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National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility Fact Sheet

A Critical National Priority

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is building a \$650 million, 500,000 square foot laboratory to research and develop countermeasures to animal, human, and zoonotic diseases. The name of the lab will be the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). It will provide the nation with integrated research and response capabilities to protect animal and public health and enhance our capability to protect livestock and the livestock industry from both naturally occurring and intentionally introduced disease threats.

The Need for the NBAF

DHS identified the need for “safe, secure, and state-of-the-art agriculture biocontainment laboratories that research and develop diagnostic capabilities for foreign-animal and zoonotic diseases.” The aging Plum Island Animal Disease Center in New York, operated by DHS and the Department of Agriculture (USDA), performs much of this research today. However, there are no facilities in the United States that have adequate containment space, security, equipment, and infrastructure to meet modern requirements. To fill this need, DHS and its federal partners initiated plans for the NBAF.

The NBAF will research biological threats by bringing together researchers from three government departments — Agriculture, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services — to combat foreign-animal diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease, and animal diseases that can infect humans, such as avian flu. DHS expects the new lab to expand our country’s ability to create drugs, vaccines, and other countermeasures against these diseases. This is part of the effort to modernize homeland security facilities and research to meet current and future national security needs.

Kansas: The Best Home for the NBAF on the Merits

Manhattan, Kan., was selected for the NBAF after three years of competitive DHS review of 29 interested sites around the country; a phase-two evaluation of 18 sites in 11 states; and an environmental impact statement process involving six finalist sites.

The NBAF represents a seminal opportunity to build a federal laboratory in Kansas in a research sector in which the state has internationally recognized strengths. To demonstrate the state’s commitment to the NBAF mission, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius created a task force of influential representatives from business, academia, and government. Sen. Pat Roberts is the honorary chairman of the 40-person NBAF in Kansas Task Force, which is co-chaired by Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson and Dan Glickman, former secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and current chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America. This coalition led a coordinated and comprehensive effort to bring this research laboratory to Kansas on the merits.

Kansas is the ideal location for the NBAF. This world-class facility will benefit from our both our expertise and tradition of strong support for the country’s national defense infrastructure. In Manhattan, research can be conducted in cooperation with Kansas academic research institutions and other public and private research partners. We offer the capable and available work force the NBAF requires.

One of Kansas' great strengths is its leadership in bioscience, especially in the areas of animal health, infectious diseases, vaccines, and food safety. Building the NBAF in Manhattan will offer efficiencies and effectiveness drawn from a critical mass of assets in the state. This impressive mix will provide a full complement of expertise, technologies, and facilities for disease surveillance, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment. Statewide resources include:

- Kansas State University's nationally recognized expertise and programs in zoonotic, emerging, reemerging infectious diseases, and livestock medicine.
- K-State's Biosecurity Research Institute, a unique stand-alone BSL-3 agricultural facility, and the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center.
- The Kansas City region's reputation as the animal-health epicenter of the world. The KC Animal Health Corridor includes more than 120 animal health organizations — including 37 global leaders — employing more than 13,000 specialists.
- An exceptional student population and work force, thanks to five major universities with animal-science and/or veterinary programs within a 300-mile radius.
- A local community that understands and values the importance of this type of research for the state and the nation.

Safety and Security

The NBAF will be a highly secure biosafety laboratory, designed to conduct research safely and effectively. Its state-of-the-art labs will not only protect researchers from contamination, but also ensure the safety of the community. Recurring physical systems and the most stringent procedures to ensure this safety include sophisticated interior and exterior security systems and specialized clothing and equipment for work with sensitive agents.

All researchers working at these facilities are strictly supervised by scientists who are thoroughly trained and experienced in working with zoonotic diseases. Similar research is being conducted at Kansas State University and other high-level biosafety facilities in the state.

These research facilities are designed with safety and security as the top priority. According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, there are no recorded incidents involving community contamination from any of the BSL-3 and BSL-4 facilities in the United States.

Status and Timeline

In March 2006, the Heartland BioAgro Consortium and 28 other interested organizations submitted formal expressions of interest to DHS. In August 2006, DHS reduced the list to 18 sites in 11 states for the next phase of the competitive process. In July 2007, DHS further reduced the list to five sites in five states, including Kansas, and began preparing the environmental impact statement (EIS), which is an extremely thorough review of the site locations.

The final EIS, issued in December 2008, was prepared following the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and recommended Kansas as the preferred NBAF location. The record of decision documenting DHS' final decision to build the NBAF in Kansas was signed on January 12, 2009, and published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2009.

The project was reviewed by the Obama Administration, and the decision to locate the NBAF in Kansas on the merits was affirmed by Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano during her visit to Kansas State University in February 2009.

Facility design is underway with plans for construction to begin in 2010. It is expected that the NBAF will be operational by 2015.