverdale, MD
Deborah Winograd	Otis AFB, MA
Joan Withycombe	Long Beach, CA
Derek Yamamoto	Honolulu, HI
Ronald Yasuda	Honolulu, HI
Donald Yeutter	Long Beach, CA
Rodney Young	Beltsville, MD

### veterinary services

John Belfrage	Fort Collins, CO
Cheryl Bovee	Indianapolis, IN
Edwin Bowers, Jr.	Laredo, TX
Annie Broughton	Gainesville, FL
John Cougill	Raleigh, NC
Laurier Couture	Ames, IA
Nancy Feagle	Gainesville, FL
Priscilla Fitzmaurice	Fort Collins, CO
Karen James Preston	Riverdale, MD
Kelsey Johnson	Del Rio, TX
Barbara Kesl	Ames, IA
Alison King	Jefferson City, MO
Justin Krause	Highgate Springs, VT
David Liles	Sulphur Springs, TX
Raul Martinez	Miami, FL
Wayne McCutchen	Brownsville, TX
Steven Melancon	San Antonio, TX
Donald Otto	Knoxville, IA
Walter Peck	Helena, MT
Margaret Robinson	Gainesville, FL
Oswaldo Saenz	Mission, TX
David Silberman	Troutdale, OR
Stephen Weber	Fort Collins, CO
John Wiemers	Galesburg, IL
Robert Williams	Olympia, WA

### wildlife services

John Bouchard	Harlowton, MT
Phyllis Brown	Fort Collins, CO
Diana Dwyer	Fort Collins, CO
Scott Evens	Granville, ND
Jon Heisterberg	Raleigh, NC
Charles Jones	Silver City, NM
George Linz	Bismarck, ND ●

## volunteer spotlight bruce thomsen



### [employee name and program]

Bruce Thomsen  
Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer  
Pathobiology Laboratory  
National Veterinary Services Laboratories  
Veterinary Services  
Ames, IA

### [volunteer organization]

Kiwanis Club of Nevada, Iowa  
The Nevada Soccer Club

### [organization mission]

The core mission of the Nevada Kiwanis Club's 50 members is to serve and improve the lives of children, both in Nevada and throughout the world. The club works on a variety of service projects; members donate their time to educational, safety, nutrition, and leadership projects, and to fundraising. Currently, the club's two largest multiyear fundraising projects are to help pay for the new Nevada High School Auditorium and—working with Kiwanis International and UNICEF—to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus worldwide.

The goal of the Nevada Soccer Club is to provide youth (ages 4–18) with the opportunity to play recreational soccer, be part of a

positive team environment, and improve their soccer skills and physical fitness.

### [volunteer activities]

As president of the Kiwanis Club, Thomsen led weekly 6:30 a.m. meetings to help guide the efforts of the club's many active members. Because of the club's major projects and other activities to assist youth in the community, members work a lot on fundraising. The club's largest fundraising projects are growing, picking, and selling sweet corn in the summer and recycling community donated cans and bottles year round. The club receives, sorts, and recycles more than 5,000 cans each month—earning 5 cents for every can/bottle recycled.

Volunteering with the Nevada Soccer Club, Thomsen feels lucky to have coached all three of his daughters. He currently coaches his youngest daughter's U-12 team, focusing not only on soccer skills but also on sportsmanship and on being a good teammate.

As a soccer club board member and equipment director, Thomsen volunteers time to building the growing club and to equipping more than 300 kids and coaches with the gear their teams need for practice and games.

### [time given]

In 2013-2014, Thomsen volunteered more than 150 hours. He has been a Kiwanis Club member for 13 years and has served as board member, vice-president, president-elect, and president. He currently serves as past-president. In the soccer club, Thomsen has been a coach for more than 20 seasons and a board member for the past 2 years.

### [organization web site]

<http://www.nevadakiwanis.org/>  
<http://nevadasoccer.org/>

### [employee email]

[bruce.v.thomsen@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:bruce.v.thomsen@aphis.usda.gov) ●

[inside] **APHIS** John Scott, Editor  
(301) 851-4068  
[john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov)

Photo sources: Anson Eaglin (LPA), David Kenyon (Michigan-DNR), Bruce Thomsen (VS), USDA, Terrence Walters (PPQ), Chrislyn Wood (VS).

*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on [My.APHIS](#).

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## highly pathogenic avian influenza—preparing for fall

By John Scott

Since December 2014, the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has impacted egg and turkey producers across multiple States. It has killed nearly 50 million birds in what has been called the worst animal health disease emergency this country has ever seen.

Over the course of response so far, more than 600 APHIS employees have deployed and worked with more than 2,000 contracted personnel and State and industry cooperators around the clock in affected States. APHIS has committed over \$190 million in indemnity payments to producers to control the spread of disease and help them recover.

APHIS has received more than \$700 million in emergency funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation to address the outbreak—including providing compensation for producers and cleaning and disinfecting premises—and to plan for potential outbreaks in the fall.

Although we have not seen any new HPAI cases at a commercial facility since

June 17, APHIS is putting tremendous effort into planning with our partners for the potential reemergence of the disease this fall. Realistically, the agency and its partners must consider the potential worst case scenario and plan with that possibility in mind.

“We believe the threat of detections and disease is real for all of our top broiler-, turkey-, and layer-producing States: California, where we first found HPAI in commercial turkeys; across the Midwest from Nebraska to Ohio; and across the South and East from Texas to Delaware,” said Associate Administrator Jere Dick during a recent HPAI planning workshop.

“We’re not saying any of this will happen. We’re saying it could happen. But given the events of the past few months, could is something we take very seriously,” added Dick.

### [preparations underway]

During the recent [APHIS Virtual Town Hall](#) (audio clip available), Administrator Kevin Shea talked about the fall planning underway. He

*Continued on next page*

# preparing for fall

Continued from page 1

discussed, for example, the ongoing preparations concerning how the agency would pre-position people and equipment and our work to identify available landfills.

The agency is also in the process of trying to hire more than 300 term employees in Veterinary Services (VS). The employees would be prepared for quick response and to work in advance with industry and States to bolster biosecurity measures.

Additionally, APHIS is working on how we would deploy employees in the fall. Under the current response, only VS' Surveillance, Preparedness and Response Services (SPRS) section has had mandatory deployments, with the balance of the agency's needs handled through voluntary deployments.

"We are now working at the management level on a plan of how we might have full agency activation for the fall, which might require more people to deploy," said Shea. He encouraged employees to share their thoughts regarding a full agency activation with their supervisors or through the [Tell Us What You Think](#) comment box.

## [what you can do]

Volunteers are still needed. If interested, you can find more information on [My.APHIS](#).

The agency has taken steps to improve its ability to track volunteer availability for deployment and to improve the lead time for notifying volunteers about deployment dates.

A critical component of the agency's response and planning will continue to be APHIS' dedicated employees. The agency will need the support of all of its employees to meet this challenge and to continue protecting the health of our Nation's poultry.

As you think about deployment, here are some things you can do:

- Meet with your supervisor and talk about your availability and possible deployment dates.
- Talk to people you know who have already deployed and ask about their experience.
- Think about what preparations you would need to make in your personal life.
- Review the [Employee Volunteer Q&A](#) on My.APHIS.

- Participate in the August 13th open house panel discussion to hear about the experiences of other employees who have deployed. Watch your email and My.APHIS for more information. ●

Photo sources: Anson Eaglin (LPA), Kerri Goust (VS), Esther Kukielka (WS), Michael Marlow (WS).

Basket photo by Drew Harty, provided courtesy of the Akwesasne Museum.

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# aphis on the scene with avian influenza

Sometimes the best way to learn more about something is to hear from someone who has been there, someone with experience. As APHIS prepares for the potential reemergence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) this fall, agency planners want to give you that chance.

On August 13, APHIS will host an open house featuring a panel of employees who completed 21-day deployments for the agency's HPAI response. Panel members—from throughout the agency's program areas—will talk about their experience and share their insights. APHIS staff will also be on hand to answer questions about the agency's response and deployment.

The event will be available to field locations via videoconference, webinar, and conference call.

In addition, we plan to run short pieces on My.APHIS featuring employees sharing in their own words a little about their experience while deployed.

As a preview, we've included one of the "APHIS on the Scene" pieces here in Inside APHIS.

If you're thinking about deployment, be sure to watch My.APHIS and participate in the upcoming open house in August. ●

## kelsey branch



### **What was your role/job while deployed?**

I served as an Emergency Management Response System (EMRS) specialist under the Industry Coordination Branch in the Operations Section. EMRS is the database used to track foreign animal disease investigations. I worked closely with the group supervisors and contractors at the HPAI Incident Command Post to collect and record data related to depopulation, disposal, and cleaning and disinfection activities at all infected premises in Iowa.

### **What program do you work for and what is your position/job title when not deployed?**

I work for Plant Protection and Quarantine in Riverdale, MD, as an agriculturist.

