2026 Resolution
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RESOLUTION NUMBER: 11 APPROVED

SOURCE: **COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Fiscal Year 2028 Funding Request for National Zoonotic Rabies Surveillance and Case Reporting in the United States**

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the 120th Congress appropriate a minimum of $15 million annually to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to fund the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Poxvirus and Rabies Branch (PRB) at a level sufficient to maintain national rabies surveillance and reporting in the United States. USAHA further urges Congress and other public health stakeholders to support the use of these appropriated funds by HHS-CDC-PRB to protect United States citizens from this deadly zoonotic disease.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Poxvirus and Rabies Branch (PRB) is the core team responsible for national rabies surveillance, data reporting, and risk mitigation in the United States (US). 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 percent of which occur in wildlife, and more than 130 laboratories test nearly 100,000 animals for rabies each year.

In 2025, HHS-CDC rabies experts responded to more than 1,700 inquiries to HHS-CDC's Rabies Hotline from 50 states and 83 countries. Federally funded rabies control programs contribute to approximately $46 billion in annual savings through deaths prevented and avoided health care and hospital costs. These programs also align with the National Biodefense Strategy, the National One Health Framework, and the National Rabies Management Plan. The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) recognizes the crucial role that HHS-CDC-PRB plays in protecting US citizens and domestic animals against rabies.

HHS-CDC-PRB's primary objective is managing the National Rabies Surveillance System. It maintains the only globally recognized US reference laboratory for rabies diagnostics.

HHS-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.

HHS-CDC-PRB serves as a key resource for state and local health departments, acting as their sole federal agency partner in human and animal rabies case surveillance, diagnostic testing, and post-exposure prophylaxis guidelines. The subject matter expertise HHS-CDC-PRB provides to state and local health jurisdictions is also vital to accurately assessing human rabies exposures. HHS-CDC-PRB tracks outbreaks, identifies emerging rabies threats to humans and livestock, and serves as the primary expert consultative resource on rabies for the medical community. HHS-CDC-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 wildlife exposures, including bat exposures.

The duties performed by HHS-CDC-PRB are critical to protecting US citizens from this deadly disease. The requested level of funding would:

1. Stabilize staffing and support other resources required to provide continuous, 24/7 consultations with medical professionals managing human rabies exposures.

2. Facilitate the establishment of a Rabies Center of Excellence to coordinate laboratory partners across the US as a network capable of effectively managing rabies outbreaks and resulting surges in laboratory testing.

3. Facilitate hands-on training and mentoring for the next generation of rabies scientists and laboratory personnel at the state, local, and tribal levels, as these individuals are often the first to detect new rabies cases and serve on the front lines of defense against onward transmission.

4. Allow for the creation of a 24-hour rabies case-reporting hotline to close gaps in the current rabies surveillance network and provide public access to essential rabies educational materials.

5. Strengthen efforts to prevent the importation of rabid dogs from canine rabies-endemic countries into the US.

6. Facilitate travel alerts and pre-exposure vaccination recommendations for US travelers abroad.

Together, these efforts focus on reducing rabies exposures among US citizens, domestic animals, and livestock and preventing the need for costly medical interventions.

USAHA urges members of the 120th Congress to appropriate no less than $15 million for national rabies prevention efforts conducted by HHS-CDC-PRB, the primary federal institution for rabies prevention and control in the United States.