UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2026 Resolution

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 22 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON WILDLIFE

SUBJECT MATTER: Release of Funding to Update the United States Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center Research and Diagnostic Laboratories

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of the Interior to proceed with construction of the new United States Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center, for which funding has already been apportioned.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) is operated by the United States Department of the Interior (DOI) and is the only Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) facility within DOI dedicated exclusively to the scientific investigation of wildlife diseases that may threaten human and animal health. The NWHC plays a critical role in diagnostic and epidemiologic investigations of wildlife mortality events, the characterization of wildlife diseases, and the development of tools that enable natural resource managers to address wildlife health challenges. The NWHC is an affiliate laboratory of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network and a World Organisation for Animal Health Collaborating Centre for Research, Diagnosis, and Surveillance of Wildlife Pathogens. The NWHC is registered with and inspected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Federal Select Agent Program. Built in approximately 1960, the NWHC facility has reached the end of its usable life despite continual upgrades.

In 2021, USGS was congressionally directed to provide $55.5 million in initial funding for the NWHC major infrastructure project (Public Law 116-260). The construction project has been fully funded through a combination of congressionally mandated funding and the USGS Lifecycle Infrastructure Program (LIP). The project is the highest priority in the USGS five-year LIP plan. A contract for the design of the new facility was awarded in 2022, and the design was completed in 2025. The final Environmental Impact Statement was published in 2024, and the Record of Decision was signed in 2025. Approval from DOI is required before the construction contract can be solicited for bids, but that approval has not yet occurred.

Wildlife surveillance provides early warning of pathogens that threaten United States agriculture, public health, and the recreational economy. Prevention and early detection at the wildlife-livestock-human interface are more cost-effective than outbreak response. The NWHC plays a critical role in detecting high-priority pathogens through continuous surveillance and monitoring of wildlife across the country. Replacement of critical infrastructure at the current facility continues to be deferred in anticipation of construction of a new facility. Construction costs for the new facility increase with each year the project is delayed because of inflation. Previous plans and business case analyses have shown that new construction at the current site remains the most cost-effective option.

The NWHC supports the mission of the United States Animal Health Association and its members and is a significant resource for wildlife, agriculture, and public health agencies in the United States and globally. By supporting wildlife disease outbreak investigations and providing tools to help manage disease in wildlife populations, the NWHC contributes to the understanding of important diseases, including highly pathogenic avian influenza, New World screwworm, and chronic wasting disease. With increasing concerns about emerging, reemerging, and transboundary diseases, demands on NWHC facilities and staff can be expected to increase.