AVMA hails Senate Agriculture Committee Farm Bill

(WASHINGTON) April 26, 2012 - The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is pleased the Senate Agriculture Committee has included veterinary-related provisions in the 2012 Farm Bill that will improve the nation’s food safety, provide for valuable agriculture research, and improve animal health and welfare.

“The AVMA commends the work done by Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Ranking Member Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) for their bipartisan efforts to develop a bill that includes key programs essential to ensuring animal health and welfare while at the same time bolstering veterinary services where they are needed most,” said Dr. René Carlson, AVMA president. “The AVMA looks forward to our continued work with Congress to pass a Farm Bill this year. In these tough economic times this legislation takes steps to reduce the deficit while also providing necessary funding to programs that will increase the nation’s ability to provide a safe and abundant food supply, protect and enhance our country’s agriculture industry and help the economy.”

The legislation passed by the committee today includes provisions that will:

- Maintain the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program that contracts with veterinarians in areas of the country most in need of livestock and/or public health veterinary services;
- Maintain funding for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank, a tool that ensures milk, meat and eggs are free of drug or contaminant residues;
- Maintain funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Institute while underscoring the need for the agency to actively pursue stakeholder input;
• Maintain the Animal Health and Disease Research program, a valuable source of funds for fundamental research on diseases impacting livestock;
• Establish a foundation for food and agriculture research. The foundation will solicit and accept private donations to fund research activities focused on key animal, agriculture, and environmental issues of national and international significance.
• Establish the Veterinary Services Grant program to meet veterinary workforce or food protection needs in designated areas; and
• Establish a Wildlife Reservoir Zoonotic Disease Initiative to develop surveillance methods, vaccinations, delivery systems and diagnostic tests for *Brucella abortus*, *Mycobacterium bovis* and other zoonotic diseases in livestock.

Not included in the legislation passed out of committee today but of national significance is the formal authorization of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). The AVMA is hopeful there will be an opportunity to include this in the Farm Bill as discussions continue. This network of laboratories, which recently confirmed the nation’s fourth case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a dairy cow from central California, is instrumental to the nation’s animal disease surveillance system. Additionally, the AVMA will seek to include formal authorization of the Minor Use Animal Drug Program (MUADP). American minor species producers rely on MUADP to secure safe and effective products to keep their livestock healthy.

The current five-year farm bill expires at the end of September. The AVMA is calling on Congress to push this measure through to ensure that a new, comprehensive Farm Bill is passed this year.

For more information on the AVMA's congressional activities, visit [www.avma.org/advocacy](http://www.avma.org/advocacy).

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The AVMA, founded in 1863, is one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations in the world, with more than 82,500 member veterinarians worldwide engaged in a wide variety of professional activities. For more information, visit [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).