

Coordinators Guide of the National Association of Federal Veterinarians

Revised August 2011

Updated November 2014

Updated April 2017

This guide has been prepared by the National Association of Federal Veterinarians (NAFV), whose headquarters office is located at 1019 Sunderland Place NW, Washington, DC 20036. The NAFV telephone number is 202 223 4878 and the NAFV staff email addresses are hloredo@nafv.org and jfannelli@nafv.org. This guide was copyrighted in 2011 and may not be reproduced or distributed without the prior written authorization of NAFV in advance. It is intended for the use and benefit of NAFV and its members exclusively.

In March of 2011 the NAFV Board of Directors changed the emphasis and duties of NAFV appointed coordinators. The change will primarily affect those in FSIS as the coordinators in APHIS have operated on the newer guidelines for some time. NAFV coordinators are appointed by the NAFV president, and while there are no defined term limits, appointments are reviewed frequently, and when each new president takes office. NAFV looks forward to lengthy service because of the expertise and networks you will be developing.

There are five priorities, described in detail below and in the attachments, which outline the function of NAFV coordinators. They change the emphasis from the priority of assisting in representing individual members in work related problems, with formal consultation and relations with agency counterparts having been a lower priority.

The ability to perform these priorities will strongly affect the criteria used by the NAFV president in appointing coordinators.

- A. **Relations and interaction with agency counterparts.** This involves formal and informal consultation, and perhaps even more importantly, it involves less formal communication and interaction between you and your counterpart.
- B. **The creation and coordination of NAFV Chapters.** Chapters are the backbone of NAFV and viable chapters unite and strengthen the association, facilitate communication, and help to make NAFV more relevant and active for members.
- C. **The recruitment and retention of NAFV members.** Increasing and maintaining our membership especially when potential members are widely spread and sometimes isolated is critical. To be effective NAFV must speak and act for a high percentage of veterinarians, and serve their needs.
- D. **Advising and counseling members in work related and career matters.** This involves assisting and advising members with issues facing veterinarians as both employees and as supervisors in dealing with a subordinate, co-worker, administrative problem, promotion application, or the bureaucracy.
- E. **Communicating with and reporting activities to the NAFV national office.** The national

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organization must know what is happening throughout the country. In order to serve the membership, the coordinators effectively, and to develop policies, procedures and activities for the organization this is necessary. This may involve e-mails, letters, conference calls, and likely a simple periodic report.

Before addressing the specifics to above outline, here is some more general overview information.

NAFV has official recognition by USDA and FDA as an Association of Supervisors and Managers. It has legally recognized consultation rights. It does not have the same rights as a union to collective bargaining, negotiating contracts, or representing its members, nor does NAFV seek to operate in that manner or to deal with matters affecting union or bargaining unit membership. It does address proper program functioning and administrative and employment issues affecting veterinary supervisors and managers. It is not a requirement for a veterinarian to be a supervisor or manager to join NAFV, but the majority of NAFV members are.

This guide is prepared primarily for coordinators in APHIS and FSIS of USDA to use. Because each agency is somewhat unique, members in other agencies should contact NAFV directly. The perspective contained in this guide is for that of the veterinarian as a supervisory and managerial employee in dealing with higher levels of management, as well as with peers, and the NAFV headquarters office.

Procedures for members acting in the capacity of higher levels of agency supervision and executive management are well outlined by the agencies, but those involved in that capacity may contact NAFV and its coordinators for guidance and suggestions as well. A coordinator deals with both of these functions on behalf of NAFV: The proper, efficient, and improved implementing of agency programs, and the development of new programs; and, providing advice, expertise, and guidance to fellow members in work related issues.

NAFV's goal is to ensure fairness and effective functioning of programs involving veterinarians. Remember this is only a guide; it cannot begin to address every situation or procedure that may arise in federal employment. Contact the NAFV headquarters office, or agency experts as needed.

As an NAFV coordinator you represent the association in its interactions with agency management and fellow members. You are not a representative similar to that of a union representative, meaning that you will not be representing members in grievances, appeals,

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complaints, or other actions. You may, however, provide advice on strategy and procedures to members if appropriate, and may even be involved in seeking resolution of work related problems with agency officials on an informal basis on behalf of members. This will be in a cooperative problem solving mode and not that of an adversary.

As a designated coordinator you are a peer to your agency counterpart when acting in the capacity as NAFV coordinator, *i.e.* a district coordinator is a peer to the district manager, and a regional coordinator is a peer to the regional director.

A. Relations and interaction with agency counterparts

This is the most important aspect of being an NAFV coordinator. You must prove your value to your agency counterpart(s) or you will not receive credibility or even cooperative access. Consultation by the agencies is mandatory, but frequency and effectiveness is not defined. Following these suggestions increases the likelihood of you being effective by making your agency counterpart utilize you to assist in the smooth functioning of that segment of the agency.

The president will seek individuals to be coordinators who have the respect of their agency counterparts, (as well as their own peers). This involves a professional temperament, program experience and knowledge, and the ability to communicate issues concisely and in a non threatening manner in order to have them addressed.

It is important to explain your function to your counterpart initially, and probably as a reminder frequently until a mutually confident and effective relationship is developed. Many of the newer managers do not have a history of dealing with NAFV and need to recognize the role NAFV intends to play, and some are not even veterinarians. You are there to help that agency manager run that segment of the program more effectively. This can include identifying what is working well and what can be improved. Solving problems locally and working out local impediments to that proper functioning is critical and when approached from a positive perspective is welcomed by a manager acting in good faith. No manager wants to hear complaints and gripes. Managers want to deal with issues and recommended solutions. In creating a good working relationship with FSIS managers, you might have to utilize your own time and expense to travel to the district office, at least until the district manager determines that you are an agency asset and welcomes your input. As of now, it is not mandatory in FSIS that the agency bear the travel expense, however, APHIS generally funds the Rep's travel expenses for consultations.

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The initial contact should be in person, with sufficient time to communicate properly your role, later it can be by telephone or even e-mail. Before you make the initial contact, and before any subsequent meeting, have prepared some type of outline or even agenda of issues that you can address from NAFV's and your perspective, and recommended solutions. In developing solutions you must keep in mind any budgetary or staffing problems, existing agency philosophy (For example, it is ineffective to insist that positions be filled exclusively by veterinarians. FSIS has determined that this is not necessary, and is a battle the national association is continuing to address, even with other agencies, but to a lesser degree. Rather point out why a veterinarian functioning in a certain position can do so more effectively and efficiently than a non veterinarian. You can also help providing information that could make certain positions more attractive to highly qualified veterinarians both by duties and workload.) This tact works even when the district manager is not a veterinarian.

APHIS coordinators must also prove their value to their agency counterparts, but because you have been functioning in this manner already, it should only require some emphasis and fine tuning especially on membership recruiting, chapters, and increased interaction with agency counterparts at the field level.

B. The creation and coordination of NAFV chapters

Enclosed is an NAFV Chapter Kit, labeled **Attachment A**. It has all the materials and procedures necessary to establish or activate a chapter.

Each coordinator is expected to initiate and assist in the formation of one or more chapters in locations where there are not presently active chapters. Chapters are the best way that members can be served and feel a part of a national association.

The NAFV office can assist in suggesting speakers and topics of interest to members, including continuing education credits. The NAFV Executive President and the General Counsel can also be available for presentations and discussions. Chapters are also great for developing future leaders of the association and attracting new members.

C. The recruitment and retention of NAFV members

The coordinator is expected to keep informed about newly hired veterinarians, and those newly transferred in. This should be an ongoing process. Each should be contacted sufficiently in order to make them aware of NAFV, what it is and does, and what it offers—and recruiting them as members. Several new member packets are enclosed. They contain membership and insurance applications (see FEDS information below), and a list of some of NAFV's

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accomplishments on behalf of federally employed veterinarians, collectively labeled
Attachment B.

In addition to word of mouth about newly assigned veterinarians, requesting this information from the district, area or regional offices, or corresponding offices, is advised. Home addresses are confidential, but duty locations are public information. Once someone is identified, contact information should be fairly via the internet or co-workers. Caution is advised about lengthy contact during duty hours or on government telephones or e-mails. Inviting these individuals to chapter meeting is usually very productive.

