UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2026 Resolution
130th Annual Meeting
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RESOLUTION NUMBER: 4 **APPROVED AS AMENDED**

SOURCE: **JOINT COMMITTEE ON NAHLN**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Enhancing National Animal Health Laboratory Network Preparedness and Diagnostic Capacity for New World Screwworm Response**

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to develop and support a national preparedness and response program for New World screwworm (NWS) within the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), including:

- Development and deployment of standardized training, continuing education, and competency-based workforce development programs in NWS diagnostics, entomology, and parasitology for NAHLN laboratories;
- Establishment of a formal process to certify and authorize qualified NAHLN laboratories with existing trained expertise to conduct official NWS diagnostic testing;
- Development of standardized diagnostic protocols, reference materials, and laboratory guidance documents to support consistent identification, testing, reporting, and response activities;
- Establishment and maintenance of an NWS proficiency testing program for NAHLN laboratories to ensure ongoing readiness and competency;
- Support for tabletop exercises, preparedness activities, and laboratory response drills that incorporate NWS detection, reporting, and response scenarios;
- Expansion of partnerships among NAHLN laboratories, state and federal animal health officials, entomologists, universities, and other subject-matter experts to strengthen national diagnostic capacity; and
- Identification and prioritization of resources necessary to develop, certify, and sustain NWS testing capabilities throughout the NAHLN.

Further, USAHA and AAVLD urge the Secretary of Agriculture to re-allocate the funds necessary to support laboratory authorization and certification, training, proficiency testing, workforce development, preparedness exercises, and capability enhancement for NWS within the NAHLN.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

New World screwworm (NWS; *Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a parasitic fly whose larvae infest living, warm-blooded animals causing severe tissue damage, animal suffering, economic losses, and significant animal health response challenges. The successful eradication of NWS from the United States (US) represented a major achievement in animal health; however, NWS is no longer merely a potential threat. Recent incursions into Texas and New Mexico have made NWS an active threat, posing immediate risks to US livestock, wildlife, companion animals, and other susceptible hosts. [aphis.usda.gov], [aphis.usda.gov]

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) plays a critical role in national preparedness and response for foreign animal diseases and emerging animal health threats. NAHLN laboratories provide surge testing capacity, standardized diagnostic methods, trained personnel, and coordinated reporting systems that support rapid detection and response efforts throughout the US.

At present, participation in NWS preparedness activities remains limited primarily to border-state laboratories and selected affiliate laboratories. California and Texas laboratories have successfully completed proficiency testing and are activated for surveillance activities, while New Mexico has developed an innovative pilot program through collaboration between a state entomologist and a NAHLN laboratory. Although the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, National Veterinary Services Laboratories currently maintain diagnostic capacity, ongoing NWS incursions underscore the need for broader network authorization and testing readiness.

To respond effectively to this active threat, national diagnostic capacity must expand. The United States Animal Health Association recognizes that NWS detection requires specialized expertise in entomology, parasitology, specimen identification, and associated laboratory procedures. Although network-wide workforce development is necessary, certain NAHLN laboratories already possess relevant expertise that could be leveraged immediately if those laboratories were formally certified and authorized by USDA to conduct official testing.

Now is the critical time to expand entomology and parasitology expertise within NAHLN; establish pathways to certify qualified laboratories; support workforce development; provide continuing education; conduct tabletop exercises; and establish proficiency testing programs. Such investments will strengthen immediate response capabilities, maximize surge testing capacity, and support state and federal animal health officials during ongoing and future NWS incursions in North America.