
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 34 **Approved as Amended**

SOURCE: **COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Increased Fiscal Year 2025 Funding for the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services National Rabies Management Program to Enhance Rabies Surveillance, Oral Rabies Vaccination Programs in Urban Landscapes and request the Development of an Oral Rabies Bait/Vaccine Bank**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) has demonstrated that strategic implementation of cooperative oral rabies vaccination (ORV) programs targeting wildlife are cost-effective in reducing rabies transmission to protect human and animal health and reduce the cost of endemic rabies. The World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) determined that the most effective strategy to control terrestrial rabies targets the sources of infection (i.e., wildlife vector populations) with landscape scale control efforts. ORV programs are designed to immunize targeted wildlife species by increasing the percentage of rabies-immune animals within vaccination zones, resulting in the reduction of rabies cases, prevention of viral spread (Phase 1 goal of the NRMP) and eventually eliminate the raccoon rabies variant (Phase 2 goal of the NRMP).

A comprehensive raccoon rabies management strategy has been cooperatively developed with federal, state, provincial and local partners for the elimination of the raccoon rabies variant in the United States (US) and Canada. In federal fiscal year 2023, the NRMP and cooperators distributed >8.7 million ORV vaccine/baits in 13 eastern states to combat raccoon rabies and ~1 million in Texas to prevent the reemergence of canine rabies in coyotes and grey fox rabies along the border with Mexico as well as to continue field effectiveness studies on oral rabies vaccine baits targeting coyotes.

The United States National Plan for Wildlife Rabies Management (USNP) is a 5-year (2023-2027) framework for collaborative management of wildlife rabies in the US to protect humans, domestic animals and wildlife. Development of the USNP began in September 2021 when more than 100 professionals from 52 agencies and organizations

(e.g., federal, state, industry, university) developed the NRMP, and it was released in September 2023. The scope of the plan primarily addresses management of rabies in raccoons, coyotes and grey foxes in the US through oral rabies vaccination, and to a lesser degree skunks, Arctic foxes, free ranging dogs, and mongoose. In addition, the plan addresses surveillance of vampire bats, as oral rabies vaccines are not currently available for managing bat rabies.

Ongoing national supply chain problems are causing concern for the NRMP to meet the needs of licensed bait/vaccine units for ORV distribution. There are two companies manufacturing vaccine. The units are made to order, but the shelf life is only 18 months. The annual ORV distribution is time-sensitive depending on the geographic location, including Maine to Alabama for raccoon rabies and Texas for canine rabies in coyotes and grey fox rabies. Timing for newborns to be successfully vaccinated is critical. Emergency distribution in ORV sensitive areas can occur at any time of the year. Thus, an oral rabies bait/vaccine bank is required to eliminate any lapse in the ORV schedule.

The NRMP has been level funded since 2018. The requested funding of \$36 million will allow USDA to:

- Continue, refine, and improve the enhanced rabies surveillance program including support of a Wildlife Services Biologist conducting between 5,000-7,000 field rabies tests each year using the Direct Rapid Immunohistochemistry Test (DRIT) or the Indirect Rapid Immunohistochemistry Test (IRIT). (which represents 8% of all rabies testing in the US)
- Implement contingency actions in response to rabid animals in sensitive areas
- Continue Phase 1 of the NRMP, to maintain existing ORV programs to control rabies and prevent spread in wildlife populations
- Continue the evaluation of novel and US-licensed vaccines and baits
- Continue studies related to rabies control in skunks, mongoose, and vampire bats
- Enhance the operations of Phase 2 of the NRMP to eliminate the raccoon rabies variant in the US
- Plan and implement a critically needed rabies bait/vaccine bank or stockpile

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests the United States Congress to appropriate a minimum of \$36 million annually for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), National Rabies Management Program.

Additionally, USAHA requests that USDA-APHIS-WS enhance wildlife rabies surveillance and further develop a critically needed oral rabies bait/vaccine bank for the National Rabies Management Program, should adequate funds be provided.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

As outlined in this resolution, there remains strong public and agency support for nationally coordinated programs to conduct enhanced rabies surveillance with DRIT and other diagnostic techniques; maintain and enhance ORV programs to control rabies; implement contingency actions to restore the integrity of the ORV zone as needed; and to conduct applied research to evaluate novel and US-licensed vaccines and related studies targeting skunks, mongoose, and vampire bats.

WS acknowledges and supports USAHA's request to continue to develop and support a critically needed oral rabies bait/vaccine bank to avoid supply chain interruptions and to have a vaccine stockpile available for rapid response to rabies cases that jeopardize long-term management success. Congressional funding secured as a result of this resolution would greatly aid in the establishment of such an oral rabies vaccine bait bank.