### **Where and when were you deployed?**

I was deployed from June 8–30. I spent the first week of my deployment in Worthington, MN, and the last 2 weeks in Ames, IA.

### **What advice would you have for others who deploy?**

My advice would be to be proactive, forge connections with the people you



*For detailed information on participating in the panel discussion, [CLICK HERE](#).*

*Continued on next page*

# aphis on the scene with avian influenza

## kelsey branch

*Continued from page 3*

meet, and try to learn and absorb as much as possible. It will help you see and find ways to contribute that others might miss.

I made it my goal to jump in and make the most of my time there. The hours are very long and the days will start to mesh together, but being engaged and an active contributor makes the experience much more worthwhile.

### **What skills and/or personal traits were most helpful during your deployment?**

The most important traits would be adaptability, openness to change, and an eagerness to learn. An emergency is a very dynamic environment; things can change drastically from one day to another.

### **What was it like working with others you hadn't worked with previously?**

Deployments are an excellent way to increase your professional network. I met so many wonderful people while in Iowa—it was a tremendous experience to work so closely with APHIS employees from all over the country, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and two contracting companies: Witt O'Brien's and Clean Harbors.

### **Did the experience enrich your understanding of the work APHIS does? How?**

Definitely—the experience exposed me to a completely different side of APHIS. I do not have a veterinary background and, prior to my deployment, had never been involved with an emergency program.

However, I was able to get up to speed quickly upon arriving at the Incident Command Post and start making meaningful contributions to the response. I feel like a more well-rounded employee as a result of my deployment.

### **What were the challenges and what were the rewards?**

The most difficult part was the work schedule and maintaining a semblance of balance.

We worked 12-hour days, 7 days a week. A work-life balance doesn't really exist under those conditions, but it was very important to me to continue exercising regularly, eating healthy, and getting a good amount of sleep every night.

Along those same lines, one of the most rewarding parts of my deployment was the sense of camaraderie that developed among everyone working at the Incident Command Post. Because of the long hours, my coworkers became a little 3-week family. The entire group would come together to celebrate birthdays, Father's Day, and anniversaries. ●

## training calendar

The [APHIS Training and Development Calendar](#) provides updated listings for agency training courses; the calendar includes dates, times, staff contact information, and course descriptions.

For more information, visit the [Center for Training and Organizational Development SharePoint site](#). ●

# new aphis customer call center

By Tanika Whittington

With more than 900 calls during its first month and over 1,000 calls in its second, the new APHIS Customer Service Call Center is off to a busy start.

Each day the center handles a wide range of APHIS topics—including, for example, calls from families traveling with pets, a trader importing mangoes, a person complaining about nuisance geese, and a company importing a virus.

The net result is that the call center is making it easier for the general public, regulated community, and stakeholders to find the information they need about APHIS programs, services, and activities.

## [first point of contact]

Because of APHIS' diverse mission, customers can find it challenging to know where to look or who to call, and they can get shuffled from person to person or agency to agency trying to find the information they need.

Launched June 3, 2015, the APHIS Customer Service Call Center's goal is to eliminate these situations by serving as a responsive first point of contact for APHIS and by helping customers navigate the agency's offices.

The APHIS Call Center collaborates closely with agency programs that have existing call centers or 800 numbers to respond to stakeholder calls. Working together, they ensure

clear lines of communication and coordinate how to handle calls. With import/export topics, for example, the APHIS Call Center provides general information and then directs incoming calls to the appropriate program call centers for more detailed information.

The Call Center is committed to delivering a high level of service to our many stakeholders. Program specialists are available at (844) 820-2234, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, to provide resources, and information about APHIS programs and services. ●

## 101 critical days of summer



APHIS' Raleigh Office hosted an emergency preparedness fair on May 20, drawing more than 160 participants. The event focused on safety and preparedness during the "101 Critical Days of Summer"—the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day when hot weather and outdoor activities are at their peak.

The fair featured 28 exhibits, including displays by area mounted police,

the National Detector Dog Training Program, and medical professionals offering free blood pressure and glucose monitoring and information about diabetic emergencies, strokes, and heart attacks.

Other booths provided fire extinguisher training and safety information about heat and fireworks. The "Seat Belt Convincer" was also on hand to demonstrate the importance of buckling up.

Shown here (left to right): Kerry Garcia (VS), Barbara Porter-Spalding (VS), and David Mallard (WS) staff a table displaying personal protective gear. ●

## plant protection and quarantine

# weaving tribal relations with nonregulatory solutions

By William Wepsala



*Basket made by Mary Adams.  
Photo by Drew Harty and provided  
courtesy of the Akwesasne Museum.*

It is increasingly important to APHIS' success that we be flexible and open to finding alternatives to regulations in our efforts to protect U.S. agriculture and natural resources.

Sometimes by simply pausing and taking a second look, we can identify alternatives that better serve our customers and stakeholders and that still meet our safeguarding goals.

Working with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe of New York, APHIS was able to use a more flexible approach—a nonregulatory solution—to ease obstacles created by the emerald ash borer (EAB).

### [economic and cultural impact]

For generations, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has traded with the Algonquin community of Maniwaki, Quebec. Most importantly, they trade to get black ash logs used in traditional basket weaving.

Unfortunately, the presence of EAB in other parts of Canada was limiting the Tribe's ability to import much needed black ash logs. Since arriving in North America, EAB has become

a significant pest. It has affected 25 States, inflicting damage on all 16 native U.S. species of ash as well as a number of other trees. Because EAB hadn't been detected in the area of New York that the Tribe calls home, there were restrictions on its ability to import ash logs from the Algonquin community.

For the Tribe, the potential damage ran deeper than just lost income. Beyond the eco-

nommic importance of the baskets, the black ash figures heavily into the Tribe's creation story and is a significant cultural resource.

### [seeing an opportunity]

As Tribe members worked to import black ash logs, they found APHIS requirements for import permits and the permitting process

*Continued on next page*



**visit and send your photo today!**

# weaving tribal relations

*Continued from page 6*

difficult to navigate. They contacted APHIS to request a permit waiver, but were denied.

In many cases, this might have been how the story ended.

But instead, New York State Plant Health Director Diana Hoffman took a second look and saw an opportunity to be flexible with how the permits were handled under the existing regulations.

At its root, using nonregulatory solutions—or alternatives to rulemaking—means finding ways to meet our mission goals that do not involve creating new APHIS regulations. And, in situations like this one, it also means remaining open to taking a flexible approach to interpreting and implementing our existing regulations.

In this case, Hoffman and APHIS were able to streamline the permitting process and simplify the established permit. Working closely together, the Tribe and local Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) staff developed a workable permit with requirements that provide effective safeguarding but are easier to follow.

APHIS also coordinated with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, training them on the terms of the new permit, ensuring that its implementation would proceed as smoothly as possible. Discussions between the agencies helped anticipate and avoid potential problems at the border. Support from the Associate Administrator's Office as part of the Alternatives to Rulemaking Program made this possible.

With the new permit and process in place, the Tribe resumed importing black ash, and APHIS turned an important stakeholder into a valued partner.

## **[strength through flexibility]**

By taking a flexible approach, APHIS forged a stronger relationship with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe—one based on understanding and a respect for one another's goals.

The success has opened the door to others, demonstrating the degree to which nonregulatory solutions can be effective and lead to greater opportunities. APHIS has since worked with the Tribe to provide funding for pest surveys to ensure forest health. And

PPQ employees were invited to speak at the New York Indian Nations Conference, where they presented information about EAB, Asian longhorned beetle, invasive pest detection activities, as well as the AgDiscovery and Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS) youth programs. ●



## interested in writing?

Whether you're looking to practice your skills, add an interesting new goal to your individual development plan (IDP), or you simply enjoy writing, consider contacting *Inside APHIS* to learn about writing opportunities.

Contact newsletter editor John Scott by phone (301-851-4068) or email ([john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov)) for more details. ●

## wildlife services trapping expertise goes global

By Gail Keirn



*APHIS wildlife biologist Michael Marlow (upper left) traveled to Northern Uganda to train local researchers on nonlethal trapping techniques. Samples were collected from captured warthogs as part of an African swine fever study.*

Here at home in the United States, Wildlife Services wildlife biologist Michael Marlow is known for his varied expertise—from wildlife disease surveillance, to nonlethal predation damage management, to feral swine control. But in Uganda, he's known simply as “the guy with all of the cool stuff.”

### [sharing the cool stuff]

This past April, Marlow took his expertise on the road when he was invited to visit the Nwoya and Gulu districts of Northern Uganda. There, he trained researchers from Sweden, Uganda, and Kenya on the trapping techniques and equipment used to capture feral swine in the United States.

“Wildlife Services has successfully used drop-nets and corral traps to control invasive feral swine in the United States,” said Marlow. “Our hope is that these same techniques can be used in Africa to capture warthogs and bushpigs for an African swine fever study.”

