



12 February 2024

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Marketing &
Regulatory Programs

Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Office of the National
Tribal Liaison

Dear Honorable Tribal Leader:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) protects the health of U.S. agriculture and natural resources against invasive pests and diseases, regulates genetically engineered crops, administers the Animal Welfare Act, and helps people and wildlife coexist.

In protecting agriculture and natural resources, we help ensure that all Americans have consistent access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food. It is critical to identify threats and have emergency response plans in place to prevent and address foreign and domestic pests and diseases that have the potential to impact agricultural production, availability, and food sovereignty; it is critical to identify threats early and have emergency response plans in place.

APHIS continually implements new strategies to detect and mitigate diseases and pests that can impact food supplies and local economies. Collaborating with Tribal, Federal, and State partners and industry stakeholders to advance emergency preparedness and response capabilities enhances our capacity to rapidly respond to disease and pest outbreaks.

APHIS is focusing on improving Tribal awareness regarding animal and plant health emergencies and response capabilities. We are partnering with the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) and Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) to host a free 2½-day Tribal Emergency Response and Preparedness (ERP) Training starting on April 16, 2024, Baraga, Michigan. A repeat second training will take place in the Lower Peninsula at a future date. The regional trainings open critical dialogue between APHIS and Tribal personnel, facilitate learning about plant, animal, and cultural concerns and perspectives, and illuminate how APHIS can improve program delivery to Tribes.

The Tribal ERP Trainings will assist Tribal Nations in creating their own animal and plant health ERP plans. Working together is vital since outbreaks and disasters often cross jurisdictional boundaries, including Tribal managed lands. During an initial emergency response, it is essential that Tribal Nations and APHIS response personnel work together to avoid potential damage to culturally significant areas and to eradicate or manage the pest or disease rapidly and effectively.

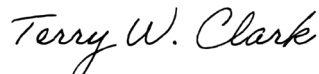
Each training will demonstrate the need for emergency response Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the Tribal Nation and APHIS. MOUs outline APHIS's and the Tribal Nation's responsibilities during a plant or animal health emergency response. MOUs will also facilitate quick and efficient emergency response actions.

The initial training will be an introduction to APHIS programs and services, diseases and pests of global and regional concern, APHIS funding opportunities, and the reasons that emergency plans are essential. The second training phase will focus on how to request emergency resources and services, how Tribal governments are a part of the Federal emergency response framework, and how to develop an emergency response plan and MOU. Additional phases will be developed based on feedback from the earlier phases. The final phases will prepare Tribal personnel to participate in an Agency and Tribal emergency response exercise and test their emergency response plan and capabilities.

We encourage personnel to attend this no-cost training if they are engaged in Tribal leadership, management of agriculture, natural resources, wildlife, or emergency response. Travel funding assistance is available through Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council to cover host hotel accommodations and mileage expenses.

We appreciate your time and look forward to the opportunity to assist Tribal Nations in developing plant and animal health ERP plans. Please contact us for additional information or questions if you are interested in attending the APHIS Tribal Emergency Preparedness and Response Trainings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terry W. Clark".

Terry W. Clark, DVM
Director, Office of the National Tribal Liaison
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