

Foreword

I am privileged to present the 2008 United States Animal Health Report. This is the fifth annual report produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) on the Nation's animal health status.

This publication highlights APHIS Veterinary Services' (VS) programs, events, and initiatives aimed at maintaining healthy livestock, poultry, and aquaculture populations. In addition, the report reviews key epidemiological developments of 2008 and provides an overview of our animal health surveillance activities, as well as our emergency planning, preparedness, and monitoring efforts. We also include an informative summary of the U.S. livestock, poultry, and aquaculture industries.

As we review the events of the past year, it is essential that we also look ahead. The national animal health landscape continues to change, and so the mission and role of VS—and the entire veterinary health community—must evolve to continue to meet its role of protecting U.S. animal agriculture. In 2008, we began to outline our vision to project a broad view of the organization we anticipate becoming by 2015. In the next few years, we will fine-tune this vision. Some of the key forces affecting U.S. animal health and APHIS are:

- *Evolving needs of the animal agriculture industry.* With effective control or eradication of many diseases, the scope and type of government services needed by the animal agriculture industry must evolve to meet the new challenges. In addition, changes in industry structure—characterized by the increase in the number of large-scale, production-intensive farm operations—will also alter the type of government services that will be needed. Meanwhile, we will consider the impact that programs may have on small and non-traditional producers.
- *Advances in technology.* New diagnostics, vaccines, and novel treatment technologies are changing veterinary medicine and management of animal disease events. These new disease detection, prevention,

or treatment possibilities might provide alternatives to traditional eradication programs, which historically have relied on expensive, large-scale depopulation activities.

- *The animal and human health interface.* Public awareness of diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, West Nile virus, and others has escalated consumer/public demand for leadership at the intersection of animal and public health concerns.
- *Increasing demand.* Developing countries will especially increase the demand for animals and animal products. With an increasing world population, demand for agricultural and other resources will only continue to rise. This trend will increase pressure to more efficiently provide necessary products and also increase the movement of animals and products around the globe.
- *Tightening Federal budgets.* For the foreseeable future, Federal budgets will be under intense pressure. This is prompting increased emphasis on utilizing available resources wisely.

Our expertise and core capabilities will position APHIS to meet these animal health challenges. We intend to continue our strong partnerships with State animal health officials, agricultural producers, and veterinary organizations. We will also continue to strengthen relationships with the emergency management community at State, national, and international levels. Additionally, we will strive to enhance our collaboration with public health and wildlife agencies and their respective organizations.

As always, I invite and welcome your comments and ideas. Information on how to provide feedback and contact details are on the inside front cover.

—John Clifford
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