



Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Keeping U.S. Agriculture Healthy for America and the World

2023
IMPACT REPORT

Answering the Call to Protect American Agriculture



Safeguarding the health and value of the Nation’s agricultural and natural resources brings many rewards: abundant, affordable food; trade access for producers; and a healthy economy. But it also brings challenges, and in 2023, APHIS faced some of its toughest challenges to date.

Thanks to the ingenuity and hard work of our employees and our many partners, we answered those challenges. We deployed staff to critical efforts within the United States and beyond. We maintained our guard against the ongoing threat of African swine fever. We sustained our robust response to highly pathogenic avian influenza and exotic fruit fly outbreaks. We refined and redesigned regulatory systems to steward taxpayer resources and better serve our stakeholders.

We did all of this—and more—while basing our decisions and actions on the latest science. We collaborated on these initiatives with our State, Tribal, and Federal partners as well as our stakeholders in industry and academia.

In 2023, we also saw new leaders emerge. After more than a decade of service as APHIS Administrator, and over 40 years with the Agency, Mr. Kevin Shea accepted a new role in the Office of the Secretary. I took on the role of APHIS Administrator, with Dr. Donna Lalli acting as Associate Administrator. These new roles became official early in 2024, when we also welcomed a new Associate Administrator, Michelle Wenberg. We each bring a unique set of experiences and expertise to our roles, and a lot of enthusiasm for the APHIS mission. Like those who came before us, we are ready to pitch in and help U.S. agriculture thrive.

In the pages that follow, we describe animals protected, pests eradicated, and acres treated in 2023. We highlight our efforts to prevent animal and plant diseases, reduce human conflicts with wildlife, facilitate and

regulate products of biotechnology, ensure animal welfare, and support the safe trade of agricultural products around the globe.

Our work at APHIS touches every American, although many may not know it. They range from consumers who can enjoy a variety of safe, nutritious foods; to family farmers and ranchers who stake their livelihoods on the health of their crops, flocks, and herds; and airline passengers who trust us to reduce wildlife strike hazards, to name a few.

As a safeguarding Agency, we often measure our success in terms of what hasn’t happened as much as or more than what has happened. The average citizen may never know about outbreaks we prevented or pests that never touched American soil, but these successes are central to our mission.

We couldn’t accomplish our mission without our vibrant workforce—more than 8,000 strong. Our employees represent a broad range of expertise, as wildlife biologists, entomologists, plant protection and animal health experts, economists, data analysts, budget specialists, communicators, human resource professionals, and more. But we all have one thing in common. Every day, we answer the call to protect American agriculture—together. We do this in the field, at the office, and around the world.

I’m proud of the work we do, and proud to share our story in APHIS’ 2023 Impact Report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Michael Watson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Watson, Administrator

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Mission: To protect the health and value of America's agricultural and natural resources

Who We Are



8,293

Employees
Worldwide



\$2.223B

Annual Budget



6

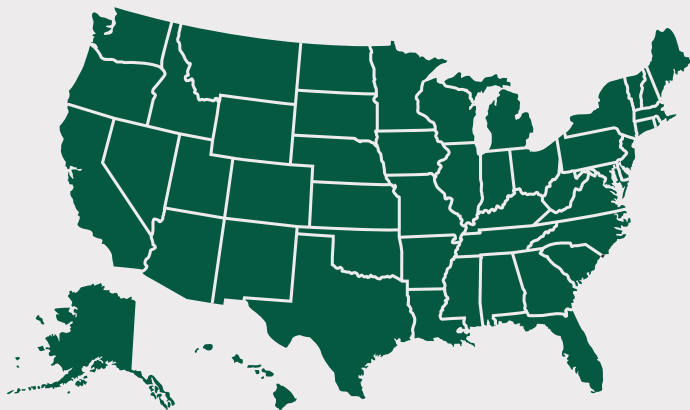
Operational
Programs



7

Labs and
Research Hubs

Where We Serve



50

States and the
District of Columbia

3

Territories

27

Countries



Our Focus



Thriving
Crops and
Forests



Healthy
Livestock
and Poultry



Safe
Trade



Balanced,
Healthy
Wildlife
Populations



Humane Care
for Vulnerable
Animals



Safe
Biotechnology



Thriving Crops and Forests

American farms and forests produce vast resources for our country and the entire world. Millions of people depend on our Nation's plant resources for food, clothing, fuel, and jobs. We protect these resources from harmful pests—so they stay healthy.

