

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4451

To support Federal, State, and Tribal coordination and management efforts relating to wildlife disease and zoonotic disease surveillance and ongoing and potential wildlife disease and zoonotic disease outbreaks, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 30, 2026

Ms. BALDWIN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To support Federal, State, and Tribal coordination and management efforts relating to wildlife disease and zoonotic disease surveillance and ongoing and potential wildlife disease and zoonotic disease outbreaks, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Wildlife Health Coordi-
5 nation and Zoonotic Disease Prevention Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) zoonotic diseases are a significant threat to
2 humans, livestock, domestic animals, and wildlife,
3 which is evidenced by the fact that—

4 (A) more than 6 out of every 10 known in-
5 fectious diseases in human populations origi-
6 nated in animals; and

7 (B) 3 out of every 4 new or emerging in-
8 fectious diseases in human populations origi-
9 nate from animals;

10 (2) zoonotic diseases are capable of transmit-
11 ting between animal populations, including wildlife,
12 livestock, and domestic animals, and human popu-
13 lations;

14 (3) the majority of recent emerging and trans-
15 boundary infectious diseases have originated in wild-
16 life, such as the ongoing highly pathogenic avian in-
17 fluenza outbreak since 2022;

18 (4) zoonotic disease spillover events are occur-
19 ring more frequently, particularly due to
20 globalization and increased interactions between
21 human and animal populations;

22 (5) risk exposure to zoonotic diseases across
23 human populations can vary, with rural and agricul-
24 tural communities and communities without
25 healthcare experiencing increased vulnerability;

1 (6) many zoonotic diseases of concern originate
2 in wildlife and livestock, which can be highly trans-
3 missible and spill over into humans, domestic ani-
4 mals, and back into wildlife and livestock, includ-
5 ing—

6 (A) highly pathogenic avian influenza
7 spreading among poultry and wild birds to hu-
8 mans, dairy cattle, cats, and wild mammals,
9 among others;

10 (B) chronic wasting disease transmissions
11 between wild and captive deer and elk; and

12 (C) bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis be-
13 tween ruminants and wildlife, which are also ca-
14 pable of infecting humans;

15 (7) outbreaks of diseases in wildlife and live-
16 stock, particularly those with zoonotic potential,
17 have significant adverse effects on the United States
18 economy, with the ongoing 2022 avian influenza out-
19 break resulting in the Department of Agriculture
20 spending, as of February 2025, over \$2,500,000,000
21 in indemnity payments;

22 (8) outbreaks of zoonotic diseases pose a sig-
23 nificant public health threat and may lead to a do-
24 mestic or global public health emergency;

1 (9) the Department of the Interior, Department
2 of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Pre-
3 vention, and Department of Homeland Security play
4 distinct but complementary roles in the prevention,
5 detection, control, and response to zoonotic diseases
6 that impact wildlife, livestock and domestic animals,
7 and humans;

8 (10) the Department of the Interior has a re-
9 sponsibility to protect and manage Federal trust
10 species, including by monitoring wildlife populations
11 and performing surveillance for emerging wildlife
12 diseases, including diseases with zoonotic potential;

13 (11) the United States Fish and Wildlife Serv-
14 ice is responsible for disease surveillance, response,
15 and management of diseases that threaten wildlife
16 and other animal populations and humans;

17 (12) State fish and wildlife agencies exercise
18 primary statutory authority over the management of
19 fish and wildlife as public trust resources within
20 their borders;

21 (13) the Department of Agriculture is primarily
22 responsible for safeguarding the health of livestock,
23 developing and conducting monitoring and surveil-
24 lance for livestock diseases, preventing the spread of
25 pests and diseases that pose a threat to the agricul-

1 tural industry, and conducting wildlife disease re-
2 search and implementing a National Wildlife Disease
3 Program that focuses on wildlife disease surveil-
4 lance;

5 (14) the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-
6 vention is the leading public health agency respon-
7 sible for—

8 (A) monitoring and responding to human
9 health threats posed by wildlife diseases and
10 zoonotic diseases; and

