

**A REVIEW OF USDA ANIMAL DISEASE
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE EFFORTS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK, DAIRY, AND
POULTRY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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A REVIEW OF USDA ANIMAL DISEASE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE EFFORTS

TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK, DAIRY, AND POULTRY,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m., in Room 1300 of the Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Tracey Mann [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Members present: Mann, DesJarlais, Bacon, Baird, Feenstra, Moore, Jackson of Texas, Molinaro, Alford, Van Orden, Thompson (*ex officio*), Costa, Spanberger, Caraveo, Pingree, and Davis of North Carolina.

Staff present: Caleb Crosswhite, Justina Graff, Patricia Straughn, Erin Wilson, John Konya, Daniel Feingold, Josh Lobert, Michael Stein, and Dana Sandman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TRACEY MANN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM KANSAS

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will come to order. Welcome, and thank you for joining us at today's hearing entitled, *A Review of USDA Animal Disease Prevention and Response Efforts*. After brief opening remarks, Members will receive testimony from our witness today, and then the hearing will be open to questions.

It is an honor to chair this first hearing of the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry in the 118th Congress. As a fifth-generation Kansan, having grown up on our family's farming operation, I rode pens and doctored thousands of sick cattle at our preconditioning feedyard. I understand the grit, tenacity, and courage that it takes to make a living in agriculture and the burden and responsibility for feeding the world that comes along with it.

Chairing this Subcommittee is a privilege for me, as I represent the big 1st District of Kansas, which produces more than \$10 billion worth of livestock, dairy, poultry, and products like beef, milk, and eggs every year. That does not happen in a vacuum. It takes the entire animal agriculture chain to make that happen, and we see it all in the big 1st. From the producer to the feedlot and from the harvest facility to the distributor, every role is important in delivering protein to the market and to the consumer.

Back in 1915—and I have a button here from the convention that year.* The Kansas Livestock Association was here on Capitol Hill advocating for producers around the exact same issues that we are looking at today: packers, stockyards, and animal health. Foot-and-mouth disease was wreaking havoc at the time, and Kansas producers stepped up to the plate to make a difference and to fix problems. And here we are today more than 100 years later holding a hearing to review USDA animal disease prevention and response efforts.

Today’s hearing is particularly timely as we are in the middle of the most devastating high-path avian influenza outbreak on record, and African swine fever in the Dominican Republic and Haiti is dangerously close to our shores.

Animal health issues don’t always get the attention that they deserve, but, as we have seen with past animal disease outbreaks, there are enormous economic consequences that extend well beyond the animal industry. The new farm bill must continue to address these risks to animal health while bolstering the long-term ability of U.S. animal agriculture to be competitive in the global marketplace and provide consumers around the world safe, wholesome, affordable food produced in a sustainable manner.

Industry stakeholders and Congressional leaders had the foresight to establish a three-tiered animal disease program with mandatory funding to ensure the sufficient development and the timely deployment of all measures necessary to prevent, identify, and mitigate the catastrophic impacts that an animal disease outbreak would have on our country’s food security, export markets, and overall economic stability.

As we work to craft this next farm bill, we must have a comprehensive understanding of how these programs have been implemented. We look forward to feedback on the lessons learned, what is working, what should be reconsidered, and where additional investment may be required.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mann follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. TRACEY MANN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM KANSAS

It is an honor to chair this first hearing of the House Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry in the 118th Congress. As a fifth generation Kansan having grown up on my family farm, I rode pens and doctored thousands of sick cattle at our preconditioning feedlot. I understand the grit, tenacity, and courage that it takes to make a living in agriculture, and the burden of responsibility for feeding the world that comes along with it.

Chairing this Subcommittee is a unique honor for me as I represent the Big First, where producers sell \$10 billion worth of livestock, dairy, poultry, and products like beef, milk, and eggs every year—more than any other Congressional district.

That does not happen in a vacuum. It takes the entire animal agriculture chain to make that happen—and we see it all in the Big First. From the producer to the feedlot and from the harvest facility to the distributor, every role is important in delivering protein to the market and to the consumer.

Back in 1915—and I have a button from their convention that year—the Kansas Livestock Association was here on Capitol Hill advocating for producers around the exact same issues that we’re looking at today—packers, stockyards, and animal health. Foot-and-mouth disease was wreaking havoc at the time, and Kansas producers stepped up to the plate to make a difference and fix problems.

* **Editor’s note:** an image of this pen is located on p. 41.

And here we are today—more than 100 years later—holding a hearing, to review USDA animal disease prevention and response efforts. Today's hearing is particularly timely as we are in the middle of the most devastating high-path avian influenza outbreak on record, and African Swine Fever in the Dominican Republic and Haiti is getting dangerously close to our shores. Animal health issues don't always get the attention they deserve, but as we have seen with past animal disease outbreaks, their enormous economic consequences extend well beyond the animal industry.

The new farm bill must continue to address these risks to animal health while bolstering the long-term ability of U.S. animal agriculture to be competitive in the global marketplace and provide consumers around the world safe, wholesome, affordable food produced in a sustainable manner.

Industry stakeholders and Congressional leaders had the foresight to establish a three-tiered animal disease program with mandatory funding to ensure the sufficient development and timely deployment of all measures necessary to prevent, identify, and mitigate the catastrophic impacts that an animal disease outbreak would have on our country's food security, export markets, and overall economic stability. As we work to craft the next farm bill, we must have a comprehensive understanding of how these programs have been implemented. We look forward to feedback on the lessons learned—what's working, what should be reconsidered, and where additional investment may be required.

The CHAIRMAN. With that, I would now like to welcome the distinguished Ranking Member and the gentleman from California, Mr. Costa, for any opening remarks that he would like to give.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JIM COSTA, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM CALIFORNIA**

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is great to be here with our Subcommittee, and we thank you for your leadership, and obviously, as you noted your own personal family history with American agriculture from the part of the country that you represent. I have a similar experience, third generation farmer in California, and I am honored to represent folks throughout the great San Joaquin Valley. We have had the Chairman out there and part of the Committee in February, and we thank him for coming out there, but he has been there many times.

I happen to represent the most productive dairy county in the country, believe it or not, Tulare County, and the highest citrus county in the nation, and we do a lot of good things out there. But this morning's hearing is important for the Subcommittee's purpose because our witness is Under Secretary Moffitt, who also is from California originally, and our good doctor has a good understanding of the challenges we face with livestock, poultry, and the other topics that are of this Subcommittee's jurisdiction.

And while the livestock policy is typically addressed outside the farm bill, there are crucial gains certainly in the last farm bill that we created that ensure our food system is secure. I am interested to hear the witness' testimony on those programs because, as I say always, food is national security. Food is national security, and I think all of my colleagues here agree with that and the importance of maintaining American agriculture's productivity, and its certainty to continue to lead the world is so critical.

No issue embodies the message to a greater extent than animal health programs. The inherent biosecurity measures in this world that we live in that is interconnected is critical, and therefore, protecting livestock operations in our country and having the tools in place to address outbreaks is critical. And therefore, our supply chain, which has been challenged here in recent years as a result

of the pandemic and other factors both internally throughout the country, as well as externally in terms of our exports is something that I think the entire Agriculture Committee is focused on.

We have all seen firsthand how high-pathogenic avian flu has devastated domestic poultry populations where depopulations have had to take place. It certainly has increased, as we know, the price of eggs. People say how could eggs increase so much? Well, avian flu, I am told, is a result of about 70 percent of the increase in egg prices.

So we have to continue to refine and improve our approach to address animal disease. The USDA needs all the tools to guarantee a robust response. We want to thank them for their good work during this outbreak and previous outbreaks and their containment efforts. Obviously, it is critical and is the subject matter for today's hearing.

There are certain aspects of animal disease that are difficult to contain, and the example as a primary driver of our current outbreak has been migrating wild bird species that interact between animal agriculture. It is just kind of the way things are, and it is inevitable. But it is something that we have to do and be challenged to prepare for. So I am looking forward to talking to our witnesses and finding how these three programs, the vaccine bank, the National Animal Preparedness and Response Program, and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network have been able to provide the foundation for preventing and preparing for outbreaks. So I look forward to the testimony of the witness. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Subcommittee, as we address the important issues that this Subcommittee faces. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ranking Member Costa. And thank you for your partnership as we look at these important issues.

Next, I would like to recognize Chairman Thompson for any opening remarks that he would like to make.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. GLENN THOMPSON, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, thank you so much. And good morning, everyone. Thank you for all taking part in this hearing. Under Secretary Moffitt and Dr. Naugle, thank you both for being here today. I want to thank Chairman Mann, Ranking Member Costa for holding this very timely and very important hearing.

From real-time disease response efforts to controlling potential disease vectors like the feral hog population, to monitoring a growing number of imported dogs from ASF-affected countries, and stopping illegal entry of meat and fruit products and byproducts, APHIS has a tremendous task in protecting the health of the U.S. animal population.

I also want to say I have had some opportunities in my travels around the country to spend some individual time with your front-line APHIS folks, and they are great people. They are dedicated to what they do. Whether it was preventing rabies from coming from Mexico or the fever tick from crossing the border and coming into our cattle, or, quite frankly, the feral hog program that is so impor-

tant because of the damage that they do, their work and your work is much appreciated.

So I was proud of Congress' work in the last farm bill to provide a historic investment in a suite of animal disease preparedness and response programs. And as we draft the next farm bill, it is imperative that we understand how these existing authorities and resources have been utilized, especially in the wake of high-path avian influenza and the incoming threat of the African swine fever. We must ensure these and related programs are having the greatest possible impact. And those are at the top. Obviously, those get more attention, but what you do each and every day, as I have mentioned, the rabies threat coming across the border, the fever tick, there is just so much that most people are not familiar with, and we very much appreciate you being on the frontlines.

Now, I hear all too often from folks back home and across the country about their ongoing struggles with the high-path outbreak, which has only reinforced my commitment to treating food security as national security. As we learned the hard way in 2014, 2015, biosecurity plays an enormous role in mitigating the spread of the disease, and we want to ensure strong measures are in place across all production methods.

That said, we also have to ensure these measures don't unduly burden the day-to-day operations of our dedicated producers. So I appreciate the Department's continued collaboration with state officials and industry stakeholders towards an efficient yet pragmatic response based on the latest available science.

I would also be remiss if I didn't highlight CWD, chronic wasting disease, which has been a big problem in many states for deer populations, including my home State of Pennsylvania, for quite some time. In total, it has spread to 29 other states across the country. Last Congress, I was proud to work with Congressman Kind and my House and Senate colleagues to enact the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act (Pub. L. 117-328). And I look forward to working with you and my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to ensure that those programs continue to receive the attention and the resources that they deserve.

And with that, I again want to thank our distinguished witnesses not only for being here today but for their important work day-to-day, working to protect the health of our animal populations.

And with that, I look forward to your testimony, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thompson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. GLENN THOMPSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Under Secretary Moffitt and Dr. Naugle, thank you both for being here today. I also want to thank Chairman Mann and Ranking Member Costa for holding this very timely hearing.

From real-time disease response efforts, to controlling potential disease vectors like the feral hog population, to monitoring a growing number of imported dogs from ASF-affected countries, and stopping the illegal entry of meat and fruit products and byproducts—APHIS has a tremendous task in protecting the health of the U.S. animal population.

So I was proud of Congress' work in the last farm bill to provide a historic investment in a suite of animal disease preparedness and response programs.

As we draft the next farm bill, it is imperative that we understand how these existing authorities and resources have been utilized.

Especially in the wake of high-path avian influenza, and with the looming threat of African Swine Fever, we must ensure these, and related programs are having the greatest possible impact.

I hear all-to-often from folks back home and across the country about their ongoing struggles with the high-path outbreak, which has only reinforced my commitment to treating food security as national security.

As we learned the hard way in 2014 and 2015, biosecurity plays an enormous role in mitigating the spread of the disease, and we want to ensure strong measures are in place across all production methods.

That said, we also have to ensure these measures don't unduly burden the day-to-day operation of our dedicated producers.

So I appreciate the Department's continued collaboration with state officials and industry stakeholders towards an efficient, yet pragmatic response based on the latest available science.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't highlight CWD, which has been a big problem for the deer populations in Pennsylvania for quite some time and has spread to 29 other states across the country.

Last Congress, I was proud to work with Congressman Kind and my House and Senate colleagues to enact the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act, and I look forward to working with you and my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to ensure those programs continue to receive the attention and resources they deserve.

With that, I again want to thank our distinguished witnesses, not only for being here today, but for their important day-to-day work in protecting the health of our animal populations.

I look forward to your testimony, and I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. And thank you, Chairman Thompson.

The chair would request that other Members submit their opening statements for the record so the witness may begin her testimony and to ensure that there is ample time for questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller of Ohio follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MAX L. MILLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM OHIO

Ohio is one of the top leading producers for livestock, representing about 1/2 of all Ohio agriculture production.

- Ohio's cattle farmers raise approximately 296,000 cows
- There are about 2,200 dairy farms in Ohio
- Ohio raises more than 2.95 million hogs each year

As such, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's "APHIS" efforts working with state and local partners toward detection, prevention and rapid response tools remain critical to address any potential animal disease outbreak.