African swine fever is a highly contagious hemorrhagic disease of pigs, warthogs, wild boar, and feral swine. It is prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, and outbreaks have occurred in some parts of Europe. Although the disease can be

devastating to wild and domestic pig populations, it is not a human health threat. Experts hope to learn more about the role of the bushpig in the epidemiology of African swine fever—especially at contact points between wildlife and livestock. This information will help African countries deal with the disease and prevent its spread to other countries, such as the United States.

Successful trapping and radio-collaring projects are an important—and admittedly tricky—part of learning more about the disease's spread.

“Our colleagues at the National Veterinary Institute in Sweden and Makerere University in Uganda, as well as several other partners, were having difficulty capturing and radio-collaring warthogs and bushpigs in Africa,” said Marlow.

“The traps and nets they were using just weren't working on these very shy, elusive, and strictly nocturnal animals.”

### [drop-nets and corral traps]

To help increase trapping success and improve the group's African swine fever sampling

and monitoring efforts, Marlow traveled to Uganda and demonstrated how to use two tools—an electromagnetic drop-net system and a drop-door corral trap.

The drop-net system uses a large, square net hung from four corner poles. Each corner of the net is secured to a weight that is held in place by an electromagnet. A wireless remote-control can turn off the power to the electromagnet and allow the net to drop. Animals are lured under the net with bait.

The drop-door corral trap includes a holding container made of welded fencing material and a suspended, trigger-activated door. Once inside the corral, the animals' movements trip a trigger line that causes the door to close, trapping them inside. Both techniques can catch multiple animals at a time.

While there, Marlow and the team captured two warthogs with the drop-net system.

“We likely would have caught more animals, but the weather was not ideal. Our trapping

*Continued on next page*

## volunteer spotlight ralph davis



*Ralph Davis  
IT Security Manager  
Information Technology Division  
Marketing and Regulatory Programs  
Business Services  
Riverdale, MD*

**[volunteer organization]**

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Post 8950 Lanham, MD

**[organization mission]**

The VFW mission is to foster camaraderie among U.S. veterans of overseas conflicts, and to serve our veterans, the military, and our communities. The VFW advocates on behalf of all veterans.

**[volunteer activities]**

Davis volunteers his time as the Board of Governors Chairperson for his post. Among other things, he works hands-on at Post 8950 to help with events and sales activities and to maintain the facility, kitchen, building, and other areas. He also participates in numerous annual scholarship, fundraising, and public awareness events.

**[time given]**

Serving as Board Chairperson for the past 2 years, Davis has donated more than 1,000 hours.

**[organization web site]**

[www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

**[employee email]**

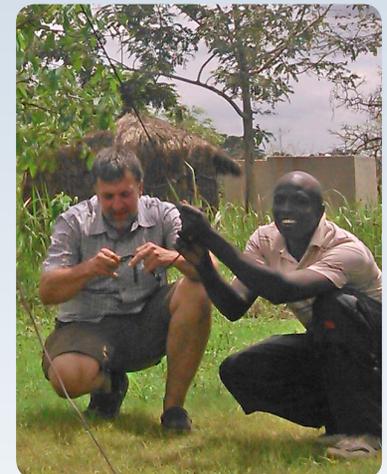
[ralph.t.davis@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ralph.t.davis@aphis.usda.gov) ●

## trapping expertise

*Continued from page 8*

occurred during the transition period between Uganda's dry and wet seasons. The sudden increase in food and water made it difficult to predict where the warthogs and bushpigs would be," said Marlow.

Still, enthusiasm remains high that these new tools will boost capture success and allow researchers to gain valuable



*Researchers in Uganda set up one of the drop-nets brought over by APHIS-WS' Michael Marlow for use in capturing warthogs and bushpigs.*



*Final touches are placed on the drop-door corral trap. Animals are lured into the corral with bait. Once inside the corral, their movements trip a trigger line that causes the door to close, trapping them inside.*

information about African swine fever in warthog and bushpig populations.

"It's rewarding to know other wildlife professionals are benefiting from Wildlife Services' experience," said Marlow. ●

## animal care

# veterinarians aim for specialty board certification

By Dave Sacks

*(Foreground, left to right): Animal Care VMOs Paula Gladue and Tonya Hadjis, National Animal Care Specialist Nicolette Petervary, and Supervisory Animal Care Specialist Dana Miller conduct an animal welfare assessment of dairy cattle on the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine Teaching Farm as part of the 2015 ACAW "Animal Welfare Short Course."*



Many Animal Care veterinary medical officers (VMOs) are seeking to enhance their professional credentials by becoming board certified under the newest American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) specialty program—the American College of Animal Welfare (ACAW).

ACAW's mission as a new board-certified specialty is to advance animal welfare through education, certification, and scientific investigation. As the world's largest employer of animal welfare veterinarians, Animal Care knows that its VMOs are prime candidates to fulfill that mission.

It has the makings of a win-win-win situation for Animal Care.

"Our VMOs will benefit from being formally recognized as professional experts in animal welfare. Animal Care's stakeholders will benefit because these VMOs will advance the

welfare of animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act. And, of course, the animals will benefit as well," said Betty Goldentyer, Animal Care's director of operations in Raleigh, NC.

### [recognizing expertise]

The AVMA—which represents more than 86,500 veterinarians working in private practice, government, industry, academia, and the uniformed services—recognizes 22 specialty organizations, or boards, and encourages its members to develop enhanced skills in specific areas of veterinary medicine. More than 11,000 veterinarians have completed the rigorous postgraduate training, education, and examination required to become board-certified in specialty areas such as surgery, internal medicine, behavior, and pathology.

Individuals who complete the process become "diplomates," and they serve animals, the public, and the veterinary profession by providing high quality service in their particular area of expertise.

Prior to 2006, animal welfare had never been a board-certified specialty, but a group of veterinarians led by former AVMA president Bonnie Beaver set out to change

that. They launched an initiative that would become ACAW.

### [how it came about]

"Animal welfare has always been the foundation of veterinary training and education, but viewing it as a specific scientific discipline had not been done previously," said Dr. William Stokes, Animal Care's assistant director of operations in Raleigh, NC.

Establishing animal welfare as a distinct professional discipline did not happen overnight.

"It took a while to prepare a certification program and gain accreditation from AVMA—five years to be exact," said Stokes, who was invited to serve on the ACAW organizing committee in 2007 based on his welfare expertise in the care and use of animals in research and testing. "During that time, our committee laid out the knowledge requirements we felt were needed in order for a diplomate to truly have a professional level of expertise in the discipline of animal welfare."

*Continued on next page*

# specialty board certification

*Continued from page 10*

ACAW certified its first class of diplomates in 2013.

In addition to the education, training, and examination required to become board-certified, candidates must also publish two papers in peer-reviewed journals.

“The journal papers are significant because the candidates, through research or critical reviews, are evaluating new ways to approach specific animal welfare challenges—and this leads to science-based improvements in animal welfare,” said Stokes.

## [great fit for animal care]

Animal Care employs 72 VMOs in the field and another 13 in the Center for Animal Welfare and Riverdale. A large number of them have shown a strong interest in becoming ACAW diplomates.

“Many of our veterinarians are interested because becoming a diplomate demonstrates that you have special knowledge and skills in animal welfare—and they want to gain that knowledge and enhance their welfare assessment skills,” said Stokes.

In June, ACAW offered its second annual “Animal Welfare Short Course.” Speakers explained

how to conduct animal welfare assessments for a wide range of species and discussed contemporary animal welfare issues and best practices. Stokes discussed strategies for reducing and avoiding pain and distress in biomedical research and testing.

Nicolette Petervary, national animal care specialist in Raleigh, discussed how Animal Welfare Act regulations are applied to address the key aspects of animal welfare. Thirty-three Animal Care VMOs—plus one from Veterinary Services and one from USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service—attended the course.

Animal Care’s Deputy Administrator Chester Gipson is determined to enable as many of his program’s VMOs as possible to become ACAW-certified.

The program has established a working group to develop recommendations for training and education opportunities that would allow interested VMOs to meet the requirements for certification.

“We are supporting those who want to become ACAW-certified because they will be bettering themselves professionally. And our whole program will benefit from that,” said Goldentyer. ●

## in memoriam

From March 1 through June 26, our agency lost seven members of the APHIS family. We will miss them. Our thoughts are with their families.

### plant protection and quarantine

Ronald Winningham	Krebs, OK
Alvaro Lopez	Harlingen, TX
Violet Ko	Kahului, Hi

### veterinary services

Zong Xiong	Ames, IA
------------	----------

### wildlife services

Kenneth Baer	Elko, NV
Shannon Tunnell*	Roswell, NM
Kelly Hobbs*	Roswell, NM

\*WS Pilot Kelly Hobbs and program cooperater Shannon Tunnell died on June 5 when their aircraft crashed during coyote control work southeast of Raton, NM. Hobbs became a WS employee in 1990 and had more than 35 years with the cooperative WS program, serving as a pilot in New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. Tunnell began his career in 2009 as a New Mexico Department of Agriculture wildlife specialist in Chaves County. He had extensive training as a crewmember in aerial shooting operations for predator damage management. [Read more.](#)

**Special Note:** Since our last issue, we learned of the passing of APHIS retiree John Cougill on February 26, 2015. John joined APHIS in 1991 and retired from Veterinary Services in December 2014. ●

## plant protection and quarantine

# pilot program helps users bring the 'right stuff'

By Amanda Sutker

Imagine returning from an exciting adventure in Mexico or China or a relaxing vacation in Hawaii. You would like to bring back mementos from your trip: an orchid, sand from the beach, even a mango from a tree outside your hotel.

