

Fact Sheet: National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is leading a requirements analysis process to identify a next-generation biological and agricultural defense facility to replace the important but aging facility at Plum Island, New York. The Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) is an essential component of the national strategy for protecting U.S. agriculture from a bioterrorist attack involving the intentional introduction of foreign animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, as described in the Homeland Security Presidential Directive, "Biodefense for the 21st Century."

The Plum Island facility was built in the 1950s and is nearing the end of its lifecycle, and the Homeland Security mission requires replacing PIADC with a new facility. The President's FY06 budget requests \$23 million for the needs assessment and design process for a new National Bio and Agro-defense Facility (NBAF). In addition to agricultural and animal studies, public health threats from emerging high consequence zoonotic pathogens and the development and licensure of medical countermeasures are generating additional demands for biocontainment laboratory space. DHS is working closely with the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate future needs in the context of this new national facility.

Why a New Facility?

Recognizing that protecting the agricultural infrastructure is a critical element of our Nation's homeland security, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 transferred the ownership of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center from the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS). PIADC is the Nation's designated facility for studying and responding to foreign animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease and classical swine fever. While DHS now has responsibility for operating PIADC, both DHS and USDA conduct programs there as part of an integrated agro-defense strategy.

As our Nation evaluates future research requirements in this area, the need to take specific steps to replace this aging facility to meet the new challenges of the coming decades has become increasingly clear:

- PIADC is now 50 years old and is becoming increasingly more costly to maintain.
- The laboratory and test space in the current facility is insufficient to support the increasing levels of research and development needed to meet the growing concerns about accidental or intentional introduction of foreign animal diseases into this country, and it is not appropriate for zoonotic disease research.
- Homeland Presidential Security Directive 9, "Defense of the United States Agriculture and Food," states: "The Secretaries of Agriculture and Homeland Security will develop a plan to provide safe, secure and state-of-the-art agriculture biocontainment laboratories that research and develop diagnostic capabilities for foreign animal and zoonotic diseases."

The Next Steps

To meet these requirements, the President requested \$23 million in FY06 for the design and initiation of a National Bio and Agro-defense Facility. In preparation for this process, DHS will conduct a conceptual design study to characterize the key programmatic requirements driving the NBAF design and to analyze the cost and benefit tradeoffs associated with each of these drivers.

This design study will explore three major NBAF options:

- Keep the scope the same as the current PIADC mission but build the facilities required to meet the needs of the first half of the 21st century;
- Expand the scope to include additional agriculture biocontainment laboratories at biosafety level 3 agriculture, and possibly biosafety level 4 for foreign animal and zoonotic diseases as called for in HSPD-9 as described above; or
- Add expanded test and evaluation facilities to support non-clinical testing under the Animal Rule needed to

support advanced development of security medical countermeasures by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The options for a location, or locations, for the biocontainment facilities have not been identified at this time, but will be considered during the conceptual design study. DHS will continue to work closely with USDA and HHS throughout the conceptual design process, which will also include ongoing consultation with other key stakeholders including professional societies and industry groups.

Experts from DHS, USDA and DHHS, will review the key programmatic requirements for each of these options in order to assess key facility determinants such as the amount and type of required laboratory and support space. DHS will also conduct a design solicitation in the coming months in order to be able to better estimate the costs of key components of such a facility, such as biocontainment laboratories, support space, and administrative space.

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Related Information

- [Fact Sheet: Plum Island Animal Disease Center Transition](#)

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