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**Statement of James R. Moseley
Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Before the House Agriculture Committee
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it is an honor for me to appear before you today to discuss the important role played by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in homeland security. I appreciate your initiative in calling this hearing because the Department's actions in support of homeland security are very important to farmers, consumers, and all of the other constituents of our programs.

As you know, the President has taken decisive action to protect our homeland security in light of the events of September 11th. Executive Order 13228 established the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council. The Office of Homeland Security is headed by former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. The Secretary and I have met with Governor Ridge and continue to provide his team with counsel and information about USDA's role in homeland security. The Secretary is a member of the Homeland Security Council, which is chaired by the President. The Secretary recently attended the first meeting of the Homeland Security Council and we at USDA are actively working to ensure the protection of our food supply. There is also a Working Group of Deputy Secretaries that has been established to support the Homeland Security Council, and I am a member of that Working Group. In short, the President has seen to it that we have the necessary institutions in place to assure the coordination and information flow that we will all need to carry out our homeland security responsibilities. In addition, he has requested \$45.2 million in supplemental funding to further secure USDA facilities and programs.

Mr. Chairman, USDA has a long history of assuring that the nation's supply of

meat, poultry and egg products including production, processing, storage and distribution of foods, is safe and wholesome. My full testimony outlines the many areas of responsibilities of USDA in our food system.

For instance, to date, we have prevented such devastating animal diseases as Foot and Mouth and BSE from entering this country. This has come as a result of a very dedicated team of animal health and plant health experts composed of federal, state and private efforts dedicated to maintaining our nations agricultural health. In fact, we implemented added security measures at the beginning of the year to prevent the spread of these diseases to the U.S. We added additional veterinarians and dog teams at ports of entry. We also increased the number of inspectors.

Since September 11, we have worked in partnership with the Office of Homeland Security and the National Security Council as well as other Departments to set us on a course for long-term success. We have secured our facilities and inventoried our biological assets, with special emphasis on our labs across the country.

We have sought input from a variety of interests to ensure we are addressing everything we need to. For instance, we continue to meet with industry, state officials, academia and others for input into the total response system.

And, most importantly, we are communicating this information to people in face-to-face meetings, through the media and through our website.

My testimony today outlines many of the details in these areas. But I think it is important to also focus on our long-term plans and actions to prevent any threat that may occur.

Our goal is to test our prevention and response systems across the board. To do this, we have organized an internal USDA Homeland Security Council chaired by myself with members from all of our program areas to ensure coordination across the department. In addition we are assessing our research needs to allow us to employ the latest technology to help in our efforts. And, we are formalizing a communication process to disseminate information about the products we regulate throughout the food chain. This will maintain confidence that we are doing everything possible to secure the products under our jurisdiction.

Mr. Chairman, please let me now expand in certain areas on what the Department is doing with respect to biosecurity. Most importantly, I want you to know that homeland security is of top priority. It has the personal attention of the Secretary, our subcabinet, agency heads, our USDA employees, and myself. The Department is a large and complex organization which employs 100,000 people, has offices and installations throughout the world, provides stewardship for 190 million acres of national forest land, and provides more than \$100 billion in loans, grants, and services annually. More than one in six Americans participates in programs sponsored by USDA, and many more benefit from the very diverse set of programs the Department operates. In this context, carrying out the Department's responsibilities for homeland security requires a very large effort, and it also requires discipline and focus. Our most intense efforts have, therefore, been directed to seven key areas, which we believe must be addressed if we are to be successful in carrying out our homeland security responsibilities. I would like to give you a brief report on what we are doing in each of these areas.

Protecting U.S. Borders

USDA has important responsibilities at U.S. borders, airports and ports of entry. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) carries out inspections at U.S. ports-of-entry to prevent the introduction of foreign plant and animal pests and diseases, which would be harmful to our country's agriculture. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) reviews foreign inspection systems and facilities that export meat and poultry products to the United States and reinspects all imported meat, poultry, and egg products to insure that U.S. requirements are met. Scientific support for these activities is provided by the Department's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The Office of Inspector General provides audit and enforcement services.

The Department of Agriculture has been in the business of biosecurity since its inception. As you know, the Department had already been working to strengthen our border inspection systems prior to September 11th due to the presence of foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom, Europe and South America. Since September 11th, we have adjusted and strengthened our systems even further. By way of background APHIS, which is in charge of monitoring our borders, has 5,000 inspectors, veterinarians and other personnel helping at 126 ports of entry. In addition, these individuals work with state and industry officials to ensure prevention of harmful animal and plant diseases from entering our country. APHIS has responded by increasing awareness within the veterinarian community. Specifically, the agency has recently conducted an

educational teleconference with veterinarian professionals in which diagnostic and foreign animal disease recognition skills were emphasized.

