

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 8 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH

SUBJECT MATTER: Fiscal Year 2027 Funding Request to Maintain National Rabies Surveillance and Rabies Case Reporting in the United States

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) recognizes the crucial role the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Poxvirus and Rabies Branch (PRB) plays in protecting food security and national security, at large, through its rabies control programs.

USAHA urges members of the 122nd Congress to appropriate funding for national rabies prevention and control and to recognize the HHS-CDC-PRB as the primary federal resource for rabies prevention and control in the United States. Additionally, in alignment with the HHS-CDC, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases 2025 strategic priorities, the USAHA urges HHS to allocate funding to enable HHS-CDC-PRB services to return to staffing levels and services equivalent to those in fiscal year 2025.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Rabies is a high-consequence pathogen and one of the most common infectious zoonotic diseases that state and local health departments confront on an ongoing basis. More than 6 million Americans report animal bites each year, with 1.6 million seeking medical care. Approximately 4,000 animal rabies cases are reported annually—90% of which occur in wildlife—and over 130 laboratories test nearly 100,000 animals for rabies each year. Federally funded rabies control programs save billions of dollars annually and align with the National Biodefense Strategy, the National One Health Framework, and the National Rabies Management Plan (NRMP).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Poxvirus and Rabies Branch (PRB) is the core team responsible for rabies surveillance data reporting and risk mitigation in the United States (US). In addition to managing all state rabies data, PRB plays a critical role as the reporting arm of the NRMP, which is managed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

PRB oversees the National Rabies Surveillance System and maintains the only globally recognized US reference laboratory for rabies diagnostics. The subject matter expertise provided by PRB to state and local health jurisdictions is vital to food safety and national security. PRB serves as a key resource for state and local health departments, acting as their sole federal agency partner in rabies case surveillance, diagnostic testing, and post-exposure prophylaxis guidelines. PRB tracks outbreaks, identifies emerging rabies threats to humans and livestock, and serves as the primary consultative resource for the medical community. PRB also educates the public on rabies exposure protocols, oversees the importation of dogs into the US from rabies-endemic countries, and provides accurate information about bat exposures.

The recent loss of trained staff due to attrition and internal resource shifts within the CDC has already had a significant negative impact on the quality of rabies disease control in the US.

The duties performed by PRB are critical to protecting US citizens from this deadly disease. Ongoing surveillance and annual reporting of rabies cases are essential to maintaining accurate epidemiological assessments and tracking mitigation costs.

PRB's federal funding is allocated by the Department of Health and Human Services. The CDC supports infectious disease programs through initiatives such as the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Program and the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases.

The recent reduction in workforce and resource allocation at the CDC is of great concern to USAHA members, as these changes place considerable strain on state rabies prevention initiatives—to the severe detriment of human and animal health and safety—and directly conflict with federal and state public health and food security priorities.