The Executive Board (EB) of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has set an aggressive federal legislative agenda for the Association. This proactive agenda was developed by working within the AVMA governance system. The AVMA Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) assists the AVMA EB in formulating AVMA policies and positions on federal legislative and regulatory issues. The AVMA Governmental Relations Division staff works cooperatively with appropriate AVMA Schaumburg staff to develop and implement strategy to advance the AVMA federal legislative agenda.

ACTIVE PURSUIT OF PASSAGE

Federal Funding for the National Veterinary Medical Service Act (P.L. 108-161)
On December 6, 2003 Congress passed P.L. 108-161, The National Veterinary Medical Service Act (NVMSA). This law authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a loan repayment program for veterinarians who agree to serve in veterinary shortage and emergency situations. On June 21, 2005, the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee inserted $750,000 for NVMSA into the Agroterrorism Education line item, and it was retained when the full Senate passed the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. Though the House-Senate Conference Committee for the bill trimmed the NVMSA funding total to $500,000, establishment of a pilot program is scheduled for 2006. The AVMA-GRD assembled a NVMSA Advisory Group and submitted to the Department of Agriculture its recommendations for the rules of the program (i.e. how the $500,000 will be spent). The USDA is currently formulating these rules. The AVMA will continue to work with members of Congress to obtain full funding for the NVMSA in FY 2007 and beyond. For information on how you can help work with your Member of Congress to actively pursue funding for the NVMSA, please contact Senator John Melcher at (800) 321-1473 or Dr. Robert Nichols at 800-321-1473, ext. 3204, rmichols@avma.org.

Small Business Health Plan Legislation
Small Business Health Fairness Act (H.R. 525/S. 406)
Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act of 2005 (S. 1955)
As health care costs continue to grow, many small business owners, including veterinarians, find it difficult or impossible to provide health care coverage to their employees. By joining together in associations, small business owners can achieve an economy of scale in providing health care for their employees. Under current laws, AVMA members cannot purchase the AVMA’s Group Health Life Insurance Trust (GHLIT) plans for their employees. In addition, regulations in seven states (ME, MA, NH, NJ, ND, VT, WA) prevent the GHLIT from providing health insurance to AVMA members. Passage of the Small Business Health Fairness Act or similar legislation will allow small business owners to join together in associations, such as the AVMA, and provide affordable health insurance to their employees. In addition, this legislation will allow AVMA members in all fifty states to purchase affordable health insurance for themselves and their families. H.R. 525 was passed by the House on July 27, 2005. The House has passed similar legislation on eight separate occasions in the past, but such legislation had never emerged from the Senate until recently. On November 2, 2005, the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP), Senator Enzi (R-WY), introduced “The Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act of 2005” (S. 1955). On March 15, 2006, the HELP Committee “marked-up” S. 1955 and passed it to the Senate floor.
The AVMA is currently lobbying for insertion of wording in the bill that would specifically allow the AVMA to continue offering individual member plans in addition to group plans for employees. For information on how you can work with your member of Congress to promote this legislation, please contact Dr. Robert Nichols at 800-321-1473, ext. 3204, rnichols@avma.org.

The Veterinary Workforce Expansion Act (S. 914/ H.R. 2206)
The AVMA is partnering with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) in a major federal funding initiative to build infrastructure and provide ongoing support for faculty and programs dedicated to increasing human resource capacity in public health practice and biomedical research, areas in which a critical shortage of veterinarians exists. The nation faces new threats from intentional and unintentional introduction of biological agents, many of which are zoonotic. Newly emerging and reemerging infectious diseases such as SARS, monkeypox, and Avian Flu will require veterinary expertise to diagnose and manage. The nation’s colleges of veterinary medicine serve as a national resource, but are supported by only 27 states and almost 30 years have elapsed since the federal government provided any general funding to the colleges of veterinary medicine. The AVMA and AAVMC are seeking this federal funding for infrastructure development in order to increase the number of veterinarians in these areas of critical shortage. Introduced by Wayne Allard, DVM (R-CO) in the Senate and Chip Pickering (R-MS-3) in the House, the bill is structured as a competitive grant program to ensure maximum efficiency in the use of the funds. For information on how you can help work with your Member of Congress to actively pursue this funding initiative, please contact Dr. Mark Lutschaunig at (800) 321-1473 or Dr. Robert Nichols at 800-321-1473, ext. 3204, rnichols@avma.org.