Ohio ranks seventh in the nation in pork production and with 25 percent of pork goods exported, threats relating to foreign animal diseases are a constant concern. Pork producers continue to face increasing threats from foreign animal disease including African Swine Fever. If a foreign animal disease outbreak were to occur, U.S. farmers would immediately turn to APHIS, state animal health officials, and other stakeholders for:

- early detection, prevention and rapid response tools;
- robust laboratory capacity for surveillance;
- and a viable stockpile of vaccines to rapidly respond to the introduction of a high-consequence diseases.

A foreign animal disease outbreak would immediately impact the entire agricultural sector, and stifle needed foods supplies.

* * * * *

We look forward to the 2023 Farm Bill to review and strengthen programs that safeguard the nation's food supply against threats posed by foreign animal diseases,

including veterinary diagnostic laboratories to test for new or emerging animal diseases, as well as funding to support animal disease surveillance.

The CHAIRMAN. Our witness for today's hearing is USDA's Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Jenny Lester Moffitt. She is accompanied today by Dr. Alecia Naugle, who is the Associate Deputy Administrator for Veterinary Services at USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services.

Under Secretary Lester Moffitt, thank you for joining us today. We will now proceed to your testimony. You will have 5 minutes. The timer in front of you will count down to 0, at which point your time has expired. Under Secretary Lester Moffitt, please begin when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF HON. JENNY LESTER MOFFITT, UNDER SECRETARY FOR MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D.C.; ACCOMPANIED BY ALECIA L. NAUGLE, D.V.M., PH.D., ASSOCIATE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR, VETERINARY SERVICES, ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, USDA

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you, Chairman Mann, Ranking Member Costa, Chairman Thompson, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here to testify today.

As you mentioned, Chairman Mann, I am joined by Dr. Alecia Naugle, Associate Deputy Administrator for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services Veterinary Services Program. She works closely with Dr. Rosemary Sifford, the U.S. Chief Veterinary Officer. Together, they lead a workforce of veterinarians and other personnel dedicated to protecting the health and marketability of American livestock.

As Chairman Thompson mentioned, every day, APHIS employees are out on the field, on farms, at the borders inspecting and conducting surveillance of animal diseases. They are working directly with individual farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, states, and Tribal officials. They share best practices about biosecurity and preparedness. They oversee imports and exports of animals and animal products to ensure continued safe trade, protecting existing and opening new markets for agricultural products here and abroad.

Their efforts to protect these markets has been greatly enhanced by the new animal health programs Congress provided in the last farm bill. The new authorities and additional funding are working. We are better prepared today because of those programs. The 2018 Farm Bill gave us three interlocking programs. They work incredibly well together and allow us to form stronger partnerships with producers, states, veterinarians, and others. These programs, coupled with appropriations and the Secretary's ability to transfer funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation, help us respond and be prepared. All of us have a stake in keeping foreign animal diseases out of the country, and these tools help us work together.

The National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, or NADPRP as we call it, has allowed us to fund 180 different projects with our partners. We have funded projects that have increased our surveillance for significant animal diseases and that have enhanced our ability to standardize sample collection.

NADPRP has let us fund training exercises and new methods for recovering from disease outbreaks. Key is that it is not just us doing this important work but also our partners and cooperators who bring their expertise in U.S. animal health as well.

These projects fill important needs. They identify and close small gaps in our overall preparedness and response programs. We regularly say that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound in cure. By that standard, this program is worth its weight in gold.

The other two programs that the farm bill authorizes are also critically important. We have funded over \$20 million worth of projects for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. We know that speed is important with animal health emergencies, and having a broad network of laboratories to identify where disease is lets us quickly eradicate it and reduce the spread.

The third program, the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank, we know that we have kept foot-and-mouth disease out of the country for nearly a century, and we are confident that the system of overlapping safeguards that we have in place will continue to work. However, given the massive cost that an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease would cause, having vaccine at the ready is a very prudent measure, an insurance policy should the worst occur.

These programs have better prepared us for foreign animal diseases, but they are also building off of existing expertise that APHIS has in preparing for and responding to disease such as the outbreak of highly-pathogenic avian influenza. We know that our methods in stamping out high-path AI are working. In March 2023, we had just five cases in commercial facilities when in March last year, we saw ten times that amount. We know how and where to look for high-path AI. We know how to respond quickly so producers can get back to producing food, how important biosecurity is, and how to keep trade markets open as well. We also know from our partners at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that the currently circulating virus strain poses a low human health risk to the public. And if high-path AI cases surge again, with continued partnership with states and producers, we know what to do, and we are ready.

With respect to African swine fever, our efforts continue to keep this deadly virus offshore. We have enhanced inspections, increased our surveillance capabilities, and educated producers and veterinarians about the signs and risks of the virus. I remain confident that we can keep this disease away, but we are all prepared to respond to any incursion, and the farm bill programs have helped us improve our readiness.

Mr. Chairman, we always want to keep these foreign animal diseases out of our country, and these new tools that Congress has given us have enhanced our efforts. We are better prepared to detect, to respond, and to eliminate foreign animal diseases because of them.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Moffitt follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JENNY LESTER MOFFITT, UNDER SECRETARY FOR MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Chairman Mann, Ranking Member Costa, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important topic. As Under Secretary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Marketing and Regulatory Programs, I see up close every day how the hard-working employees of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) are protecting and enhancing the health of our nation's livestock and poultry.

I am joined by Dr. Alecia Naugle, Associate Deputy Administrator of APHIS' Veterinary Services program. She works closely with Dr. Rosemary Sifford, the Chief Veterinary Officer of the United States. Together they guide a workforce of veterinarians and other personnel dedicated to protecting the health and marketability of American livestock.

Their work is essential because too many farmers are in a precarious position—an outbreak of an animal disease on their farm would be disastrous. While the last couple of years have seen record national farm income, we know that nearly 50% of American farmers have had negative farm income. Our data shows that 40% of farms are small and midsize farms where the primary occupation of the household is farming, but the majority of their income to support their families is from off-farm sources. Only 11% of American farmers are mid-sized or larger—representing over 80% of the value of U.S. agricultural production, which drove the record-level farm income at a time when so many were struggling. And lest we not forget that 2% of those farms that did exceedingly well were actually owned by investment banks and institutional investors. Our farmers and ranchers deserve the opportunity to compete in a marketplace where they have a shot at being profitable.

Farmers and ranchers also face a changing climate which is causing animal and pest populations to shift into new or expanded habitats. This movement can result in increased spread of pests and diseases. Under the leadership of the Biden-Harris Administration and Secretary Vilsack, USDA has been working hard to make our food supply chain more resilient and provide rural communities with the tools they need to thrive through investments in developing more, new, and better markets for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners.

USDA's efforts to protect animal health are fundamental to achieving this goal. Every day, APHIS employees are out in the field, on farms, and at the borders, inspecting and conducting surveillance for animal diseases. They are working directly with individual farmers and ranchers, veterinarians, states, and Tribal officials. They share information and best practices about biosecurity and preparedness. They oversee imports and exports of animals and animal products to ensure continued safe trade, protecting and opening markets for agricultural products here and abroad.

The 2022–2023 Outbreak of Highly-Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Since the first commercial detection of highly-pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Indiana in February of last year, APHIS and its state partners have responded aggressively, relying on long-established and well-practiced disease response plans that are proven to eradicate this virus from commercial facilities. And we have been successful. Compared to this time last year, we have a small fraction of the number of positive premises in commercial flocks: five in March of 2023 compared to 51 in March of 2022. We know the virus load remains prevalent in our wild bird population and APHIS, in partnership with states and industry, remains vigilant.

Our colleagues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to assess that the circulating virus poses a low risk to human health, so we remain focused on limited impacts to animal health.

The 2014–2015 outbreak of HPAI taught us the value of biosecurity. Since then, USDA has emphasized its importance at every opportunity and our efforts have had meaningful results. Producers have made significant improvements in biosecurity, detection, and monitoring on their farms, which has resulted in very little lateral, farm-to-farm spread during this latest outbreak. In the 2014–2015 outbreak, approximately 70% of the cases were due to lateral spread. In this outbreak, lateral spread accounts for just 16% of the cases, a remarkable improvement. But that number could be even smaller. Our efforts show that even minor biosecurity measures have a massive impact on whether the virus impacts a farm. We continue to stress more than anything else, the importance of strong biosecurity to every producer—from the largest commercial-scale farms to smallest backyard flocks. And we ask for your continued partnership in sharing the important message of biosecurity with poultry producers in your districts. Our Defend the Flock campaign outlines

resources and steps that every producer can take to safeguard the health of their birds.

Our counterparts at the Agricultural Research Service are hard at work developing a vaccine to counter the strains of the virus currently circulating so that we are prepared in the unlikely event if we should ever need to turn to vaccination to complement our eradication efforts. This work is ongoing, and it will still be a while before a vaccine could be commercially available and easily applied. Even then, there would be many factors we would weigh before authorizing its use, especially with respect to the likely trade impacts of a vaccination campaign. We will continue to discuss these issues with stakeholders and our trading partners and weigh all these perspectives before making any decisions on policy.

At this stage of the outbreak, continuing our current strategy of eradication or “stamping out” HPAI is our best and most effective option. We can rapidly contain and eliminate the virus in commercial poultry; in fact, the majority of cases in recent months have been backyard flocks. APHIS and our state and industry partners and producers respond quickly and aggressively to reduce viral spread among poultry operations through rapid depopulation and disposal, and surveillance testing for the virus in high-risk geographic areas.

On top of the field veterinarians and support staff who have been leading the emergency response, I would like to highlight the excellent work the APHIS trade staff has done in keeping as many export markets open as possible. While some of these negotiations are done after we experience an outbreak, APHIS has also made great strides in securing regionalization agreements to prevent market disruptions. APHIS’ efforts on regionalization have ensured a science- and risk-based approach that is consistent with APHIS obligations under international trade agreements and the continued free flow of agricultural trade. Instead of limiting U.S. exports from the entire country, these negotiated agreements are often at the state or county level and are consistent with approaches to address HPAI in a science-based and trade facilitative manner. As a result, a contained outbreak in one part of a state may have little bearing on the export possibilities of producers in other parts of a state. This has been a huge benefit to producers across the country and these efforts have greatly helped producers stay afloat during these challenging times.

I thank every APHIS employee who has been deployed around the country, often for weeks at a time, away from family and friends, to respond to this outbreak and I thank our state partners for also responding aggressively. This outbreak has highlighted the critical need for public sector animal health professionals, specifically veterinarians. We need a robust state and Federal workforce ready to respond to any outbreak. We are continually evaluating opportunities to recruit and retain talented professionals as well as encourage more students to consider careers in animal science. Unfortunately, veterinary student loan debt and other limitations may make public sector positions less attractive to new graduates. We look forward to working with Members of the Subcommittee and both chambers to identify solutions to workforce challenges, especially in retaining highly qualified, skilled professionals for the benefit of livestock and poultry producers.

2018 Farm Bill Section 12101: Animal Disease Prevention and Management

We know that responding to animal health emergencies is difficult and incredibly costly. The Secretary has used his emergency authority to transfer nearly \$800 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation to combat the HPAI outbreak. The 2014–2015 outbreak cost taxpayers around \$1 billion. An outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease or African swine fever would have even more devastating economic consequences for the country, producers, and consumers, with costs to the government and producers into the tens of billions. Prevention and preparedness are essential if we are to protect U.S. agriculture, our export markets, and the stability of the U.S. food supply.

That is why we are so appreciative of the tools that Congress gave us in the 2018 Farm Bill. The bill created a three-tiered program to support animal disease prevention and preparedness. It included the new National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), the new National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB), and additional funding for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). We are incredibly thankful for your leadership in establishing these new tools and we have worked diligently to fully implement these programs.

NADPRP gives APHIS additional resources to work with its partners to expand the reach of its animal health programs and to identify and fill in gaps in our existing preparedness and response capabilities. Under NADPRP, APHIS provides funds to states, universities, industry organizations, Tribal partners, and other eligible entities to support projects that help prevent and prepare for the most serious animal

diseases that threaten U.S. livestock, poultry, and related industries. Collectively, NADPRP projects boost the nation's capacity and capability to detect, respond to, and recover from animal disease outbreaks that may impact all livestock and poultry sectors and all livestock and poultry operation types and sizes.

NADPRP projects develop programs and provide resources to:

- increase producer's use of effective and practical biosecurity measures;
- training and exercises for animal agriculture emergency responders and producers;
- educate livestock and poultry owners on disease prevention and build awareness of what happens in an outbreak;
- develop and implement carcass disposal and decontamination techniques;
- create and test animal movement plans for outbreak scenarios; and,
- help states develop and exercise animal disease response plans to enhance their readiness to quickly control high-consequence animal disease outbreaks.

One major NADPRP success story is the Certified Swine Sample Collector Training Program, a cooperative agreement with Iowa State University, which has become a cornerstone of our African swine fever prevention efforts. Iowa State worked cooperatively with major swine industry organizations to develop, evaluate, and improve this highly regarded and frequently used training program. NADPRP funded online training videos and other materials to educate sample collectors, and the swine industry has been instrumental in sharing this program with producers and encouraging participation. This program is part of a national diagnostic sample collection training program designed to assure state and Federal animal health officials that producers, caretakers, and other pork industry personnel have been trained through a standardized process by accredited veterinarians to correctly collect, handle, and submit samples. This would be invaluable in the unlikely event of an outbreak.

