

National organizations call for full funding of nation's early warning surveillance and testing system for animal diseases

(Washington, D.C.) April 27, 2015—Today, the undersigned organizations call upon Congress and the Obama administration to fully fund the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). Congress authorized a new budget line of \$15 million for the NAHLN as part of the 2014 Farm Bill. Full funding for this program is absolutely critical because when large-scale animal disease outbreaks occur—such as what we are experiencing now with the highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI) and last year with the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV)—tracking the progress and performing diagnostic tests on thousands of diagnostic samples requires surge capacity, ample staffing, and integrated communications systems.

The NAHLN is the first responder to each HPAI incident. As of April 20, there were more than 13,800 tests performed by 13 NAHLN laboratories with hundreds of tests being performed daily, seven days a week. Since Dec. 14, our country has seen HPAI spread from Washington state eastward and is now present in 16 states.

Many diagnostic laboratories have reached capacity and need additional resources now. Millions of turkeys and chickens have been afflicted and producer's livelihoods are at stake. This disease has immediate ramifications for the poultry industry and may dramatically impact the availability of poultry products in the United States for the foreseeable future if Congress does not act now.

The NAHLN is the nation's early warning surveillance and testing system for animal diseases, including: HPAI, PEDV, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (otherwise known as mad cow disease), classical swine fever, chronic wasting disease, scrapie, swine influenza virus, swine pseudorabies virus, exotic Newcastle disease, foot and mouth disease, and vesicular stomatitis virus.

We urge the administration and Congress to fully fund the NAHLN in fiscal 2016 and provide every resource necessary to tackle this and future animal disease outbreaks.

Respectfully,

Joel Brandenberger, president, National Turkey Federation
Mike Brown, president, National Chicken Council
Tom Burkgren, executive director, American Association of Swine Veterinarians
Barry Carpenter, president and CEO, North American Meat Institute
W. Ron DeHaven, executive vice president, American Veterinary Medical Association
Neil Dierks, CEO, National Pork Producers Council
Michael Gilsdorf, executive vice president, National Association of Federal Veterinarians
Barbara Glenn, CEO, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
Chad Gregory, president and CEO, United Egg Producers
Charles Hofacre, executive vice president, American Association of Avian Pathologists
Bruce King, president, U.S. Animal Health Association
Jim Kistler, executive director, American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
Andrew Maccabe, executive director, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Joel Newman, president & CEO, American Feed Industry Association
John Starkey, president, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association