D. Advising/counseling members with work related issues

There are several important things to note. First, is that NAFV does not and cannot represent its members. Unions may, but NAFV is an association of supervisors and managers. In addition, since the partial retirement of the NAFV attorney, William G. Hughes, NAFV no longer provides representation through his office. He does continue to help advise members in certain situations, and certainly the NAFV coordinators whenever needed. Second, it is important that all members purchase FEDS professional liability insurance.

Detailed information on FEDS is in the *Federal Veterinarian* almost every month, and is always on the NAFV website. It covers work related lawsuits, investigations, and defenses to disciplinary actions through a well reputed law firm. The cost is reasonable and, ironically, the agencies will reimburse supervisors and managers fifty percent of the premium. It is also important to note that the policy must be purchased before a situation that leads to a lawsuit or disciplinary action develops. Just like an auto policy, one cannot wait until after an accident happens to buy insurance. FEDS and NAFV have an excellent relationship which began to replace the representation provided by the NAFV attorney. It is very frustrating to NAFV when a member is faced with proposed disciplinary action and has neglected to be insured. It has been and is well publicized and not having it is naive at best.

Third, your advice as a coordinator to a member is very important, but you must be careful that you do not appear to be giving official advice that someone relies on for career matters. Since you are not a trained counselor, your advice and guidance should consist of letting members know where to go to get advice from official or recognized experts. Advise and guide, but don't promise or commit. For example, matters related to retirement or workers' compensation eligibility or benefits, or reassignments must come from an official source to be official.

Attachment C contains detailed information on the matters that are most likely to arise.

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E. Communicating with and reporting to the NAFV national office

Enclosed is a form entitled “Coordinator’s Activity Report”, labeled **Attachment D**. It’s very simple, self explanatory, and can be filed by e-mail. It is very important that you maintain communication with the NAFV headquarters, and that headquarters knows how you are involved and active. You will be sent a copy of Attachment D periodically by the NAFV office to be completed and returned promptly. Volunteers such as you are critical to the organization, and the service NAFV provides to its members, the agencies, and the American public. Thank you for your service to the veterinary profession.

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ORGANIZING A NEW CHAPTER

Steps to Take to Organize a Chapter of NAFV

1. Determine interest. Survey potential members in the geographic area you expect the chapter to serve. Chapters should draw from all members, not just one agency. Contact the respective area offices for APHIS and FSIS for lists of veterinarians and contact the NAFV Executive Vice President to check their membership status and to assist in locating other potential members from other agencies. Since not every member can attend every meeting, consider a sufficient number of members necessary to sustain a viable chapter.
2. Chapter members must be members of NAFV. Applications are necessary and are available from an area or regional coordinator or the national office. Five members must sign a **Petition for a Charter**. Chapter kits containing petitions are available from the national office.
3. The chapter kits also contain a model chapter Constitution and Bylaws. This should be reviewed by a small committee prior to the organizing meeting so it can be explained to the members with recommendations for dues and frequency of meetings.
4. This committee or another can serve as a nominating committee to recommend a slate of officers.
5. Call an organizing meeting. Consider using an official agency meeting or an NAFV or agency continuing education seminar as a means of assembling potential members. Consider also utilizing area or regional coordinators, board members and officers or national staff, if available, to assist.
6. Consider and adopt the Constitution and Bylaws.
7. Elect officers in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws. Be sure any modifications or amendments are consistent with the NAFV Constitution and Bylaws.
8. Send a report of the meeting including the minutes, the completed Petition, a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws, as amended, and a list of the members and officers to the Executive Vice President in the national office.
9. The chapter will be issued an official charter.

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The following article is included in the Coordinator guide because Dr Linville articulated well many reasons why Chapters are vital to NAFV membership.

Chapters -- The Ultimate Voice, by John W. Linville, DVM, April 2001 Federal Veterinarian

During our recent Board of Directors' strategic planning session we discussed a variety of membership-related problems and issues. One of these issues was the lack of Chapters in general and the inactivity of many of our established Chapters. I would like to detail why Chapters are vital to our viability as an organization and how to start, restart and/or reinvigorate a local Chapter.

First, I would like to explain the reason for Chapters:

Chapters and regular Chapter meetings are a means to interact with peers and supervisors on a local/regional level. By pulling in FSIS speakers from the District, Tech Center, and/or Washington, pertinent and timely information can be readily spread among the members and questions answered "straight from the horse's mouth." The same goes for Area Veterinarians in APHIS or commanding officers in DOD or FDA. Speakers brought in from the CDC or outside sources, such as academia, can lead to accredited CE hours that can be applied to licensing requirements.

As can be seen above Chapter meetings include members from all Agencies. This provides an opportunity to interact with veterinarians from other Agencies and also to make contacts and friends not otherwise readily made.

Chapters also lead to great social events. The social part after Chapter meetings and year-end parties are not to be neglected -- or forgotten!

Chapters:

- Are the lowest levels of interaction between members
- Are a great means to spread information and correlate on local and regional issues
- Are conduits for continuing education

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- Are a means to interact with veterinarians from other Agencies
- Are great opportunities to interact socially

As you can see there are many reasons to start and maintain an active Chapter. In the following section, I would like to elaborate on (re-) starting a Chapter:

Getting advice on starting or reactivating a Chapter is as simple as picking up the phone and calling the NAFV office, EVP (Michael Gilsdorf), or GC (Bill Hughes). These are some of the best sources for any kind of Chapter-related information available. They helped me tremendously when I set out to reactivate the Alabama Chapter two years ago. Past presidents or officers can also be of great assistance when reactivating a Chapter, as can presidents or officers of other active Chapters. All that remains after getting the technicalities settled is to get a group together, hold a meeting, and elect officers. The main thing is not to wait for someone else to do it, otherwise, in my experience, it won't get done -- JUST DO IT!

Starting or Reactivating a Chapter

NAFV office, EVP (Michael Gilsdorf), and GC (Bill Hughes) are all tremendous sources of information.

You should converse with presidents/officers from other Chapters.

When reactivating a Chapter -- talk to former officers of the Chapter for advice.

Don't hesitate -- JUST DO IT!

As mentioned above, one of the main reasons for establishing a Chapter is to disseminate information on a local/regional level. One effective way of doing this is to hold regular Chapter meetings.

When setting up a Chapter meeting make sure it is scheduled well in advance. This gives everyone, from the speakers to the attendees, time to prepare and make their plans. Invite interesting speakers, this could include subject matter experts on things directly or indirectly affecting the governmental agencies. Most high level managers, such as District Managers/Area Veterinarians in Charge, Tech Center personnel, and Administrators at the Washington level are eager to come -- they just need to be invited. When inviting higher level governmental speakers it is even more important to schedule well in advance to accommodate their busy schedules.

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Academic speakers are wonderful assets to our meetings and we can often grant CE hours for their lectures. A fee is usually involved when getting nongovernmental speakers and this needs to be taken into account when setting up the Chapter dues or setting a fee for the meeting. Another often-overlooked resource is local "experts." Many local members have been around the block and have very useful insights into dealing with LMR issues, problem employees, problem industry management, or myriad other daily issues. These members can be an invaluable contribution to our information base. When you are inviting members to the meeting remember to include all members from all agencies. More often than not these meetings wind up being attended by members of a single agency (FSIS) and the interagency interaction that could result is lost. Also remember nonmembers. This is a great time to show non-members what we are about and get them to join our great association.

Effective Chapter Meetings:

- Schedule the meeting(s) well in advance.

- Invite interesting speakers.

- District Managers, Area Veterinarians, Tech Center, and/or Washington Officials are all good candidates and are usually eager to come.

- Academic speakers are great but usually at a cost.

- Local members can often be "experts" at many things, from LMR issues to dealing with problem industry management, etc.

- Invite ALL members from ALL agencies (FSIS, APHIS, DOD, FDA, etc.)

- Invite nonmembers.

Another very effective way for Chapters to spread information is via our governmental e-mail system.