We are also working closely with our Federal partners including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Our veterinary medical and plant health communities have been put on notice to treat every foreign disease or pest investigation with increased diligence. All APHIS and FSIS field staff has been placed on a heightened state of alert. In addition, the Department is formalizing information flow throughout the our regulated industries to maintain confidence that we are doing everything possible to secure the food supply. Finally, we have established a protocol with the Federal Aviation Administration for the delivery of investigative samples by military transport to our laboratories in the event of another civil aircraft stand down. We must insure the rapid transportation of biological samples to diagnostic laboratories during emergency situations.

Assuring a Safe Food Supply

For purposes of homeland security, the complete, the complete process of production, processing, storage and distribution of food is important. This includes the seed necessary for production, feed for livestock and poultry, fertilizer for increasing crop yields, and farm equipment and repair parts for the machinery necessary to support agricultural production. Obviously, the protection of the Nation's food supply is a major undertaking and involves the efforts of a variety of USDA agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services through the Food and Drug Administration.

It is important to realize that the Department of Agriculture has been in the food safety business for almost 100 years since the passage of the original Federal meat inspection legislation in 1906. Over the course of that time, our responsibilities have been expanded and our systems have improved. We have well-established partnerships with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and with industry. The system was functioning effectively prior to September 11th and is continuing to function effectively.

The Department's FSIS has fundamental responsibility for meat, poultry, and egg products and carries out its responsibility through a team that includes over 7,600 food inspectors, 200 compliance officers, and 200 laboratory personnel. Since 1996, FSIS has been highly successful in working with industry to install landmark pathogen reduction/hazard analysis and critical control point systems, which greatly strengthened the ability of the inspection system to respond to food safety issues. The FSIS works closely with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state agencies to conduct an ongoing systematic collection of food borne illness data to detect outbreaks and monitor disease trends and patterns.

USDA has other important responsibilities in connection with the food supply: The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) because of various activities resulting in the acquisition of commodities; the Food and Nutrition Service because of our efforts to provide food assistance to children and needy families. The Farm Service Agency, because of the critical linkage provided by that agency to our Nation's farmers; and the Foreign Agricultural Service has the responsibility to gather information on current food and agriculture situations because of the capability of that agency to gather information worldwide. Scientific support for

these activities is provided by ARS, and audit and enforcement support is provided by the OIG.

The Department has taken a variety of actions to further strengthen these systems. USDA has a Food Emergency Rapid Response and Evaluation Team (FERRET), which was authorized by the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998, and is chaired by our Under Secretary for Food Safety. FERRET is very active in ensuring the necessary USDA-wide coordination of food safety activities. We have put our own personnel on a heightened state of alert. We are working with our cooperators to make sure that they are engaged in a heightened state of alert as well as establishing a Food Biosecurity action team to serve as the arms and legs of our efforts to ensure that we are vigilant in safeguarding foods under USDA's jurisdiction. USDA has been meeting on a regular basis with FDA's food counter terrorism committee. In addition, USDA has recently organized to form the Food Threat Preparedness Network, linking FDA, CDC, FSIS and others to focus on preventative activities to proactively protect our food supply. For instance, the Department of Agriculture is working with industry to develop guidelines for security measures. We continue to provide emergency food relief in support of the Federal Government's efforts in New York.

Protecting and Enhancing Research and Laboratory Facilities

Science and technical support are a vital component of our overall homeland security efforts. ARS is our principle in-house research agency. APHIS and FSIS also maintain a number of laboratories and methods development centers. In addition, we work closely with our cooperators at 78 land grant universities located throughout the U.S. In short, we have tremendous scientific capability

to respond to homeland security issues, but we must maximize security and further improve this capability.

Since September 11th, USDA has enhanced the security of its research buildings, laboratories, and pathogen inventories, and also established new guidelines for personnel suitability. Those measures include increased USDA security, and additional patrols and surveillance by the Coast Guard of the waters and shipping lanes surrounding our facility at Plum Island, New York. USDA is also making sure that all the work the Department conducts with sensitive materials performed in the most secure locations.

We have taken two additional actions to provide further assurance that we are doing all of the necessary measures in this area. We have contracted with SANDIA National Laboratory to provide a risk assessment and security analysis of our five Biosecurity Level Three laboratories. The Department has also asked the OIG to conduct reviews of the controls and procedures throughout the Department's laboratory system to ensure that facilities are secure.