Overall, about 24 percent of NADPRP projects have been focused on improving biosecurity, the importance of which we now see with the HPAI outbreak. About 1/3 have been focused on improvements for depopulation and disposal, which would be critical in the event of an outbreak. The program has greatly improved the reach of our animal health efforts and improved our preparedness and ability to respond to foreign animal pests and diseases.

Last month, APHIS announced the FY 2023 list of projects funded under this section of the farm bill. We awarded \$15.8 million to 60 projects led by 38 states, land-grant universities, and industry organizations to enhance our nation's ability to rapidly respond to and control animal disease outbreaks. This year's projects focused on enhancing prevention, preparedness, early detection, and rapid response to the most damaging diseases that threaten U.S. livestock. Projects will help states develop and practice plans to quickly control disease outbreaks, train responders and producers to perform critical animal disease outbreak response activities, increase producer use of effective and practical biosecurity measures, educate livestock owners on preventing disease and what happens in an outbreak, and support animal movement decisions in animal disease outbreaks, among others. APHIS also intends to fund additional projects that will be led by Tribal partners and will announce those projects this spring.

The 2018 Farm Bill provided additional funding for NAHLN. NAHLN is a nationally coordinated network and partnership of 60 Federal, state, and university-associated animal health laboratories, which provides animal health diagnostic testing to detect biological threats to the nation's food animals, thus protecting animal health, public health, and the nation's food supply. We are thankful to Congress for their ongoing support for NAHLN through annual appropriations bills, which provides most of the Federal funding for the network. Funding provided by the farm bill supplements the existing yearly appropriation and allows the laboratories to take on new and important projects that enhance coordination and animal health diagnostics. As we saw with the HPAI outbreak, the labs that are part of NAHLN are the backbone of our disease surveillance and response, rapidly detecting disease and providing insight into where to focus our eradication efforts.

APHIS has awarded \$21 million in funding from the farm bill to the NAHLN laboratories over the past 3 years, including a few projects funded jointly with NADPRP. We plan to award an additional \$7.5 million this year. It is also worth noting that many NAHLN labs served as surge capacity for human COVID-19 testing during the height of the pandemic, demonstrating their value to our overall national healthcare infrastructure beyond their critical role for animal health.

The third component to the farm bill's animal health program is the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank. While our ultimate goal is to

keep foreign animal pests and diseases out of the country entirely, the vaccine and countermeasures bank will allow us to respond quickly should a high consequence disease strike the United States. Per the direction from Congress, the bank is primarily focused on vaccines and countermeasures that would target an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). APHIS has kept FMD out of the country for nearly a century and we are confident that the system of overlapping safeguards we have in place—including the exclusion of imports from affected countries and at-the-border inspections of animals and animal products—will continue to keep the disease out. However, given the massive costs an outbreak of FMD would cause, having a vaccine at the ready is a prudent measure which would work with our existing inspection and eradication measures, and is an insurance policy should the worst occur.

The vaccine bank is focused on providing coverage for the highest priority strains of the FMD virus. APHIS, on the advice of the technical committee that provides scientific recommendations and oversees and guides the vaccine bank, has provided more than \$56 million for the purchase of vaccine antigen concentrate and will invest an additional \$15 million this year.

Although much of the focus has been on acquiring vaccine antigen concentrate, we also invested \$520,000 in other countermeasures, such as diagnostic test kits for foot-and-mouth disease and African swine fever for the first time in 2022. We have a sources—sought notice open to gather worldwide information regarding available test kits for those two diseases and classical swine fever. We will make future purchases after reviewing the responses, with the intent to purchase from more than one source to ensure an adequate supply in case of an outbreak.

Response to the Threat of African Swine Fever

I mentioned previously how important it is to keep foreign animal diseases out of the country. That is why APHIS took immediate steps to strengthen our defenses when, for the first time in several decades, we detected African swine fever (ASF) in the Western Hemisphere. ASF is a devastating, deadly disease of swine that would have a significant impact on U.S. pork producers and the economy if it were to be detected in the United States. There is no treatment or vaccine available for this disease approved for use in the United States, although we are hopeful that the work of our colleagues in the Agricultural Research Service will soon yield a vaccine that is fully tested and ready for commercial production. The only way to stop ASF is to temporarily halt the movement of all pigs and depopulate all affected or exposed swine herds. A detection here would immediately close overseas export markets, which are critical to the profitability of the swine industry, and it would take many months or years to fully restore those markets.

When an existing cooperative disease surveillance program identified the virus in pigs in the Dominican Republic in July 2021 and later in Haiti, APHIS took swift action to augment and enhance its many existing defenses. We already have a strong system of overlapping safeguards in place, including restrictions against imports of animals or pork products from ASF-affected countries. We looked closely at potential pathways the virus could enter and worked with our partners to close them. For example, our U.S. Customs and Border Protection colleagues enhanced inspections of passengers coming from the region and are closely monitoring the handling of regulated garbage from airplanes. We worked with the Coast Guard to identify boats traveling to Puerto Rico whose passengers could unintentionally carry the virus and have conducted appropriate disease surveillance where the boats were detected.

Most notably, we established a protection zone around Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Since those are U.S. Territories, any incursion of ASF onto those islands could trigger trading partners to cut off trade from the mainland. The World Organisation for Animal Health permits the establishment of a protection zone within an area free of disease, as a temporary measure in response to an increased risk from a neighboring country or zone of different animal health status. The protection zone we created allows the continental U.S. to retain its disease-free status and continue our international trade, even if there is an ASF detection in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands. It also allows APHIS to enhance surveillance and create additional rules for movement restrictions of live swine and products out of the protection zone, protecting the islands from the virus and enhancing protections for the U.S. livestock industry.

Beyond establishing the protection zone, we are focusing additional resources on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We have removed feral swine in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands because feral swine are a natural reservoir for the disease and could help the virus spread quickly if it moved to those territories. We have also made improvements to the diagnostic laboratory in Puerto Rico, providing

resources and technical assistance to increase that lab's capabilities to run important diagnostic tests. We have enhanced inspections of passengers traveling to and through the territories. We have run a bilingual public education campaign in those territories and the region to educate the public, veterinarians, and producers about the risks of ASF and how they can help stop the spread of the virus.

The Secretary, using his emergency transfer authority under the Animal Health Protection Act, transferred \$500 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation for these and other enhanced ASF prevention and response activities. APHIS has used that funding to strengthen its response activities and has placed teams of veterinarians and animal health officials in the region. APHIS officials are working closely with the Dominican Republic, providing technical and financial assistance for a plan to control the disease in the country, thereby strengthening the animal health security of our domestic producers. APHIS is also working closely with the Dominican Republic to modernize and support their animal health laboratory capabilities, ensuring effective and proactive surveillance testing is available in the region. In Haiti, APHIS is focused on providing supplies and remote technical laboratory support to agricultural officials and is working with them on long-range plans, although the political instability of that country presents an ongoing challenge. We will continue to work with animal health officials in the region in further developing those plans and do everything we can to keep this high consequence disease out of the country.

Domestically, we have built upon our existing system of safeguards to strengthen our defenses here. We have trained 65 additional detector dog teams who work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection at key commercial seaports and airports. We have ramped up testing capacity at our National Animal Health Laboratory Network. We also developed an extensive public outreach campaign, including advertising and signage at the largest international airports and digital advertising related to searches and other requests for information about international travel. We have also specifically geared information campaigns towards veterinarians and producers, educating them about ASF and what the signs of it are so that they can enhance our surveillance for the disease.

Animal Disease Traceability

Earlier this year, we issued a proposed rule that would update our animal disease traceability regulations. The rule would require electronic identification for interstate movement of certain cattle and bison, which would strengthen the nation's ability to quickly respond to significant animal disease outbreaks. Major animal disease outbreaks hurt our ranchers and farmers and all those who support them along the supply chain, threaten our food security, and impact our ability to trade America's high-quality food products around the world. Rapid traceability in a disease outbreak could help ranchers and farmers get back to selling their products more quickly; limit how long farms are quarantined; and keep more animals from getting sick.

We recently extended the comment period for that proposed rule and are accepting comments through April 19. We have received over 1,000 comments already, and I can assure you that we will carefully review those and use that information to determine our next steps on this important initiative.

The Agricultural Quarantine Inspection Program

Before I conclude, I'd be remiss if I didn't note our appreciation for what this Committee and the Appropriations Committees have done to help shore up funding for the Agricultural Quarantine Inspection (AQI) program over the last few years. AQI is the backbone of our efforts to protect plant and animal health. With our frontline partners at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the program provides the series of overlapping safeguards that ensure commodities, cargo, and passengers entering the country do not harbor harmful pests or diseases. Whether from the APHIS scientific, technical, and regulatory officials deciding what can be imported safely under what conditions and from where, CBP's inspectors looking through cargo, or the APHIS-trained beagle brigade sniffing out passenger baggage and cargo for meat and other agricultural products, the systems we have in place protect U.S. agricultural resources.

During the pandemic, owing to changes in travel patterns, the user-fee funded program faced shortfalls that could have led to widespread furloughs curtailing our ability to conduct these inspections and scientific and technical work. Thankfully, Congress stepped in, giving the program necessary funding to fill the gap, and we are back on strong footing.

Nevertheless, it has been many years since those user fees were last adjusted and changes in transportation and conveyance methods and sizes have rendered those

fees outdated. We are in the process of developing an updated fee schedule, which is going through the rulemaking process. While we are still early in this process, we will certainly keep this Subcommittee informed of our progress.

Conclusion

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to highlight these important programs for you today. I know we are in the midst of another farm bill cycle. The enhanced tools that Congress gave us in the 2018 Farm Bill have had very positive outcomes for our animal health programs and we are certain that the Subcommittee's work on the next farm bill will continue the critical work of safeguarding animal health. We stand ready to support you as you develop this important legislation and appreciate your understanding that "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Thank you for inviting me to join you today. I'm happy to answer your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your important testimony this morning.

At this time, Members will be recognized for questions in order of seniority, alternating between Majority and Minority Members and in order of arrival for those who joined us after this hearing convened. You will be recognized for 5 minutes each in order to allow us to get as many questions in as possible.

First, I will recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Under Secretary Moffitt, as I mentioned in my opening statement, the last farm bill included historic investments in animal health programs, including the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, and the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank, not to mention the work to solidify the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility that is currently being constructed and is almost completed in the big 1st District of Kansas.

Can you talk about how these farm bill programs are used to complement other programs and funding streams to bolster APHIS' ability to carry out one of its core missions, protecting the health of the U.S. animal population?

Ms. MOFFITT. Chairman Mann, thank you so much for that question. As I outlined in the testimony and as you just talked about, the three different programs interlocking together are very important. I come from production agriculture myself, and the importance of a farmer to be able to have many different tools is similar to our own APHIS animal disease preparedness response, as well, to be able to have funding, to be able to do tabletop exercises, other exercises so that we are ready and prepared to be able to respond to animal disease outbreaks, as well as, of course, the lab network—the extensive lab network throughout the country, and then of course the insurance policy through the vaccine bank. All of these things are important.

And your question about how we supplement that with the existing resources, annual appropriations that APHIS and USDA received, writ large, is a very important part of that. We have an incredible team at APHIS that Chairman Thompson mentioned, and a lot of that funding comes through annual appropriations. The lab network in fact is also funded through annual appropriations as well.

And then finally, I will just emphasize when and should we have an animal disease outbreak like high-path AI, the importance of being able to use CCC funding to be able to manage that outbreak is important as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. As we work to reauthorize these programs through the next farm bill, is there anything in particular that you would advise that this Committee consider?

Ms. MOFFITT. I think one thing that is really important about the funding and the authority that was provided through those three different programs in the 2018 Farm Bill is the flexibility that is allowed there so that our staff and our team of animal health responders have that flexibility. I think that is such an important part.

Of course, we will continue to work through the lab network. We will continue to work in all of the different pieces of that. We also know that we have over 800 APHIS staff who have been deployed at least once in a 6 week period many multiple times, so building up our workforce is a very important part of that as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, I agree. Thank you. On January 19, 2023, APHIS proposed a rule that would require electronic identification, or EID, ear tags for purposes of animal disease traceability and as a requisite for official interstate movement of certain cattle and bison. While I understand the goals here will obviously come with added cost to producers in my district in Kansas and across the country, in the past, APHIS has provided free EID tags and financial assistance for related infrastructure to prepare for compliance efforts with such a regulation. So I am curious, what are the Department's plans for mitigating the cost to producers and other entities like sale barns for compliance with this rule, should it become final?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing the work that APHIS has done in the past in providing animal ear tags. Over 19 million ear tags have been distributed already by APHIS. This rule right now is in draft form. I think we have received over 1,000 public comments so far, and the rule closes tomorrow, and so we are still accepting public comments. We will take those public comments as we will look at, as the team at APHIS looks at drafting the final rule and taking into consideration impacts and opportunities for small producers, large producers, and everyone in between.

Should there be funding allowed and funding available, we can continue to look at ways that we can distribute additional ear tags. We are also working with sale barns and auction barns and distributing and handing out readers as well so that when animals come to auction, there is an ability to be able to identify them as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, thank you. We ought to remember what these regulations mean to producers, so I appreciate your comment.

One last question, I am also closely monitoring the Food and Drug Administration's proposed changes to long-standing labeling requirements for re-implanting of shorter-acting growth implants for cattle. While I understand this is not a USDA issue, I do want to mention that USDA should be at the table when FDA is making decisions like these that would abruptly stop a common practice that could adversely impact the industry. How is USDA working with FDA on these proposed changes?

