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RESOLUTION NUMBER: 20      APPROVED

SOURCE:                      COMMITTEE ON CATTLE AND BISON

SUBJECT MATTER:            Funding for Supporting Research in *Mycoplasma bovis* and other  
Emerging Disease Threats of Bison

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

*Mycoplasma bovis* is an emerging disease of significant impact and concern to North American bison conservation and production, with affected herds experiencing upwards of 30% mortality that often recurs in subsequent years. In 2013, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) declared *Mycoplasma bovis* an emerging disease of concern for bison. Since that time, the disease has expanded in scope and scale with few advances in scientific understanding of disease epidemiology, ecology, prevention, or treatment. The fastidious nature of *Mycoplasma bovis* makes it difficult to detect, the lack of a cell wall and inherent genetic characteristics makes the bacterium resistant to most classes of antibiotics, and the ability to establish latent and 'healthy carrier' states makes the organism difficult to control once introduced to a herd. Furthermore, how the pathogen becomes introduced or established in naïve herds is unknown, nor the full extent of other susceptible wildlife species. The lack of dedicated funding or captive bison research facility hinders efforts to understand this and other diseases in bison. Several other emerging infectious diseases such as SARS CoV-2 and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) occur at the human-livestock-wildlife interface but impacts and implications of these diseases in bison are unknown, despite significant susceptibility and impacts in cattle.

The USDA-National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) previously included a captive bison facility dedicated to understanding disease at the bison-livestock interface, and USDA-ARS has experts in *Mycoplasma bovis*, but closure of the NWRC bison facility, insufficient funding at ARS, and competing priorities for experimental animal space have hampered work in support of bison health. A captive bison research facility for infectious diseases would provide a much-needed mechanism to develop the science for prevention, treatment, and response to emerging diseases in bison and begin to meet the needs of an underserved agricultural industry and wildlife conservation goals alike.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges Congress to appropriate funding to support *Mycoplasma bovis* and other emerging disease work in bison, and to support a dedicated captive bison research facility. Funding appropriation amount will be determined through a USAHA Cattle and Bison Committee working group consisting of the National Bison Association and state animal health officials, with input from relevant federal partners.