

THE CENTRAL PLANT BOARD

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July 25, 2016

Osama El Lissy
Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine
USDA APHIS PPQ
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Osama:

The membership of the Central Plant Board appreciates our close working relationship with USDA-APHIS-PPQ at both the national and state levels. Our ability to safeguard our agricultural resources in each state depends significantly on effective communication and collaboration with USDA-APHIS-PPQ. I am confident that recent work on the Strategic Alliance document and review of case studies by the National Plant Board/USDA-APHIS-PPQ interagency relations committee, and subsequent development of communication protocols will provide important improvements. We appreciate your efforts and the efforts of your staff on these initiatives.

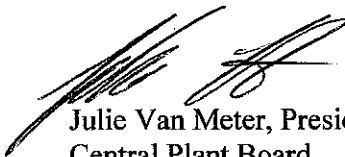
We are, however, concerned about several recent incidents in which communications between the states and USDA-APHIS-PPQ were insufficient. In the Central Plant Board for example, the recent brown fir longhorn beetle detections in Minnesota, and the subsequent recall by Sportman's Guide, exemplified continuing shortcomings in communication with the impacted states. SPROs were intentionally not provided simultaneous information with their SPHD counterparts to prevent states from prematurely contacting recipients of the recalled products. However, as with so many instances before, when SPHDs receive information without simultaneous communication to SPROs, the information is not consistently forwarded to SPROs for various reasons. The result is that some states do not receive the information at all, or the information is greatly delayed. Another more recent communication example involved the very late notification to states about the lack of gypsy moth lure and traps which was extremely impactful to the Central Plant Board states. There was very little information provided to either SPROs or SPHDs on why this happened or when we could anticipate delivery. Often, SPHDs feel just as much out of the communications loop as their SPRO counterparts.

The Central Plant Board recommends PPQ leadership do the following:

1. Recognize not only the communication gaps that exist between PPQ and the National Plant Board, but also the top down communication gaps between PPQ leadership and SPHDs.
2. Reach out to SPHDs for input as internal communication issues are identified and addressed.
3. In collaboration with the NPB, develop specific, written communication protocols which include simultaneous communication with SPHDs and SPROs on issues such as detection of new pests.
4. Provide training on the newly-developed communication protocols through the Strategic Alliance for new PPQ management team members, SPHDs, national program managers, and other key staff who are temporarily or permanently moved into positions that communicate with SPROs or the National Plant Board.
5. Continually emphasize that safeguarding can only be done through effective collaboration with state counterparts; communication with SPROs and National Plant Board leadership should be an agency priority.

We look forward to working with you towards the common goal of improved communication between our organizations. If you would like to discuss further, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Julie Van Meter, President
Central Plant Board

CC:

Paula Henstridge, Assistant Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Alan Dowdy, Acting Associate Deputy Administrator, Policy Management, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Mat Rhoads, Executive Director, Policy Management, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Matt Royer, Associate Deputy Administrator, Field Operations, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Carlos Martinez, Executive Director, Field Operations, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Ron Sequeira, Associate Deputy Administrator, Science and Technology, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Phil Berger, Executive Director, Science and Technology, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Ginger Murphy, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Analysis and Information Management,
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Joe Collins, National Plant Board President
Dana Rhodes, Eastern Plant Board President
Larry Nichols, Southern Plant Board President
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