Setting up distribution lists takes a little time initially but makes sending out loads of information as easy as a "one click" operation. Information can be quickly forwarded to any number of people and any number of groups by setting up a number of individual lists. Just be sure it is related to government business when using the government's server and that everyone in the region is included. Do not exclude nonmembers from a regional listing as this could then be viewed as an NAFV interest even if it has to do with government business.

E-mail as a quick and easy way to communicate:

Set up one or more distribution lists with the members you want to reach for easy "one click"

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access.

When using this system, remember to ensure the message contains issues relating to government business.

When you are sending blanket information, remember to include ALL veterinarians in that particular region -- member or not.

In conclusion:

Chapters and Chapter meetings are vital parts of our organization in NAFV. Getting information out to our members, reaching out to nonmembers, and getting feedback from the field is our pulse. Please help keep our association healthy by supporting your local Chapter!

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL VETERINARIANS

1910 Sunderland Place NW | Washington, DC | 20036-1608
Phone: 202.223.4878 | fax: 202.223.4877
www.nafv.net | nafv@nafv.org

April 11, 2011

Dear NAFV Member,

Welcome to the National Association of Federal Veterinarians. As one of our newest members, we are pleased to be of service to you and hope that you will call upon us to assist you in every way we can.

The NAFV is the only organized association representing federally employed veterinarians. We are your voice in federal matters. With the many program issues and personnel matters currently affecting us, it is imperative that we have as strong a voice as possible. Our strength is our membership's willingness to work together actively, to present ideas, meet together to discuss issues, and to help NAFV grow stronger by inviting other federal veterinarians to join. I ask for your suggestions and your help with all of the above.

We will keep you informed of our activities through the NAFV *Federal Veterinarian* newsletter. We consult with agency leaders, congress, other associations, and are members of several coalitions in our efforts to support your efforts and educate the public about the importance of the work you perform.

Contact me or our staff at any time. As a kind reminder, please remember that NAFV dues may be itemized for federal income tax as a miscellaneous expense, but cannot be deducted as a charitable contribution.

Enclosed are the latest issue of the *Federal Veterinarian* (future issues will be sent to you via email), a Hertz member identification card, information about the Professional Liability Insurance offered through NAFV, and a copy of NAFV's previous annual letter.

Your NAFV coordinator is _____:

Please email NAFV (Mariana Barros at: mbarros@nafv.org), fax, mail or call in any future change of address ASAP so you will continue to receive your newsletter in a timely manner.

Respectfully,

Michael J. Gilsdorf, D.V.M.
Executive Vice President

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NAFV Annual Letter for 2010



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL VETERINARIANS

1910 Sunderland Place NW | Washington, DC | 20036-1608

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www.nafv.net | nafv@nafv.org

Dear Valued NAFV member,
2010

December

The economy has made it difficult for most people this year. It has also affected NAFV's efforts in obtaining specialty pay and incentives for federal veterinarians. With the elections and negative press concerning federal employees, there hasn't been as much progress as I had hoped. However, progress is still being made. NAFV is still intimately involved in the meetings with OPM and federal agencies developing criteria to improve the recruitment and retention of federal veterinarians within the government. Out of all federal agencies, FSIS has taken the lead and is providing recruitment bonuses to veterinarians and is now also developing retention incentives; with NAFV's constant encouragement. NAFV and the AVMA will present a report identifying to OPM and Congress the new authorities and flexibilities needed to recruit and retain veterinarians in the future. We had expected that report to come from USDA earlier this year, but it has never cleared the approval process.

NAFV is continually working with the federal agencies toward getting retention incentives and specialty pay for federal veterinarians. One recent development that should be beneficial to this cause is the approval for DOD veterinarians to get increases in specialty pay; Board certification pay and retention pay. NAFV is involved in current efforts to extend those pay approvals to Uniform Services veterinarians and then to all federal veterinarians.

Work on the Pay for Performance (PHHRS) program at FSIS has continued this year. We continue to identify issues that NAFV members have provided and communicate those issues to the leaders of the PHHRS project. NAFV has again updated our annual survey of the federal veterinary workforce and will be publishing an updated report in January to monitor trends of employment. It appears the numbers are continuing to decrease overall.

In an effort to promote increases in pay and benefits for all veterinarians, NAFV has worked with others, especially the AVMA, on student loan repayment legislation and in identifying where other shortage areas for veterinarians is occurring and how to resolve those shortages. The AVMA continues to update their surveys from its members on incomes and other economic veterinary issues. NAFV is also identifying gaps in federal pay and incentives in order to convince federal agencies and congress of the need to take action.

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NAFV Annual Letter for 2010 (continued)

In addition to another successful consultation with APHIS, we continue to participate in meetings/working groups on multiple topics including; working as advisors to the Center of Public and Corporate Veterinary Medicine to help develop career path opportunities for veterinarians that want to work and/or advance within the federal government. We have also had a successful consultation with FSIS in May. Since then we have been working with FSIS in re-establishing meetings between the NAFV Coordinators and the District Officers. As I have said before, all of these actions contribute to our desire to have NAFV be the constant and proactive force in public and animal health. We also continue, as a member of the Animal Ag Coalition and independently, to ask Congress for increased appropriations for programs in many of the agencies that employ federal veterinarians.

NAFV is constantly and proactively working to increase the visibility of federal veterinarians and our opportunities to provide input into policy development and decision making within federal agencies and Congress. Earlier this year, I was asked to talk about what federal veterinarians do on the Federal News Radio. NAFV was also asked to provide input and comments on numerous other documents that will influence how veterinarians are educated and trained in the future. It is important that federal veterinarians have the ability to provide input into items related to NAFV and on issues that affect you and what you do. This can be achieved by joining or starting an NAFV Chapter in your area, by keeping in contact with your NAFV coordinators, or by contacting the NAFV staff. For information on starting a Chapter, please contact us at the NAFV office. We are also in the process of revising and improving how NAFV reps will function in the future. More information will be forthcoming next year.

We also welcome any and all assistance with various on-going projects. Possible ways to assist would be submitting an article for the *Federal Veterinarian*, providing research and/or investigations for our agency consultations, drafting website reference material, being an agency/NAFV coordinator on special task forces and details, or serving as a mentor to a recently-employed veterinarian. These are a few of the activities ongoing within NAFV and NAFV members could certainly benefit by tapping into our membership's varied and vast knowledge. So if you have not already provided us with your information and interests, please let us know. We cannot accomplish all these things without you!

Please review our website located at www.nafv.net. It contains a members-only section which will provide you with specific information about NAFV, including: how to contact NAFV reps if you need them, advice on several topics concerning federal employment and applying for federal positions, links to helpful web sites, and some historical information about NAFV. Please review the site and let us know how it can be improved.

As AVMA delegates, your President and I meet with the other delegates to discuss animal health, animal care, animal welfare, and food/feed safety issues of concern to AVMA and NAFV and provide input and perspectives of federal veterinarians on those issues. We have also met with congressional staffers to provide them with a better understanding of federal program needs - which affect federal veterinarians' ability to accomplish agency missions.

In the spirit of giving this season, please remember that NAFV sponsors a scholarship for dependants of members wishing to pursue a veterinary medical degree. Donations are tax deductible and would help encourage the next

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generation of veterinarians. Another great way to donate is to our Political Action Committee (not tax deductible). Help NAFV get its voice heard on the hill! We did donate to Representative Schrader's campaign this year because he is interested in helping federal veterinarians.

If you have not already done so in the past year, please take a few minutes to fill out the information on the attached flyer and send it to us so we can be sure our membership records are current. If you'd prefer to convey this information electronically, please email your updates to Mariana Barros mbarros@nafv.org (Note: Mariana Barros has replaced Caroline and her email is mbarros@nafv.org) or myself at mgilsdorf@nafv.org. It may be faxed to us at 202-223-4877 as well. Thank you in advance for helping us to be able to serve you better.

Happy Holidays!

Michael J Gilsdorf DVM
Executive Vice President
NAFV

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Information on Professional Liability Insurance

The National Association of Federal Veterinarians (NAFV) recommends securing personal counsel representation through Professional Liability Insurance because a decision, action, or inaction on your part could lead to investigations, proposed disciplinary actions and even civil actions.



