

FACTSHEET: The National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility **Site-Specific Risk Assessment**

Why We Need the NBAF

The United States needs to be on the frontline of livestock animal health research and defend America against foreign animal, emerging, and zoonotic diseases, yet the U.S. currently does **not** have a modern research facility capable of effectively studying and developing vaccines for some of the most serious threats to our food supply and agriculture economy. The National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), a new, state-of-the-art biosafety level 3 & 4 facility, will enable the U.S. to conduct comprehensive research, develop vaccines and anti-virals, and provide enhanced diagnostic capabilities to protect our country from numerous foreign animal and emerging diseases.

Currently, the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) is our nation's primary facility to conduct this type of livestock-disease research. However, PIADC is at the end of its life-cycle, is too small to accommodate necessary research, and does not have BSL-4 capabilities. The biggest danger to the American public and its food supply is the lack of research to protect them.

Why Kansas Was Selected

The selection of Manhattan, Kansas as the NBAF site was made by a panel of federal employee experts – career civil servants – from the departments of Agriculture and Homeland Security in 2008. The decision was based on stated evaluation criteria, environmental impacts, and the threats and risks of operating the NBAF. To ensure transparency, the process of developing the NBAF has been open and exhaustive, with many public meetings around the country over seven years.

In Kansas, the NBAF will be at the center of a strong partnership between USDA, DHS, academia, and industry working to protect our Nation from a catastrophe. The site location near Kansas State University provides proximity to a critical mass of existing research capabilities and the leading scientific expertise in the Animal Health Corridor.

The Site-Specific Risk Assessment and National Academy of Sciences Evaluation

In the FY 2010 DHS Appropriations Act, Congress directed DHS to complete a site-specific risk assessment (SSRA) to determine the requisite design and engineering controls for the NBAF and inform the emergency response plans with city, regional, and State officials in the event of a release of a pathogen – and submit the SSRA to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) for evaluation.

The SSRA was developed by a team of over 130 federal employees and subject matter experts – including representatives from DHS, USDA and CDC – and incorporated valuable operation review and input from international and domestic peers from other high-containment laboratories. The SSRA used a thorough and robust methodology to assess risk and identify strategies to mitigate those risks. As NBAF moves past this initial design stage, DHS will continue to incorporate all recommended mitigation strategies from the SSRA. Risk-based decisions will be incorporated at every decision point to ensure safe and secure operation.

In their evaluation, NAS found the site-specific risk assessment to be an important “first step in an iterative process aimed at identifying and minimizing risk” and supported the need for the capabilities the NBAF provides. With a risk assessment at such an unusually early stage in facility design – it is less than 25 percent complete – we are even better equipped to build in risk mitigation and management measures for this facility.

The Academies' report is not an accurate assessment of the operational picture of the NBAF. Their calculation of cumulative risk over a 50-year period was based on our very early-stage risk calculations of a notional facility with no additional mitigation measures in place.

As we continue facility design – which will include robust and multi-layered mitigation measures – we will incorporate NAS' recommendations.

Building the NBAF in Kansas Will Be Safe

Congress has demonstrated its support for the NBAF and its location on the mainland when it included a provision to allow foot-and-mouth disease research as the successor facility to PIADC in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In the fifty years since PIADC was built, laboratory design and bio-containment procedures have evolved dramatically. The redundancies inherent to today's containment and biosecurity systems, along with recurrent employee training and monitoring, effectively minimize risks.

We have demonstrated our ability to safely run high containment laboratories in the U.S. –we do it every day in Atlanta, Georgia; Ames, Iowa and Fort Detrick, Maryland. The rigorous construction requirements and operational procedures in place today have successfully protected the local environments around federal high biocontainment facilities on the U.S. mainland for decades, and modern technologies only improve that protective capability for future facilities like the NBAF.

DHS will not build or operate the NBAF unless it can be done in a safe manner. We will continue to work with USDA and the Center for Disease Control to ensure all recommendations from the SSRA are properly implemented and all biosafety and biosecurity requirements have been met. No permits will be issued by USDA and/or CDC until all requirements are met.