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For immediate release

UT College of Veterinary Medicine Awarded \$2 Million Homeland Security Grant to Help Protect US Agriculture

(Knoxville, TN.) The University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (UTCVM) will have a key role in helping officials across the nation prepare for homeland security threats directed against US agriculture. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has awarded the veterinary college and its partnering institutions a \$2 million dollar Competitive Training Grant that will fund the development and national delivery of an agricultural vulnerability assessment training program for agricultural facility managers and state, county, and local officials to assist in the prevention and deterrence of a weapons of mass destruction attack.

In a news release announcing the grants, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said the course will help ensure communities can respond swiftly and aggressively to a potential public disaster. “Our best defense against homeland security threats is ensuring local and state leaders are prepared to anticipate and manage a crisis,” Frist said. “I’m proud that UT has been selected to help administer these crucial public safety programs.”

Dr. Sharon Thompson, Director of Partnership Programs at the veterinary college and Project Director for the DHS grant, said it is important that communities and industry have the tools and training to identify and evaluate their agricultural sites of greatest vulnerability. “They need to have the knowledge to put measures in place at the local level,” Thompson said. “This training initiative will strengthen the ability of state and local communities to improve intelligence and operational capabilities for prevention and deterrence of terrorist acts that target the agricultural sector.”

Dr. Michael Blackwell, UTCVM dean and retired Chief of State of the US Surgeon Generals Office, said the college is taking a leadership role in the country to deliver a national training program. “As a college, we have promised we would be a voice assisting communities and nations in the public health arena.” Blackwell said. “The receipt of this grant reflects the quality of our program. We are on track, doing what we said we would do.”

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The College will work in partnership with DHS, the Food and Drug Administration, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in the development of its training program. In addition, the TN Department of Agriculture; TN Department of Homeland Security; Kirkwood Community College; Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine; and New Mexico State University will be involved in the development and delivery of the national training program.

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See [Tennessee Today](#)