WHAT IS NBAF?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to open the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). After a 3-year site selection process, Manhattan, KS was selected in 2009 as the location for NBAF. DHS is building the $1.25 billion, state-of-the-art facility to standards that fulfill the mission of USDA. Once construction and commissioning activities are complete, currently estimated for summer 2022, USDA will own and operate NBAF.

NBAF will replace the aging Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC), a biosafety level-3 facility that is more than 65 years old. Currently, USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) conduct foreign animal disease research, training and diagnostics at this center. ARS and APHIS will transfer their research and diagnostic missions from PIADC to NBAF and will operate the facility jointly. USDA and DHS will continue to collaborate on national security research priorities.
WHY DOES THE U.S. NEED NBAF?

Protecting livestock and agricultural interests also protects the economy. Agriculture, food and food processing contribute more than $1.1 trillion to the U.S. economy’s gross domestic product per year. In addition, 11 percent of jobs — about 22 million — have some ties to agriculture.

At NBAF, USDA will continue to conduct comprehensive research, develop vaccines and anti-virals, and provide enhanced diagnostic and training capabilities to protect the nation from animal diseases that are:

- **Foreign or transboundary** — those that could enter the U.S. from another country.
- **Emerging** — are new or not well known.
- **Zoonotic** — normally exist in animals but can infect humans.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 70% of new and emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic. USDA will expand its scientific work at NBAF and be the first in the U.S. to provide maximum biocontainment (biosafety level-4) laboratories capable of housing large livestock to develop vaccines and diagnostics for zoonotic diseases. NBAF will be a critical component of USDA’s priority to develop vaccines and countermeasures for — as well as the early detection of — diseases that threaten livestock, other animals and food from the nation’s farms and fields.

NBAF also will have a Biologics Development Module, which will enhance and expedite the transition of new innovations from research to commercially viable countermeasures.

WHEN WILL CONSTRUCTION BE FINISHED?

Due to COVID-19 disruptions, the DHS Science & Technology Directorate and USDA have collaborated to realign the NBAF schedule. USDA is currently working in a phased transition before assuming full responsibility for NBAF’s operations. With the new schedule, federal officials can address necessary technology upgrades identified since the design was completed in 2012 and install USDA-funded equipment. DHS S&T currently estimates construction to be completed in spring 2022 and commissioning in summer 2022.

HOW MANY USDA EMPLOYEES WILL WORK AT NBAF?

NBAF will eventually have about 400 personnel. As of November 2021, more than 240 team members have been hired to support NBAF operations and more than 40 personnel are committed to supporting NBAF’s science teams. Watch USAJobs (www.usajobs.gov) for position openings and follow NBAF on Twitter (www.twitter.com/USDA_NBAF) and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/company/usda-nbaf) for regular updates.

HOW DOES NBAF ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY?

NBAF is actively engaged with the local media and the community providing updates by request and representing USDA NBAF at various local, state and regional events. Please send all questions and requests for NBAF presentations to nbaf@usda.gov.