Why Choose FEDS?

The FEDS policy is exclusively endorsed by NAFV due to the coverage their policy provides, the representation provided by their panels of attorneys, the commitment of their employees to the federal community, and their outstanding customer service!

Many members have put off getting coverage because they just didn't have time – only to regret it when an investigation was directed at them. It takes less than 5 minutes to enroll [on-line](#) or complete and fax the attached FEDS PLI enrollment form. The cost is less than it costs to consult with an attorney for 2 hours.

Annual Cost for NAFV members:

\$290 for \$1,000,000 Limit

\$390 for \$2,000,000 Limit

If applying on-line, the discount code is NAFV

Veterinarians classified as managers or supervisors are eligible for agency reimbursement up to half the cost of the policy. NAFV continues to push for policy reimbursement for all veterinarians. It is strongly recommended that all federal veterinarians have coverage in place regardless of agency reimbursement policy - this policy is affordable and available to you for a reason.

NAFV is highlighting this because coverage will not apply if you wait until after a claim, allegation, investigation, or lawsuit is made or filed against you – so don't wait – call or email FEDS with any questions.

866.955.FEDS (3337)

www.fedsprotection.com

feds@fedsprotection.com

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Standard Form 1187
Revised March 1989
U.S. Office of Personnel Management

REQUEST FOR PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS FOR LABOR ORGANIZATION DUES

Privacy Act Statement

Section 5525 of Title 5 United States Code (Allotments and Assignments of Pay) permits Federal agencies to collect this information. This completed form is used to request that labor organization dues be deducted from your pay and to notify your labor organization of the deduction. Completing this form is voluntary, but it may not be processed if all requested information is not provided.

This record may be disclosed outside your agency to: 1) the Department of the Treasury to make proper financial adjustments; 2) a Congressional office if you make an inquiry to that office related to this record; 3) a court or an appropriate Government agency if the Government is party to a legal suit; 4) an appropriate law enforcement agency if we become aware of a legal violation;

5) an organization which is a designated collection agent of a particular labor organization, and 6) other Federal agencies for management, statistical and other official functions (without your personal identification).

Executive Order 9397 allows Federal agencies to use the social security number (SSN) as an individual identifier to avoid confusion caused by employees with the same or similar names. Supplying your SSN is voluntary, but failure to provide it, when it is used as the employee identification number, may mean that payroll deductions cannot be processed.

Your agency shall provide an additional statement if it uses the information furnished on this form for purposes other than those mentioned above.

1. Name of Employee (Print or Type-Last, First, Middle)	2. Employee Identification Number (SSN or Other)	3. Timekeeper Number
4. Home Address (Street Number, City, State and ZIP Code)		5. Name of Agency (Include Bureau, Division, Branch or Other Designation)

Section A-For Use By Labor Organization

Name of Labor Organization (Include Local, Branch, Lodge or Other Appropriate Identification)

I hereby certify that the regular dues of this organization for the above named member are currently established at \$ _____ per _____ (biweekly pay period) (calendar month). *(Strike out whichever period is not appropriate, based on arrangement with the employee's agency.)*

Signature and Title of Authorized Official

Date (Month, Day, Year)

Section B-Authorization By Employee

I hereby authorize the above named agency to deduct from my pay each pay period, or the first full pay period of each month, the amount certified above as the regular dues of the (Name of Labor Organization):

and to remit such amount to that labor organization in accordance with its arrangements with my employing agency. I further authorize any change in the amount to be deducted which is certified by the above named labor organization as a uniform change in its dues structure.

I understand that this authorization, if for a biweekly deduction, will become effective the pay period following its receipt in the payroll office

Signature of Employee

of my employing agency. I further understand that Standard Form 1188, Cancellation of Payroll Deductions for Labor Organization Dues, is available from my employing agency, and that I may cancel this authorization by filing Standard Form 1188 or other written cancellation request with the payroll office of my employing agency. Such cancellation will not be effective, however, until the first full pay period which begins on or after the next established cancellation date of the calendar year after the cancellation is received in the payroll office.

Contributions or gifts (including dues) to the labor organization shown at left are not tax deductible as charitable contributions. However, they may be tax deductible under other provisions of the Internal Revenue Code.

Date (Month, Day, Year)

FOR COMPLETION BY AGENCY ONLY. The above named employee and labor organization meet the requirements for dues withholding. (Mark the appropriate box. If "YES", send this form to payroll. If "NO", return this form to the labor organization.)

YES	NO

1-Agency Copy

2-Labor Organization Copy

3-Employee Copy

(Note: Form 1187 is generic for dues withholding for all organizations despite that it is titled for labor organizations)

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Advising and counseling members in work related and career matters

This is only an informational guide; it cannot begin to address every situation or procedure that may arise in federal employment. It is provided to give NAFV coordinators some basic knowledge about how the systems operate so that advice can be given and questions answered. Never should you act as a coordinator on behalf of NAFV.

This is a table of contents for the topic areas included below.

- A. Disputes and How to Deal With Official Charges
 - 1. Disciplinary Actions
 - 2. Grievances
 - 3. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Complaints
 - 4. Mediation and Voluntary Dispute Intervention
- B. Problems with Assignments and Pay
 - 1. Directed Reassignments and Work Reductions (RIFs)
 - 2. Grading of Positions and Classification
- C. Advising Members
 - 1. Violence and Intimidation in the Workplace
 - 2. Investigations
 - 3. Sexual Harassment
 - 4. OWCP
 - 5. Avoiding Misconduct
- D. Improving Professionalism
 - 1. Appearance and Demeanor
 - 2. Communications

* * *

A. Disputes and How to Deal With Official Charges:

1. Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary actions have a specific definition in directives and the regulations and range from letters of reprimand, suspensions, demotions, to removal. (Criminal charges will not be addressed in this guide). Investigations, letters of instruction or caution, or informal accusations are not defined as disciplinary actions and cannot be grieved or appealed through the disciplinary procedures. (Removals during the probationary period are not appealable except in very rare

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circumstances. An agency is required only to provide written notice within the year's period. It does not have to state why the action is being taken, or even be accurate if it does).

Disciplinary actions fall into two categories – less severe actions of up to and including a two-week suspension, and actions more severe than a two-week suspension. For practical purposes, both are handled the same way, except that the appeal procedure is much different. Grievances or appeals cannot begin until the action is actually taken.

The initial stage is called the Proposal stage. Most frequently a member has some idea that charges may be forthcoming. This is because of earlier allegations, because there had been an investigation, or knowledge of the underlying event. Usually no one really believes a disciplinary action will actually be proposed, and not with such severity. It is usually a surprise that the employing agency turns into a prosecutor.

Proposal Letters are very detailed and contain the specific Reasons relied upon by the agency to justify the proposed action. Lately the agencies make this very general, such as Improper Conduct. Each Reason will contain Specifications detailing the specific acts alleged to support the conclusion drawn in the Reason.

The evidence relied upon in bringing the Proposal will be contained in a packet received with the Proposal called an Evidence File. Occasionally this will have to be requested, but it must be provided promptly. If delayed, time limits should be adjusted accordingly.

The Proposal Letter will outline the employee's rights, where further information is available, and will provide the names and addresses where replies are to be directed.

Replies must be made within ten days, but requests for reasonable extensions may be made as provided. In APHIS, they are usually granted; in FSIS they are granted less often, absent a showing of good cause such as scheduled leave, training, or hardship. While requests must be made in writing, because time is often so short, calling to attempt to arrange something orally before a written request is submitted is usually advisable. Make sure that confirmations of extensions are in writing (e-mail is OK).

Once a Proposal Letter is received, time is critical. Never put yourself in a situation where you are responsible for someone failing to meet a deadline. Remember your role is only to help a member figure out a course of action.

The Proposal will provide the options of replying in writing, orally, or both. A Written Reply is

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by far the better option, often in conjunction with an Oral Conference, which must be specifically requested. Be aware though, that Oral Conference Officers are not stenographers or court reporters, and anything they put into their report is subject to their ability to take notes and to understand the presentation. A well organized and thoughtful Written Reply is far better, and is easier for the Deciding Official to rely on—and to become part of the record if an appeal is necessary. An Oral Conference can be helpful when sincerity and credibility are issues. After the Written Reply is submitted an Oral Conference generally will be scheduled, if it had been requested.

