2026 Resolution
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RESOLUTION NUMBER: 28 APPROVED

SOURCE: **COMMITTEE ON PARASITIC & VECTOR BORNE DISEASES**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Strengthening Research, Education, and Extension Capacity to Address the Emerging *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda Threat in the United States Cattle Industry**

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association supports the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, and the USDA, Agricultural Research Service to request and Congress to appropriate annual funding to address the threat posed by the pathogenic protozoan *Theileria (T) orientalis* Ikeda and to:

1. Collaborate with state animal health officials, veterinary diagnostic laboratories, academic institutions, and industry stakeholders to prioritize surveillance and epidemiologic investigations for *T. orientalis* Ikeda and its vectors;

2. Support and facilitate research to better characterize the distribution, prevalence, economic impact, transmission dynamics, and risk factors associated with *T. orientalis* Ikeda infections in all United States cattle populations;

3. Support the research and development of improved diagnostic methods, treatment and prevention options, and strategies to mitigate the impacts of *T. orientalis* Ikeda, including integrated pest and vector management strategies and best practices;

4. Assemble and analyze field and research data to develop science-based recommendations for the effective control and management of *T. orientalis* Ikeda; and

5. Coordinate, participate in, and support symposia that bring together researchers and stakeholders to provide research updates and identify producer needs and priorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Bovine theileriosis, caused by the pathogenic protozoan *Theileria orientalis* genotype Ikeda, poses a significant threat to animal health, cattle productivity, and the profitability of the United States (US) cattle industry. First diagnosed in the US in 2017, *T. orientalis* Ikeda has since spread westward alongside its primary tick vector, the Asian longhorned tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*), which has become established in 27 states and continues to expand its geographic range. Alternative routes of transmission, including other biting insects and needle transfer, may make the distribution and impact of bovine theileriosis significantly greater than previously thought.

The first detection of bovine theileriosis in the Midwest was reported in Missouri in 2023. Since then, cases have been reported in several other states, including Kansas (2024), Iowa (2024), and Nebraska (2025). Economic losses resulting from clinical theileriosis affect producers. In naïve areas, these losses occur primarily in adult cows. As *Theileria* becomes endemic in an area, the disease shifts toward clinical cases occurring primarily in a small percentage of young calves, most commonly those two to three months of age.

Acute infection with *T. orientalis* Ikeda causes anemia and fever, which can manifest clinically as weakness, late-term abortion, and death. However, most herds and most cattle that become infected never exhibit clinical signs. When mortality occurs in affected naïve herds, rates range from two to ten percent. In rare theileriosis outbreaks, mortality rates exceeding 20 percent have been observed. The specific risk factors that predispose particular herds or individual cattle to developing clinical signs of theileriosis are poorly understood. There is concern that, when subjected to stress, *Theileria*-positive animals, despite the absence of anemia, may have lower survival rates than *Theileria*-negative animals when challenged by a bovine respiratory disease event, underscoring the need for further research. Knowledge gaps regarding disease progression, pathology, and correlates of protection hinder the identification of high-risk animal groups and the implementation of evidence-based interventions, thereby limiting the development of effective control strategies. Currently, no proven effective vaccines or treatments are available, leaving veterinarians and producers with limited means to mitigate losses associated with *T. orientalis* Ikeda infection.