Ms. MOFFITT. Well, thank you for that question. USDA continuously works with FDA on a myriad of different issues where we share common ground, we share common work, and we would be

happy to work with FDA on working through this issue as well so that the voices of agriculture and the perspective that USDA can bring are a part of the decision for FDA.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Yes, please do as this regulation will certainly negatively impact our cattle producers and, at the end, will increase the cost of our food supply at a time of rising inflation, so thank you.

With that, I now recognize the Ranking Member, the gentleman from California, for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Before I get into my questions, I want to make a couple of observations. We talked about the three programs that we initiated in the last farm bill, the vaccine bank, the National Animal Preparedness Response Program, and the Animal Health Laboratory Network. But I want to note that, frankly, these programs are only as effective as the people that enact them. An effective response is dependent upon a highly trained veterinarian and support staff who can work with stakeholders to contain the certain outbreaks. We have a shortage of veterinarians across the country. We need to do and take into consideration I think in the farm bill a strong pipeline of the veterinarian professionals so that we can continue to support the efforts of APHIS, which is so important that we have and maintain a trained staff to address outbreaks.

And so the farm bill of course does a host of things to ensure, as I said earlier, maintaining food security and that food security is a national issue. We just need to remember, I believe, that the past year, the cost of an outbreak will far exceed the cost of supporting disease prevention programs. Remember that. The cost of an outbreak far exceeds the cost of these prevention programs.

With that said, Secretary Moffitt, looking at the current response, you partially answered that question in answer to the Chairman's question in terms of what improvements you think need to be made to optimize future outbreaks. And is there the authority with APHIS that would provide a more effective response? And because of your previous experience not just as a farmer, producer in California's Department of Food and Agriculture, how do you think we can more closely coordinate the efforts between state and Federal efforts to manage these diseases?

Ms. MOFFITT. Well, thank you for that question. And, I think there are a few things. So, first, as you recognize, coming from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, in fact in I think early 2020 before the pandemic, thanks to funding from NADPRP and through the partnership that the state and Federal Government really strongly have in collaboration, we did a tabletop exercise should there be a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the dairy industry in California. So that funding, I know firsthand how important it can be for states in readiness and preparedness, as well as of course with industry partners and university and land-grant partners as well.

Mr. COSTA. That partnership is critical.

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, it is.

Mr. COSTA. And we need to build on it. Our trading partners often use non-tariff barriers to deal with their internal politics in terms of our ability to trade. And I am wondering if you have de-

veloped a strategy toward maintaining our trade efforts when we have efforts to vaccinate, especially in light of the high-path impacts and the potential and concerns about them. And of course, we have dealt with depopulation, as you well know.

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, so your question relates as we are looking at all different tools in the tool chest, they are very important. And you asked about the different mechanisms that we have. And Dr. Naugle can talk a little bit about some of the lessons that we are learning in the current outbreak and how we are applying that.

But I will just quickly answer the vaccine question. It is very important as we consider vaccine, first off, we are many, many, many months, in fact, 18 to 24 months down the road. ARS is not really doing research trials at this point. But, it is important that as we look at and evaluate a potential for a vaccine, we are looking at things like human health, animal health, trade impacts, and also implementation of the vaccine strategy. So there are many things that we would be factoring and weighing—

Mr. COSTA. Yes, my time is expiring here. Doctor, quickly, how do our trading partners look at our ability to maintain high standards to contain any health impacts? Could you comment quickly?

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, I mean, our trade partners, we are working actively with many different trade partners around the world on a regionalization approach so that we have in place—and this is something we developed since the 2015 outbreak—strong regionalization approach for both high-path AI, as well as we are developing it for African swine fever.

Mr. COSTA. And our efforts to improve diagnostic and surveillance technology comes hand-in-hand with it, right?

Dr. NAUGLE. Absolutely. Absolutely. If we know where the disease is—

Mr. COSTA. How are we doing there?

Dr. NAUGLE.—we can keep it—sir?

Mr. COSTA. Well, my time has expired. I was asking how are we doing there to improve diagnostic and surveillance technology.

Dr. NAUGLE. How will we improve it? We will constantly improve it. We are working with our labs network around the country. Rapid detection and diagnostic technology is really important, and some of the funding for the lab network has also been for rapid diagnostic testing as well.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. The chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama and my good friend, Congressman Moore, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Over the Easter break I had some hearings with our ag—we call them listening sessions in Alabama. And one of the things that I noticed, is that feral hogs are starting to be an issue. And I can remember growing up we had a military base, Fort Rucker, they were getting kind of in the farmers' land now, but it seemed like all over the district, in the 2nd Congressional District, we have these questions about feral hogs. And I was really glad we had the pilot program in 2018 before I got here that my colleagues put in. But if you don't mind, Under Secretary or Dr. Naugle, if you all could kind of elaborate on some of the things that are going on for

the feral swine, the control process and what the outlook is, if we have any optimistic predictions for the future.

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, thank you for recognizing the pilot program. That is a partnership with NRCS and APHIS together, which I think is a really unique opportunity in a pilot to really come together and take a whole-of-USDA approach, improved access to landowners. We have worked with over 6,000 landowners in the country through this pilot program and partnered on over 8 million acres of land to work on removing and eradicating feral hogs. This is complementary to annual appropriations that APHIS continues to receive and has received since 2014. We have been successful today in successfully eradicating feral hogs from seven states, and we are close to four more additional states.

Mr. MOORE. I hope Alabama is on one of those lists.

What are you guys seeing that you feel good about in the program as far as eradication? I understand there are some medications, there are some treatments they are finding that seem to be working. Is that the case, Dr. Naugle? Is that what you are seeing?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, Dr. Naugle?

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, our Wildlife Services Unit uses a variety of complementary tools to be able to eradicate those hogs.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you. Now, onto the next question I got a lot of concern about last week was chronic wasting disease, and how it's wreaked havoc on deer populations across the country. I was happy for the passage of the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act last Congress, which authorized additional annual funding to be divided equally between CWD research and state and Tribal CWD management efforts. Under Secretary Moffitt and Dr. Naugle, can you talk about APHIS' ongoing work to manage CWD and the promising developments on that front as well?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, I will kick it off and pass it on to Dr. Naugle. Yes, as you mentioned, chronic wasting disease is absolutely devastating in so many states. Chairman Thompson also mentioned that as well. We were pleased that we were able to, thanks again to funding that we have received through Congress, be able to allocate another \$12 million toward that combination of research and state partnerships because that is such an important thing, the mix of both understanding, as well as applying our work together.

And I will pass it to Dr. Naugle.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, I will extend a little bit on Under Secretary Moffitt's comment about the funding we have provided to states, Tribes, and universities. In 2022, we provided \$9.5 million to those states, Tribes, universities for these cooperative agreements that help them control CWD not only in farm-cervid populations but wild-cervid populations as well, and we just announced last week the additional \$12 million. I am very excited about that.

Within APHIS, we really have two approaches. On the wildlife side, our Wildlife Services, again, conducts research and supports wildlife management activities with regard to CWD, and on the Farm Service side we do have our voluntary herd certification program, of which 28 states participate in.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Dr. Naugle.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Next, I now recognize the gentlewoman from Connecticut for 5 minutes.

Mrs. HAYES. Thank you. Animal diseases can be devastating to any farm but especially to the small family farms that represent the majority of operations in the United States. Under Secretary Moffitt, in your testimony you highlight the gap between the minority of large, wealthy farms and the majority of small, struggling farms. The farms in Connecticut's 5th District represent this fact. You have been there, so you know what it looks like. Ninety-four percent of them are family farms, and 92 percent have less than \$100,000 in sales value. For example, producers in my district may rely on fewer than two dozen dairy cows for their livelihood, and any diseases could do irreparable damage to their way of life.

Under Secretary Moffitt, can you describe how the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services disseminates information to the smallest and most vulnerable producers? And additionally, to what extent does your agency work directly with farmers to improve biosecurity and develop best practices?

Ms. MOFFITT. Congresswoman Hayes, thank you so much for that question. And working with and making sure that we are prioritizing farmers of all sizes, of all backgrounds who are working in different fields and different value-add is very important and is a priority. As you probably have heard in the Secretary's testimony as well, making sure that we are supporting the many and all of the farmers, so thank you for asking that question.

As far as outreach and how are we reaching out through our different APHIS programs, we have a couple different programs, actually, several different programs but a couple that I will highlight, and Dr. Naugle can add some more as well. So we have things like the Defend the Flock Program, which is really about partnering and disseminating information about signs, symptoms of highly-pathogenic avian influenza, and then also our partnership with states as we work on stamping out the disease and making sure that producers have access to indemnity payments and that all producers know of the available resources that we have.

On African swine fever, it is the same thing. We have a Protect Our Pigs Campaign. These campaigns are very much in partnership with industry, with states, with Cooperative Extension, who I know are such important tools and partners for particularly small producers but producers of all sizes. So these are very important as we get information out and disseminated and so that everyone, even backyard farmers to small farmers to larger farmers, have access to this really critical, important information.

Dr. Naugle?

Dr. NAUGLE. And I would just echo some of Under Secretary Moffitt's comments. We have a nationally distributed workforce in APHIS veterinary services, and you will often see our employees at local meetings with livestock producers, on the farm with producers, small families, whether they are helping them to work through a regulatory problem, just doing a check-in and providing education, that is key.

I would also add that, again, the work through NADPRP, the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, many

of the projects that we have funded have worked and focused on outreach with some of the particular producer groups that you described, right, because we recognize that we need to reach out to those producers maybe in a different way than some of our big national communication programs like Defend the Flock or Protect Our Pigs.

Mrs. HAYES. Thank you. I think we have to be intentional about making sure this information reaches the smallest of farmers so that our work can really be done well.

You also mentioned, Under Secretary, the need for public-sector animal health professionals and veterinarians. Connecticut is home to 20 agricultural science and technology education programs such as the one at Shepaug Valley School in Washington, Connecticut. Give me 2 minutes and I am going to get to education somehow. These programs provide high school students with diverse science case working career exposure in agricultural management, mechanics, biotechnology, animal science, and more.

Under Secretary Moffitt, very quickly, can education programs targeted at high schoolers help alleviate workforce shortages in the animal health sector? And are you aware of any strategies that APHIS and USDA will use to support agricultural science and technology education programs?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you so much for that question, and absolutely, those programs that you described are such an important part of building our workforce, bringing in students in this talent pipeline I think is so important. At APHIS we have the AgDiscovery Program that is actively working with high schoolers, middle schoolers to build that pipeline and for youth who are interested in sciences, interested in agriculture to discover through this AgDiscovery Program different possible careers so that hopefully they come and want to work at USDA or in agriculture, writ large.

Mrs. HAYES. Thank you. I will just close by saying I am so incredibly proud of Shepaug Valley High School and their agriscience program in my district, and I am going to put my neck out there and extend an invitation to you to visit at any time.

My time has expired. I feel bad, but I do apologize in advance. I have to go to another hearing. Thank you for your time today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Next, I now recognize the gentleman from Wisconsin for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Thank you very much for coming. I just have a few questions for you, Madam Under Secretary.

I am particularly concerned about diseases being introduced to our herds and flocks around the country. It has a devastating economic impact on agriculture. One of the things I would like to ask about is African swine flu. Are we importing hogs from Africa?

Ms. MOFFITT. I can have Dr. Naugle talk a little bit more about some of the interlocking and the things that we are doing to make sure that we keep African swine fever out of the country. African swine fever is unfortunately in many countries and particularly close to us is in the Dominican Republic and Haiti as well.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. In Puerto Rico, right.

Ms. MOFFITT. I will pass it to Dr. Naugle to talk about the different things, but important is the import controls that we have that Dr. Naugle can talk about.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Right. So I am just going to cut you off here. I know the answer. I am asking this. Are we importing pork into this country from anywhere? That is just an example because the African swine fever—are we importing pork into the United States?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, we import pork and pork products into the United States.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Okay. Are we importing poultry into the United States?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Okay.

Ms. MOFFITT. We import poultry and poultry products into the United States.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. All right. So I understand this. So can you maybe explain to me why we are importing pork into the United States and poultry into the United States when the American farmer is capable of producing these in nearly unlimited capacity if they have the appropriate types of regulatory controls established by the Government?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, so international trade that we enjoy goes two-ways, and so there are some types of product that are important that we can import here for consumer preferences.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Yes.

Ms. MOFFITT. But what is very important, as we are importing and as we have protocols in place for importing product is that we are making sure that the product that is coming in is free from disease and not introducing a foreign animal disease or a food safety risk to any of our industry and people in the country.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. I understand. So I am asking you, do you think that potentially some of the policies that have been put in place are restricting our ability to produce pork and poultry here, including exporting them? Because I am having a really hard time understanding why we are importing—pretty soon, we are going to be a net importer for agriculture, and from my perspective, a lot of that is due to some very restrictive policies that I would like to see us open them up a little bit so we could produce pork and poultry and serve it around the world as opposed to potentially importing these animals into the country that introduce these horrible diseases into our flocks and our herds?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, I think what is really important is that we are working and actively working on supporting and protecting our own industry so our own industry can continue to grow and thrive to produce food for our domestic consumers, as well as abroad.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Yes.