Allocated more than \$70 million to support 382 projects under the Plant Protection Act's Section 7721 program as part of a nationwide effort to strengthen the country's infrastructure for pest detection, surveillance, and mitigation, as well as protect the U.S. nursery system

Inspected and cleared 3.31 billion pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables from 20 countries before they were shipped to the United States and oversaw a systems approach for the safe import of 2.96 billion pounds of avocados from Mexico



Cleared 27,235 imported shipments containing 1.87 billion plant units (cuttings, rooted plants, tissue culture, etc.) and over 670,811 kilograms of seeds of woody plants, and prevented entry of 2,176 quarantine-significant pests at U.S. plant inspection stations

Identified 92,000 pests found during U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspections of cargo, mail, and express carrier shipments and took quick action to prevent those of concern from entering the United States

Issued 28,155 import permits and 8,361 regulatory guidance letters for plants and plant products and responded to over 33,000 inquiries about imports and plant health permits

Issued more than 591,000 Federal phytosanitary certificates directly or through authorized State and county cooperators to aid the export of U.S. plants and plant products to approximately 200 trading partners

Conducted technical negotiations to open, maintain, and expand export markets; and facilitated the release of held shipments—an added value of approximately \$459.3 million

Helped expand the Global Electronic Phytosanitary (ePhyto) Solution, which makes the exchange of export certificates fast, efficient, and fraud-resistant—in fiscal year 2023 alone, the United States sent more than 292,000 ePhytos to 99 trading partners and received more than 351,000 ePhytos

Completed 200 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and program requirements to support safe trade and protect American agriculture

Conducted plant pest surveys targeting 222 unique pests with cooperators in 50 States and 5 Territories and coordinated the response to 45 pests that were identified during FY 2023 surveys and prior years

Worked with more than 180 International Plant Protection Convention members to advance international standards that facilitate safe agricultural trade

Collaborated with counterparts in the Americas to address emerging plant pest issues that threaten agriculture, food security, commerce and the environment. APHIS and our counterparts in Canada effectively implemented the new U.S.

and Canada Coordinated Safeguarding Framework, which provides a broad and holistic approach to safeguard North America against the threat of plant pests and diseases



Monitored grasshopper and Mormon cricket populations in 13 Western States and treated 138,495 rangeland acres to control outbreaks, protecting more than 290,000 acres of rangeland forage and wildlife habitat

Eradicated two exotic fruit fly outbreaks in California that began in FY 2022. APHIS is responding to seven new outbreaks that began in the summer and fall of 2023. These response efforts prevent the establishment of these pests, which attack several hundred types of fruits and vegetables

Protected American agriculture from harmful plant pests and foreign animal diseases like African swine fever by intercepting about 250,000 prohibited agricultural items during baggage inspections of more than 15.9 million passengers bound for the U.S. mainland from Hawaii and Puerto Rico



Healthy Livestock and Poultry

We keep America's agricultural animals healthy. A critical part of this work includes responding to serious animal diseases—and preventing these diseases from entering the United States. Our experts work with partners across all disciplines—here at home and around the world—to find the best health outcomes for all.



Continued to assist the Dominican Republic and Haiti with African swine fever (ASF) response efforts, including providing advice and assistance on surveillance, quarantine, depopulation, and disposal methods; providing testing support; and bolstering in-country testing capacity

Continued to enforce an ASF protection zone in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; enhanced pre-departure activities by adding temporary staff, canine detector teams, and x-ray machines, as well as training staff in inspecting for animal products; and increased Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance market surveys in the protection zone to identify potentially regulated or prohibited products



Continued an emergency program to address nationwide detections of highly pathogenic avian influenza. Performed more than 1.4 million tests on commercial poultry flocks through National Poultry Improvement Plan cooperative agreements and coordinated the collection of more than 31,000 wild bird samples, helping protect the U.S. poultry industry—valued at \$77 billion

Provided training to support a nationwide network of more than 71,000 USDA-accredited veterinarians who serve as the first line of defense for reportable domestic and foreign animal diseases

Awarded \$16.4 million to States, Tribes, land-grant universities, and industry organizations for 64 projects to enhance our nation's ability to rapidly respond to and control animal disease outbreaks

Invested \$14.3 million in the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank for additional foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine antigen concentrate to bolster reserves and incorporate a new antigen

Awarded \$2.3 million to support 14 National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) projects to enhance the early detection of high-consequence animal diseases

Licensed 85 manufacturers and permit holders for 1,431 active product licenses/permits for the control of 278 animal diseases

Endorsed 346,612 health certificates to facilitate safe animal and animal product exports and approved approximately 1,100 facilities to export U.S. animal

products, maintaining and expanding the network of USDA-approved establishments to move these products quickly and safely to global markets

Accepted electronic USDA Accredited Veterinarian signature for the issuance of all live animal export health certificates submitted for endorsement to facilitate live animal shipments to 47 countries





Safe Trade

We have Foreign Service Officers and staff in 27 countries overseas—on the front line for U.S. agricultural health. Working with foreign governments and industries, we help them build capacity to control, manage, and eradicate pests and diseases. We also help our international partners establish and manage sustainable animal and plant health programs to ensure the safe trade of agriculture commodities between our countries.



