



H.R. 2, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018

On December 20, 2018, the legislation otherwise known as the Farm Bill became law. Many of AVMA's priorities were included, as well as other provisions that will be of interest to veterinarians. The following provides an overview of those provisions, while the full text may be accessed [here](#).

Animal Disease Prevention and Management

Establishes and funds programs intended to prevent and mitigate animal disease outbreaks and address the risk of the introduction and spread of animal pests and diseases affecting U.S. livestock.

Components:

1. National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP)
2. National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB)
3. National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)

This combination of cooperative grants between U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the states, utilization of the NAHLN, and a U.S.-only vaccine bank will help veterinarians to assist in preventing the introduction and spread of animal diseases within the United States. While the vaccine and countermeasures bank is initially prioritized to Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), the Secretary of Agriculture may expand it as needed.

Funding:

Allocates \$150 million in mandatory funding through the Commodity Credit Corporation over the five-year life of the Farm Bill and provides permanent funding for the programs. Further, the potential for appropriated funding for the NAHLN is doubled to \$30 million, and authorized appropriations of unspecified funds are made for the NADPRP, and NAVVCB.

- Over the first four years of the bill, \$120 million is immediately made available to be expended. Of this, no less than \$20 million is reserved for the NADPRP. The remaining \$100 million is available to be divided between the NADPRP, NAHLN, and NAVVCB at the Agriculture Secretary's discretion. Permanent funding of \$30 million is made available every year thereafter, with no less than \$18 million reserved for the NADPRP and \$12 million to be divided.

Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP)

Includes language to emphasize and prioritize grant awards for programs or activities focused on the practice of food animal medicine. There is also a provision to allow the use of funds to expose students in grades 11 and 12 to education and career opportunities in food animal medicine.

Veterinary Training and Emergencies

Amends the program allowing the development and maintenance of a supply of Federal and State veterinarians well trained in recognition and diagnosis of exotic and endemic animal diseases by adding those who can provide effective services before, during, and after emergencies.

Legalization of Industrial Hemp

Defines Hemp as the plant *Cannabis sativa L.*, or any part of that plant including seeds, derivatives, and extracts that contain a delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis; and exempts these from the Controlled Substances Act. The bill also specifies that no changes are made to affect or modify the Federal Food, Drug, or Cosmetic Act regarding Hemp.

USDA Research Programs and Grants

Reauthorizes the Continuing Animal Health and Disease Research Programs and Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) with levels of annual authorized appropriations identical to previous years. Adds Cattle Fever Ticks, Laying Hen and Turkey Research, Chronic Wasting Disease, and Honeybees and Pollinators to the list of AFRI Grant High Priority Research and Extension Initiatives. The bill also requires a report that describes the funding necessary to adequately address the needs of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which administers the VSGP and Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program as well as AFRI grants.

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR)

Provides an additional \$185 million to FFAR once the foundation submits a required strategic plan to move to become self-sustaining. FFAR must also annually publish an online report and a stakeholder notice of new priorities. For information on FFAR and its 1:1 match requirement, see [FFAR's website](#).

Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority Pilot (AGARDA)

Establishes AGARDA, a pilot project intended to overcome long-term and high-risk research challenges in agriculture that industry is unlikely to undertake because of technological or financial uncertainty. AGARDA is meant to consider the experiences of other, similar, government initiatives such as DARPA, BARDA, and ARPA-E; and is expected to prioritize projects related to the highest risk disease threats to animals and plants, and viable alternatives for labor intensive aspects of specialty crop production. The legislation encourages USDA to partner and collaborate with other agencies, relevant industries, academia, and other stakeholders to conduct advanced research and development.

Agriculture Genome to Phenome Initiative

Although not previously funded, the Agriculture Genome Initiative is amended to include language outlining research goals to expand knowledge concerning genomes and phenomes of crops and animals of importance to the agriculture sector; and authorizes annual appropriations of \$40 million.

Report on the Importation of Live Dogs

Requires a report from the Secretary of Agriculture, in conjunction with other agencies, to provide a report to Congress on the volume of live dogs imported to the United States. Recognizes the potential for import of animals with animal and zoonotic diseases that pose potential risks.

Protecting Animals with Shelter (Pet and Women Safety Act)

Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to facilitate a grants program to assist victims of domestic violence and allows for restitution to include veterinary services relating to physical care for their pet, service animal, emotional support animal, or horse.

Prohibition on Slaughter of Dogs and Cats for Human Consumption

Prohibits individuals from knowingly slaughtering a dog or cat for human consumption; or knowingly shipping, selling, or otherwise transporting or receiving a dog or cat or its parts for human consumption; in respect to conduct in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States. Exceptions are made regarding religious ceremonies.

Extending Prohibition on Animal Fighting to the Territories (Parity in Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act)

Deletes certain exceptions to extend this prohibition to states and territories where it may not have been applicable.