Humane Methods of Slaughter Act Amendment
The AVMA is actively pursuing an amendment to the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which would update the Act to include all species slaughtered for commercial use under federal inspection. In 1978, Congress passed the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act to assure that all federally inspected slaughter facilities adopt humane handling and slaughtering practices. This Act mandates humane slaughter for cows, pigs, sheep, and other livestock slaughtered at federally inspected facilities, but does not include birds, rabbits and other commercially slaughtered species. The AVMA is working closely with the National Association of Federal Veterinarians (NAFV) and other groups to amend the Act to include all species slaughtered for commercial use under federal inspection. For information about how you can work with your Member of Congress to actively pursue this amendment, please contact Dr. Mark Lutschauknig at (800) 321-1473, ext 3205, mlutschauknig@avma.org.

Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (S. 2548/H.R. 3858)
This legislation amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Assistance Act to ensure that State and local emergency preparedness operational plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals following a major disaster or emergency. This amendment is essential in light of recent events with Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. These disasters highlighted the importance of including household pets and service animals in local emergency preparedness operational plans. Many residents did not evacuate because they did not want to leave their pets behind, and there were few facilities that would accept people and their pets. In addition, many pets were abandoned by evacuating residents. S. 2548 was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs. H.R. 3858 was referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, where it was passed and was discharged on April 5, 2006. It was passed unanimously by the House Transportation Committee on April 5th and approved by the full House on May 22nd by a 349-24 vote. On August 3, 2007, the Senate amended the House version with their version of the bill, and passed the bill by unanimous consent. The president signed the bill on October 6, 2006. For additional information about this legislation, please contact Dr. Mark Lutschauknig at (800) 321-1473, ext 3205, mlutschauknig@avma.org.

Legislation to Address the Issue of Unwanted/Retired Horses
The AVMA has been actively pursuing defeat of H.R. 503/S. 1915, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act and any related amendments to the Agriculture Appropriations bill. Amendments prohibiting funding for inspection of horses slaughtered for human consumption have passed overwhelmingly on the FY 2006 House and Senate Agriculture Appropriation’s bills. If Congress decides that horses and other equids are prohibited from being processed for human consumption, it is estimated that each year an additional 65,000-100,000 unwanted U.S. horses would need to find an alternative method of care, or disposal if the horse is euthanized. A congressional ban on slaughter of horses will only lead to a crisis situation if the ramifications of such actions are not addressed. The AVMA is actively pursuing legislation that will deal with these ramifications. This legislation is necessary to insure the humane care and treatment of these unwanted horses, and would be developed with input from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP). The legislation would address the following: Euthanasia concerns; standards for horse retirement centers; proper disposal of healthy animal carcasses; proper disposal of diseased animal carcasses; education for the proper care of horses and disposition options. For additional information about this initiative, please contact Dr. Mark Lutschauknig at (800) 321-1473, ext. 3205, mlutschauknig@avma.org.

Funding for Establishment of an Office of Minor Use and Minor Species in FDA/CVM
The Minor Use & Minor Species Animal Health Act of 2004 became law (P.L. 108-282) on August 2, 2004. This law provides incentives for drug companies to develop and seek FDA approval for drugs to treat uncommon animal disease conditions in major animal species and to treat conditions in minor species for which therapies are currently unavailable. It also authorizes the creation of an Office of Minor Use and Minor Species that will be responsible for designating minor use and minor species animal drugs, for administering grants and contracts, for reviewing minor species drug index listing requests, and for serving as liaison to those
interested in minor use and minor species animal drug development. The Office was established on November 9, 2004, however at the present time it is inadequately funded. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that creating and funding of the Office of Minor Use and Minor Species will cost $1 million in 2005 and $6 million over the 2005-2009 period. For information on how you can help work with your Member of Congress to support this legislation, please contact Dr. David Scarfe or Dr. Elizabeth Curry-Galvin, at the AVMA-Scientific Activities Division at (800) 248-2862 or Dr. Mark Lutschaunig (800) 321-1473, ext. 3205, mlutschaunig@avma.org.

**Foreign Animal Disease Laboratory**
The Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) has served admirably for fifty years as the only facility in the United States performing research on foot-and-mouth disease. The facility and operation of PIADC was transferred to the Department of Homeland Security in June 2003 as directed by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296). USDA continues to perform its functions of research and diagnostics within the Center. Currently, 180 employees at PIADC are helping to lead a research and development program to protect America’s food supply against the intentional or natural introduction of foreign animal diseases and to develop improved methods to diagnose foreign animal diseases. PIADC is in critical need of renovation and upgrades to be able to maintain its capabilities in foreign animal disease detection and research. For information on how you can help work with your Member of Congress to support this legislation, please contact Dr. Lyle Vogel, at the AVMA-Scientific Activities Division at (800) 248-1862; Dr. John Melcher (202) 546-4084 or Dr. Mark Lutschaunig at the AVMA-Governmental Relations Division at (800) 321-1473, ext 3205, mlutschaunig@avma.org.