A new Web site, [CanIBringIt.com](http://CanIBringIt.com), sponsored by Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), can help you make smart choices when you pack your suitcase.

PPQ works cooperatively with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and State departments of agriculture to protect our agricultural and natural resources from invasive pests. Many travelers do not realize that some fruits, vegetables, and meat products from certain areas can carry potentially harmful pests and diseases that could cost millions of dollars in agricultural and environmental damage and eradication efforts.

While USDA regulations permit certain items to cross U.S. borders or move interstate (i.e., in the case of items entering the mainland from Hawaii), some items are prohibited entry. And all items entering the country are subject to inspection by CBP or—for items from Hawaii—to predeparture inspections by APHIS officials.

Heather Curlett, PPQ's outreach and risk communications coordinator, says that for travelers, knowing when it's ok to bring something and when you should leave it behind can be challenging. That's why Curlett and others in PPQ developed [CanIBringIt.com](http://CanIBringIt.com).

"The Web site is currently being piloted," says Curlett says. "By focusing on certain countries and points of entry, we are learning how to help travelers navigate our regulations. When travelers know what they can and can't bring, it helps to alleviate pressure on our safeguarding system by reducing the risk that someone might unknowingly bring a dangerous plant pest or animal disease."

People traveling from Mexico and China, as well as those entering the U.S. mainland from Hawaii, can use the site to make informed choices about what they might wish to bring with them. The interactive, graphic-based Web site is accessible in English, Mandarin, and Spanish. Individuals with limited language skills should find its photo-heavy design easy to use, says Curlett.

The Web site's accessibility and ability to communicate effectively with broad, diverse audiences have already yielded impressive results. Since the pilot began in mid-April, [CanIBringIt.com](http://CanIBringIt.com) has received nearly than 51,000 unique visitors and more than 100,000 page views. ●

## can i bring it? quiz

Can you identify which items are allowed into the United States?

1. Kudzu from China?
2. Orchids from Mexico?
3. Mango from Hawaii?
4. Empanada from Mexico?
5. Seed leis from Hawaii?
6. Curry leaf from Hawaii?
7. Prickly pear fruit from Mexico?
8. Pork skins from Mexico?
9. Citrus peel from China?
10. Wreaths made from spruce from Mexico?

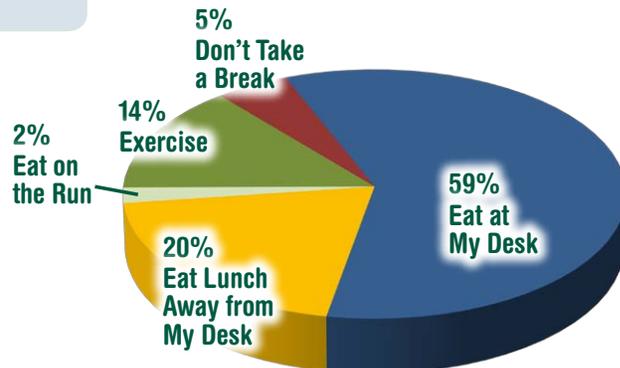
Check your answers on page 13.

# question Of the day

What do you do most often for your lunch break?

In our last issue, we asked employees, “What do you do most often for your lunch break?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.



Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

### [next question please]

Different people learn new skills and information in different ways. Some prefer books, classrooms, or Webinars, while others choose on-the-job training experiences whenever possible.

With that in mind, we ask: *For you, what is the best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to enhance your career with APHIS?*

- Webinars
- Shadow Assignments
- Details
- Classroom Courses
- All of the Above

As always, thanks for responding and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! Click here to take part in the poll: [Question of the Day](#) ●

## can i bring it? –quiz answers

1. Kudzu from China—Allowed (leaves and stems allowed after clearing U.S. Customs and Border Protection)
2. Orchids from Mexico—Allowed (fresh cuttings for decoration allowed after clearing U.S. CBP)
3. Mango from Hawaii—Prohibited
4. Empanada from Mexico—Allowed (thoroughly cooked, prepared food containing meat for personal use in small quantities allowed after clearing U.S. CBP)
5. Seed leis from Hawaii—Allowed (after clearing U.S. CBP)
6. Curry leaf from Hawaii—Allowed (if commercially treated at USDA-approved facility and packed in boxes that are clearly marked/stamped after clearing U.S. CBP)
7. Prickly pear fruit from Mexico—Allowed (after clearing U.S. CBP)
8. Pork skins from Mexico—Selectively allowed depending on State of origin, crispness, and temperature fried (after passing U.S. CBP)
9. Citrus peel from China—Prohibited
10. Wreaths made from spruce from Mexico—Prohibited

explore your training options today!

The APHIS Center for Training and Organizational Development (CTOD) offers many courses and options to help you with your professional development goals.

Visit the [CTOD SharePoint page](#) to learn about all the resources available, including a [Training Calendar](#) that features course descriptions and registration information. ●

# weighing options with regulatory enforcement



What happens when someone violates APHIS regulations?

While the question sounds straightforward, the answer can get complicated. Thankfully, APHIS Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) is there to answer the question.

Depending on the particular situation, the details of the violation, and consideration over which enforcement action may best deter possible future violations, each case can take a variety of different paths.

The role of IES staff is to investigate and understand the specifics and then, as needed, advise the agency programs and guide the enforcement action that follows.

IES efforts promote and protect the health and value of American animal, plant, and natural resources by supporting APHIS programs and the agency's regulations, including those related to essential laws like the Plant Protection Act (PPA), the Animal Health Protection Act, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), the Horse Protection Act, [and others](#).

## [no easy task]

The work of IES is no easy task. In every case, there are many factors to sort out. There are often competing information, facts to document, specific provisions in the statutes to

consider, and aggravating or mitigating factors to weigh that may shape the penalties pursued by the agency.

IES looks at the seriousness of the violation, the culpability or level of responsibility of the parties involved, and any previous violations. They also consider how cooperative the parties have been.

When you add to this mix the collaboration it takes to investigate potential violations and actually complete an enforcement action, you get a pretty thick stew. IES works closely with APHIS programs, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), USDA's Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

## [striking a balance]

After an investigation that substantiates violations, IES has several options. With agreement from the agency program involved, IES can issue an official warning, pursue a voluntary settlement agreement, refer a case to OGC for an administrative proceeding, or—in cases involving more serious violations—refer the case to the DOJ for civil or criminal action.

For practical reasons, not all cases result in pursuing the toughest possible enforcement action or penalty. Considering available

resources, it's just not possible, and such an approach wouldn't necessarily yield better compliance results. Instead, IES aims to strike a balance between two things: applying effective measures that support the agency's mission and maximizing USDA's overall enforcement resources.

This means understanding, for example, that an official warning will work well in some cases, and in others, a civil monetary penalty is needed.

## [deterrent effect]

Determining which enforcement action to take is difficult, and it can be controversial. Questions can arise about appropriate penalties, the complexities of following Federal regulations, the financial impact on small businesses, issues of quality and timely case resolution, and how effective enforcement actions are as deterrents to future violations.

That last part—an enforcement action's effectiveness—is especially hard to quantify and predict. For some, the value of a deterrent is measured in dollars. For others, the deterrent is more about being publicly associated with violating Federal regulations.

In a recent case, a plant nursery—in violation of APHIS regulations—shipped plants known

*Continued on next page*

## did you know ?



**Did you know** that our [Investigative and Enforcement Services' \(IES\) Web pages](#) now feature data and summaries outlining APHIS enforcement actions for each program, agricultural quarantine inspection activities, and the agency as a whole?

IES recently posted the information to help increase public awareness and support of enforcement activities for APHIS-administered laws.

The Web site helps make APHIS enforcement efforts more transparent. It houses data and summaries covering fiscal years' (FY) 2014 and 2015 (mid-year), plus information about IES and how it supports the APHIS mission.

IES will update the posted data at the end of FY 2015 and twice each year thereafter.

### **[increasing efficiency]**

The site also shares some exciting successes from IES' Business Process Improvement (BPI) project. The goal of the BPI was to help IES take swifter action on alleged violations. Through this project and other initiatives, IES has increased its efficiency, cutting its processing time in half.

The project has also driven dramatic reductions since 2011 in the number of open cases pending action. And, last year alone, IES efforts resulted in nearly 1,800 official

warnings, the collection of more than \$1.8 million in stipulated penalties, and the assessment of almost \$1 million in civil penalties from administrative orders.

