UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2026 Resolution
130th Annual Meeting
October 15-21, 2026
Madison, WI

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 2 APPROVED

SOURCE: JOINT COMMITTEE ON NAHLN

SUBJECT MATTER: Establishing a Predictable Annual Award Timeline for National Animal Health Laboratory Network Infrastructure Cooperative Agreements to Ensure Operational Continuity

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RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services, to:

1. Establish and adhere to a standardized, predictable annual timeline for the review, processing, and execution of National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) infrastructure cooperative agreements;
2. Ensure that cooperative agreement awards are fully executed and issued no later than June 1 of each year, providing state and university laboratories with sufficient lead time before the July 1 start of the state fiscal year;
3. Streamline administrative processes within the USDA-APHIS to eliminate late-cycle processing delays and reduce the need for emergency pre-award spending authorizations by recipient institutions; and
4. Prioritize consistent and timely funding transfers to sustain core laboratory infrastructure, retain specialized diagnostic personnel, and ensure network-wide readiness for foreign animal disease surveillance and emergency response.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) relies on federal cooperative agreements to fund core laboratory infrastructure. These agreements represent a vital federal-state-private partnership, providing the foundational capacity, diagnostic capabilities, equipment, and trained personnel required for business continuity, ongoing surveillance, and rapid emergency response to animal health outbreaks involving NAHLN-scoped diseases.

In recent years, sporadic changes in funding availability, shifts in administrative policies, and delays in federal award processing have introduced significant uncertainty into network operations. Unpredictable award cycles force state and university diagnostic

laboratories to navigate substantial administrative challenges, threatening their ability to maintain uninterrupted staffing and operational readiness.

A primary operational challenge stems from the misalignment between federal award execution timelines and state institutional fiscal calendars. The fiscal year for the vast majority of NAHLN member laboratories begins on July 1. When federal cooperative agreements are delayed beyond this date, as occurred in 2026, when award notices were delayed by 14 weeks, laboratories are forced to establish complex pre-award spending authorizations and assume financial risk simply to maintain ongoing operations and retain specialized diagnostic staff. The 2026 delays extended nearly to the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30, creating additional risk because these funds are not "no-year" funds and, therefore, could have been lost if the awards had not been executed before the end of the federal fiscal year.

To ensure business continuity, safeguard diagnostic capabilities, and eliminate reliance on emergency pre-award spending workarounds, the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service should establish a standardized, predictable annual funding calendar. Ensuring that cooperative agreement awards are finalized and issued by June 1 each year would better align federal award execution with state laboratory fiscal cycles and enable laboratories to execute their agreed-upon scopes of work without disruption, thereby supporting national diagnostic preparedness.