

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 7 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH

SUBJECT MATTER: Fiscal Year 2027 Funding for the National Rabies Management Program, United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services to Maintain Rabies Surveillance, Oral Rabies Vaccination Programs, and Rabies Case Reporting

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests the 122nd Congress to appropriate a minimum of \$38 million annually for the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services, National Rabies Management Program. USAHA urges Congress and other stakeholders to retain the resources at state and national levels to continue rabies surveillance, laboratory testing, and timely reporting of rabies cases in the United States.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The National Rabies Management Program (NRMP), administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), has demonstrated that strategic implementation of cooperative oral rabies vaccination (ORV) programs targeting wildlife reservoir species in the United States (US) is cost-effective in reducing rabies virus transmission. These efforts protect human and animal health and lower the cost of living in geographical areas endemic for wildlife rabies.

ORV programs are designed to immunize targeted wildlife species by increasing the percentage of rabies-immune wild animals within vaccination zones. This results in a reduction of wildlife rabies cases and spillover into domestic species, preventing viral spread (Phase 1 goal of the NRMP) and ultimately leading to the geographical elimination of the raccoon rabies virus variant (Phase 2 goal of the NRMP). Since 1995, this comprehensive raccoon rabies management strategy has been cooperatively developed with federal, state, provincial, and local partners to eliminate the raccoon rabies virus variant from the US and Canada.

In the US, more than 90 percent of annually reported rabies cases occur in wildlife. The USDA-APHIS NRMP works to control and eliminate rabies virus variants in terrestrial carnivore populations to protect human and animal health. The primary raccoon rabies management area includes thirteen eastern states. Management efforts in these states

have successfully prevented the further spread of raccoon rabies beyond the eastern seaboard and into Canada by establishing an ORV zone from Maine to Ohio along the Canadian border, and from Ohio to Alabama. The USDA-APHIS National Wildlife Research Center estimates that these actions help avoid more than \$58 million in annual raccoon rabies-related costs.

The NRMP also collaborates with the Texas Department of State Health Services to maintain an ORV zone along the Texas-Mexico border to prevent the reemergence of canine rabies, the emergence of the Arizona fox variant, and the entry of the vampire bat variant into the US.

Contingency actions are time-sensitive management responses to outbreaks and are considered essential to reduce the risk of further virus spread. If not addressed promptly, outbreaks could result in significantly more costly responses. Contingency actions include doubling vaccine bait density (increased to 150/km² versus the standard 75/km²) and distributing baits twice a year (spring and fall) for three consecutive years to restore the integrity of the ORV zone.

USDA-APHIS has supported contingency actions in recent years using appropriated funding. However, rising operating costs, depletion of previously existing bait/vaccine stockpiles, and an increasing number of contingency actions have strained available resources. USDA-APHIS receives approximately \$28 million annually through the Wildlife Damage Management line item for these activities. This funding has remained flat for the past eight years (aside from small increases for employee pay), while fixed costs continue to rise.

Commodity Credit Corporation funds totaling approximately \$18.8 million in 2024 (to be spent over a 2–3 year period) were recently used to address raccoon rabies outbreaks in multiple states, establish a sufficient stockpile of rabies vaccination baits for current and limited future use, respond to emerging high-risk rabies cases in Texas, and vaccinate raccoons in areas affected by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. ORV actions were also conducted in high-risk areas in Maine, Vermont, and Alabama. This emergency transfer was critical in preventing further spread of the raccoon rabies virus.

If annual appropriations for rabies prevention in the US are not maintained, USDA-APHIS anticipates an increased likelihood of disease spread and negative impacts on human and animal health and safety. This would jeopardize the USDA-APHIS investment of over \$500 million since 1995 in preventing the spread of the raccoon rabies virus variant. As of September 2025, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported tracking 14 potential wildlife rabies outbreaks in 20 states.

The NRMP has been level-funded since 2018. The requested funding of \$38 million for USDA-APHIS-WS will ensure that US rabies prevention efforts remain functional and efficient as a critical public safety network for disease prevention and reporting. This funding will support the following actions:

- Continue, refine, and improve the enhanced rabies surveillance program and training of USDA-APHIS personnel

- Enable USDA-APHIS to implement contingency actions in response to rabid animals in sensitive areas and manage high-risk rabies spread corridors, particularly in urban-suburban habitats with high raccoon density
- Enhance bait distribution resources and field operations to prevent further virus spread
- Maintain wildlife rabies surveillance in high-risk areas, such as along the US-Mexico border
- Advance Phase 2 operations to eliminate the raccoon rabies variant from the US