

SUBJECT: New PPQ State Structure Within the States of AL/MS and TN/KY

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

The Deputy Administrator of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) is issuing this notice to announce the combining of states under the State Plant Health Director (SPHD) Structure involving the states of Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky.

### **BACKGROUND**

A combination of budget and personnel changes within the PPQ Eastern Region in recent months, has prompted management to re-evaluate the best approach to administer PPQ field operations with-in the above mentioned four states. SPHD retirements have occurred in three of these states resulting in PPQ management discussions about how to effectively staff and manage personnel and programs into the future. Current fiscal year budget reductions and those expected in the 2012 budget and beyond have directed the need to reassess PPQ state structure. Based on these issues, the decision has been made to combine AL/MS and TN/KY PPQ operations into the responsibilities of one respective SPHD each.

### **ISSUE**

With expected reduced budgets in upcoming years, PPQ is faced with the problem of how to best provide field delivery of programs in all states and retain effective cooperative relations with its customers and stakeholders. One solution is to combine PPQ field operations among states where the programs and personnel structures would allow for such a transition. PPQ already has several state combinations under one SPHD and this has worked well in those instances. Certainly, not all states would be suitable for combining PPQ responsibilities for one SPHD because of the complexity and number of programs associated with each. Also, cooperative programs with state cooperators and stakeholders are important and require thorough consideration to determine if consolidation of states can be successful from both the Federal and state standpoints. In the case of both AL/MS and TN/KY, it is felt that based on the similarity of agricultural programs and strong cooperative relationships, the combinations are felt to be workable. Effective immediately, AL/MS PPQ operations will be assigned to the SPHD for MS, Jeffrey Head, stationed in Starkville, MS. A vacancy announcement will be released soon for filling the SPHD position in Murfreesboro, TN which will be responsible for PPQ operations in both TN and KY. Until that time, PPQ operations in the state of KY will continue to be directed by an Acting SPHD.

Please provide this information to those within your organization that should be notified of these changes in PPQ field structure.

**/s/ Paul R. Eggert for**

Rebecca A. Bech  
Deputy Administrator  
Plant Protection and Quarantine