Ms. MOFFITT. And I would like Dr. Naugle to talk about just some of the things that we have in place so that when product is becoming imported, that we aren't introducing or we are reducing the risk of introducing any foreign animal diseases.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Please do, Doctor.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, thank you. My pleasure. So within APHIS, we have a group that just focuses on regionalization services, and so whenever a country requests to import any kind of animal or animal product into the United States, we begin an extensive and a quite long process of evaluating their veterinary infrastructure, the disease status of various different diseases in their country, as well

as what mitigations they have in place to prevent future outbreaks or respond should those outbreaks occur. After that process occurs, we do multiple site visits. We do formal risk assessments, all of that prior to publishing a proposed rule that would allow for public comment for people to let us know what they think about whether we would recognize certain countries to allow for trade or not.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Great. Thank you, Doctor. I am sorry, but my time is going to expire here real quick.

Dr. NAUGLE. I understand.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Madam Under Secretary, I would like to put on your marketing hat real quick. We go to the store, we can buy skim milk, we can buy one percent milk, and we can buy two percent milk. Do you know what the fat content of whole milk is?

Ms. MOFFITT. I don't. I want to say it is somewhere around six percent.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. It is not. It is 3½ percent. That is the problem.

Ms. MOFFITT. Three and a half.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. So people think they get skim milk, one percent, two percent, and they think they are drinking butter when they have whole milk. So I am going to ask you, I would like to get with your staff, we have to be able to change this because we are prohibited from marketing whole milk as 3½ percent milk, so people think they are getting six percent or ten percent or 15 percent, and they believe that it is unhealthy when in fact it is the most healthy form of milk. So I am going to ask you to commit to getting with me and my staff to see if we can—you put your marketing hat on and we can get this changed so that the American consumer understands exactly what they are consuming.

Ms. MOFFITT. I will absolutely be happy to have our staff and your staff connect.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Well, thank you, Madam Under Secretary and Doctor. I appreciate it. With that, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I now recognize the gentlewoman from Colorado for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARAVEO. Thank you, Chairman Mann, and to Ranking Member Costa, and thank you for hosting the hearing this morning.

Under Secretary Moffitt and Dr. Naugle, thank you for taking the time to be here to provide your testimony. These issues are all very important to me. One of the counties that I represent is Weld County, Colorado, which is a leading producer of beef, cattle, and dairy, and I am glad that animal health is the focus of our first Subcommittee hearing. I do want to reiterate the comments that Chairman Mann said about the ear tag program and trying to make that cost as small to the producers. I know that that is something that has been brought up on my ag listening tours.

But speaking about diseases and wildlife and feral animals, they increasingly pose risks to humans and agricultural health and our economy, as evidenced by the recent outbreaks that have been spoken about with highly-pathogenic avian influenza in the U.S. and African swine fever in the Caribbean. Generally, what is the USDA currently doing to assess disease spillover from wildlife, enhance wildlife disease surveillance, and develop cost-effective mitigation efforts that can be deployed at scale in the event of an outbreak?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you so much for that question. And I will pass it on to Dr. Naugle to answer more fully, but I just want to highlight, of course, as you well know from Colorado, the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, Colorado, and the importance of that program is a key part of our wildlife research program. That program is doing important surveillance on 31 different diseases in wildlife. And the work on monitoring wild birds particularly was a key early indicator for us in our highly-pathogenic avian influenza response.

So I will pass it to Dr. Naugle for further answer.

Dr. NAUGLE. Great. Thanks for this question. This is an area that I think all of us in animal agriculture really understand the risk at that wildlife-livestock interface. And I think if you look at historically some of the diseases that we have had control programs for in the United States like tuberculosis, brucellosis, we know that both of those have a wildlife component in them, right?

So to specifically answer your question, with many of our disease programs, we do conduct surveillance in different wildlife species surrounding herds that might be infected with diseases that we know can affect wildlife like TB. We know we have the greater Yellowstone area with brucellosis, and we work very hard to implement mitigations there so we don't get brucellosis in cattle in the greater Yellowstone area. Additionally, the feral swine program that we talked about earlier, surveillance is conducted on those swine to help us look at things like swine brucellosis, pseudo-rabies, as well as monitor for the potential for ASF or CSF. So we really look at our disease control comprehensively and consider both wildlife and livestock.

Ms. CARAVEO. Are there resources needed to replace the existing funds that came from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117-2) that were dedicated to addressing some of these concerns and efforts?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for highlighting the funding that was received through the American Rescue Plan. We are working actively on implementing that funding. At this point, the funding has been able to identify different research projects and implementation for the interface of COVID-19 and animals and between animals and then also between animals and human health. So that funding has been important, and we have additional funds through that that we are working on developing and ensuring that funding is put to good use as well.

Ms. CARAVEO. Perfect. Thank you both so much, and I yield back my time.

The CHAIRMAN. The chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee for 5 minutes.

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think you both have been working around this question that I am going to ask you just now, but just for further clarifications, I will ask it maybe a little different way. What steps is the USDA taking to work with outside stakeholders such as State Departments of Ag, animal health officials, wildlife experts, to inform the public, especially those with backyard flocks, about biosecurity and resources on what symptoms to look for to help mitigate the spread of avian influenza?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, there are a lot of resources that APHIS has been putting into play, and Dr. Naugle can talk about some of them specifically. I mentioned the defend the flock program. That is an important one. The partnerships you identified with states, with industry, with cooperative extension, with other nonprofits and Tribal organizations. All of those different layers of partnerships are very important so that we are reaching different constituents who are getting information from different information sources.

But I will pass it to Dr. Naugle.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, thank you. It is really a whole-of-industry response with regard to outreach and education, right? In addition to some of the things previously mentioned, we do provide cooperative agreement funding directly to states that are impacted by HPAI to assist with their response, as well as education and outreach with those local producers.

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Okay.

Ms. MOFFITT. I will just add on, my daughter, until we moved to D.C., was a 4-H member, and we would get information through the 4-H network, so there are lots of different avenues and wonderful avenues to get that information.

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Thank you. Under Secretary, is there an end in sight to the current high-path outbreak? And if the disease is here to stay, how does that alter APHIS' approach to dealing with the disease moving forward?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you so much for that question, Representative. That is an important question, one that I don't have an answer to. I wish I had a crystal ball to really know. But I think what is very important—and I will pass it to Dr. Naugle to talk about this because she so clearly identified it last week in a meeting that we had with industry—is as we are working—just like we took lessons learned from the 2015 outbreak, we are already incorporating lessons learned in this 2022–2023 outbreak, and that includes things like looking at and evaluating biosecurity and what more can we do on biosecurity because we know that is the one most effective things in reducing lateral spread, but also how we are looking at and reducing the attractiveness of wild birds because we know the virus load is very strong in the wild bird population, and we want to reduce the introduction from wild birds.

Dr. NAUGLE. Thank you. Additionally, I will add that we also really are working at the farm level to help do biosecurity assessments so producers can go through their facilities and identify if there is opportunity for wild birds to get in there and potentially infect their flocks. So I think that is a really important step for us.

I think you are leading toward the vaccination question, and so to that regard, we are currently behind the scenes having conversations with international trading partners. Dr. Sifford goes to the World Organisation for Animal Health in May, and HPAI will be a major topic at that meeting, and she will discuss with her counterparts across the world if we need to look at vaccination differently. Right now, our partners at Agricultural Research Service are investigating different strains of potential vaccine for possible licensure, and internally, we are determining plans for how we might implement a vaccine strategy.

However, right now, today, we believe strongly that our response has been effective. Whenever we have identified HPAI in a case in domestic poultry, we have effectively stamped it out. And due to the trade consequences of vaccine at this point, we are planning for the future but continuing on the current path. Thank you.

Mr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. And by reading my mind and answering my last question, I can yield back 47 seconds.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I now recognize the gentlewoman from Maine for 5 minutes.

Ms. PINGREE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing. Nice to see you, Under Secretary. Thank you for being with us. And thank you, Dr. Naugle, for participating as well.

I am going to take a slightly different turn and talk about aquaculture. Maine aquaculture is about an \$85-\$100 million a year business, represents about 25 different species of finfish, shellfish, sea vegetables, and is about 700 jobs in our state. So aquatic animal health is very important to us.

APHIS has a National Aquaculture Health Plan and Standards, which was released in 2021, which supports aquatic livestock health. Could you give me a little bit of an update about the work you are doing to protect aquatic animal health, and what should we be doing in the farm bill to future your efforts?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you, Representative Pingree, for that question. I am going to pass it to Dr. Naugle to talk about it but just wanted to highlight that the standards are out there. We are working with industry and states on implementing it. And Dr. Naugle can talk more about that.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, thank you. The aquaculture industry is really an exciting industry, right? It is really growing, and we are really happy to be supporting producers at the forefront.

First, we did receive additional funding in the omnibus for Fiscal Year 2023, and we are using that to further develop we are calling the CAHPS, which is the Comprehensive Aquaculture Health Program Standards, and what that allows us to do is it develops an approach where aquaculture producers address things like biosecurity, surveillance, other types of management practices that support aquatic health and allow them to be competitive both interstate trade, as well as potentially international trade. We are very excited about that.

With that money, we also plan to provide about \$1 million in cooperative agreements with laboratories to help us further with the laboratory capacity with regard to aquatic diseases, which is something we haven't really focused on much in the past.

And then finally, we continue to do risk assessments and pathway assessments to look at certain high-consequence diseases of aquatic species to determine if any additional actions need to be taken with regard to movement of animals.

Ms. PINGREE. Great. Well, thank you for that work, and I am glad to see you are putting the new funding to work, and we will look forward to working with you on that.

Back to the avian influenza, which I know is on everyone's mind, I mean, even though we were once a huge poultry-producing state, we are now much more like of a small-, medium-size, backyard

flocks. And unfortunately, in a backyard flock you have more opportunities for making that connection with wildlife. And I know you have been talking quite a bit about that. Well, birds of course, but also in Maine we had avian influenza detected in our harbor seals, and so because we have a lot of saltwater farming, a lot of coastal farming, that is something we are concerned about, too.

So can you just talk a little bit about the interfacing you are doing with backyard flocks? And I know you have talked a little bit about how you try to control it in wildlife, but just some of those issues, how you are educating farmers about how to watch for it to make sure we are not spreading it. I know we have had some outbreaks in Maine with backyard flocks.

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, certainly, how to watch for it and the education and the work that we are doing with farmers, backyard farmers, with household farmers, with industry at large I think it is such an important part. Actually—and I just learned last week—the first case that we found that was detected in Indiana was because of education campaigns that APHIS had done on how to understand and detect symptoms that birds might be exhibiting when having high-path avian influenza.

So it just shows the success of the program, and I think that that is important, and making sure, as I mentioned before, that we are working with multiple different partners who are reaching different audiences I think is a very important part. I know the information that I used to get on my farm is different even from the information that a neighboring farmer would get, and so that is an important part.

Identifying and then also knowing what to do when you do identify that there are symptoms, calling a local vet, calling cooperative extension, calling the state animal health official, and how to be able to respond to that. And then of course also bringing in the state officials who might also invite APHIS to join as well, I think all of those interlocking efforts are very important.

Dr. Naugle, anything additional?

Ms. PINGREE. Great. Well, I yield back, but thank you very much for being with us today and the work you are doing.

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you, Representative.

The CHAIRMAN. I now recognize the gentleman from Nebraska for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Under Secretary Moffitt and Dr. Naugle, for being here.

One of the things I am very proud of in the last farm bill, we were able to put in the foot-and-mouth disease vaccine bank. If you already talked about this, I apologize. I have multiple hearings going on simultaneously right now. Could you give us the status of the foot-and-mouth disease vaccine bank? Is it fully operational in your mind, or what else do we need to be doing?

Ms. MOFFITT. I will kick it off, and Dr. Naugle can talk more fully about this. The foot-and-mouth vaccine bank, thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill, we have been able to invest \$52 million in the vaccine bank as a whole, and that has been very important. And Dr. Naugle can talk about some of the practices that we have employed so that we make sure that we have—as we talk about the vaccine bank, it is an important insurance policy. First and foremost is bio-

security, and our work, together with industry in stamping out the disease, but to have that vaccine bank as an insurance policy is such an important part.

Dr. Naugle?

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, thanks. I will share some additional detail there. So right now, within the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank, we have access to vaccine antigen concentrate for foot-and-mouth disease. We have access to finished vaccine for classical swine fever, and we also recently purchased diagnostic test kits for both FMD and ASF, right? So the countermeasures in the vaccine bank is more than just FMD, right?

Mr. BACON. Okay.

Dr. NAUGLE. It is much more comprehensive.

As far as the number of doses that we have in the bank, our goal is to be able to have somewhere between ten to 25 million doses per each strain of FMD that we bank, and we have, I believe, ten strains that we are currently banking antigen against. That goal of 25 million doses per year is a minimum goal, right? It wouldn't necessarily cover everything in the event of an FMD outbreak, but it would allow us to use the vaccine initially should it be needed.

The last thing I will say is the determination of what vaccines we use, the strains that we bank against are made by a subject matter expert panel that kind of help us decide based on the epidemiology and the geography of those diseases which are the highest risk.

Mr. BACON. So would you consider yourselves fully operational with the vaccine bank, or is there more work to do to get—

Dr. NAUGLE. There is always more work to do, sir, always more work to do.

Mr. BACON. Okay. So there is always more work to do, but would you consider yourself fully operational at this point?

