



**Assessment of Collaboration for Incident
Response Preparedness: A Report
prepared by APHIS, NASDA, and other
key State Organizations**



January 23, 2008

To the APHIS Management Team and NASDA members,

APHIS Policy and Program Development (PPD) analysts with the assistance and concurrence of the the Assessment Working Group (AWG), made up of APHIS and State representatives, have completed this report to address issues raised about APHIS and State collaboration as it relates to incident response preparedness.

The AWG would like to stress that one of the most important points to come out of our discussions and PPD's data collection is that collaboration needs to be looked at across the board in all of our work in order to enhance incident response preparedness. Even though the original charge was specific to incident response preparedness, the reality is that everything presented here and recommended is relevant to all aspects of APHIS and State working relationships.

Also, the AWG would like to note that one of the original issues that led to the launch of this project, the situation with an Emerald Ash Borer firewood compliance agreement, has not been brought to closure and the affected States still have questions that remain unanswered. It is imperative for the successful implementation of any of the recommendations in this report that those questions are answered and that the answers be documented.

Finally, the AWG wants to emphasize that we understand that the kind of culture change needed by both sides will require time and effort from all parties. There is no silver bullet. However, the recommendations offered, and especially the subset of items to start on, are designed to address both current difficulties and begin transformation of APHIS and State cultures as they pertain to collaboration. It will be critical that both APHIS and States make serious commitments to this work, and as a part of that commitment, make expected behaviors clear and hold people accountable for them. However, it is also imperative that people be rewarded for demonstrating changes and advancing the goal of enhanced collaboration between States and APHIS.

In closing, the AWG would like to thank you for commissioning this report and for listening to our recommendations. We know all of APHIS and the States are interested in your responses and we pledge to work together to help bring the ideas offered here to fruition.

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