

Consolidation of Animal and Human Pathogen Biocontainment Programs (excluding pathogens causing Foreign Animal Diseases)

The programs of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) that issue pathogen import permits, certify laboratories handling animal and human pathogens, and provide guidance on biosafety and biocontainment are being consolidated, effective April 2013, with the exception of animal pathogens that can cause foreign animal disease (FADs).

This will reduce regulatory burden and make it easier for laboratory staff to do their work, while still protecting the health and safety of Canadians: currently, organizations who want to import certain pathogens in the course of their work need to apply to two different offices to obtain permits. After the transfer is complete, organizations will be able to come to a single Government of Canada point of contact for the issuance of most of the necessary permits.

Laboratories in Canada that will use the resulting single window service include all laboratories that must adhere to the Human Pathogens and Toxins Act (and future regulations), the Human Pathogens Import Regulations (HPIR), and the Health of Animals Act as it applies to the handling of animal and zoonotic pathogens (with the exception of animal pathogens that can cause foreign animal disease (FADs). CFIA will continue to issue permits for aquatic and plant pathogens.

Both agencies have been working towards program efficiencies for several years, but they are now in a position to achieve an even greater economy of scale through the merger of both operations into a single office, housed at the Public Health Agency of Canada. CFIA and PHAC will continue to work closely together on pathogen regulation.

The scientific community, academia, diagnostic services, government laboratories and businesses that work with pathogens will be positively affected through streamlined processes and services. The Canadian public will benefit from a strengthened, harmonized regulatory program, and the Government of Canada will realize cost savings as well as enhanced utilization of biocontainment expertise.

During 2012-2013, a new operating model will be developed and implemented including the engagement of stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition.

This transition will result in an overall enhancement of the Government of Canada's capacity and capability to provide oversight of pathogen-related work without creating risk to public health. The containment regulations and measures designed to protect Canadians and animals from diseases that could transfer into the human or animal population will continue to be enforced.

We will continue to update you on development of this initiative over the course of the coming year. Should you have any questions, please contact:

Lisa Young
A/Director, Biocontainment, Safety and Assets, CFIA
613-773-6529
Lisa.Young@inspection.gc.ca

or

Mary Louise Graham
Director, Office of Biosafety and Biocontainment Operations, PHAC
613-957-1775
Mary.Louise.Graham@phac-aspc.gc.ca

William (Bill) Anderson, Ph.D.
A/Associate Vice-President
Science Branch
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
1400 Merivale Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0Y9

Telephone: 613 773-5851
William.Anderson@inspection.gc.ca

Sandra Fry
Director General
Pathogen Regulation Directorate
Emergency Management and Corporate Affairs
Public Health Agency of Canada
100 Colonnade Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Telephone 613 960-6637
Sandra.Fry@phac-aspc.gc.ca