Once the Decision is issued, the action decided upon will be imposed. Any appeal comes later and does not stop the action taken. Time limits usually begin on the first day of the action taken.

- The appeal for less severe disciplinary action of no more than a two-week suspension is a grievance under the agency administrative grievance process. The agency Employee Relations Division, first decides these cases, with a further appeal to the USDA grievance examiners. The Employee Relations (ER) individuals are often the same ones who handled the case at the earlier stages.
- The appeal for an action more severe than a two-week suspension is titled an Adverse Action and is made to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). The MSPB is a federal agency with the legal equivalence of a U.S. District Court. It uses administrative judges and formal hearings to determine whether the agency charges are supported by sufficient evidence, and that the penalty is within proper limits for the offence. An attorney is usually necessary for appeals of adverse actions.
- An appeal of an adverse action that involves allegations of discrimination must be filed with the MSPB and not the agency's EEO office nor the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. These are called mixed cases.

Compassion and knowing what advice to give as a coordinator is very important. Do not become a judge; you do not determine guilt or innocence regardless of how bad things look or what rumors you may have heard. The facts are almost never what they appear to be at first. It is important to ensure that members know their rights, receive an opportunity to state officially their side of the case, and if disciplinary action is forthcoming, that it be appropriate to the offense and no more severe than necessary.

2. Grievances

Procedures for administrative grievances including time limits are found in **FSIS Directive 4771.1** and in **APHIS in MRP Directive 4771.1**. The **APHIS Supervisor's Desk**

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Guide is also helpful. Do not confuse the procedures for administrative grievances applicable to our members in FSIS with the negotiated grievance procedures applicable to members of a bargaining unit such as the National Joint Council of Food Inspection Locals (NJC). Grievances can be filed over performance ratings and any management or supervisory decision which adversely affects an employee.

Be aware that grievances are rarely successful and tend to cause even greater polarization, but sometimes can lead to a better dialog, and often lay the groundwork for mediation, described below in section 4.

There are two levels of grievances, informal and formal. Use of the informal level as a first stage is mandatory except for when the grievance is used as the appeal to a disciplinary action of a severity of a suspension of two weeks or less. This is described in section 1 above.

Informal grievances are often the more successful, because if handled fairly, presented logically, and include persuasive facts, will often allow a supervisor acting in good faith to change or correct an erroneous action or decision. Supervisors, who may also be NAFV members, deserve an opportunity to address disputes before they are taken to a higher level. Requested corrective should be reasonable and related to the basis for the grievance.

Even informal grievances should be in writing. They should describe clearly and concisely the real issues and concerns as dispassionately as possible and why the supervisory action being grieved should be changed. They must include the corrective action being requested. Often a meeting will help explain the concern and clear the air. Informal grievances should be presented with the intention of resolving disputes, both immediate and long term, and fully documenting the case in the event that a formal grievance is necessary. They should not be used in an attempt to harass a supervisor, who may also be a member.

Every effort should be made to resolve grievances at the informal level. The administrative grievance procedures require the informal grievance to be filed with the lowest level supervisor capable of taking the requested corrective action. The next level under the administrative procedure is the appropriate Deputy Administrator in APHIS and the Administrator in FSIS.

Formal grievances are referred to the employee relations divisions and are a lengthy process, and especially in FSIS often end up being a rubber stamp for what action was taken unless it was clearly contrary to a written procedure. After a final decision by an agency, there is an appeal to the USDA level. This too is a very lengthy process. The filing of a grievance is not official business, so official time, government email or government postage should not be used, though

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processing and meetings are official.

Please see the section below on mediation and alternative dispute resolution.

3. EEO Complaints

NAFV normally does not get involved in EEO complaints. We do, however, give advice on procedures, and often merits, in order to add an objective overview of what is usually an emotional issue. Advice can be to those complaining of discrimination, and to those accused. Because this is a sensitive subject it is important that when a complaint is filed we assist in assuring that there be a good faith belief that discrimination might have occurred. Allegations do not need to be proven at this stage, but there should be some reasonable support for accusations, not just that something negative has happened and someone is a member of a protected class--- because everyone is included in some protected class. Keep in mind that at some point, despite the implication that agencies have to prove that there was not discrimination, a complainant will have to prove that the negative action was caused or influenced by discrimination.

Procedures are generally posted conspicuously in federal workplaces. The first step is to contact the agency's EEO office and file an informal complaint. This must be done within 45 days of an event felt to be discriminatory, or when one reasonably learns of such an event. Each agency has an 800 number for this. Usually an intake person will record the filing and have a counselor call back the person filing for details.

Make sure you advise the member to keep a record of dates and who is contacted. All submissions should be certified mail, e-mail, or FAX. Official time is permissible, BUT must have the advance approval of your supervisor.

It is recommended that after the initial discussion with the counselor, the informal complaint be reduced to writing and sent promptly. This assists the counselor in the efforts to seek resolution, and begins the documentation process. The counselor may not include what is submitted into a counselor's report, but it is worth providing it. It helps in understanding the issues, and shows that the complainant is taking the matter seriously. Reducing a complaint to writing also helps the member assess the validity of the issues and facts and how they may read to others.

Requested corrective action must be reasonable and related to the basis for the complaint.

The complainant will be offered an option of traditional informal counseling or mediation. In most cases mediation is worth the effort, provided the matter can be resolved by that means and the appropriate persons are in attendance. Some issues cannot. If mediation or traditional

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counseling is not successful, the employee will be informed in writing of the right to file a formal complaint. This will go to the Department and will involve an investigation by a contract investigator. After the Report of Investigation is completed by the contract investigator, in about six months to a year, it will be provided to the complainant with three options: to drop the complaint, to let the USDA make a final decision on the record, or to take the case to a formal hearing with an administrative judge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). If one chooses to go to a hearing before an administrative judge, it is almost always necessary to hire a lawyer. Do not wait until the last minute to do so, but usually it is not necessary to do so prior to the receipt of the Report of Investigation (ROI).

4. Mediation and Voluntary Dispute Intervention

Both FSIS and APHIS have excellent programs to resolve disputes by means other than formal actions. Both agencies have mediation as an alternative to informal counseling in informal EEO complaints. This is government wide.

In addition, APHIS has an excellent mediation program for disputes of other than an EEO nature. FSIS, too, has a Voluntary Dispute Intervention Program (VDIP). Use of both mediation and VDIP is voluntarily. Both parties must agree. A session with a trained intervener will be held to resolve the dispute and if there is a resolution it normally will be reduced to writing. Everything is expected to be confidential.

Unfortunately, there is no power of enforcement over the non EEO agreements. They depend on the good will of the parties. If there is a breach, or if the dispute persists, additional formal action may be necessary.

In advising members take into account the following. Mediation and VDIP have a high success rate in resolving the most common types of disputes which are based on communication problems, personal conflicts and similar matters. Some things cannot be resolved unless there is a good will effort by both sides. Use of an alternative process loses nothing though except time. Generally they are to be encouraged.

It is critical that if these procedures are used, the persons in attendance have the authority to make the necessary decisions to resolve a matter.

B. Problems With Assignments and Pay:

1. Directed Reassignments and Work Reductions (RIFs)

One of the things that most civilian federal employees have a hard time

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understanding is that they can be reassigned anywhere at any time if the agency states that the move is for the good of the service. It must pay for relocations if outside the commuting area (generally 35 miles). The good of the service standard is broadly defined and is not considered to be an Adverse Action which would provide appeal rights. An agency cannot reduce anyone's grade without formal procedures including appeal rights, but often members may opt for a voluntary grade reduction to avoid moving.