### **[improving communication]**

With a focus on community relations, IES has taken other steps to improve the availability of its information online.

For example, IES listened to public requests and began posting the Horse Protection Act

Disqualification List on the Web site. But it's not just about data. The site now also provides links to information for small businesses, frequently asked questions, and IES contacts. The program is planning other exciting additions as well, such as a searchable enforcement action tool.

Visit the [IES Web site](#) to see what's new and check back for up-to-date information about APHIS enforcement efforts. ●

## weighing options

*Continued from page 14*

as a host for sudden oak death. The nursery sent the plants without the necessary notifications and continued even after a hold was placed on materials that tested positive for the pathogen. In response, IES pursued a case, and an Administrative Law Judge issued a consent decision assessing a civil penalty of \$10,750. Despite the penalty, the nursery is now again under investigation for continuing to violate the PPA. Together, IES, OGC, and the Plant Protection and Quarantine program are pursuing stronger enforcement actions to compel the nursery's compliance.

In contrast, consider the case of a public zoo that had several serious AWA-related issues. These involved animal enclosure hazards, poor sanitation, and providing

insufficient qualified care. Following an IES investigation, the zoo agreed to a monetary settlement agreement of \$8,107. Unlike the nursery, the zoo has not been the subject of any further investigation.

### **[not just numbers]**

In fiscal year 2014, IES initiated over 2,500 enforcement actions, but the numbers alone are not its goal.

IES serves to support the APHIS mission. And, like the agency, IES is becoming increasingly aware that fulfilling this mission can be done not just through enforcement actions, but through proactive collaboration and communication with the public and with greater transparency and information sharing on its [Web site](#). ●

# recent aphis retirees

Between March 1 and June 26, 2015, a total of 48 employees joined the ranks of APHIS retirees.

We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

## office of the administrator

Cynthia Smith Edenton, NC

## international services

Eloisa Jones Riverdale, MD

## marketing and regulatory programs business services

Deborah O'Brien Minneapolis, MN  
Sherri Sirotkin Riverdale, MD

## plant protection and quarantine

Deverett Alexander Palmetto, FL  
Debora Bivins Goldsboro, NC  
Joseph Cavey, Jr. Riverdale, MD  
Linda Chan Daly City, CA  
James Clow Raleigh, NC  
Dean Daugherty Owensboro, KY  
Joseph Dayball Ft. Pierce, FL

Darlene Di Leone  
Peggy Elder  
Joel Floyd  
Steven Golebiowski  
Stephen Knight  
Nora Lynch  
Mark Michaelis  
Connie Pepper  
Richard Richerson  
Joseph Rocco, Jr.  
Gilbert Rowe, Jr.  
Ralph Salber  
William Spitzer  
Earl M. Toyama  
Shirley Wager-Page  
Terrance Washington

## veterinary services

Debra Beaugh Fort Collins, CO  
Judith Berganini Fort Collins, CO  
Judy Crawford Gainesville, FL  
Arthur Davis Ames, IA  
Jack Ellithorpe Lakewood, CO  
Niels Forseth Miami, FL  
David Gramlich New Braunfels, TX

Riverdale, MD  
Otis AFB, MA  
Riverdale, MD  
Worcester, MA  
Des Plaines, IL  
Riverdale, MD  
Berlin, VT  
Sacramento, CA  
Glynco, GA  
Ft. Pierce, FL  
Mullins, SC  
Mullica Hill, NJ  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Honolulu, HI  
Riverdale, MD  
Miami, FL

John Johnson  
Barry Latney  
Reed Macarty  
Beverly Moxley  
Annette Olson  
Douglas Pedersen  
Evonne Phillips  
Harry Vogt  
Tim Wetherbee

## wildlife services

Peter Butchko  
Rodney Krischke  
Judy Loven  
Brenda Scott  
Ricky Walker

Little Rock, AR  
Orient Point, NY  
East Lansing, MI  
Austin, TX  
Ames, IA  
Ames, IA  
Ames, IA  
Del Rio, TX  
Blackfoot, ID

Okemos, MI  
Casper, WY  
West Lafayette, IN  
Springfield, IL  
Collins, MS ●



Michelle Weddle Wenberg  
APHIS Budget Officer  
Policy and Program Development

## manager profile with **michelle wenberg**



### [what is your background?]

I was born and raised in the Washington, D.C., area. I began working for APHIS in 1990 when I was a student at the University of Maryland in College Park.

After graduating with a degree in business, I began working for APHIS full-time and have since held positions in Plant Protection and Quarantine, Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services, Wildlife Services, and Policy and Program Development (PPD).

I also spent a year on detail with the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Agriculture in the early 2000s. I have been the APHIS Budget Officer since 2005.

### [most memorable aphis experience?]

I have had a number of memorable experiences while working for APHIS. As a headquarters employee, I have particularly enjoyed opportunities to spend time in the field to see APHIS' mission in action.

Some examples are when I volunteered for the Karnal Bunt emergency program in Arizona and tracked coyotes that were preying

on sheep in the Colorado mountains. Another big highlight of my career was helping draft the fiscal year (FY) 2003 appropriations bill during my congressional detail.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

My staff and I will continue to defend and justify APHIS' FY 2017 budget request as it makes its way through USDA and the Office of Management and Budget. I have been spending a lot of time preparing and justifying emergency funding requests for the current avian influenza emergency, too, and expect that to continue into the fall. Another priority for me is leading the effort to develop PPD's first strategic plan.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

Professionally speaking, I am most proud of receiving the APHIS Supervisor of the Year Award in 2012 because members of my staff nominated me for it.

### [last book read?]

I'm currently enrolled in the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Executive Institute training, so I've been reading a lot of leadership development books lately. I

just finished reading Patrick Lencioni's *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. I am currently reading *Leading Across Boundaries* by Russell Linden.

### [favorite meal?]

Being a Maryland girl, I love to spend time on the water picking crabs during the summer. Of course, this must be accompanied by a healthy helping of crab dip and a cold beverage.

### [hobbies?]

I enjoy planning community outreach activities for my daughter's Girl Scout troop, for which I am also the money manager.

I also got a FitBit watch recently to track my steps, activity, etc. and am having fun challenging myself—and my FitBit friends—to walk more each day.

### [guilty pleasure?]

Binge-watching recorded episodes of *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*. And all things chocolate.

### [favorite movie?]

*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. ●



# plant protection and quarantine understanding international standards



- More than 180 countries, in addition to the United States, are members of the IPPC.

- The NAPPO member countries are the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

“How do you make diplomats out of scientists?” Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Assistant Deputy Administrator John Greifer asked recently. “You do everything you can to prepare and equip them to deal with a rapidly changing world.”

“Historically PPQ has been known primarily for its domestic work, but now we’re about much more than keeping bugs away from our borders,” said Greifer.

When PPQ reorganized in 2013, one of its priorities was to increase the program’s focus on international standards and trade by placing those responsibilities directly under the PPQ Deputy Administrator.

In an increasingly complex, global society, PPQ believes it is critical that more employees understand international guidelines for plant health in order to work more effectively with foreign counterparts.

### [new training]

To help achieve this goal, PPQ recently introduced a new training program, available through AgLearn to all USDA employees. The

training course is called [Introduction to International Phytosanitary Standards](#).

It introduces users to standards set by International Standard Setting Organizations (ISSOs)—such as the International Plant Protection Committee (IPPC) and North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO)—and the way they affect PPQ’s daily operations. The four-lesson training takes about an hour to complete.

“The course information is interesting and it provides a good foundation for employees who participate in IPPC or NAPPO meetings or with international working groups,” said Lora Katz, PPQ communications program specialist.

More than 100 APHIS employees designated as subject matter experts have attended IPPC or NAPPO meetings abroad or served on ISSO working groups here in the United States.

Since the May 1st launch of the online training, 16 plant health safeguarding specialists, entry-level professionals serving in duty

stations around the country, have completed the course as part of their basic agricultural safeguarding training.

“The [Introduction to International Phytosanitary Standards](#) training is only the beginning,” said Katz. “Changes in global agriculture will require a workforce that understands the global policy framework that affects commerce and regulators. We welcome employees with an interest in this critical area to let us know if they would like to serve as a technical expert on an IPPC or NAPPO working group.”

For more information about the online training, contact Katz or Stephanie Dubon. Katz is available at [lora.katz@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:lora.katz@aphis.usda.gov) or (301) 851-2256; Dubon is available at [stephanie.m.dubon@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.m.dubon@aphis.usda.gov) or (301) 851-2180. ●

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## plant protection and quarantine supporting exercise talisman sabre

By Jose Lozada and Andrea Simao

Every two years, the United States and Australia conduct a joint military exercise called Talisman Sabre. The exercise provides an opportunity for the two countries to test and practice their capacity for contingency response and the interoperability of their tactics, techniques, and procedures.