Facilitated new markets for a wide range of U.S.-origin animals and animal products, including live cattle to Israel worth an estimated \$75 million over the next 5 years and fresh grapefruit to Vietnam worth an estimated \$5 million per year.

Worked with foreign partners and other APHIS experts to resolve challenges posed by pest detections, trading partner regulatory changes, and other issues, helping to preserve threatened or reopen closed markets for U.S.-origin goods, including oak logs with veneer to the European Union (reopening a \$12 million annual market) and eggs to Taiwan (valued at \$2.7 million in 2023), among other markets threatened by the avian influenza outbreaks in the United States

Negotiated with foreign officials in-country to resolve delays with 187 U.S. shipments at foreign ports, totaling more than \$98 million

Past successes also continue to add value for U.S. exporters. APHIS reached an agreement with its counterparts in Mexico in FY 2022 to expand access to the market for U.S. potato producers. Exports of potatoes grew 48 percent from January to November 2023 compared to

that same period in 2022. Total exports of U.S. potatoes to Mexico were worth an estimated \$118 million in 2023

Produced 1 billion sterile Mediterranean fruit flies weekly at the El Pino sterile insect facility in Guatemala, supporting preventative release programs in California and Florida, along with population control efforts in Guatemala and Mexico

Produced 6 billion sterile Mexican fruit flies at the San Miguel Petapa facility in Guatemala (an average of 115.7 million weekly) to support eradication activities in Texas and California. These flies also supported preventive release programs in northern Mexico and Texas to help protect America’s valuable citrus production

Initiated a response to a New World screwworm outbreak in Panama and Costa Rica, increasing production of sterile flies weekly from 20 million to 65 million. This multi-year response will protect screwworm-free areas in North and Central America



Hosted 10 foreign engagements related to agricultural trade and U.S. regulatory processes, attended by 237 officials from Canada, Chile, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, and Vietnam

Coordinated APHIS’ ASF response in the Dominican Republic—advising local authorities on public outreach, testing samples, training staff, expanding surveillance, and supporting APHIS’ establishment of an ASF protection zone around Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands



Delivered seminars and workshops, supported continuing education courses, and shared information both virtually and in person on a wide range of technical topics for officials representing 50 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean to increase their capacity to identify, diagnose, control, respond to, and recover from animal and plant pests and diseases



Balanced, Healthy Wildlife Populations

Wildlife are one of America's most valued public resources. Yet wildlife-related problems—including disease threats, livestock predation, crop losses, property damage, and more—are common. In response, we lead our Nation's efforts to find innovative solutions that protect people, agriculture, and wildlife so all can coexist.



Completed 32,472 direct control activities for cooperators to protect livestock from predation through a combination of techniques and tools—including nonlethal methods like range riding, fladry, fencing, and husbandry practices

Continued researching and promoting nonlethal methods to cooperators nationwide under the Nonlethal Initiative, which started in 2020 to protect livestock from large carnivores and was expanded in FY 2022 to include nonlethal beaver damage management. The Nonlethal Initiative supports research and implementation of nonlethal methods in 12 States

In a One Health initiative with Federal, State, and Tribal partners, monitored and surveyed thousands of white-tailed deer and other animals (both wild and domestic) for SARS-CoV-2 to help identify species that may serve as reservoirs or hosts for the virus and better understand exposure, disease susceptibility, and risks of cross-species transmission

Protected wildlife and public health by distributing more than 8.7 million oral rabies vaccination (ORV) baits to combat raccoon rabies in 14 Eastern States and more than 900,000 million ORV baits

in Texas to prevent canine rabies from reemerging along the Mexican border

Partnered with Federal and State resource agencies, private organizations, and community groups on approximately 5,226 damage management projects that helped protect threatened and endangered bird species across 46 States, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Worked with State and Federal partners to reduce or prevent feral swine damage on approximately 187 million acres in 35 States and 3 Territories, directly protecting agriculture, human health and safety, property, and natural resources



Led feral swine eradication efforts and enhanced ASF surveillance in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, removing 1,985 and sampling 1,116 feral swine in Puerto Rico, to help protect the United States from this deadly animal disease after its detection in the Caribbean

Dispersed more than 275,000 double-crested cormorants, helping protect the U.S. aquaculture industry, which is worth \$1.5 billion annually



Helped nearly 800 civil, military, and joint-use airports worldwide—comprising about 60 percent of all U.S. commercial passenger airports—reduce or avoid wildlife strike hazards to protect people and aircraft

Led U.S. research to find innovative solutions for managing wildlife damage, initiating 67 studies with more than 100 research partners nationwide—with the majority of our work devoted to nonlethal tools and techniques

