

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 1 APPROVED

SOURCE: JOINT COMMITTEE ON NAHLN

SUBJECT MATTER: Prioritizing Federal Partner Participation at the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians/ United States Animal Health Association Annual Meetings and Related Activities

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) urge the United States Department of Agriculture and United States Department of Health and Human Services to support and provide appropriate, comprehensive representation from their agencies, aligned with their strategic objectives, to attend and participate in USAHA / AAVLD Joint Annual Meetings and other associated activities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

It is critically important for federal veterinarians, animal health scientists, and public health professionals to attend the annual meetings of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD). The 2026 meeting will mark the 130th annual gathering of the USAHA and the 69th for the AAVLD. These are the only meetings where state and federal regulatory veterinarians, veterinary diagnostic laboratory scientists, researchers, and producers convene to discuss and recommend actions for controlling animal and public health diseases of significance—helping to ensure that the United States (US) maintains an abundant, nutritious, and safe supply of homegrown animal protein.

This in-person event offers the premier opportunity for leaders in animal health from across the nation to debate, discuss, and propose solutions to pressing issues in food animal production, food security, agricultural trade, and public health. The joint Annual Meeting also serves as an excellent platform to foster and develop emerging leaders within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The presence of our federal partners is vital to sustaining more than a century of productive collaboration with stakeholders across all sectors of the animal agriculture industry. This collaboration serves the American people well. Former USDA Under Secretary Bill Hawks once stated, “Working together works.” Much of that foundational work is accomplished at the USAHA and AAVLD annual meetings.

While federal appropriations may fluctuate, the threats to animal health, food security, agricultural trade, and public health continue to grow in both scale and severity worldwide.

Diseases such as highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry and dairy cattle, African swine fever, New World screwworm, rabies, and many others demand immediate solutions. The absence of federal partners at the USAHA and AAVLD annual meetings impedes the US animal agriculture industry's ability to respond effectively to these diseases at the state and national levels—and as global leaders.

Past successes in controlling both high-consequence and common production diseases have largely stemmed from face-to-face discussions and the presentation of new scientific findings, followed by action-oriented resolutions and investigations that advance all disciplines involved in detecting, diagnosing, understanding, and controlling disease processes.

For decades, USDA and DHHS have actively sought stakeholder input on critical topics. These meetings provide an efficient and impactful mechanism to help both agencies better support US agriculture, food security, agricultural trade, and public health.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

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

Thank you for highlighting the importance of federal participation in the USAHA and AAVLD meetings. APHIS recognizes that these gatherings are essential for protecting U.S. animal health, food security, agricultural trade, and public health. Meeting in person allows experts to discuss issues openly, share new science, and develop practical, science-based recommendations.

Even as funding levels shift, animal and public health threats continue to grow. Many of our most effective disease responses have resulted from face-to-face collaboration and clear, actionable decisions.

For these reasons, APHIS will continue to support attendance and participation in the USAHA and AAVLD Annual Meeting, as it deepens our mutual understanding of the issues, strengthens professional relationships, and fosters collaboration in support of the nation's animal health system.