

# The Executive Division

***As the policy-making branch of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the Executive Division provides oversight to the Department's eight divisions, which consist of approximately 350 employees statewide. Other responsibilities include administering the WVDA budget and serving as a clearinghouse for all personnel, budgetary and regulatory activities.***

In 2001, the reverberations of world events impacted West Virginia, especially our agriculture community.

With the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Europe that devastated its livestock industry, the potential of a similar disaster to our livestock economy and food supply became more apparent. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) reacted to this threat swiftly. As FMD continued to spread across Europe, the Department became a key player in organizing a reaction plan for state and federal agencies, and conducted a tabletop exercise which incorporated "what if" scenarios. Biosecurity training is a top priority for the WVDA. We must be diligent in our efforts to protect our livestock from FMD and other potential threats to animal, plant and human health.

On the local level, the Department assumed the responsibility for the distribution of safe food commodities to West Virginia schools and food banks thorough the Donated Foods Program. The Program is still in transition, but we are working with our state, federal and private partners to ensure that wholesome, high-quality food products are provided to those who benefit most from this program.

Our efforts on behalf of agribusiness development continue through the administration of the West Virginia Rural Rehabilitation Loan Program, which approved \$966,000 in loans last year for entrepreneurs starting their own businesses and the future possibility of employing others. In keeping up with changing times, the Department is utilizing e-commerce to facilitate business transactions such as paying fees online. This is a benefit for the many citizens involved in pesticide and auctioneer licensing, and other programs. We are still exploring the unlimited opportunities e-commerce will pose.