
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 30

APPROVED

SUBJECT MATTER: National Poultry Improvement Plan Staffing

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) is the federal government's poultry disease control program administered in cooperation with state animal health officials and poultry producers. Currently, out of a national staff of five, there are three scientific positions in the NPIP and two of these are vacant. The NPIP Senior Coordinator position is filled, but the Compartmentalization Veterinary Medical Officer and the NPIP Authorized Laboratory Coordinator positions remain vacant.

Since its origins in 1935, the NPIP has grown tremendously due to its long history of success. The effectiveness of the program's unique industry-driven structure has made it the home for controlling diseases far beyond what the program creators envisioned. As we saw following the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak in 2015-17, the multibillion-dollar United States poultry industry relies on the NPIP to monitor and respond to many of the most impactful diseases of poultry that negatively impact the poultry and product movement regionally and internationally. The role of these positions is vital.

Recently, the NPIP has expanded to include: shifting from oversight of hatchery and breeder monitoring to oversight of the entire commercial poultry industry for avian influenza; compartmentalization; expansion of laboratory workshops; and the newly mandated biosecurity audits. These programs along with the 2020 NPIP Biennial Conference magnify the impact of these vacancies. For the continued success of the program there is an urgent need to bring the NPIP office to full capacity.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) expedite the process to hire the best qualified Compartmentalization Veterinary Medical Officer and the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) Authorized Laboratory Coordinator for the positions located at the NPIP office.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, VS recognizes the concerns of the USAHA and appreciates the opportunity to respond. To fill the vacancies in the NPIP office, APHIS has hired two well-qualified veterinary medical officers (VMO). Dr. Kathryn Burden joined the NPIP team on February 3, 2020, and serves as the Authorized Laboratory Coordinator. Dr. Burden brings to the job her experience in laboratory microbiology and quality systems, biosecurity audits, flock inspection, and poultry disease investigations. We expect the NPIP Compartmentalization Coordinator to begin in late March 2020.

FINAL RESPONSE:

USDA, APHIS, VS is pleased to report a new hire for the NPIP staff. In addition to Dr. Kathryn Burden, who joined the NPIP team on February 3, 2020, NPIP welcomed Dr. Savannah Thomas as the NPIP Compartmentalization Coordinator on August 17, 2020. Dr. Thomas' background in poultry medicine and commercial poultry production brings a wealth of information and perspective to the NPIP team and will aid her in managing all aspects of the compartmentalization program.