

KCA Reaches out to DHS and Congress

As construction is once again set to resume at the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) site near the Kansas State University campus, Kansas Cattlemen's Association (KCA) reached out to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano and Congress to request a re-evaluation of the site location and provide more oversight of the NBAF project.

In December 2012, the state of Kansas signed a land transfer agreement turning over 46 acres of land to the DHS so that construction of the NBAF could begin. In February 2013, then the utilities contract was awarded, and this month DHS intends to begin constructing the facility's \$40 million utility plant that will be built next to the main laboratory building and will house the heating, cooling, and emergency power supply systems.

KCA is very concerned with the construction of the NBAF. KCA supports bio-defense research; however, KCA has long opposed having a NBAF in the heart of cattle country. Although the site location has been approved by Congress, KCA contends that there has been a lack of oversight on both the state and national level regarding this project.

The Kansas Bioscience Authority, a publicly-funded initiative, was put in place to promote among other things, the facility and high paying bioscience jobs in Kansas. Instead, the agency misused taxpayer funds, destroyed documents, and confirmed improper conduct by its leaders. As national security is an important aspect of the facility, this type of behavior and lack of oversight is not acceptable to groups such as KCA.

As well, area professionals and organizations have asked DHS to address the potential outbreak situation.

"KCA is concerned as to what viable protocols are in place should an outbreak affect the cattle industry. Not only is quarantine an issue, but how DHS is going to address personal losses, the plummeting market, and contamination and residue are all issues that have not been addressed," stated KCA Executive Director Brandy Carter.

On a national level, The National Research Council reviewed a number of concerns and made suggestions for providing additional safety to the facility including distributing research throughout the country and scaling back the facility. Those concerns and recommendations have also not been fully addressed by DHS.

Fiscal responsibility, according to KCA, has not been properly taken. Congress originally budgeted \$451 million for the project. Today, the cost is expected to be \$1.14 billion, almost three times as much as originally determined. Not only did the federal government halt funding in 2012, it cut the project funding in the 2013 fiscal budget as well. Yet, construction is set to resume. KCA stated that Kansas taxpayers have had to pick up the a partial tab as the state of Kansas has continued to throw money at the project and let schools and education left to wonder how they will be funded. The state of Kansas has committed more than \$105 million of taxpayers' money to the facility thus far.

Despite all of these critical issues that will affect the facility and the surrounding communities, DHS Secretary Napolitano has made statements and shown commitment to construction of the NBAF utility plant.

"Political pressure to move forward is not adequate reasoning when there are so many health, safety, and economical questions left unanswered. KCA urges Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to re-evaluate the site location and address all of the issues still left so that all contingencies are in place. Unforeseen consequences could destroy our cattle industry, our domestic food supply, and our economy. That should be taken seriously and be a determining factor when making decisions regarding NBAF," Carter concluded.