

Dr. Kevin Petersburg
Testimony
Iowa General Assembly
Effects of Flooding on Livestock Industry Study Committee
Nov. 19, 2008

Good morning. Chairman Fraise, Chairwoman Mertz and members of the Study Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service during the unprecedented flooding this past June. As you know, the State of Iowa called upon the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance. In response, FEMA activated a number of Emergency Support Functions, or ESFs, including ESF #11, which covers Agriculture and Natural Resources. As the coordinating Agency for ESF #11, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, known as APHIS, stepped in to provide assistance at the State's request. As APHIS' Area Veterinarian In Charge in Iowa, I was asked to oversee this effort at the ground level.

APHIS' primary task was to assist with the clean up of swine carcasses on both public and private lands. To support this effort, APHIS arranged services through its National Veterinary Stockpile, which has existing contracts with companies that specialize in depopulation, disposal, and decontamination or 3-D services. APHIS contracted with Clean Harbors Environmental Services. Clean Harbors arrived on-scene Saturday, June 21st, the same day they were contacted, and began work on Sunday. Their job was complicated by flood waters that were too deep for vehicles and too shallow for boats with deep hulls. Instead, Clean Harbors used flat bottom air boats and

cables in the water to corral the carcasses and transport them to dry land where they could then be moved to an approved landfill. Despite the hot, humid weather, workers wore full personal protective equipment, including respirators because many of the carcasses were badly decomposed and the flood waters were assumed to be contaminated with chemicals and sewage. Clean Harbors completed their carcass recovery efforts on July 18th. In 28 days, they removed a total of 371 carcasses from public access areas and 1,160 carcasses from within confinement buildings. Altogether the carcasses weighed more than 83,000 pounds.

Although many Iowa swine producers made heroic efforts to evacuate their animals from the area—with as many as 37,000 being removed—some producers released their hogs when it became clear the area was going to flood. As a result, a number of hogs roamed around the flood zone seeking dry land on top of already vulnerable levee systems. APHIS' Wildlife Services program provided aerial and ground surveillance, which included providing GPS coordinates for both live hogs and carcasses in the 20,000-acre flood zone. Nongovernmental organizations were allowed to rescue as many hogs as possible, and Wildlife Service was asked by Dr. Schmitt, the State Veterinarian, to dispatch any remaining hogs to prevent them from becoming feral. To support both the recovery and rescue efforts, APHIS' Veterinary Services program provided critical coordination assistance to ensure that contractors and volunteers had proper credentials and land owner permission to access areas devastated by the flooding. Contacting swine producers was challenging because they were forced to evacuate the area when their homes flooded. It is important to note, however, that the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and APHIS were able to

quickly determine which livestock premises were in the flooded area because many of the premises were registered with the National Animal Identification System. This saved critical time and resources.

IDALS did an excellent job of coordinating with FEMA and APHIS' regional ESF #11 coordinator to work through the mission assignment process. The mission assignment process provides a paper and money trail that ensures proper requesting of services from a State to FEMA to another Federal agency. This coordinated effort, in turn, allowed APHIS to move quickly to address the State's pressing needs. The 3-D contractor was allowed to immediately begin removing carcasses from public access areas. However, it took some time to gain access to private property because FEMA required a State-issued declaration that the carcasses on private property presented an immediate threat to public health and safety. Establishing a process now to address this will help to expedite our response to future disasters where the State might seek funding from FEMA for carcass disposal. I would be happy to work with the appropriate State agencies to develop an effective process.

I also want to talk briefly about funding for our response effort. The assistance from APHIS and the 3-D contractor was funded through a request from IDALS to FEMA per the required process. FEMA authorized a total of \$1.1 million to capture or euthanize live swine and to recover and dispose of livestock carcasses. The authorization included a State cost share of 25 percent, which was subsequently reduced to 10 percent. The final cost for the operation came in under budget at approximately \$800,000.

Before I close, I would like to provide some important information about USDA's Farm Service Agency Livestock Indemnity Program or LIP, which was authorized under

the 2008 Farm Bill. The following is subject to change because program regulations have not yet been published. The LIP would be available to eligible livestock producers on farms that have incurred livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality because of adverse weather; and there is no requirement for a Secretarial Disaster Declaration or Presidential Disaster Designation. The livestock deaths must have occurred due to an eligible adverse weather event on or after January 1, 2008, but before October 1, 2011. Livestock losses that occurred during the 2008 spring and summer flooding occurred within the required timeframe and would therefore be eligible for the LIP.

There is no formal LIP sign-up period; once the program rules are in place, LIP signup will be announced. Beginning inventory documentation would be required when the first LIP application is filed during the calendar year. Proof of death would also be required. This program is not yet implemented, but FSA will publicize it once it becomes final so you can expect to hear more about it.

Thank you again for holding this hearing and allowing me to provide information about APHIS' role in the flood response and recovery effort. I think our work exemplifies the success that can occur when State and Federal Agencies work well together. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.