Protecting Other Infrastructure

The Department has a huge infrastructure beyond those particular areas I have already discussed. We have more than 24,000 buildings at 7,000 sites throughout the world. We have responsibility for the National Forest System. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has a variety of responsibilities in rural America, including providing technical assistance to help assess water supply vulnerability. The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides funding for electric, telecommunication, and water and waste disposal systems in rural America. These and other activities are all important in the context of homeland security, and we are doing everything possible to strengthen these activities. For

instance, the Forest Service has established additional patrols to improve security on National Forest System lands; RUS is working with its borrowers to improve security where necessary at electric, telecommunications, and water systems financed by the Federal Government.

At this point, I want to pay particular attention to one of our most important responsibilities – the protection of our own employees. At the USDA headquarters complex, members of the guard force were armed for the first time and will remain armed. Increased numbers of officers have been added to supplement the basic staff. We have technology, within the Department, that enables environmental testing for anthrax. This technology has been used by multiple government agencies during the recent anthrax emergencies. We have used that capability to establish a mobile diagnosis unit at the Washington Navy Yard to furnish rapid responses to possible environmental anthrax detections. This unit is being used for the protection of USDA employees and has also been made available to other Cabinet-level organizations.

Obviously, the vast majority of the USDA workforce is outside the Washington area. We are working aggressively with all of our agencies to upgrade security wherever necessary for all of our employees. In this regard, one specific action is our effort to expedite and strengthen our system for security clearances. We have hired a contractor to assist in completing the necessary investigations to evaluate the individuals being considered for security clearances.

Securing Information Technology Resources

In many areas, information technology is at the core of USDA activities. It is used to gather and use crucial information in support of USDA programs. We issue payments to farmers and engage in thousands of other transactions through information technology. We provide the infrastructure that manages the payroll for 500,000 Federal employees, and the Thrift Savings Retirement Plan for all Federal employees. We are vulnerable to security breaches in these areas. Our Chief Information Officer has overall responsibility for the Department's Cyber Security Program. We are working to strengthen that program through upgraded security policies and standards as well as through increased oversight and guidance for USDA agencies. We have asked all of our information technology processing centers to raise their alert level and insure that system backups are available.

Continuity of Operations

In February 2001, the Department established an Office of Crisis Planning and Management. The mission of this office is to manage USDA's emergency operations center, coordinate staff from USDA agencies in response to emergencies, provide USDA liaison with the FEMA, and support a variety of other activities necessary to assure the continuation of the Department's operations in an emergency situation. Shortly after September 11th the Office of Crisis Planning and Management began 24 hour a day and seven day a week operations with on-call personnel.

The Department has a detailed Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) with alternative work sites to enable USDA's leadership to manage essential functions. The Department's COOP plan was implemented in response to the September 11th events, and we are now in the process of using that experience

to review and strengthen the plan where such action is necessary.

Audits and Investigations

As I have mentioned throughout this testimony, we look to our OIG in many areas for audit and investigative support to help us with our homeland security efforts. OIG has focused its efforts on homeland security cases. OIG has accelerated its overall effort to work with USDA agencies in a number of key areas including the security of USDA laboratories, controls over importation of bio-hazardous materials, vulnerabilities in the National Forest System, and cyber security. The work of the OIG has been very helpful in all of these areas.

Mr. Chairman, I have tried through this testimony to provide the Committee with a brief report of some of the key activities the Department is carrying out in support of homeland security. As the President has repeatedly stressed, homeland security is a long-term issue. We have a lot more work to do in the Department of Agriculture before we are fully satisfied that we have done everything possible for homeland security.

However, we need to look at measures to strengthen our already rigorous system of protections. This is particularly true in the area of infrastructure—our research and laboratory capabilities. You have heard the Secretary speak of this issue several times, but we need to ensure investment in the systems that will protect our food system, farmers and ranchers. This takes time and resources; neither of which are unlimited. I will work with Congress in examining these long-term measures to ensure the protection of our farms and food supply.

We are proud of our employees who provided food assistance in New York and of our Forest Service incident management teams, which provided assistance to

the New York Fire Department and FEMA in the immediate aftermath of the September 11th events. We have a tremendous diversity of talent in USDA, and there is no doubt that we will be able to mobilize that talent in support of homeland security.

One final note I would make has to do with the subject of communication. We simply must do everything possible to communicate to the public the actions we are taking in support of homeland security. The Secretary and other top officials of the Department are issuing public statements and are discussing this topic at every opportunity. USDA's website @ www.USDA.GOV includes access to a series of linkages which contain information about the actions we are taking to keep America's food and agriculture safe. We look forward to a strong and cooperative relationship with this Committee and other Committees in the Congress as we move ahead. I would be glad to respond to your questions or to provide any additional information for the record that you may require

Again, thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about this most important issue.