

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2006

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 32 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES OF SWINE

SUBJECT MATTER: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL BIO AND AGRO-DEFENSE FACILITY

DATES: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On June 1, 2003, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) assumed control of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Since that time, DHS has served as the "landlord" of the island and its facilities and has been in charge of daily operations and facility maintenance. USDA, specifically the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), has continued to carry out its mission of protecting animal agriculture from the threat of foreign animal diseases by directing research projects aimed at improving diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines as well as training animal health specialists to recognize diseases of concern.

The Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL) is housed at PIADC and is responsible for the diagnosis of foreign animal diseases, reagent production and vaccine testing, and training. Being on an island means that PIADC is very costly to maintain and increases the difficulty of attracting and retaining employees and researchers. In addition, the facilities are in need of significant maintenance, upgrading, expansion and renovation. For these reasons, DHS has begun the process of evaluating options for the future of PIADC, including moving the facility to a new location.

In March 2006, DHS began evaluating applications to house a facility, the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), to replace much, if not all, of the current activities conducted at PIADC. This proposed \$451 million 520,000 square foot facility will address biological and agricultural national security risks by co-locating scientists from several federal agencies in a state-of-the-art bio-safety containment facility. The DHS plans to equip the NBAF with numerous laboratories that will conduct research in high-consequence biological threats involving foreign animal, zoonotic, and human diseases. As a key part of this, DHS plans to house laboratories that will provide high security spaces for agricultural and animal studies and training. In addition, DHS plans for the NBAF to develop vaccine countermeasures for foreign animal diseases, and provide advanced test and evaluation capability for threat detection, vulnerability, and countermeasure assessment for animal and zoonotic diseases.

According to information on the DHS website, the NBAF project will integrate those aspects of public and animal health research that have been determined to be central to national security. Meet the related and synergistic homeland defense research, development, test and evaluation responsibilities, NBAF will provide essential animal model test and evaluation capacity to support licensure of vaccine countermeasures. Provide a unique biosafety level (BSL3/Ag and BSL4) livestock capable laboratory for developing countermeasures for foreign animal diseases, and advanced test and evaluation capability for threat detection, vulnerability and countermeasure assessment for animal and zoonotic diseases.

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA), while supporting the desire to enhance and expand the resources available to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to address the concerns of animal agriculture with respect to detection, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of foreign animal diseases and to provide foreign animal disease (FAD) training for veterinarians and animal health officials, expresses concern with the current lack of direct stakeholder input into the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) process.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests information from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding the specifics of facility development and future management to include facility design, development of the scope of work, allocation of funds and resources, definition of funding requirements from collaborating agencies, and a description of oversight to insure adequate access to the available resources.

USAHA urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and DHS to develop a forum through which stakeholders can have ongoing meaningful input into the planning, management and oversight of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) and that facilitates the agencies outreach to its constituency, and that DHS develop a management plan to address the issues of funding; resource allocation and research direction that insures the USDA mandate regarding foreign animal disease (FAD) issues are adequately addressed.

RESPONSE:

United States Department Of Agriculture (USDA), Office Of The Secretary

Thank you for your letter of November 15, 2006, to Secretary Johanns concerning resolutions passed by the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) at its October 2006 annual meeting.

We welcome USAHA's input, and will take the organization's views under consideration as we address the issues in question. We look forward to further dialogue with USAHA on these and other matters as we move forward with important animal health initiatives.

We value your organization's longstanding collaborative relationship with USDA, and I know that we will continue to work together to advance U.S. animal health.

Department Of Homeland Security (DHS), Science and Technology Directorate

The Department of Homeland Security is pleased to provide a response concerning the development of the National Bio and Agro-defense Facility. The proposed National Bio and Agro-defense Facility (NBAF) will enable DHS to fulfill its mission of detecting, preventing, protecting against and responding to bioterrorist attacks within the United States. The process to develop NBAF is a multi-phase, multi-year effort that involves site selection, environmental assessment, planning, design, construction, and commissioning. The NBAF project brings together several cooperating agencies with mission critical objectives in an effort to share resources in a state of the art building designed and built to facilitate integration and collaboration.

The Science and Technology Directorate's, Office of National Labs is leading a team of researchers, scientists, technicians, and other skilled professionals from various agencies in the specifics of facility development. While future management and resource allocation planning are being handled at the highest levels of DHS and its collaborating agencies, the NBAF project management team remains committed to providing an open, inclusive, and iterative process that considers the input of all interested stakeholders during every phase of the project.

The NBAF project management team will oversee the entire development process. All program and technical requirements, budgetary planning, resource allocation planning and coordination, schedule tracking, and status reporting will be managed by these team leaders with necessary agency input at the most senior levels. The NBAF project management team will manage the development and posting of public information to stakeholders throughout the project and specifically for the small number of sites that will be selected for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) development. The Notice of Intent (NOI) will be the vehicle to notify interested parties and the public of the selected sites.

Copies of the NOI will be posted in the Federal Register and will announce the selection of sites for which an EIS will be performed. Postcards will be mailed to stakeholders announcing public scoping meetings, and other significant milestone events affording the opportunity for meaningful input for all sites where an EIS will be conducted.

Following the scoping meetings, stakeholders can continue to monitor and provide input to the design and development of the NBAF and associated activities via the NBAF website (www.dhs.gov/nbaf). Stakeholders are encouraged to engage the program manager to provide input, assessments, and commentary of a technical or programmatic nature that will assist the government in developing a program that properly engages the varied and combined missions of the agencies involved in the NBAF project.