

# UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2008 RESOLUTION

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**RESOLUTION NUMBER:** 11      **APPROVED**

**SOURCE:** COMMITTEE ON DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY AND  
VETERINARY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**SUBJECT MATTER:** SUPPORT FOR HIGH-CONTAINMENT BIOSAFETY  
LABORATORIES

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

High containment biosafety level (BSL)-3, BSL-3 Ag, and the establishment of BSL-4 laboratory space for livestock is vital to our nation's ability for early detection and response to any potential emerging and foreign animal disease or bioterrorist event.

Laboratories must be capable of handling disease agents in a manner that allows the safe handling of diagnostic materials and the ability to conduct research to detect and prevent emerging and exotic infectious agents.

These same laboratories assist livestock producers, regulators, veterinarians, pet owners, wildlife managers, food and feed systems specialists and public health professionals in every state on a daily basis by providing surveillance and diagnostic services for these diseases. There is collaboration between the high containment laboratories in Canada, United States and Mexico that provides international defense against animal and zoonotic diseases.

## **RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) supports continuing operation of existing, and construction of new, high-containment biosafety laboratories and maintaining the current system for regulatory oversight of these laboratories.

## **RESPONSE:**

### **USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services appreciates the United States Animal Health Association's interest in biosafety laboratories. In conjunction with the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, APHIS is adding to its high-containment biosafety facilities by developing the National Centers for Animal Health (NCAH). New facilities for NCAH include a biosafety level (BSL)-3 Ag large animal facility and a BSL-2 and BSL-3 laboratory and animal facility. APHIS supports meeting national needs for biosafety laboratories with

regulatory oversight that provides assurances to employees of the facilities, the community, and the public.

### **Homeland Security**

DHS supports Resolution 11: Support for High-Containment Biosafety Laboratories, as written. The Department is committed to the coordination of a proper response to biological threats and the availability of safe and contained laboratory space to support early detection of such threats is an absolute requirement. DHS currently operates the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) to protect America's livestock from foreign animal diseases. PIADC operates Biosafety Level 3 (BSL3) and BSL-2 laboratory facilities and has state-of-the-art biosafety practices and procedures in place to prevent a disease organism from escaping into the environment. In addition, Kansas State University was recently selected as the site for the Department's National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). NBAF will: research high-consequence biological threats; support basic research; diagnostic development, testing and validation; advanced countermeasure development; and, training for high-consequence livestock disease. NBAF will operate BSL-4, BSL-3, and BSL-2 laboratory facilities. DHS will continue to monitor and ensure compliance of these laboratories with current laws, regulations, guidance, and practices related to working with biological select agents and toxins. In addition, given the importance of biosecurity to protecting public health and agriculture, per Executive Order 13486, "Strengthening the Biosecurity of the United States," DHS will continue to work with its Federal partners to examine existing biosecurity programs and develop recommendations to strengthen the current regulatory oversight of its laboratories.