Advanced our Nation's ability to manage wildlife resources wisely and effectively by sharing our research results and encouraging the use of new methods, with 99 peer-reviewed papers uploaded to the Digital Commons, and over 129,000 downloads from Digital Commons

Donated nearly 163 tons of deer, goose, and other meat—more than 1 million servings of protein for people in need—and more than 18 tons of meat for animal consumption to animal rehab centers, zoos, and other facilities, making full use of this resource from wildlife damage management work



Humane Care for Vulnerable Animals

We protect more than 1 million vulnerable animals nationwide by enforcing two important laws: the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act (HPA). Through inspections and outreach, we oversee thousands of breeders, dealers, and exhibitors; research facilities; transporters; dog importers; and managers of horse shows, exhibitions, and sales to make sure their animals receive care and treatment that meets Federal standards. We also provide national leadership on the safety and well-being of pets and other animals during disasters.

Worked with Federal, State, and local partners to confiscate or facilitate the surrender of 853 animals to relieve their suffering and provide them with humane care

Took civil and administrative action to address alleged AWA violations, including opening 262 cases, issuing 214 official warnings, obtaining 19 administrative orders, denying 9 licenses, and permanently revoking 16 other licenses to support AWA compliance and deter future violations

Oversaw more than 16,000 licensees and registrants—including nearly 3,000 new registrants—ensuring the humane care and treatment of AWA-covered animals



Conducted over 10,000 AWA site inspections—including more than 900 unannounced inspections at research facilities—to assess the health, care, and treatment of animals covered under the AWA

Inspected licensees and registrants for compliance with the AWA—throughout FY 2023 92 percent of which were found to be in substantial compliance and 71 percent were found to have zero violations.*



Attended 80 horse events, inspected 2,740 horses, and identified 532 instances of HPA noncompliance. In collaboration with industry representatives, sampled 1,235 horses for prohibited substance testing and found that nearly half the samples tested were positive for prohibited numbing agents

Issued 2,706 import permits covering 7,000 dogs entering the United States for resale, ensuring they are healthy, vaccinated, and over 6 months of age



Continued supporting the Zoological All Hazards Partnership—which reached hundreds of animal facilities, professional and industry groups, private owners, veterinarians, and others in the exotic animal community in FY 2023—covering topics such as hurricanes, wildfires, SARS-

COV-2, highly pathogenic avian influenza in zoos, and biosecurity and resilience for zoos and aquariums

Hosted or assisted with more than 20 education and outreach events, including a State and Federal Veterinarian Meeting, Animal Transportation Symposium, and Small Pet Welfare Symposium. Field and species specialists attended or presented at 17 veterinary, breeder, or species-focused meetings and connected with more than 3,600 individuals across 36 states and 8 countries

***Note:** Licensees/registrants with an active license or registration during any part of FY23 are included. These statistics are based on certificates in APHIS' animal welfare data system, which means for a licensee or registrant with multiple sites (some facilities have dozens of sites), a single instance of a "not substantially compliant" inspection at a single site would render that licensee/registrant to be captured as not substantially compliant. APHIS is taking steps to ensure consistent data reporting to aid tracking of trends over time.

While APHIS' Impact Reports have historically reported substantial compliance annually, the Animal Welfare Public Search Tool (PST) provides public access to all inspection reports and those reports document all noncompliances. Further, the PST provides the ability to export and summarize noncompliance data.



Safe Biotechnology Products

We help American agriculture stay at the forefront of science and innovation. From crops that help achieve climate goals to healthier fruit, vegetable, and oil crops, people develop new products every day using genetic engineering. We work alongside other Federal agencies to make sure these products are safe to eat and grow.



Issued 784 authorizations across 45 States and territories for the movement or field testing of organisms developed using genetic engineering

With State agricultural officials, performed more than 700 inspections of authorized field trials involving organisms developed using genetic engineering.

Delivered more than 10 presentations to international stakeholders representing 40 countries to offer technical information and build capacity abroad for regulating biotechnology

Issued 15 Regulatory Status Review (RSR) decisions to developers, informing them that their modified plants were not subject to regulation and could be safely grown. By adopting a science-based and risk-proportionate framework for reviewing products, we reduced processing times by 37 percent and completed roughly three times the number of product reviews compared to the legacy review process

Responded to 40 requests for confirmation that a plant met the criteria for exemption from regulation, within an average of 51 days from receiving the requests, including products involving grain, oilseed, fruit, vegetable, and cover crops. Eighty six percent of these products replicated modifications achievable through conventional breeding and 95 percent were developed by small- to medium-sized enterprises and public institutions



Contributed to the critical international guide for the products of biotechnology released by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Regulatory colleagues in OECD member countries finalized the document after more than 15 years of development, protecting the environment and enabling trade and use of these products



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Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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