And for Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Preclearance and Offshore Programs (POP), the exercise—which occurred again this past summer—gives agency personnel the chance to support the training, collaborate with a key agricultural trading partner, and demonstrate PPQ's skills at safeguarding agricultural and natural resources.



*Shown (left to right) are: Nicole Harvey (Aus.), Michelle Brotohusodo (Aus.), Andrew Agius (Aus.), Leonie Kearney (Aus.), Bill Aley (PPQ), Emma Davidson (Aus.), JoAnn Cruse (PPQ), Lee Newport (PPQ), Jon Bicket (Aus.) and (kneeling front) Jose Lozada (PPQ).*

Since 2007, POP's military preclearance inspectors have joined forces with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to facilitate the

exercise, which requires the movement of U.S. military equipment to Australia. Australia has strict biosecurity requirements that protect its agriculture and natural

*Continued on next page*

# talisman sabre

Continued from page 1



A Landing Craft Utility boat approaches the well deck of an amphibious assault ship. Cobra attack helicopters can be seen on the flight deck above.

resources. Without the support of POP inspectors, these requirements would make it very difficult to conduct a realistic training exercise since military equipment can pose a high biosecurity risk.

Additionally, POP's involvement eases other obstacles concerning inspection. Because U.S. military vessels and aircraft have sovereign immunity, foreign authorities may not board and conduct inspections required for entering Australian ports and national waters. Here again, POP personnel step in and help.

### [exercise preparations]

As part of the preparation for the exercises, POP officials conducted pre-inspection of U.S. military equipment and eliminated all agricultural risks discovered during the inspection process. These efforts included inspecting and certifying 41 combat aircraft, 5 amphibious vessels, and all of the U.S. vehicles and equipment used by the more than 30,000 military participants.

The process required great patience and immense attention to detail. Each Cobra

helicopter took an average of 3 days to clean, inspect, and certify.

### [step aboard]

In July, members of POP's military preclearance team left land and served aboard U.S. Navy vessels. During the 3-week exercise, team members provided advice, inspection, and certifications at sea, which allowed DOD to practice on the Australian shores.

PPQ's involvement demonstrated the program's unique ability to deliver agricultural risk mitigation any time, any place—even under the challenging environments at sea.

Congratulations to PPQ's Jose Lozada, Lee Newport, William Aley, JoAnn Cruse, and Colleen Kitzmiller for their outstanding work on Talisman Sabre. ●

[inside] **APHIS** John Scott, Editor  
(301) 851-4068  
john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov

Photo sources: Bill Aley (PPQ), Kristy Bly (World Wildlife Fund), Anson Eaglin (LPA), Bob Nichols (USDA), Plant Protection and Quarantine, John Steuber (USDA), Veterinary Services.

*Inside APHIS* is a quarterly newsletter serving all APHIS employees by delivering agency news, providing useful workplace information, and connecting employees from across the agency to our shared mission, common challenges, and significant accomplishments.

For information about contributing articles and photos, click here to visit us on [My.APHIS](#).

## interested in writing?

Whether you're looking to practice your skills, add an interesting new goal to your individual development plan (IDP), or you simply enjoy writing, consider contacting *Inside APHIS* to learn about writing opportunities.

Contact editor John Scott by phone (301-851-4068) or email (john.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov) for more details. ●

## combined federal campaign

# We make it possible



By Amanda Sutker

There's still time to make your contribution to the 2015 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The campaign has been extended and now runs until December 31st.

With a list of thousands of eligible charities to choose from, it's easy to select an organization or charity of interest to you. CFC keyworkers in Riverdale and Washington, D.C. are available to assist you with completing paper donation forms or online giving.

Since the CFC kickoff in September, APHIS employees throughout the country have participated in local CFC campaigns, pledging payroll deductions and attending events to raise awareness about CFC.

Agency employees in the National Capital Area have so far raised nearly \$58,000. Contributions have come from individual donors and an active fundraising schedule, including jeans and jersey days, a coffeehouse with live music, an international chocolate fair, and various lunchtime food events.



To benefit other regional CFC campaign areas, APHIS employees in Minneapolis, Raleigh, Ames, Fort Collins, and other locations are supporting CFC by working with State campaign coordinators to sign up donors and host events.

Fort Collins employees even found a way to connect their local USDA People's Garden to this year's CFC fundraising efforts. Veterinary Services' Kasey Reyling organized a "guess the pumpkin's weight" contest in October. The pumpkin, which Kasey and others grew in the garden, weighed 53.1 pounds.

Through individual pledges and events like the "guess the weight" contest, APHIS employees in Fort Collins have raised nearly \$18,000 in support of CFC. ●

## aphis in memoriam

From June 26 through November 28, we lost five members of the APHIS family. We will miss them, and our thoughts go out to their families and loved ones.

### plant protection and quarantine

Robert Dahl	Gladstone, MO
Lance Oshiro	Honolulu, HI
Genoveva Pereira	Miami, FL
Juan Vasquez	Edinburg, TX

### wildlife services

Mark Crabb	Petersburg, TX
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**Special Note:** We learned recently of the passing of APHIS retiree Dr. Pierre Arthur Chaloux, former Deputy Administrator of Veterinary Services.

Chaloux joined USDA in 1953 and had a lengthy and very accomplished career.

Among other achievements, he played a key role in the development of the bovine tuberculosis, screwworm fly, and hog cholera eradication programs.

For more, read Administrator Kevin Shea's message (December 2, 2015).●

international services

# improving vesicular disease surveillance in central america

By Conrad Estrada

In August, APHIS signed a cooperative agreement to begin an enhanced and sustainable level of vesicular disease and screwworm surveillance in various Central American countries. The agreement—a collaborative effort with the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA)—improves animal disease surveillance in the region and helps safeguard the United States against the risk of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

### [partners in protection]

OIRSA is an intergovernmental organization that provides technical assistance to the ministries and departments of agriculture and livestock of nine member states: Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Mexico, and Costa Rica. The organization plays an important role in disease and pest control throughout Central America, protecting and strengthening development of agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture by enhancing production capacity and the safety of crops and agricultural products.

The recent cooperative agreement supports field surveillance for vesicular diseases, data

management and program analysis, as well as the Vesicular Disease Laboratory in Panama.

### [risk-based strategy]

Since the 1970s, APHIS has supported vesicular disease surveillance in Central America, working on early detection systems

for FMD, screwworm, and other transboundary animal diseases. In recent years, however, with less financial support for these programs, the number of field samples and the efficiency of the system has decreased.

*Continued on next page*



*International Services Deputy Administrator Beverly Simmons and OIRSA Executive Director M.Sc. Efrain Medina Guerra shake hands after signing the cooperative agreement.*

## a good rainy day's work



*Veterinary Services employees spent hours in the rain on November 17 at the port of Olympia, WA, to safely load 1,427 Holstein heifers for export. The exporter shipped the cows to Vietnam to help enlarge the country's herd and meet a national goal of providing all children with one glass of milk per day.*

*Shown here, loading crew members were (left to right): Mille Chopic, Jodie Jones, Tom Lehman (back), Aaron Gilbertsen, Kate Bowers, and Victoria Knutson. ●*

# improving vesicular disease surveillance

*Continued from page 4*



*APHIS formalized the cooperative agreement with the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) in Washington, D.C. on Aug. 26, 2015.*

A robust vesicular disease and screwworm surveillance program includes field investigations, sample collection and submission, and diagnostic sample processing. The new cooperative agreement outlines a risk-based surveillance strategy. It focuses on higher risk populations and species, which in turn increases the efficiency of detections while optimizing the use of the designated funds.

Although no country in Central America has ever reported an occurrence of FMD, vesicular stomatitis is an endemic disease with clinical signs similar to those of FMD. By supporting vesicular disease surveillance in the region, APHIS is helping to ensure that there are no undetected disease incursions in FMD-free areas. This reduces the risk of FMD being introduced into the United States. The project also supports screwworm surveillance in coordination with the Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworm in Panama.

## [how it will work]

In accordance with the cooperative agreement, each participating country in the Central American region will identify the sources, such as farms with susceptible species, that may be at risk because of their proximity to ports, airports, and landfills. The countries will sub-

sequently develop a surveillance plan to track and detect disease in these areas. Countries will have the option of participating in other established surveillance programs as long as samples are collected from the identified at-risk sources. Countries will also include samples from vesicular disease investigations.

Countries will decide how frequently veterinarians and animal health technicians should visit sites to collect samples and epidemiological information and to talk with producers to

ensure they are familiar with the goals and objectives of the program.