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes. If we needed to deploy vaccine tomorrow, we would—

Mr. BACON. Okay. Not—

Dr. NAUGLE.—have access to FMD and CSF vaccine tomorrow.

Mr. BACON. The reason I ask that question, a couple years ago they said, well, we are minimally operational. We have more work to do, so I think we are probably at a—now you are just at a sustainment—

Dr. NAUGLE. Oh, for sure.

Mr. BACON. Yes, you are at sustainment level.

Dr. NAUGLE. Absolutely. Yes.

Mr. BACON. Okay.

Dr. NAUGLE. I am sorry. I misunderstood that.

Mr. BACON. That is all right. Well, I probably didn't ask the question quite right either.

Well, first of all, I want to thank the Nebraska cattlemen and also the Nebraska pork industry because they came to me back in 2017, said this was a top priority, and we were able to work hard—initially, I was told it was too early, and that we needed more research to get there, but I am so proud that we have been able to achieve this huge milestone.

Secretary Vilsack said you are making pretty good progress on the African swine fever vaccine. Can you just give our citizens some update where we are at?

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes, I had the opportunity to travel to Vietnam where ARS, in partnership with the Vietnamese Government, is working on field trials as we speak on African swine fever vaccine trials for a handful of different vaccine strains, and I think that is making very good progress. Just like with the high-path avian influenza vaccine that Dr. Naugle talked about, as we look toward and work on what that looks like and once it gets developed and we have a plan in place on how it would be able to be implemented, there are many other factors that we would be considering. And Dr. Naugle can expand on this more, but certainly the human factors, animal health factors, what is the efficacy of the vaccine, and how would we maintain and look at and evaluate trade in all of those as well as we distribute.

Mr. BACON. When you see what it did to the Chinese pork industry, it just devastated it, so I am glad we are ahead of the game here on some preventative measures and some reactionary measures if it happens.

One last question, is your level of research dollars or appropriations adequate to do what you need to do?

Ms. MOFFITT. That is a very good question, Representative, and I think, across the board we do what we can with the research funds that we have, and I know Dr. Jacobs-Young has been before the Senate to talk about the level of research dollars we have and the advancement that we are doing in research. I think what is really important is the partnership that we have with industry, the partnership that we have with the universities and land-grant universities to be able to maximize the dollars that we have. But, as always, in everything that we do, we can always do more with more funding.

Mr. BACON. With that, I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina, Congressman Davis, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, and thank you so much for being here to ensure our producers have consistent, predictable USDA guidelines on animal disease and prevention.

The hog and poultry industries are powerful economic drivers in agriculture, particularly in eastern North Carolina. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service just announced more than \$15 million for 60 projects, including one at North Carolina State University, designed to extend a between-farm African swine fever transmission model to estimate the necessary number of sample collectors in the highly swine-dense region.

My question, Under Secretary, can you give me a timeline based on previously awarded funding for the rollout of the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program grants?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question, and thank you, Congressman Davis, for highlighting one of the projects that just recently received funding. It is exciting as I look at the funding that we do have and that we are able to invest in projects, just the breadth and diversity of the projects that are funded, how those

projects—the determination of projects is funded through. Similar to the vaccine bank, we bring in a group of experts to really identify the top priority in funding for each year. That money is distributed each year, so when you ask about the timing—and I can pass to Dr. Naugle about specifics for this recent round of funding—but we do announce the funding every year so that there is an annual cycle of new funding available.

And as far as the existing projects and what they are looking like, Dr. Naugle?

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes. So, correct. Every year, we provide funding for these projects on both the NADPRP side, which you talked about, as well as the NAHLN side, right, which goes to the different laboratories. The prior announcement that we just did was probably the largest that we have had. It was for the \$15.8 million for the 60 projects. And that is because we know that the last year we went to a steady state of \$18 million for the NADPRP program.

So beyond that, I would say that these agreements tend to be for a year, renewable up to a second year, so the projects that were initiated very early on in the course of the farm bill funding are in the final stages of being completed at this time.

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Okay. Thank you so much. Eastern North Carolina has a very robust agricultural workforce and a large presence of poultry producers. And I have heard from several in the industry and labor leaders. Given the recent outbreak of the highly-pathogenic avian influenza, how do you assess product safety and workplace safety, which go hand-in-hand at large poultry processing facilities?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you, Representative Davis, for that question. And Dr. Naugle can talk specifically about some of the safety procedures. I will just say that we take safety very seriously. We want to make sure that as the team is coming in and working in these poultry houses or different facilities that have contagious diseases, that we are making sure that we are protecting everyone, our workforce, as well as all of the workforce that is there.

We are also making sure that we have a rapid response corps, that it has the flex capacities so that we are not overextending our workforce as well, and we had a rapid response team to be able to handle that.

Dr. Naugle?

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes, I would just add from the worker safety perspective in the event of a response, anyone who is working on that response wears the appropriate personal protective equipment. We also have a safety officer onsite at all responses to ensure worker safety. We also collaborate with local state departments and the CDC to ensure post-response monitoring for signs of flu.

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Okay. Thank you for the response.

Over the past several years, Congress has shown tremendous support for the Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Program, most recently with the reintroduction of the Beagle Brigade Act (H.R. 1480/S. 759). How important is this program for keeping foreign animal and plant diseases and pests out of the United States? And how does your agency work with Customs and Border Protection to ensure its success?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you, Representative Davis, for that question. And that is such an important part. It is really an important factor in keeping foreign animal diseases out of the country is APHIS' partnership with CBP that you identified. The AQI funding is the funding source for that partnership. It allows us to be able to fund our partners at CBP. Any of us who have come into the country from foreign travel have been interviewed and asked whether we are bringing in animal products, and that is a really important piece of our defense mechanism to prevent foreign animal diseases from coming in.

We also, through that funding, are funding things like the detector dog teams that are used at many airports and also parcel facilities so that product that is coming in via person or also parcel is inspected. These are all funded through the AQI fees.

And we want to just recognize Congress for being able to supplement the AQI fees. AQI fees, for those who might not be familiar, receive various funding sources, but part of it is through international air travel. And when international air travel mostly screeched to a halt at the beginning of the pandemic, the funding source also dropped significantly. But thanks to supplemental funding from Congress, we have received close to \$1 billion in additional funds to continue to make sure that we have our safeguards in place at all of our points of entry so that we don't introduce foreign animal diseases into the country.

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. And I recognize the gentleman from Iowa, Congressman Feenstra, for 5 minutes.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Thank you, Chairman Mann, for holding this hearing. You look good in that chairmanship. Thank you for doing this.

I also want to thank Under Secretary Moffitt and Dr. Naugle for being here.

In Iowa, obviously, the avian influenza outbreak has been very extreme. I think $\frac{1}{4}$ of the birds that were depopulated came from Iowa. Fifty-eight million birds were affected in 47 states, and we had 16 million turkeys, chickens, and birds destroyed in Iowa, so this is significant.

I have lived through it. I have lived through the 2015 outbreak and since. I have seen a lot of changes, which is great, working with APHIS and then also our Secretary of Ag Mike Naig in Iowa, the depopulation time has decreased from 15.5 days in 2015 to about 4 days in 2022, so this is very, very significant.

Either one of you, or Under Secretary, is there anything the agency can do to start looking at minimizing the risk, or can we look at predictive modeling, anything that can help our producers to try to minimize this from happening each year, and again, trying to curb the effects?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question. And, I want to just acknowledge just the deep impact that highly-pathogenic avian influenza has had on producers, has had on consumers as well. We in this hearing really talk about and highlight the success that we have seen from the farm bill programs. They are working in our current outbreak, as you talked about, a big difference from 2015.

And that has been great in many ways, but it certainly has deeply impacted the producers.

You asked about what additional measures that we are taking and predictive tools, and there are a lot of different things that we are doing. First off, I want to highlight biosecurity. We have worked with producers, and industry has also worked with producers on developing more robust biosecurity plans and training for those biosecurity plans so that they are implemented by producers. We have seen a reduction in lateral spread, which is spread between house-to-house from 70 percent in the 2015 outbreak to around 15, 16 percent in this current outbreak, so a big, significant reduction there.

We have more to do. We know, as you mentioned, the virus is prevalent in the wild bird population, so how do we reduce the attractiveness of the farms from wild bird populations is another avenue that we are working at. Predictive modeling and our partners at Wildlife Services and our partners with fish and wildlife agencies across the country at states is a very important part of what we are doing as well. We talked about the lab network through NAHLN.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes.

Ms. MOFFITT. We have tested over two million birds so that we understand and know where the birds are traveling so our industry can be prepared.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes, awesome. When you talk about NAHLN, obviously, that is born out of Iowa, too. Iowa State University is home to the world-renowned vet diagnostic lab and they are doing a lot. I am concerned. Is there anything that we can do to help undertake the current workload and be more prepared from the lab and NAHLN, anything that we can do in the farm bill that you look at and say, hey, this might be a good idea?

Ms. MOFFITT. For the lab networks, the variety of funding sources that the NAHLN network receives is very important, certainly through state funding, through land-grant funding, through appropriations, as well as farm bill, and that I think the variety of funding sources, I believe, has been very important for those lab networks.

Dr. Naugle, is there anything additional?

Dr. NAUGLE. I would just add that, earlier today, we talked about some of the gaps in the veterinary workforce—

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes.

Dr. NAUGLE.—and I think when you talk about the workforce of the laboratory, it is an even more specialized group of people, right, because they have these additional—

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes.

Dr. NAUGLE.—skills and capabilities, so I think workforce development for laboratories is critical.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Awesome. So I am just going to pivot here, and it has the same theme. African swine fever. The depopulation of birds is one thing. When you have to euthanize hogs is another thing. And we saw this with COVID when we had to do it with COVID. Are you really taking serious measures of what this is going to look like when you have to depopulate large animals and where are they going to go? And I know China is having this issue,

right? I mean, you can't really just bury them because the disease stays. I mean, have these things been thought through?

Ms. MOFFITT. Representative Feenstra, thank you for the really important question. As we have been, we have been absolutely preparing for the, I hope, unlikely event of African swine fever in the country. With that said, we know that we need to be ready, and we have been investing through funding through NADPRP, as well as through the CCC funding that the Secretary has authorized for African swine fever, different mechanisms and rapid response so that we understand how to do disposal.

Dr. Naugle, perhaps you can talk a little bit—oh, we are out of time.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes. Yes. Thank you. I would like a response to that in writing at some point, okay? Thank you. I yield back.

[The information referred to is located on p. 41.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I now recognize the gentlewoman from Virginia, Congresswoman Spanberger, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you so very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, under Secretary Moffitt, for joining us today. Dr. Naugle, thank you for being here as well. It is great to see you both here, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the importance of animal health in American agriculture.

While livestock producers have certainly long known the threat that animal disease poses to our food supply, more Americans in recent times have really come to understand this reality as we have seen the price of eggs continue to go up in part due to the avian flu. As a mother of three children, I certainly know how important this nutritious food staple can be to families. Egg burritos are a fan favorite in my home.

And importantly, I have heard from Virginia poultry producers that APHIS has been helpful as a partner in responding to outbreaks in the Commonwealth, so I do want to thank you for that work. But can you please share what USDA is doing to help poultry producers impacted by the avian flu beyond indemnity payments really to ensure the producers don't go out of business after an outbreak? And I know that you have touched on this periodically throughout your testimony today, but I am really concerned about the long-term effects on our nation's egg supply and the increase and impact on families and of course the producers I represent.

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you, Representative Spanberger, for that question. And certainly as recognized with Representative Feenstra as well, the impact of what this has done for producers, particularly small producers. You mentioned indemnity. That is a very important part of the resources and the tools that have come from the Commodity Credit Corporation so that producers are able to capture some of the loss.

Looking further at markets and expanding and broadening more and new and better markets that we often are working on at the Department as well, we are looking at how do we advance more local and regional markets, how do we advance more processing capacity, more processing capacity, writ large?

Ms. SPANBERGER. Okay.

Ms. MOFFITT. I know we are also looking at, and Farm Service Agency is evaluating, what programs that they have to support users who have been hit in this distressed time as well.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you. I am glad you are thinking about it across the board as, of course, I knew you would be, but I look forward to any updates into the future.

Switching from poultry to cattle, I have recently heard from Virginia cattle producers that they are seeing a rise in theileriosis cases within their herds, which I know you know has a very high mortality rate. Unfortunately, the only way to prevent this disease is through tick control, which can be very costly. I have also recently learned that ELAP, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, which provides financial assistance to eligible livestock producers for losses due to this disease, does not cover losses due to theileriosis. Can you discuss why that is and what options exist for livestock producers to help with the cost of tick mitigation and losses associated with this disease?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question, Representative Spanberger. We can look into and I can connect with FSA on ELAP and what is and isn't allowed to be funded, but I pass it to Dr. Naugle on more things that we are doing.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes. So APHIS has been kind of on the forefront since the Asian longhorn tick, which is the carrier for theileriosis in the Virginia area since it was first detected several years ago. We work with a number of partners, including the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, on educational outreach. And while we don't have a vaccine, we do have treatment available for that particular disease.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much. We recently hosted a farm summit in my district, and this was an area of significant concern and frankly heated discussion because so many of Virginia's cattle producers are deeply concerned about the impact. So I would love to get additional information. We will follow up in writing to request that because I do want to make sure that that is available to the producers across my district, so thank you very much.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Missouri, Congressman Alford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ALFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witness for being here today.