There are almost never Reductions in Force (RIFs) in APHIS or FSIS affecting veterinarians. What is common are Reassignments in Work Reduction Situations, or Work Reductions in Lieu of RIFs. This is what the Directives that set out the procedures are usually titled. In this procedure a position is abolished because of a reduced workload. Usually this results in a reassignment at government expense to a position at the same grade. Sometimes the employee is offered a position at a reduced grade within the commuting area. This is considered a voluntary reassignment, and there is usually pay retention, but not grade retention. Pay retention generally means that even though one is working at a lower graded position, the pay will continue at about the previous rate, but there will be no step increases and only one half of cost of living increases until the pay for the position and that received are equalized.

When there is more than one person in the commuting area, and they are in the same type of position, a retention register will be set up by human resources. The lowest person on the register will be the one to be affected. Retention registers are a very mechanical process with no room for manipulation.

All veterans get priority over all non veterans, with priority among the two groups being determined by years of service and year credits for high scores on recent performance appraisals being added. There is no "bumping"; the position occupied by the person lowest on the list is the one who has to relocate, but if there are only two positions involved, it may appear to be bumping.

2. Grading of Positions and Classification

It is almost impossible to have a position reclassified and the grade increased without the approval of the agency. Classification Appeals and desk audits can be made at either the agency level or directly to OPM. They are based on whether the position has required duties and responsibilities that are not reflected in the position description. Repetition of work, unless it is of a higher level, is never a grading factor; the level of responsibility, complexity, and knowledge required by the position are the most important of a number of factors.

There is another infrequently used way to get a position upgraded. This is the Peer

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Review/Person in the Job concept. It is only applicable to “discrete”, meaning unique positions, as compared to the Standard Jobs (SJs). It may be used when the special knowledge and skills that the incumbent brings to the job actually changes and increases the nature of the position itself. The incumbent may be upgraded but when the incumbent leaves, the position reverts to the original grade. This has been successful in DHHS, but not so in USDA. In USDA the agencies generally just say that the extra duties should not be done, or change the defined duties of the position.

Positions which are predominately supervisory or managerial come under a different set of rules based largely on the level of those supervised. Generally these are above the GS 13 level.

This guide has not taken into account the experimental pay for performance system (Public Health Human Resources System (PHHRS)) now in effect in FSIS. If it becomes final, it will be incorporated. The PHHRS is a pay banding system that replaces the GS pay system. The major differences between the systems are: the GS system limits employees to 10 steps within a grade. The PHHRS system has grouped 2-4 GS grades into one band to create more flexibility in pay progression. The GS system has specific time periods and employee automatically receives a 3% pay increase with a waiting period of 1 to 3 years. In the PHHRS system, employees can receive pay increases each year based on their performance rating. However, under the PHHRS, the employee must complete a well written accomplishment report to receive a performance rating above fully successful. The higher the performance rating the more money (share of the pay increase fund) an employee receives. These performance ratings are then evaluated by their supervisor before going to a performance panel. If the employee disagrees with the rating, there is a system to challenge the rating. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough how important it is to prepare an accurate, comprehensive, and persuasive **Accomplishment Report**. You must personally document your accomplishments and not rely on the supervisor’s knowledge.

Under the GS system, once the employee reaches step 10 of their grade, they no longer receive a pay increase. Under the PHHRS, **employees at the top of the band** who receive an Outstanding rating receive up to a 5% increase; if they receive a Fully Successful or Superior rating they receive a lump sum payment each year. **Employee’s receiving promotions to the next level**, under the GS system, typically includes a 6% pay increase; under the PHHRS, promoted employee’s receive at least an 8% increase.

The most important concern NAFV initially expressed when the PHHRS was implemented was that the employees be given clear, fair, equitable, realistic, practicable, achievable, and measurable performance standards and a fair and objective evaluation. The agencies previous performance standards did not have measurable elements and were not adequate for this system.

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The performance elements should not be totally subjective. In addition, NAFV emphasized that the performance standards must take into account the workload of the employee and teamwork. NAFV also continually emphasizes that the supervisors must be able to justify their rating in writing (that is another reason the employee's Accomplishment Report is so important). Performance ratings need to be very objective in order to remove human bias and subjectivity from the rating process.

3. Violence, Intimidation, and Sexual Harassment

All agencies are concerned about these items, but FSIS seems concerned even to the point that often there is an overreaction. This is in part because of the often factory-like working conditions, but also because of sometimes hostile union subordinates and difficult plant people. Reduce your vulnerability and advise members to do the same. This means that each person must never do or say anything to make themselves vulnerable. This applies to everyone, on the job or off the job. This means no jokes, no kidding, no cartoons, and no statements which could be misinterpreted, either accidentally or deliberately. This also applies to seemingly innocent inquiries about subordinates' personal lives, including family and marital status. The workplace is not a part of one's social life, and there are far different standards of behavior.

Each agency has a toll free hotline for reporting violence. These are generally posted in the workplace. APHIS Form 259-R and FSIS Directive 4735.4, Revision 3, Attachment 1 are the forms used for this purpose in these agencies. It is very important to advise everyone that the agency rules on reporting actual violence do not preclude protection by local law enforcement authorities. In any physical assault of any nature, the first move is to assure the safety of the individual and to remove the danger; the second is to report it promptly to the local police; the third is to report it to agency officials.

As supervisors, most of our members have additional responsibilities to protect their subordinates, as well as members of the private sector from misconduct by the subordinates.

Allegations or observation of sexual harassment require immediate action by the supervisor. Anything which anyone believes to be sexual harassment must be addressed. Make sure good records are maintained of how reports are addressed.

4. Injuries, Workers' Compensation and Disability Retirement

Workers' Compensation: Prompt medical care documenting the cause of an on the job injury is essential to assure qualifying for OWCP benefits, as is the filing of the proper forms. Too often claims are denied because someone is too conscientious about leaving the job, or too "tough" to seek prompt medical care. OWCP will deny a claim whenever it can and if there is

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not clear proof that a factor of federal employment caused the injury, and/or that it took place on the job, claims are denied.

Workers' Compensation for disability requires two things. First is that the employee is unable to perform the duties of the position. Second is that there is a cause and effect relationship between the disability and the federal employment. Both require detailed and specific medical documentation. Most claims are denied because the physician does not clearly provide evidence of these two factors.

It is important to establish immediately upon receiving medical care that the injury is work related so that medical records will verify the claim. This means definitely, not possibly or probably. OWCP is insurance and will pay about 75% of a person's pay for disability. OWCP is administered by the Department of Labor, but the payments come from agency funds.

Each agency has a specialist to advise on the complicated process of handling claims. But be cautious because to one degree or other, these individuals may be more interested in preserving agency funds than facilitating the granting of benefits.

Disability retirement is handled by OPM and requires only medical evidence that the employee is unable to perform the duties of the position, regardless of the origin of the disability. The amount paid for disability retirement is based on high three, age and years of service as is optional retirement. Disability retirement only allows one to become eligible earlier than optional, and for younger, newer employees benefits can be very low. Remember that no one should rely on unofficial advice when dealing with careers or benefits. Get and confirm this information from an official source.

5. Avoiding Misconduct

Space permits only an overview of this item. Coordinators should help counsel other members how to avoid problems. The short advice is for employees never to place themselves in a position to be vulnerable to allegations of misconduct. Never rely on the fact that certain things have been done for a while and that co-workers will have any loyalty to anyone especially a supervisor. No one should do any sort of business with anyone whom they have encountered on an official basis, especially anyone connected with a regulated business.

Caution members to be completely accurate on T&As, Activity Reports, and Travel Vouchers. If something is in a grey area, check with a supervisor and note an explanation about why something was done or claimed on the form. If incorrect, this will separate a mistake from a falsification and may lead to having to do a correction, but not a misconduct charge. NAFV's

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General Counsel has a detailed presentation on avoiding misconduct that is directed toward NAFV Chapters and management groups and can be arranged with him or with the NAFV office.

6. Government Equipment and GOVs

There is a great deal of misinformation concerning this subject by agency personnel and, in years past, even by some attorneys from the Office of General Counsel of USDA. The information contained below concerning government owned vehicles (GOVs) came from the Director of the Torts Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) during several interviews, discussions of actual cases, as well as a review of the applicable legal provisions. The Torts Division of the DOJ provides the attorneys who deal with claims and law suits against federal employees.