The project will last one year and supports long-term capacity-building objectives that will allow the region of Central America better access to diagnostic and analytical systems. Additionally, the project collaboration and information exchange are both essential ingredients in APHIS' efforts to combat serious transboundary and emerging animal diseases. ●

## pear program party

*On November 17th, International Services and Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) celebrated the 30th anniversary of the sand pear export program in South Korea. The event was hosted by the industry cooperators and the National Plant Protection Organization for South Korea. Organizers presented awards to growers and exporters who have been active in the program for a number of years. Ron Tsunozumi, a pre-clearance mitigation specialist in PPQ's*



*Preclearance and Offshore Programs, received a plaque for his 15 years of work with the program. Shown here (center), PPQ's Ken Law poses with exporters participating in the program. ●*

wildlife services  
**returning black-footed  
ferrets to prairie lands**

By Pam Boehland



A black-footed ferret pokes its head out of the ground on the Crow Nation reservation in Montana. As onlookers take photos, the ferret gazes around at its new home with no way of knowing the many cooperators it has taken to make this day happen.

**[first time in a long time]**

It's been 92 years since the charismatic black-footed ferret has called the Crow lands its home. But now its back, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Federal, State, Tribal, and environmental agencies and organizations. Together, they coordinated the release of 29 ferrets onto the reservation on October 23. The project's goal is to return black-footed ferrets to the North American prairie.

For its part, Wildlife Services (WS) is helping to make sure the ferrets are well-fed and healthy. WS role is to protect the reservation's prairie dog population—the ferrets' main prey and food source. WS biologists worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Crow Nation Fish and Game Department; and the World Wildlife Fund.

"This important partnership is a part of the effort to return the masked bandit to its

prairie homeland," said Kristy Bly, senior wildlife conservation biologist with the World Wildlife Fund.

**[plagued by fleas]**

The black-footed ferret is one of North America's most endangered mammals due to habitat loss and sylvatic plague—a non-native disease that is transmitted by infected fleas and lethal to ferrets and prairie dogs.

As part of the project, all ferrets released into the wild are vaccinated against plague before they leave the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ferret Recovery Center in Colorado. But that's just part of the equation. Without intervention, plague can spread through a prairie dog colony in just a few days, leaving the ferrets stranded without food.

This is where WS comes in.

This summer WS biologists in Montana applied an insecticide called DeltaDust® into prairie dog burrows on the Crow Nation where ferrets were reintroduced. The insecticide kills the fleas that transmit plague to the prairie dogs and reduces the occurrence of the disease.

WS personnel have used DeltaDust® in Colorado, Montana, and Arizona to prevent plague where more ferret releases are planned, and near where the ferrets have already been released.

"We are so thankful for Wildlife Services' partnership and contributions to ferret recovery. Protection of prairie dog habitat from plague is an essential part of restoring and retaining ferrets on the landscape, and Wildlife Services personnel are excelling at it," said Bly. ●



*Wildlife Services' (WS) Wildlife Disease Biologist Jerry Wiscomb and WS' Specialist Jaelynn Nielsen release a black-footed ferret.*

## presentation training **overcoming the blah, blah, blahs**



By Gary Roush

What was the worst presentation you ever sat through? A likely guess is that the speaker was standing in front of a screen, facing away from the audience and reading word-for-word from PowerPoint slides crammed with meaningless bullets and charts. Sound familiar? Or, perhaps you have even done this yourself?

Frankly, we all know there must be a better way to communicate ideas. To help employees discover their inner-speaker, APHIS is offering training opportunities to learn, practice, and refine vital presentation skills. These skills are essential both for personal effectiveness and career advancement. And they benefit APHIS as well: every presentation an employee makes to an external audience is an opportunity to enhance the public's faith and confidence in our agency.

Recently, the agency hosted two contractor-led classes: Death by PowerPoint and Effective Executive Speaking. Both courses received rave reviews from participants.

Death by PowerPoint focused on speech content and explored what makes ideas

“stick” in an audience's long-term memory. Participants learned how to keep an audience's attention by using PowerPoint to create arresting, image-rich slides that complement a spoken message.

Effective Executive Speaking emphasized the importance of speech preparation and delivery techniques, such as voice projection and hand and body movements that reinforce a speaker's authenticity with an audience.

### **[more help on the way]**

Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services' Center for Training and Organization Development (CTOD) and Plant Protection and Quarantine's Professional Development Center are partnering to develop a hybrid presentation course that will be offered to APHIS employees nationwide. Although final details are still in flux, the course will likely consist of video and/or webinar sessions coupled with a classroom component to provide opportunities to practice the skills with other enrollees. Watch your email for course descriptions and training dates!

In the meantime, if you'd like to sharpen your skills right now, CTOD has a robust [online Career Development Center](#) website that offers a wide range of learning activities to fit your learning style, developmental goals, and work situation. These activities are organized around the Office of Personnel Management's 28 core career competencies and other learning categories, including a section on presentation skills. Click on any of the associated links and you will discover a broad range of courses, webinars, reading materials, websites, and personal activities to enhance your skills.

And remember to check out your local Toastmasters club. Toastmasters is an excellent way to gain confidence in public speaking through fun, structured practice with colleagues. APHIS reimburses the cost of Toastmasters' membership fees.

Visit the [Toastmasters website](#) to search for a club near you. The Riverdale Club meets every other Wednesday in the library, and guests are always welcome. ●

## biotechnology regulatory services

# how aphis is improving biotechnology



By Andre Bell

You probably know that APHIS' Biotechnology Regulatory Services program (BRS) regulates certain genetically engineered (GE) organisms, some of which become part of the U.S. agricultural system. Additionally, Veterinary Service (VS) regulates veterinary biologics that contain GE organisms and may regulate certain GE animals if they present an animal health risk. What you may not know is that BRS and VS are one part of a larger science-based Federal regulatory framework that regulates the safe use of GE organisms.

Within that framework, APHIS partners with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). APHIS is responsible for protecting agriculture from pests and diseases. The EPA regulates pesticides in order to protect health and the environment. FDA is responsible for ensuring the safety and proper labeling of all plant-derived food and feed, including those products developed through genetic engineering.

### [time to update]

The three agencies have worked together since 1986—that's when the framework was created by the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The framework was last updated in 1992. Recently, in July 2015, OSTP directed the three Federal agencies to again update the Coordinated Framework to clarify roles and responsibilities, to develop a long-term strategy to ensure that the system is prepared for the future products of biotechnology, and to commission an expert analysis of the future landscape of biotechnology products to support this effort.

### [first steps]

On October 30, the three agencies held a public meeting with the overall goal of helping stakeholders understand the current system and to receive input on how to improve the transparency, predictability, coordination, and ultimately the efficiency of the biotechnology regulatory system.

The meeting was the first in a series of expected public engagement sessions on the initiative.

During the meeting, presenters from the three agencies discussed their regulatory roles and the OSTP memorandum entitled, "Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology Products." Public participants then provided oral comments representing a wide range of views.

APHIS' John Turner (BRS) and Lisa Ferguson (VS) presented during the meeting.

### [more information]

For additional information—including meeting agenda, webcasts, transcripts, presentations, and the Notice of Public Meeting—visit FDA's [Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology Products webpage](#). The page also features a link to sign up for notifications of future activities related to the effort. ●

# recent aphis retirees

Between June 27 and November 28, 2015, APHIS had 62 employees retire.

We send our congratulations to each and wish them all the very best.

### animal care

Joseph Nelson Raleigh, NC

### international services

Eric Hoffman Santo Domingo, DR

### marketing and regulatory programs business services

Anita McGrady Washington, D.C

### policy and program development

Karla Gainey Riverdale, MD  
Craig Roseland Riverdale, MD

### plant protection and quarantine

Ada Alamani Waimanalo, HI  
Linda Beal Shafter, CA  
Michael Bechtel Raleigh, NC  
Dennis Blinkhorn Amelia, OH  
Joann Botte Boston, MA  
Charles Brown Riverdale, MD  
Donovan Cho Kailua Kona, HI

Gerald Clardy  
Joseph Gittleman  
Katherine Handy  
Cedric Howell  
Reynold Ito  
Joanne Johnson  
Lawrence Kershaw  
Carmen Laureano  
Willie McDonald  
Kimberly Merenz  
George Muneoka  
Jose Renteria  
Joe Rodriguez  
David Root  
Gilbert Rowe, Jr.  
Michael Saah  
Ralph Salber  
John Tanaka  
Alan Tasker  
Michael Telson  
Tom Yoshinaka  
Lawrence Zaleski

### veterinary services

Gerardo Alarcon Santa Teresa, NM  
Linda Craig Sacramento, CA  
Eileen Cramer Riverdale, MD  
Mary Darragh Austin, TX

Phoenix, AZ  
Amityville, NY  
Riverdale, MD  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Honolulu, HI  
Vero Beach, FL  
Jacksonville, FL  
Miami, FL  
Orlando, FL  
Albany, NY  
Honolulu, HI  
Edinburg, TX  
Raleigh, NC  
Baltimore, MD  
Mullins, SC  
Beltsville, MD  
Mullica Hill, NJ  
Kailua Kona, HI  
Riverdale, MD  
San Francisco, CA  
Lihue, HI  
Frederick, MD

Larae Dolph  
Nils Forseth  
Joe Garrett  
Joyce Grow  
Arnoldo Gutierrez  
Leroy Jan  
Susan Jistel  
Kristine Kraig  
Mark Mason  
Luanne McGonigle  
Lawrence Miller  
Terrel Milligan  
Kathleen Nelson  
Annette Olson  
Joseph Pericozzi, Jr.  
Gary Ross  
Charles Shaw, Jr.  
Ruth Smith  
Oscar Winn  
Michael Wooten

### wildlife services

Mark Kinney Redmond, OR  
Daniel Libby Chehalis, WA  
Nancy Stephan Bismarck, ND  
Jacob Wimmer Miles City, MT ●

Ames, IA  
Miami, FL  
Austin, TX  
Hollidaysburg, PA  
Aspermont, TX  
San Juan, PR  
Austin, TX  
Tumwater, WA  
Tumwater, WA  
Ames, IA  
Riverdale, MD  
Ben Wheeler, TX  
Ankeny, IA  
Ames, IA  
Ithaca, NY  
Riverdale, MD  
Eupora, MS  
Ames, IA  
Eagle Pass, TX  
Nashville, TN

in tribute  
**kelly hobbs  
and  
shannon tunnell**

By Pam Boehland

On Friday, June 5, 2015, Wildlife Services (WS) pilot Kelly Wayne Hobbs was flying a small, fixed-winged aircraft while Shannon “Bubba” Tunnell, a wildlife specialist from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, was on board conducting coyote control when the plane went down near Raton, NM.