Under Secretary Moffitt, I want to talk about workforce a little bit more. I think it is so important. We all know the importance of having a great APHIS staff in place to help with our preparedness and response. It is my understanding that 13 percent of the total USDA workforce right now is eligible for retirement. Is that correct to your understanding?

Ms. MOFFITT. I don't know the exact number, but certainly—

Mr. ALFORD. All right. We have done a little research on this. Our top-notch staff has. In the next 4 years, another 13 percent is going to be eligible for retirement. That is a big number. What are we doing to make sure that we have the workers in place to create safety?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question. And I think that we are very focused on how do we build our workforce across the board at USDA and specifically at APHIS. As you have mentioned, our APHIS workforce I would say—I call them our unsung heroes. They are working behind the scenes on making sure our food supply chain is safe, making sure that we have a safe and secure food supply chain in there, so important. And a critical part, as I think Ranking Member Costa said, in our national food security. So making sure we have a workforce that is ready when we do have retirements and that we are constantly flowing in new employees is important.

As far as our workforce for emergency response, we are developing a rapid response corps so that we can flex our workforce and handle response capability—

Mr. ALFORD. How big will that be?

Ms. MOFFITT. What?

Mr. ALFORD. How big will this corps be for rapid response?

Ms. MOFFITT. It is starting out right now with 12 positions, so it is building up. It is just beginning. But at the same time, we also are working on emergency hiring authorities, so we have hired, through emergency hiring authorities, 65 additional staff this year, as well as 25 term-limited positions.

That said, getting to the core of your question, how do we look long-term, we have many programs that are available for high school students who are interested in getting involved in agriculture, becoming veterinarians, or other fields in agriculture, as well as for college students. And we have different things like an internship program. Dr. Naugle can talk a little bit more about some of the different programs that we have so that we build and keep the pipeline coming into APHIS and to USDA across the board.

Mr. ALFORD. I would like to hear about that because I know this is a big concern all over America, workforce.

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes.

Mr. ALFORD. How are you getting young people interested in this, really which is a national security issue?

Dr. NAUGLE. Well, sir, I think that is it. That is the challenge that we all have, right, and we need to start young. We need to start with students that are in 4-H, FFA, perhaps targeting in areas where we know there are major livestock industries to get some of those students interested in animal health jobs. We do have numerous internships within APHIS for really all ages of students, whether high school, all the way up through college, and we do have the premier Saul T. Wilson Scholarship Program and internship that provides some funding for students to attend veterinary school, and upon completion, they return and work for us for a certain period of years. But I think it is really going to take effort from all of us. I don't think it is something that APHIS can do alone. And I think we really need to leverage groups like 4-H and FFA.

Mr. ALFORD. Madam Under Secretary, what can we do in Congress to help you in this effort?

Ms. MOFFITT. Well, that is a very good question. I can take that back with our team to look more at what types of things that we could ask for from Congress for this and get back to you.

[The information referred to is located on p. 42.]

Mr. ALFORD. That would be great. We would love to hear that. We love to help out.

As you know, BSE or mad cow disease exists in two forms, classical and atypical. Can you talk us through the big-picture differences in the forms of the disease and explain why we do not restrict imports based on atypical cases of BSE?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question, Representative. I am going to pass it to Dr. Naugle who can get into the science on that.

Dr. NAUGLE. Great. So I would really describe it, this is the difference. What we call classical BSE, it is a malforming of the proteins in the brain, right? And it is infectious. Atypical BSE is kind of like that malformation that occurs due to old age. When we typically see atypical BSE, even atypical scrapie in sheep, which are in the same family, it tends to be in older animals. And even the World Organisation for Animal Health has said atypical scrapie and atypical BSE are not transmissible. When we have gone back and done the investigation with those cattle or with those sheep that have atypical, we can't find any exposure. There was no known exposure to other infected animals so that is the difference.

Mr. ALFORD. Thank you. I appreciate it. Thanks again for being here. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Congressman Baird, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BAIRD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I really appreciate this hearing, and I appreciate the witness being here. My background is in research and animal science and so on, and so I really appreciate having this discussion.

Under Secretary Moffitt, as you know, gene editing has been a promising tool for meeting the sustainability, the animal health and food security demands facing our food supply, so I was pleased to see the USDA budget request acknowledge animal biotechnology as one of the Secretary's top priorities. So my question is can you or Dr. Naugle talk more about the potential for gene editing to advance animal health, as well as the potential role of USDA in regulating and approving products for animal biotechnology?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question, Representative Baird. And certainly, as you described your background, this hearing is right up your alley for sure.

Animal biotech, as you asked about, is an important tool just as we talk about our disease response mechanisms and the different tools that we must have in the tool chest. As we look forward, right, with climate change, with other things that animals might need to have to be able to adapt to a changing or hotter climate, animal biotech can be a tool that producers may want to be able to tap into. And so the ability to get this right and to advance a regulatory rulemaking process for animal biotech is absolutely an important part of that.

At USDA, as you talked about, we have the resources. We are part of the conversation. We have an incredible talented staff pool that is working on biotech on the plant side. Of course, we have

a significant number of veterinarians at the Department. We have, of course, our trade partners at Farm Services Agency. So we are looking at all of the different factors and really opening the aperture of what this looks like as we regulate gene-edited animals. What is really important is that there is a regulatory framework, that it supports innovation and safety, and that it provides certainty for developers because we want to make sure that developers, small, medium, and large, are able to participate in a regulatory framework, and that certainty is what we hear is a very important part of that.

So at USDA we have a strong track record for developing or for regulating genetic engineering; and, certainly, we want to make sure that we have the best possible regulatory system at play.

Mr. BAIRD. Thank you. And, Dr. Naugle, do you have any thoughts, anything to add? I really appreciate the focus on biotechnology. I want to say that again because I really feel that it is going to be important as we move to try to find plants and animals that can adapt to environmental change and is also a way of improving our volume on plants and animals, so I really appreciate the focus there.

My next question then deals with the animal vaccine technologies. So, with the magnitude of challenges posed for these disease outbreaks and the critical need to safeguard our food supply, does USDA agree it should consider any and all options for veterinary countermeasures? Doctor?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you for that question, and for this one, I will certainly pass it on to Dr. Naugle.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes. So with regard to vaccines specifically as a countermeasure, we rely on APHIS' Center for Veterinary Biologics to evaluate any possible technology and determine that it is safe, pure, efficacious, and potent. And so we would consider new technologies as they are developed.

Mr. BAIRD. Thank you very much. And we are getting close on time, so with that, Mr. Chairman, I am going to yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Congressman Baird.

As we wrap here, just some closing remarks. From high-path avian influenza to African swine fever and from foot-and-mouth disease to biosecurity measures, this Subcommittee will continue to work to give animal health and livestock, dairy, and poultry issues the attention that they deserve. These issues, however, also deserve the attention of the House Appropriations Committee, and they deserve the attention not only of the USDA but also the Food and Drug Administration where proposed changes to long-standing labeling requirements for re-implanting of shorter acting growth implants for cattle could abruptly stop a common practice that would adversely impact the industry.

The issues deserve our attention during the reauthorization of the farm bill and on the House floor. The livelihood of farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers, and the consumers whom they often work for is at stake.

Under Secretary Moffitt, thank you for participating in today's hearing.

Oh, you popped in. So Congressman Molinaro, the Member from New York, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOLINARO. I apologize, Chairman, but I do thank you. I just wanted to circle back to a couple I think somewhat specific New York questions, so I will get to that. Obviously, very timely. We know how dangerous an outbreak of disease can be. And of course, over the past year, avian influenza has decimated poultry farmers across the country. Now, specifically, though, considering just how destructive disease outbreaks can be for farmers and in fact the entire food system, it is essential obviously that USDA and Congress work together to ensure robust prevention.

New York farmers very specifically are fortunate to benefit from Cornell University's Animal Health Diagnostic Center, which happens to be in my district in upstate New York. This is one of the most advanced diagnostic laboratories in the country and of course helps livestock farms of all sizes throughout my district manage the health of their herd and prevent the spread of disease.

The Animal Health Diagnostic Center is part of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, and so very specifically, Under Secretary, could you just speak to how the USDA is working to improve access to facilities like the Animal Health Diagnostic Center to prevent the spread of avian flu and other like diseases?

Ms. MOFFITT. Representative, thank you so much for that question. And the National Animal Health Laboratory Network is such an important part of our response mechanism so that we have quick diagnostic across the country, as you identified. We have labs in over 40 different states, 43 different states, and that network of labs is a critical part of it.

You asked about the funding that we have. Thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill, we were able to receive additional funding for the National Animal Health Lab Network, so additional \$20 million that have been able to supplement annual appropriations, as well as state funding and also land-grant funding that the labs receive. This funding is an important part. I have not been and visited the lab in Cornell but did get to visit the lab in Minnesota, and I saw firsthand what they were able to do with the NAHLN—that is the acronym—with the NAHLN funding that they received to be able to invest in equipment that could do rapid diagnostics so that when we do have an outbreak—and I was able to see this before we had high-path avian influenza to see how they were ready and the proper equipment and materials to be able to be ready should an outbreak occur so they can do mass diagnostic testing. The quicker we know that we have a disease, the quicker that we know we have a foreign animal disease, the better we can respond quickly.

Mr. MOLINARO. So I appreciate that. And I also want to extend certainly an invitation—Chairman Thompson was just with us in the 19th District, met with the folks at Cornell, certainly would love to have USDA staff and yourself visit the great work at Cornell.

Could you though—and I apologize if you did cover it. So now in the development of the farm bill, I assume other than or inclusive of dollars, what could Congress be focused on to expand obviously access and that support?

Ms. MOFFITT. Well, and Dr. Naugle can go into this more if you are specifically talking about the lab or—

Mr. MOLINARO. Yes.

Ms. MOFFITT. I think the funding of course is very important. We hear that from the labs themselves. The flexibility that the funding allows for them to be able to identify what needs they have and for us to be able to fund those I think is important as well.

Dr. Naugle—

Mr. MOLINARO. That would be great. Thank you.

Dr. NAUGLE. Yes. And I will say I had the pleasure of being at the Cornell Lab last summer, so I had a very recent tour. It was beautiful. The one thing that I would add—and we have talked about it in a prior question—is workforce development for our laboratories as well.

Mr. MOLINARO. And what—and I apologize, what do you recommend as a pipeline beyond funding to expand at least access and development of the workforce?

Ms. MOFFITT. Well, I have been in and around your district, and there are incredible technical colleges that New York has. That is an incredible opportunity if it already isn't as a pipeline to develop high school students and college students who are interested in different career options, making sure that they know that working in a lab or working in an animal health capacity in some way, shape, or form I think is a really important part of building the pipeline. And the technical colleges that New York has, as well as technical colleges that we heard in Connecticut, are really a valuable tool there.

Mr. MOLINARO. Yes. I think just to further that point, expanding K-12 ag education, making the connectivity through vocational applied and life science education, and of course making the connectivity to community colleges and higher education institutions as a means of not only creating the pathway but also expanding and supporting agriculture in upstate New York. So I just appreciate that and look forward perhaps to hosting a visit at Cornell.

Mr. Chairman, thanks very much.

Ms. MOFFITT. I will just add, we talked about this earlier, but the pipeline in schools is important, pipeline through 4-H and FFA and all those other programs are important as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Next, the chair recognizes the Congressman from Texas, Congressman Jackson, for 5 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON of Texas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you squeaking me in here right at the end. It looks like I got here seconds before we are done, but thank you. I have four committees, so it has been chaos today. But thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

As you may or may not know, I represent the 13th Congressional District of Texas. It is one of the largest animal agriculture districts in the country. Texas 13 has more fed cattle than anywhere else in the entire U.S., representing over \$16.5 billion in economic value. The work that you all do in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is critical to the overall health of the animal agriculture industry in my district and the rest of the country, and I appreciate it.

Under Secretary Moffitt, I wanted to ask you, foot-and-mouth disease is right off the coast of one of our major trading partners right now, Australia, in Indonesia. African swine fever has been

found in the Dominican Republic, a mere stone's throw away from Puerto Rico. Your testimony underlines the catastrophic impacts these and other foreign animal diseases would have in the U.S. if and when an outbreak were to occur. Can you speak to the importance of continuing to bolster the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasure Bank in the next farm bill, including further funding to meet our ever-growing need in protecting from foot-and-mouth disease and other foreign animal diseases that we might encounter?

Ms. MOFFITT. Thank you so much for that question. And I will pass it to Dr. Naugle to talk about the vaccine bank. And then of course as you recognize, the preparedness, the response, making sure that we are keeping it out in the first place, but the vaccine bank—but, important is biosecurity and stamping out the disease, and that vaccine bank adds an important insurance tool as well.

But I will pass it to Dr. Naugle to talk about the vaccine bank.

Dr. NAUGLE. Sure. A couple of additional details here, so we have purchased over \$56 million in vaccine antigen concentrate for FMD and finished vaccine for CSF, which is classical swine fever. Also important in the bank is it is a countermeasures bank in addition to a vaccine bank, so we purchased diagnostic test kits for FMD and ASF, African swine fever, so we can be ready to respond as quickly as we detect those diseases. Currently, our goal is to have a minimum of 25 million doses available for each of the top ten strains for FMD, and we are working toward that goal. So I do think that the bank and having access to those vaccines is critically important from a preparedness perspective.