NAFV has attempted for years to have the instruction kits, and the training provided to drivers of GOVs, including the following information. (APHIS is now in the process of issuing guidelines to employees based on information from NAFV and OGC; NAFV is still working with FSIS to do the same)

The essential problem is a gap in the two primary sets of rules and statutes that apply to use of GOVs. The first is the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) that covers all federal employees for claims made against them for common law torts while operating within the scope of their employment. Applicable common law tort claims relevant here are for personal injury or property damage to a third party caused by a GOV.

The second set of rules governs official use of a GOV. These describe when it is legally permissible to operate a GOV, and are generally set by the General Services Administration (GSA), the agency that governs GSA vehicles or those provided by an agency such as the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The two sets of laws do not cover the same things in all circumstances. There are common occasions where a GOV may be operated legally under the official use doctrine, but not be covered under the FTCA. **This means that if there is an accident that is not within the scope of one's employment, even though the GOV may be being operated legally, the government cannot pay for any damages or legal fees incurred in defending such claims, and the driver is personally responsible.**

The misconception is that if a federal employee is authorized to use a GOV that the government's self insurance coverage of the FTCA will apply if there is an accident. This is not the case.

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The key terms are scope of the employment and official use. Scope of the employment generally is defined as doing something for which one is hired, that is the actual performance of official duties. Such duties are usually specified in a position description, or dependent upon it. This includes driving during a tour of duty to or from an official duty point.

Official use on the other hand includes any use of the GOV that is permitted, including making a reasonable deviation from a direct route for personal needs, such as meals. It also includes driving for meals while on travel or temporary duty. Strictly speaking, such travel must be to the closest reasonable location that provides adequate food and safety. It does not include going a farther distance because the driver, or a group, wants to visit a particular place, or enjoy some specialized type of food. This includes avoiding the in-hotel restaurant, or a suitable one in the immediate area, in lieu of driving to a more distant location. Travel, even when permitted under the official use doctrine, however, for eating or other approved personal needs, does not fall under the scope of the employment doctrine. Eating may be necessary, but is not an official duty, *i.e.* what one is hired to do.

NAFV strongly recommends that anyone who drives a GOV be sure that one's personal automobile insurance policy provides coverage when operating a GOV. This is normally done by means of a special addition to a policy called a rider. Most insurance agents are unfamiliar with such coverage, so it may be necessary to inquire at higher levels of one's insurance company.

NAFV will also be working with the agencies to assure that more detailed information on this subject be provided to GOV drivers through the training and instructions given to GOV drivers.

As if the above were not bad enough, there is another type of situation that could cause individual liability. **If a federal employee causes damage to government property, either within the scope of employment or during official use, that employee may be required to pay for the damage. This applies to any government property, including such things as cellular phones, computers, and motor vehicles even if the government pays for any personal injury or property damage incurred by third parties. This is another reason why NAFV recommends that personal automobile insurance provide coverage for use of GOVs.**

All accidents involving GOVs are reviewed by an agency entity titled the Board of Survey to determine whether the driver should be charged for the damage. Drivers of GOVs involved in accidents generally receive a letter providing the opportunity to explain why they should not

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have to pay for the value of the damage they caused. After the response, a decision will be made.

The good news is that there is a very high legal requirement before a federal employee may be assessed costs. The legal standard that the agency must prove is that the act causing the damage was grossly negligent. This is a much higher standard than negligence. Negligence means generally that something was your fault, something that you caused through an act or omission. Gross negligence is a somewhat difficult concept, but it falls short of being a deliberate, intentional act, and generally is an act that is in reckless disregard of the potential consequences. Examples of this include reckless driving, including speed far in excess of the posted limit, careless driving during hazardous conditions, or driving while impaired by alcohol, drugs, medications, or possibly even lack of sleep. Beware of any alcohol consumption when driving a GOV, including with meals during official use of the GOV even when off duty.

The assessment of the cost of other government property can include improper security of government computers or electrical equipment. Keep such items on your person or secured out of view in a locked trunk. This is an increasingly important issue with not only the value of the equipment, but with sensitive, confidential, national security information, and access codes being contained on many computers and communication devices. Homeowner's insurance may cover stolen or lost property, but carelessness with sensitive information could cost your job. This does not require proof of gross negligence.

As with most things, prevention of potential problems, reducing the odds of something going wrong and reasonable preparation if something does go wrong, are important.

7. Handling investigations

The following information applies generally to any type of administrative investigation, whether it be conducted by someone designated by the agency or an EEO investigator. It is intended to apply especially to investigations conducted by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). As a result of a cooperative effort with NAFV, FSIS investigators provide written notification of rights to those being interviewed.

Too often a person signs a personally damaging statement which upon reflection is felt to contain inaccuracies, omissions, and admissions which are simply not true. You may plead that the statement is not true, and that the investigator used improper techniques, but if you sign it, you are swearing that you read it, that you had the opportunity to make corrections, that you understand that it may be used as evidence, and that it is true.

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What generally happens is this: You are interviewed after being advised of your right to counsel and the right to remain silent if criminal charges may be involved. After the interview, which can be lengthy and may involve accusations, suggestions, and arguing about what you really mean, the investigator will write a statement. You will be told that this is what you said and that you have to sign it. You may be told that you could lose your job if you don't cooperate.

To avoid wrongfully incriminating yourself or others, the following is worth remembering:

1. You must cooperate, but this does not mean that you have to do everything the investigator tells you to do;
2. Remember that the statement you sign is your statement, it may be the investigator's words, opinions and conclusions, but once you sign it, it's yours. You do not have to sign any statement unless you are totally satisfied with it;
3. You should never sign any statement that does not tell the story you want told accurately and completely. If what the investigator writes is not true and complete and he or she won't rewrite it, do it yourself or don't sign it. Remember that if more than one interpretation can be drawn from a statement, it will usually be the worst one. What the statement says or appears to say is what is important, not what you wanted it to say;
4. Never allow yourself to be rushed into making or signing a statement. Take as much time to think about it as is necessary;
5. Investigators do not have the right to make you skip meals, or stay up late;
6. Do not believe that the investigation is the end of the case and that by signing a statement, the problem will go away just because the investigator promises that he or she will; it may be only the beginning. Also, no matter what the investigator says, do not believe that he or she is on your side;
7. In most serious disciplinary actions, the most damaging evidence generally consists of the individual's own statement;
8. While being interviewed or discussing the case with the investigator, you are in a pay status. Unless you have your supervisor's permission, your assigned duties come first;
9. If you are being investigated, contact this office or a private attorney BEFORE you sign a statement.

8. Recommended Email Protocol

Members are cautioned about misusing government communications systems. Government e-mail, Faxes, and telephones, are for official business use only, with limited

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exceptions. "Official business use" encompasses everything that is part of your official federal position responsibilities. "Official business use" does not include:

1. Things that are not related to your job
2. Casual correspondence with fellow agency employees
3. Correspondence with NAFV, except in preparation for NAFV meetings with agency officials in consultations or in preparation for Chapter meetings involving Continuing Education
4. Correspondence with a NAFV coordinator even in allegations against you or for discussing work related issues

The following are some recommendations to assist in effective communications. They apply both to business and to personal e-mails. Some of the suggestions listed below have some overlap.

1. Be clear in everything you write- Do not fall into the trap that because emails can be utilized so rapidly and easily, that your writing becomes sloppy and unclear. Anything stated or asked should be unambiguous. Responses to questions should leave no doubt as to your meaning and can be relied upon; Questions should be framed in a manner to let the responder know what you need, so as to lead to specific and clear answers.

2. Use good grammar- Your messages should be written in complete sentences. Remember to use proper punctuation. Do not use the type of abbreviations or "shorthand" that might be acceptable for text messaging. As a Federal Veterinarian, you are an educated professional in an important position. Do not place that in doubt even among friends and family. Do not fail to use commas and certainly not periods when necessary. Do not use exclamation points unless what you write is actually an exclamation and not just something you want to emphasize. Exclamations include words and terms such as Help! Look out! Ouch! and Stop! Use for emphasis, especially routinely, is distracting at the least.