Both men were lost in the line of duty, and their sacrifices were honored during the Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards at the USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., on November 5.

During the award ceremony, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Department of Administration Assistant Secretary Gregory Parham, and APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea presented a folded flag encased in a wooden frame to the families of the two fallen men.

“Kelly was an exceptionally skilled and well-respected pilot, and absolutely loved flying for Wildlife Services,” said Alan May, WS State director in New Mexico. “He was a no-nonsense, salt of the earth man who took great pride in helping ranchers be more productive.”

Hobbs had served with WS since 1990 and as a pilot since 1992. He had more than 35 years of service with the cooperative WS program and had accrued more than 13,500 hours of flight experience, serving as an APHIS pilot in Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah.

May said that, “Bubba was an easy going guy, who was happiest out in the field on the trap line with his dogs. Always a smile on his face, he spent a lot of time thinking of ways to improve the job he truly enjoyed.”

Tunnell had served as a wildlife specialist since 2009 and trained extensively as a crewmember for aerial wildlife damage management activities.

“Both of these guys had hearts bigger than Texas,” said May. “They were friends that the WS family and the agricultural producers of New Mexico will miss forever.” ●



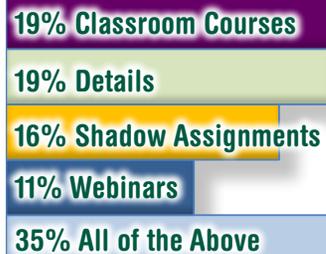
*Secretary Tom Vilsack, Assistant Secretary Gregory Parham, and APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea presented flags to family members in memory of Kelly Hobbs and Shannon Tunnell. The flags were presented during the Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards Ceremony. Above (left photo) are Hobbs’ son Donald and daughter Vicki Crawford; (right photo) Tunnell’s mother Sharon Null, sister Savannah Fleck, and nephew Jacob Fleck.*

# question of the day

In our last issue, we asked employees, “For you, what is the best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to enhance your career with APHIS?”

Here’s the percentage breakdown of the answers we received.

For you, what is the best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to enhance your career with APHIS?



Our thanks to everyone who responded to our last question.

### [next question please]

As 2015 draws to a close and the New Year begins, many people will take the time to reflect on their lives—both inside and outside of work.

With that in mind, we ask: *What advice would you give yourself for the coming year?* (50 words or less)

As always, thanks for responding, and remember your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Share this link with your coworkers and encourage them to participate! To take part, click [Question of the Day--Vol. 3, 2015](#). ●

## gleaning for feds feed families

*APHIS employees nationwide gave generously to the 2015 Feds Feed Families (FFF) food drive that ended October 2. The agency collected a total of 121,565 pounds of food and personal hygiene items. Employee-organized gleaning efforts contributed significantly to the total collected.*



*Shown here, employees and family members participate in a gleaning event sponsored by the APHIS Emerging Leaders Program. International Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Policy and Program Development, and Veterinary Services employees joined together to glean sweet potatoes at the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network Warehouse. ●*



## manager profile with **burke healey**



**Executive Director  
Surveillance, Preparedness and  
Response Services (SPRS)  
Veterinary Services (VS)**

### [what is your background?]

I was raised in southern Oklahoma on my dad and uncle's beef cattle ranch and haying operation. Following college and veterinary school, I practiced small, large, and exotic veterinary medicine in Arkansas and Texas before buying my own practice in Oklahoma.

After 10 years in practice, I was selected as the Oklahoma State Veterinarian, a position which I enjoyed for another 10 years before joining APHIS as the Oklahoma area veterinarian in charge.

### [how long have you been with aphis?]

I joined the APHIS team in 2006 and shortly after relocated from Oklahoma to North Carolina in the Eastern Regional Office for several years before returning west to Fort Collins.

While in Colorado, I have had the pleasure to serve as an associate regional director, director of cattle health, and for the past year as the executive director of SPRS under Associate Deputy Administrator TJ Myers.

### [most memorable aphis experience?]

There are many wonderful experiences and memories with APHIS, some of which

shouldn't be placed into print. Perhaps, however, the most recent was a call with TJ Myers where I suggested I may need to stay back from an international trip to assist with some highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) questions that were arising. By the time we hung up, I was the national incident coordinator for the recent HPAI incident.

### [priorities in the coming months?]

My top priority is working on finalizing preparations for a possible reoccurrence of HPAI this winter/spring all the while hoping the virus has mutated enough to not be the issue it was this past spring.

Concurrent priorities are focusing on my role as executive director to make adjustments in the new structure of VS to better support our staff in conducting daily activities in the field.

### [accomplishment most proud of?]

In work, it is the fact that we were able to pull together some of the greatest folks in government to manage and stave off HPAI as it devastated the Midwestern poultry industry this past spring. It was an honor to be a part

of such a committed and energetic group of individuals—from the field responders to the highest levels of the agency—selfless individuals with the dedication necessary to tackle the largest event of this nature that we have witnessed in recent times.

### [last book read?]

My pleasure reading is usually limited to a mystery that I grab before flights and travel that I can read before returning home. The latest title I recall was a Vince Flynn memorial novel, *The Survivor*.

### [guilty pleasure?]

Ah, guilty pleasures? That would have to be jumping on the Harley and riding away with no connections to work or life for a short period—just wind and road. It is always good to end up the journey with friends and family to reconnect however.

### [favorite meal?]

I really like to eat, so picking a favorite food is kind of tough. But meals have always been a time to celebrate family and friends, so any time they are present and enjoying a relaxing meal is memorable and a pleasure.



*Continued on next page*

# did you know ?



**Did you know** that all of the 211 commercial facilities affected during the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak are now eligible to restock?

Here are some snapshot facts about the outbreak, its size, and APHIS' response.

- The HPAI outbreak is the largest animal health emergency the Federal Government has ever faced. In total, 211 commercial and 21 backyard poultry flocks were affected, which resulted in nearly 50 million birds being put down.
- More than 600 employees from across the agency deployed to emergency sites—primarily in Iowa and Minnesota, but also in other States like Nebraska, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin.
- During deployments, many employees stepped away from their normal lives, making personal sacrifices and missing anniversaries, birthdays, or other special events while deployed. They missed other popular events and things that we likely took for granted. For example, between December 2014 and late August—when the last employees returned from field deployment—there were 6 Federal holidays, 36 weekends,

roughly 90 films released nationwide, the Super Bowl, and the NCAA basketball tournament.

- In the summer months, employees managed 100+ degree temperatures while working in biohazard suits to help producers get back in business as quickly as possible.
- Employees with our National Veterinary Services Laboratories produced more than 220,000 tubes of the media used to transport samples. In total, they received nearly 3,000 samples and performed almost 14,000 tests on those samples.
- Veterinary Services' (VS) Professional Development Services helped provide an incident overview and safety training to hundreds of responders, in addition to creating and delivering specialized training on environmental sampling, case management, biosecurity, and the use of personal protective equipment. This training helped ensure that responders had the information they needed to do their work as effectively as possible while staying safe.
- Employees at the VS warehouse in Kansas City sent more than 1,000 supply shipments out to support the HPAI response.

- Employees also spent countless hours reviewing and processing indemnity claim forms, which were crucial to the depopulation efforts. ●

*Continued from page 12*

## manager profile with **burke healey**

### **[hobbies?]**

Working around the house/farm, motorcycles, snow sports/skiing (No more snowboarding but that is another story).

### **[favorite movie?]**

Another tough question, as I really like to attend movies—whether it is a quiet date with my lovely wife or watching Minion movies with grandkids at the drive-in. But I tend towards action type movies now that westerns don't seem to be in production anymore. ●