Mr. JACKSON of Texas. Thank you. I agree, and I think that prevention obviously is way cheaper than trying to treat once it gets here. I think we all understand that.

Madam Under Secretary, I was going to ask you one more question. In your testimony, you mentioned how foreign disease outbreaks highlight the critical need for public-sector animal health professionals, especially veterinarians. I just want to point out that in my district, the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine is specialized in training the types of large rural animal vets that we need so desperately right now in the country, vets that the USDA needs to maintain the health of America's animal agriculture industry. I am hopeful that the USDA recognizes the potential of the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine as a pipeline to the talent that they so desperately need when staffing shortages at the agency. Can you please expand on the opportunities that you are taking to recruit and retain talented individuals like the ones I am describing?

Ms. MOFFITT. Representative, thank you so much for that question and for highlighting, I think some of the important—part of our pipeline development is of course veterinary schools across the country. These are important for us in many ways. I had the opportunity not to visit Texas Tech but to visit another university, another vet school, and to meet with students and talk about the opportunities for working at APHIS, at USDA as a whole. And I know our team at APHIS, our team at USDA are constantly reaching out and recruiting students from vet schools across the country, I would imagine including Texas Tech.

And I can pass it to Dr. Naugle to talk about some of the scholarship programs, some of the internship programs that we have as well so that we are not just doing recruitment but we are also really feeding that pipeline.

Dr. NAUGLE. Thank you. First, I would say there is a lot of opportunity for students who are interested in working for us in Texas, right? We have the Cattle Fever Tick Program. We also have the southern border ports that we cover, so these could be veterinarians, as well as animal health technicians, really anyone interested in agriculture.

Within USDA APHIS, we have several internship programs for students, college students, high school students. We also have an internship program that is a scholarship program. It is called the Saul T. Wilson Scholarship, and it allows us to provide some funding to help students go to veterinary school and return to us. And we are very well aware of the program at Texas Tech, as well as programs at Texas A&M.

Mr. JACKSON of Texas. Yes, and we have a component of Texas A&M in my district as well that does the first couple of years of that type of training. It is a phenomenal program as well. I understand, as a physician, how the money that is out there available to you based on what specialty you pick is going to drive a lot of what you do. I also know my district director and my treasurer in my district are large animal vets, and I know that like a lot of people will choose to be small animal vets because that is where the money is at, so anything I think that you can do to foster people wanting to go into taking care of our cattle and our large animals and stuff is going to be very beneficial to us all in the long run.

Thank you. With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Under the Rules of the Committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for 10 calendar days to receive additional material and supplementary written responses from the witnesses to any question posed by a Member.

This hearing of the Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

SUBMITTED MATERIAL BY HON. TRACEY MANN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM KANSAS



SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL SUBMITTED BY HON. JENNY LESTER MOFFITT, UNDER
SECRETARY FOR MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

Insert 1

Mr. FEENSTRA. Awesome. So I am just going to pivot here, and it has the same theme. African swine fever. The depopulation of birds is one thing. When you have to euthanize hogs is another thing. And we saw this with COVID when we had to do it with COVID. Are you really taking serious measures of what this is going to look like when you have to depopulate large animals and where are they going to go? And I know China is having this issue, right? I mean, you can't really just bury them because the disease stays. I mean, have these things been thought through?

Ms. MOFFITT. Representative Feenstra, thank you for the really important question. As we have been, we have been absolutely preparing for the, I hope, unlikely event of African swine fever in the country. With that said, we know that we need to be ready, and we have been investing through funding through NADPRP, as well as through the CCC funding that the Secretary has authorized for African swine fever, different mechanisms and rapid response so that we understand how to do disposal.

Dr. Naugle, perhaps you can talk a little bit—oh, we are out of time.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes. Yes. Thank you. I would like a response to that in writing at some point, okay? Thank you. I yield back.

We understand the importance of having plans in place for depopulation of livestock and poultry, especially large animals. While we hope to never have to use these tools and techniques, we have plans in place for what APHIS and its state and industry partners would need to do in event of an outbreak. USDA relies on livestock and poultry depopulation guidelines set by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), which has identified preferred, permitted, and non-recommended methods for each species. The USDA, state animal health officials, and

producers carefully weigh the different options to determine the best option for humane depopulation and do not make such decisions lightly.

The various tabletop exercises and trainings we have conducted, some of which were funded through the farm bill's animal health programs, help us work through various scenarios so that we are able to make the best decisions using the lessons we learned from those practice scenarios. I would also note, that aside from those exercises, the farm bill's animal health programs have funded projects focused on bettering our understanding of depopulation and disposal techniques. Even if the project was focused on one state or one species of animal, we have seen that those lessons and strategies developed through those projects can be applicable widely.

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Ms. MOFFITT. . . .

. . . And we have different things like an internship program. Dr. Naugle can talk a little bit more about some of the different programs that we have so that we build and keep the pipeline coming into APHIS and to USDA across the board.

Mr. ALFORD. I would like to hear about that because I know this is a big concern all over America, workforce.

Ms. MOFFITT. Yes.

Mr. ALFORD. How are you getting young people interested in this, really which is a national security issue?

Dr. NAUGLE. Well, sir, I think that is it. That is the challenge that we all have, right, and we need to start young. We need to start with students that are in 4-H, FFA, perhaps targeting in areas where we know there are major livestock industries to get some of those students interested in animal health jobs. We do have numerous internships within APHIS for really all ages of students, whether high school, all the way up through college, and we do have the premier Saul T. Wilson Scholarship Program and internship that provides some funding for students to attend veterinary school, and upon completion, they return and work for us for a certain period of years. But I think it is really going to take effort from all of us. I don't think it is something that APHIS can do alone. And I think we really need to leverage groups like 4-H and FFA.

Mr. ALFORD. Madam Under Secretary, what can we do in Congress to help you in this effort?

Ms. MOFFITT. Well, that is a very good question. I can take that back with our team to look more at what types of things that we could ask for from Congress for this and get back to you.

The outbreak of highly-pathogenic avian influenza again demonstrated how important having a dedicated and skilled workforce is to protecting agriculture. It also demonstrated our need to improve recruitment and retention efforts, and we really appreciate this question.

Staff are considering several options to address this need. Each option will have a budgetary impact. USDA will consider each of the options within the context of the annual budget process.

SUBMITTED QUESTIONS

Response from Hon. Jenny Lester Moffitt, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Question Submitted by Hon. Trent Kelly, a Representative in Congress from Mississippi

Question. Madam Under Secretary, my home state of Mississippi is a large poultry state, producing more than \$3.8 billion of poultry products, making it our number one commodity in terms of economic value, a position it's held for 28 consecutive years over all other commodities grown in the state. Among the poultry growing states, we typically rank 5th in the nation in broiler production.

I first want to commend the agency for all their work on the highly pathogenic avian influenza issue. Fortunately, to date, Mississippi has only had one positive case of HPAI, found in a commercial broiler operation this November.

Back in 2015, a group of stakeholders, including several from my state, led an effort to make the APHIS indemnification process more equitable for the contract grower, in the event that birds have to be depopulated on-farm. It is my understanding that USDA did in fact make those recommended adjustments and created a protocol to which the contract grower is compensated for many of the costs that they have invested in raising the bird to the point of depopulation. Will you update

the Committee on that change and tell the Committee if that process is working well?

Answer. In 2018, APHIS published a final rule that allows for contract growers to receive a portion of the indemnity compensation for the work they had performed at the time when birds are depopulated because of highly pathogenic avian influenza. By all accounts, this process is working well, and producers are receiving the funding to which they are entitled. Indemnity funding remains an important tool, encouraging producers to quickly report illness in their birds, and allowing APHIS and its partners to move rapidly to eliminate the potential spread of the virus.

Questions Submitted by Hon. Randy Feenstra, a Representative in Congress from Iowa

Question 1. Under Secretary Moffitt, I'm aware that EPA has three ongoing risk assessments for formaldehyde, and it seems the EPA is on a path to set unscientifically supported and extremely low exposure limits that will in effect ban its use in the U.S. Many of my constituents are concerned about losing this important product for agricultural applications. Formaldehyde and formaldehyde-based products provide critical applications for crop production, veterinary medicine, animal agriculture and aquaculture, from protecting against *Salmonella* in hatching eggs or feed, to a disinfectant on-farm, fungal control in aquaculture or to help increase crop yields. Research has also shown it could be our most effective risk mitigation tool against African swine fever if it ever came to the United States. What are you doing to ensure agriculture's voice is heard and considered in this debate so my constituents don't lose this important tool that can be and has been used safely in agricultural applications for decades?

Answer. APHIS coordinates with EPA on the effectiveness of disinfectants they approve for specific livestock and poultry pathogens, particularly related to foreign animal diseases response. APHIS also maintains lists of those EPA-approved products. With regards to USDA's role in ensuring agriculture's voice is heard in discussions around pesticide regulatory actions, USDA has an office specifically dedicated to serving as the voice of the grower, the Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP). As part of OPMP's review process, OPMP will reach out to affected growers and collaborate with APHIS following the release of the risk assessments to raise awareness, and OPMP will ensure grower concerns are reflected in feedback to EPA.

Question 2. Under Secretary Moffitt, the National Institute of Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Education (NIAMRRE) led by Iowa State University, and of which University of California Davis is a very active member, has been working with USDA APHIS to understand the how to best collect and share antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) data for livestock operations. A key outcome of that work has identified that having statutory protections, similar to HIPAA laws for human health, would allow for better collection of AMR data and lead to more effective decision-making. How could these data security protections be provided and implemented at the national level?

Answer. Protecting producer data is a priority for USDA. We have heard concerns from producers and veterinarians about the confidentiality of data, and it is possible that those concerns are preventing some participation in these important programs. We have experience, through some of our animal health surveys in protecting the confidentiality of data and encouraging producer participation. We would be happy to continue to work with NIAMRRE and Congress to identify possible solutions for the issues they raise and identify whether statutory changes would be needed.

Question 3. Under Secretary Moffitt, through federally appropriated funds, NIAMRRE has also been actively working with APHIS to create an AMR Dashboard to monitor AMR and antimicrobial use. Building off this existing work, how do you plan to prioritize efforts to combat AMR and how could you utilize this dashboard to carry out those plans?

Answer. The AMR dashboards are an important tool in our Agency's broader One Health Strategy. APHIS and our partners will use AMR dashboards to monitor trends in antimicrobial resistance patterns, detect emerging resistance profiles, and better understand relationships between antimicrobial use and health management practices and antimicrobial resistance. In November 2022, APHIS announced a competitive funding opportunity to develop dashboard tools to improve access to information on AMR in domesticated animals through public private partnerships. APHIS is thoroughly reviewing those proposals, and we look forward to announcing the projects that will be funded soon.

Question 4. Under Secretary Moffitt, are you aware that U.S. EPA has proposed restricting the use of rodent control pesticides rodenticides that will make it significantly harder and much more costly for many poultry and livestock producers to

control rats and mice on their operations? Can you engage with your counterparts at EPA to seek rodenticide policies that do not impose any unnecessary restrictions and that EPA fully take into account animal health and welfare in whatever they do?

Answer. APHIS and OPMP did provide technical input as EPA was considering possible rodenticide actions, and OPMP provided formal public comment during the comment period. In addition, OPMP conducted a survey around the proposed actions using the authority granted by the 2018 Farm Bill to provide more information to EPA on the impacts of their proposal. We will continue to inform EPA of the unique needs of the agricultural community as they make decisions.

Questions Submitted by Hon. Max L. Miller, a Representative in Congress from Ohio

Question 1. Please share how USDA is working with state, veterinary and industry partners to ensure resources and processes are in place to address foreign animal disease outbreaks, which have capacity to cripple the agricultural sector if not prepared?

Answer. Partnerships are essential to ensuring we are prepared to detect and respond to foreign animal diseases. As an example, during the current outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza, we have worked closely with our state partners in every state to rapidly detect and respond to the virus. We have worked hand-in-hand with our industry partners, sharing information about the outbreak and enlisting their help in spreading the message of the importance of biosecurity. Those efforts have helped us control the disease and led to the success we have seen where we have very few cases of the virus in commercial facilities, and those that we do see are eradicated quickly.

Question 2. Please let us know how programs such as the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank, and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, which includes a partnership with the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Division, support this mission?

Answer. The farm bill's animal health programs have been a critical tool in our efforts to protect animal health and expand our capabilities to detect and respond to foreign animal diseases. Key to that success is that the programs have allowed us to strengthen partnerships with states, such as the one you mention with Ohio Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Division. The National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program provides funding to states, universities, industry organizations, Tribal partners, and other eligible entities for projects to help identify and fill in gaps in our existing preparedness and response capabilities and help prevent and prepare for the most serious animal diseases. Of note, Ohio received about \$500,000 for a project on effective depopulation methods. As part of the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank, APHIS has invested more than \$56 million to amass a stockpile of foot-and-mouth vaccine, with more than \$15 million more planned for FY 2023. We've also started accumulating foreign animal disease diagnostic test kits and are planning for additional types of vaccines and countermeasures to make sure the United States is well-prepared for future emergencies. The additional support of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network helps us partner with states and universities in building diagnostic capacity and technical knowledge so that we can rapidly detect foreign animal diseases, which is critical to stamping out foreign animal diseases.