



USDA Homeland Security Efforts

May 2003

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

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

Protecting U.S. borders from invasive pests and diseases

USDA increased safeguarding personnel at borders by 50 percent over FY 2000 levels to enhance prevention efforts to keep foreign agricultural pests and diseases from entering the United States. In addition, 18 new veterinarians have been added to the agricultural quarantine inspection staff at borders, ports of entry and on farms to ensure strong preparedness programs are in place to protect U.S. agriculture and 20 new food import surveillance officers have been added to ports of entry. Approximately 2,600 members of the border inspection force have been transferred to DHS. In close consultation with DHS, USDA will continue to train inspectors and set policy for plants, animals and commodities entering the U.S.

The Department has maintained National Forest Service enforcement personnel along the hundreds of miles of continuous Forest Service land along northern and southern borders.

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

USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued complementary regulations establishing new safeguards for the control of select agents that could pose a threat, in accordance with the Agriculture Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

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

In an effort to develop a more comprehensive approach to animal health surveillance system, USDA appointed a

national surveillance system coordinator. The coordinator will lead and maintain the creation of a National Animal Health Laboratory system as well as implement the enhancements recommended by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Animal Health Safeguarding.

USDA developed guidance documents for distribution to farmers and ranchers to help remind them of steps they can take to secure their operations. Information was posted on the USDA web site and distributed through the USDA Extension system to reach every county in the nation.

USDA upgraded security efforts at USDA state and county offices including a web-based tracking system for disaster reporting, maintaining databases of fertilizer, food, feed and seed listings, and coordinating with State and County Emergency Boards to assist during an emergency.

USDA has held and continues to hold ongoing Foreign Animal Disease Awareness Training Seminars for federal and state veterinarians from all 50 states to help states better prepare for accidental and intentional introductions of foreign animal diseases and has conducted and continues to conduct emergency preparedness satellite seminars to share vital information for federal and state veterinary officials and emergency planners, military representatives and academia on emergency preparedness. A CD-ROM was developed to help practitioners better identify and diagnose animal diseases.

USDA provided \$43 million to states, universities and tribal lands to increase homeland security prevention, detection and response efforts.

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

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

A Department-wide National Incident Command System structure, based on the successful system developed by the USDA's Forest Service, is being implemented. Training and exercises are being conducted across the department.

USDA is spending \$18 million to develop rapid tests for agents that pose the most serious threats to our agricultural system. Some examples are: foot and mouth disease, rinderpest and wheat rust.

Assuring a safe food supply

USDA enhanced security at all food safety laboratories and increased capacity to test for additional hazards and biological agents.

USDA established an Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness to coordinate activities to prevent and, if necessary, coordinate a response to an intentional attack on the food supply.

USDA prepared and distributed food security guidance documents to meat, poultry and egg products processing plants and developed information on biosecurity and the food supply for constituents and processors.

USDA coordinated with other government food agencies to develop prevention, detection and response procedures to protect the nation's food supply.

USDA implemented the national Consumer Complaint Monitoring System, a surveillance and sentinel system that monitors and tracks food-related consumer complaints.

USDA participated in several drills and exercises at the federal and state level to increase response procedures.

USDA is conducting vulnerability assessments for domestic and imported food, developed a food security plan and conducted training sessions for employees, veterinarians and inspectors in preparedness activities.

USDA is conducting threat assessments to ensure the security of food. This includes food purchased by USDA for federal feeding programs as well as shipping procedures and storage.

Protecting and enhancing research and laboratory facilities

USDA has developed department policies for the sponsorship of non-citizen visiting scientists, including a tracking system for all foreign visitors to USDA facilities.

Background checks are being conducted for non-citizen visiting scientists.

All positions at USDA labs are being examined for personnel reliability clearances beginning with the BSL-3 locations.

USDA is spending \$21.7 million for physical security upgrades at laboratory facilities for security assessments, background investigations, and additional security personnel at facilities.

Security assessments of all USDA BSL-3 facilities were conducted.

Emergency preparedness and response

A Department-wide National Interagency Incident Management System, based on the successful system currently utilized by USDA's Forest Service, is being implemented. This system includes: command and control systems, coordination systems, training and qualification systems and publication management systems. On February 28, 2003, President Bush signed Homeland Security

Presidential Directive 5, which established a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management.

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

Protecting other infrastructure

USDA developed a threat advisory system for rural infrastructure and enhanced evacuation procedures for USDA rural development entities.

USDA completed security assessments of 13 U.S. Forest Service aviation facilities and implemented additional security measures as a result.

USDA's Forest Service has enhanced efforts to protect forestland and facilities including dams, reservoirs, pipelines, water treatment plants, power lines and energy production facilities on government property.

Securing information technology

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

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

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

Continuity of operations

Full and complete continuity of operations are developed for all USDA agencies and offices. Alternate work places have been upgraded and improved to avoid disruption in the work of USDA. A National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) is being expanded department wide.

Audits and investigations

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

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

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