**Funding for Animal Health Protection**
The objective of USDA §1433 Formula Funds for Animal Health and Disease Research Program (7 U.S.C. §3195) is to support research to improve the health and productivity of domestic livestock, horses, poultry, and aquatic animals, prevent diseases in both domestic and wild animals, and to protect human health through control of zoonotic agents (animal diseases transmissible to humans). Animal health protection requires effective veterinary response at the local level. In the event of a disease outbreak, veterinarians are responsible for diagnosis and risk management leading to disease control or elimination. The failure to diagnose foreign animal diseases and zoonotic agents accurately and rapidly, whether they are intentionally introduced or naturally occurring, can lead to catastrophic economic losses and loss of human and animal lives. Increasing funding for USDA §1433 Formula Funds for Animal Health Disease Research Program will address these problems by improving prevention, surveillance, diagnosis and control measures for infectious diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), avian influenza, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) monkeypox, foot-and-mouth disease, and etc. For information on how you can help work with you Member of Congress to support this legislation, please contact Dr. Lyle Vogel, at the AVMA-Scientific Activities Division at (800) 248-1862; Dr. John Melcher (202) 546-4084; Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, mlutschaunig@avma.org, at the AVMA-Governmental Relations Division at (800) 321-1473, ext 3205.

**Proactive Education on Compounding**
Veterinarians are preeminent among the many stakeholders in the complex compounding issue simply because there are not enough U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved drugs to adequately treat the wide diversity of pets and other non-food animals that veterinarians must treat. A compounded drug is a medication that has been created by combining or altering ingredients for an individual patient in response to a licensed practitioner’s prescription. Compounding can be as simple as changing the dosage form of an FDA approved drug or adding a flavoring agent for ease of administration. However, sometimes bulk (raw) pharmaceutical ingredients must be used to compound because FDA approved drugs are either unavailable or medically inappropriate for the specific patient. The current controversy in compounding centers around compounding from bulk pharmaceutical ingredients. For information on how you can help work with you Member of Congress on this issue, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Curry-Galvin, at the AVMA-Scientific Activities Division at (800) 248-2862; or Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, mlutschaunig@avma.org at the AVMA-Governmental Relations Division at (800) 321-1473, ext 3205.

**Full Funding for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)**
The National Animal Health Laboratory Network is a network of federal and state resources intended to enable a rapid and sufficient response to animal health emergencies, including foot-and-mouth disease and other foreign animal diseases. The network’s primary objective is to establish a functional network of existing diagnostic laboratories to rapidly and accurately detect and report diseases of national interest, particularly those pathogens that have the potential to be intentionally introduced through bioterrorism. The USDA Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) administers the funding for the NAHLN. The American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) is concerned that the current funding levels for NAHLN are inadequate to support the NAHLN, potentially negatively impacting animal health and our nation’s animal food supply. AAVLD requested that the AVMA actively pursue increased funding for the NAHLN in FY 2007 and beyond at the levels of $85M for infrastructure and $30M annually for continuing operations. For information on how you can help work with you Member of Congress to support this legislation, please contact Dr. Lyle Vogel, at the AVMA-Scientific Activities Division at (800) 248-1862; Dr. John Melcher (202) 546-4084; Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, mlutschaunig@avma.org, at the AVMA-Governmental Relations Division at (800) 321-1473, ext 3205.
2007 Reauthorization of the FARM Bill

The “Farm Bill” is an omnibus multiyear authorizing law that deals with major farm and food legislation. The most recent omnibus farm bill, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171), expires in 2007. Because of the size and complexity of the farm bill, the 109th Congress has already started the reauthorization process, which will culminate with the passage of a new farm bill in 2007. While the heart of every omnibus farm bill is farm income and commodity price support, the farm bill typically includes titles on agriculture trade and foreign food aid, conservation and environment, forestry, domestic food assistance (primarily food stamps), agricultural credit, rural development, agricultural research and education, and forestry programs. In addition, the farm bill often contains such provisions as farm marketing, energy, food safety, and animal health and welfare. The AVMA has identified the farm bill reauthorization as a major piece of legislation that will impact the veterinary profession, animal health and welfare, and agriculture research programs. For additional information about this initiative, please contact Dr. Mark Lutschauinin at (800) 321-1473, ext. 3205, mlutschauinig@avma.org.

Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (S. 3721)

ACTIVE PURSUIT OF DEFEAT

The American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503/S. 1915)
This legislation amends the Horse Protection Act to prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of horses and other equines to be slaughtered for human consumption. The AVMA will not support this legislation because it does not adequately address the following issues: disposition of affected horses, animal welfare/standards of care for retirement and rescue facilities, costs related to the care of the horses, and environmental concerns related to horse carcass disposal. Rep. John Sweeney (R-20th/NY) introduced H.R. 503 on February 1, 2005, and was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. S. 1915 was introduced on October 25, 2005 by Senator John Ensign (R-NV) and was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. On June 8, 2005, Congressman Sweeney (R-20th/NY) introduced an amendment (H.AMDT. 236) to the 2006 House Agriculture Appropriations bill (H.R. 2744) that eliminates funding: 1) to be used to pay the salaries or expenses of personnel to inspect horses that are being processed for human consumption; and 2) to be used to pay the salaries or expenses of personnel to inspect horses under the USDA’s regulations for the Commercial Transport of Equines to Slaughter, which were established in 2001. This amendment would effectively shut down the horse processing industry in the United States. The amendment passed by a vote of 269-158 with 6 members not voting and the full 2006 House Agriculture Appropriations bill passed by a vote of 218-210. On September 20, 2005, Senator Ensign (R-NV) offered the same amendment (S.AMDT. 1733) to the Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill (H.R. 2744). The amendment passed 69-28 with 3 senators not voting, and the full 2006 Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill passed 97-2. The Senate-House Ag Appropriations Conference Committee retained the provision in the Ag Appropriations bill, but gave the plants 120 days before the provision takes effect. The USDA established a fee for service for the plants, and the plants remained open. On July 13, 2006, Congressman Whitfield obtained a simultaneous 2 two week referral to the House Energy and Commerce Committee and House Agriculture Committee, at which time the full House will vote on the bill. The Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on July 25, 2006, and discharged the bill on July 26, 2006. The House Agriculture Committee held a hearing and mark-up on July 27, 2006. The bill was reported unfavorably to the full house with amendments. On September 7, 2006, the full House voted 263-146 to pass the bill without amendments and sent it to the Senate. For additional information about this legislation, and to learn how you can work with your Member of Congress to actively pursue defeat of this legislation, please contact Dr. Mark Lutschauinig at (800) 321-1473, ext. 3205, mlutschauinig@avma.org.

SUPPORT

- Development of legislation that effectively deals with the welfare issues associated with “puppy mills.”
- Increase funding for the animal arm of the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS)
- Increase funding for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD)
- Funding for USDA’s National Animal Identification System (NAIS)
- Establishment of a USDA Veterinary Biologic Advisory Committee (VBAC)
- Formation of a National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
- Captive Primate Safety Act (S 1509/H.R. 1329)
- Special Pays for Board Certified Veterinarians in the Federal Government
- Equity for our Nation’s Self-Employment Act of 2005 (S.663)
- Southern Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act of 2005 (H.R. 2323)
- Great Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2005 (H.R. 1707)
- Seeking appropriations for Johne’s disease program in FY 2007 and beyond
- Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2005 (H.R. 817/S. 382)
- Antifreeze Bittering Act of 2005 (H.R. 2567/S. 1110)
- National Health Museum Act of 2005 (H.R. 3630)
• Seeking appropriations to enable improvements and standardization of veterinary diagnostic methods that support Homeland Defense Programs such as the Food Emergency Response Network
• National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005 (S. 1195)
• The Agroterrorism Prevention Act of 2005 (S. 1532)
• Amend Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (H.R. 739-Titles III and IV)
• The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (H.R. 4239/S. 1926)
• Pursue use of PZP immunocontraception vaccine to manage wild horses and burros on public lands
• The Save Act (provides the expansion of tax credits for small business contributions to Health Savings Accounts) (S. 160)
• The Global Health Corps Act of 2005 (S. 850)
• Seeking FY 2008 federal funding for the USDA-APHIS-VS Aquaculture Program
• Generating Opportunity by Forgiving Educational Debt for Service Act of 2005 H.R. 1765)
• New Markets for State Inspection Meat and Poultry Act of 2006 (H.R. 6130) and the Agriculture Small Business Opportunity and Enhancement Act (S. 3519)
• 15$ additional funding for USDA-CSREES NRI-CAP Program
• The Agricultural Protection and Prosperity Act of 2006 (S 3681); and To amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (“Superfund”) to provide that manure is not a hazardous substance or pollutant or contaminant under that act (H.R. 4341), and similar legislation in the 110th Congress.
• Pet Animal Welfare Statute
• Haley’s Act, addressing the welfare of big cats (H.R. 5909)

NON-SUPPORT

• Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2005 (S. 742/H.R. 2562)
• To Restore the Prohibition on the Commercial Sale of Wild Free-Roaming Horses & Burros (S.576/H.R 297)
• Pet Safety and Protection Act of 2005 (S. 451)
• Natural Stock Conservation Act of 2005 (S.796)
• The Downed Animal Protection Act (H.R. 3931/S. 1779)
• The Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act (H.R. 5557)

REQUEST MORE INFORMATION

• Special Pay for Uniformed Services Veterinarians
• Inhumane Trapping Prevention Act (H.R. 3442)