3. Do not forward e-mails routinely- You should forward messages only to those who would benefit from them. Stop the proliferation of apparent FYIs to individuals who have no interest or need in the information. Recognize that everyone is busy and receives lots of messages. Help by making sure what you send is important. Especially avoid sending responses by clicking on "Reply All", unless all will benefit from the message.

4. Do not forward junk mail- Never forward junk or personal mail messages from a government system. Unless you are sure that the recipient actually wants something that you think is noteworthy, refrain from forwarding it. Do not assume that the recipients share your sense of humor, your political, religious, or social opinions, or even if they do, that they want to be bothered with them. Do not use automatic forwarding lists of addresses. This is one way that

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addresses fall into the wrong hands. If you do forward selected items, have the courtesy to delete the lists of Fw, Fw ... and Re, Re... that are included in most.

5. Do not let emails replace telephone or in-person conversations. Using email for these things may reduce your burden and schedule, but it may impose additional burdens on someone else. Some things still benefit from discussion and in-depth questioning.

6. Remember too that nothing is ever completely deleted from a hard drive and that government system e-mails can be and are monitored routinely.

7. Please be considerate of other's time and resources in all that you do.

D. Improving Professionalism: APPEARANCE, CONDUCT, AND COMMUNICATION

People create an impression of you by the way you appear, the way you conduct yourself, and how you communicate. Some may deem this as unfair, but it is a fact. Entire industries are based on creating favorable impressions, including advertising and public relations. You are a government professional and by following these suggestions, it is more likely you will receive the respect you deserve.

A. Appearance and Conduct

Where ever possible, observers should be able to determine that an individual is the veterinarian, that is, a doctor working for the U.S. government, by that person's appearance. Not every veterinarian working for the federal government works in the type of environment where it is appropriate to wear typical office attire, whether coats, slacks, and ties, or business suits, dresses or pant suits. There are also times when veterinarians must dress for occasions where the work is hazardous or particularly hot, cold, or dirty where these suggestions do not apply. This then is aimed at the day to day work in slaughter plants, and often farms and ranches. When it is appropriate, veterinarians should dress well even when the standard may be more casual. When wearing coveralls or even jeans is necessary, they should be clean, fit reasonably well and not be tattered. In-plant veterinarians should avoid jeans, most shorts, tee shirts, sleeveless shirts, and other non business-like attire. Slacks, buttoned, shirts or blouses, perhaps even with ties for men, are far more appropriate than matching the plant employees or many inspectors. This is especially true when your position has you dealing with counterparts who dress in a business-like manner such as plant or facility officials, state or federal officials, importers or exporters, or the public.

You should also be polite and unemotional. Regardless of the provocation, be careful of you demeanor. Do not become angry or use harsh language. Keep in mind that you are the

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coordinator not only of the agency, but of the U.S. government. This is applicable to subordinates as well as others with whom you have contact.

Good grooming is also important. Cleanliness and neatness in appearance is expected of professionals and conspicuous when it is not evident.

B. (1) Communicating-- in your speech

No one has perfect speech, grammar and syntax, but there are a few conspicuous errors and speech patterns that are judged to set off those educated persons from those who are not, or who simply don't care or are sloppy. Being a veterinarian, especially one who is a coordinator of the U.S. government and deals with the public, the regulated industries, and subordinates and peers, it is to everyone's advantage to be conscious of how you come across. Do not fall into the trap of trying to blend in with subordinates or those regulated. It may be true that many public figures, whether in the entertainment or sports industries seem to cultivate poor language skills, be conscious of who you are and what you represent. Correcting these, and others not discussed below, may seem awkward at first, but should serve to increase the respect you have earned by being an educated professional.

The following items are those most conspicuous, most common, and easiest to correct with minor effort.

- a. Do not use the term "ain't", and especially avoid the words "ain't got", as in "She ain't got good grammar."
- b. Do not misuse the contractions "don't" and "doesn't". Don't is a contraction of do not, and doesn't is a contraction of does not. When in doubt as to which is correct, simply think out the words without the contraction. For example, some incorrectly state "He don't speak properly". No one would say "He do not speak properly". Correct is "he doesn't (does not) speak properly".
- c. Do not use double negatives. Double negatives are often misused in conjunction with the misuse of "don't" and "doesn't". A double negative is when a sentence or phrase contains two negative words, such as "I didn't do nothing" and "He don't have no papers". The not in don't and the no are negatives. As stated in b. above, the use of don't instead of doesn't is improper also. The use of double negatives is often proper in some languages, such as Spanish, but it is not proper in English.
- d. Do not use filler phrases in conversation. These include terms such as "you know", "I mean", "know what I'm saying?", and overuse of "like" and "OK?". Not only are these terms annoying to the listener, but they often show that what is being said is not well thought out. A professional in a business context should always know what is important to say. Think out what you want to say and do not feel that you must continue saying words in order to communicate. If you need to think about what you want to say next, a brief pause is preferable to a filler phrase.

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B. (2) Communicating-- in your writing

It is important to communicate clearly, accurately, and succinctly (briefly) when you write. Government is relying more and more on documents and forms, whether, for example, they be non-compliance reports, export and health certificates, AC and other inspection reports, and performance appraisals, (whether your justifications or the supervisor's evaluation, especially when Pay for Performance is in effect). These are often legal documents that the agency may need to rely on to take action against an individual or business, or to defend itself against charges. This article cannot be comprehensive, but a few things can be noted.

Use good English. Be clear and unambiguous. Cover all necessary topics and considerations. Be neat. Do not add personal comments or non professional opinions. Read carefully what you have written to be sure that you communicate exactly what is important and necessary for the intended purpose, and not be difficult to understand or waste the reader's valuable time. Imagine the document being used in a legal situation and think how it will be evaluated.

Two additional items to improve readability are apostrophes and exclamation points. An apostrophe is not used to make a word plural. It is used primarily in two circumstances: when it takes the place of a missing letter, such as in a contraction, such as "don't" or "won't", and when the word is possessive, for example "My son's car", or "Today's assignment".

Exclamation points are widely overused and misused even by the highly educated. They are often used not as intended, that is as exclamation points, but rather as emphasis points. Correct usage for an exclamation point is when the word or phrase is tantamount to a shout, such as "help!", "stop!", or "get out!". Rarely are such words used in normal communications, certainly not business ones. Exclamation points should not be used when you simply want to show something is important or to call attention to something. Use of multiple exclamation points is never correct. The better alternative for emphasis is to use underlining sparingly, or as is becoming increasingly acceptable in electronic communications, is to use capital or bold letters. The above is also true when writing text or e-mails. In business communications, do not write in so called "electronic" shorthand. Write complete sentences. Spell words carefully. Use correct punctuation. Do not abbreviate words or terms in sloppy non-standard English commonly used by some for electronic communications. Remember the purpose of writing the message and that the recipient wants information in an easy to understand message.

Remember also that the message is the link between you and the recipient, so it will also contain an impression of you. Finally, you don't always know where a communication will end up, so you want it to reflect you at your best.

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NAFV ANNUAL COORDINATOR'S REPORT

1. Name: _____

2. Agency: _____

3. Coordinator venue (*e.g.* District Rep, Regional rep): _____

4. Contact information if it has changed recently (including e-mail used for NAFV purposes):

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Personal email: _____

Work email: _____

5. Means by which you have communicated with your constituents:

Phone: _____ Email: _____ Fax: _____ Face to Face: _____ Meetings: _____

6. Frequency of contact with constituents:

Daily: _____ Weekly: _____ Monthly: _____ Other (specify): _____

7. Approximate number of constituent contacts: _____

(a). group; _____

(b). individuals: _____

(c). initiated by you: _____

(d). initiated by them: _____

8. Identify agency counterpart: _____

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9. Number of times you have communicated with your counterpart of the designee (identify, and who initiated): _____

10. Outline of communications: _____

11. Number of consultations, and whether in person or by telephone): _____

12. Outline of consultation topics: _____

13. Are you aware of any disciplinary actions in your venue and include what your involvement consisted of: _____

14. Please describe the steps you have taken to help organize new chapters: _____

15. Please describe the steps you have taken to learn about new employees in your venue, and the steps you have taken to recruit them. Have you been successful? _____

16: General comments: _____