11 (B) conducting surveillance and research
12 and providing guidance to prevent and control
13 the spread of zoonotic diseases to and among
14 humans;

15 (15) the Department of Homeland Security is
16 primarily responsible for securing borders to prevent
17 the introduction of wildlife diseases and zoonotic dis-
18 eases;

19 (16) increased coordination and collaboration
20 between Federal, State, and Tribal agencies with re-
21 spect to wildlife disease and zoonotic disease efforts
22 is necessary to adequately monitor and respond to
23 ongoing and potential disease outbreaks, especially
24 outbreaks that pose public health threats;

1 (17) there is critical need to support existing
2 Federal, State, and Tribal coordination and manage-
3 ment efforts relating to wildlife disease and zoonotic
4 disease early detection, surveillance, and research
5 and management;

6 (18) greater permanence for Wildlife Health
7 Coordinators as intermediaries between the Depart-
8 ment of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior,
9 State fish and wildlife agencies, and the Centers for
10 Disease Control and Prevention would facilitate
11 communication, information sharing, and coordi-
12 nated efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to wild-
13 life diseases and zoonotic diseases;

14 (19) Wildlife Health Coordinators help address
15 State agency capacity nationally, including the inter-
16 agency National Fish and Wildlife Health Initiative
17 with membership from the Department of Agri-
18 culture and Department of the Interior and Tribal
19 and State representatives; and

20 (20) coordinated efforts described in para-
21 graphs (18) and (19) are essential to protect public
22 health, wildlife populations, and agricultural inter-
23 ests from the impacts of ongoing and emerging in-
24 fectious disease threats.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
4 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the
5 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
6 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

7 (2) LIVESTOCK.—The term “livestock” has the
8 meaning given the term in section 10403 of the Ani-
9 mal Health Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 8302).

10 (3) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means
11 the Wildlife Health Coordination and Zoonotic Dis-
12 ease Program established by section 4(a).

13 (4) WILDLIFE HEALTH COORDINATOR.—The
14 term “Wildlife Health Coordinator” means an indi-
15 vidual appointed to a position described in section
16 4(c)(1).

17 (5) WILDLIFE DISEASE.—The term “wildlife
18 disease” means any infectious disease originating in
19 wildlife that can be transmitted, directly or indi-
20 rectly, from an infected animal, host or vector, para-
21 sitic insects, inanimate source, or any other source
22 to non-human animals, including wildlife, livestock,
23 and domestic animals.

24 (6) ZOONOTIC DISEASE.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “zoonotic dis-
2 ease” means any disease that is transmissible
3 between animals and humans.

4 (B) INCLUSION.—The term “zoonotic dis-
5 ease” includes any wildlife disease that can be
6 transmitted between animals and humans.

7 **SEC. 4. WILDLIFE HEALTH COORDINATORS.**

8 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within
9 the United States Fish and Wildlife Service a program,
10 to be known as the “Wildlife Health Coordination and
11 Zoonotic Disease Program”, to be jointly administered by
12 the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Serv-
13 ice and the Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health
14 Inspection Service, to serve as a liaison between the De-
15 partment of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture,
16 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the De-
17 partment of Homeland Security, and other relevant Fed-
18 eral, State, and Tribal agencies, as determined necessary
19 by the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife
20 Service and the Administrator of the Animal and Plant
21 Health Inspection Service.

22 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Program are—
23 (1) to improve coordination among Federal,
24 State, and Tribal partners on wildlife health issues

1 and wildlife diseases, particularly diseases that have
 2 zoonotic potential; and

3 (2) to support communication, planning, and
 4 capacity building efforts to address emerging and
 5 ongoing national, State, and regional wildlife health
 6 concerns.

7 (c) WILDLIFE HEALTH COORDINATORS.—

8 (1) POSITIONS.—There are established in the
 9 Program the following positions, to be appointed in
 10 accordance with paragraph (2):

11 (A) 1 National Wildlife Health Coordi-
 12 nator.

13 (B) 1 Tribal Wildlife Health Coordinator.

14 (C) 4 Regional Wildlife Health Coordina-
 15 tors.

16 (2) APPOINTMENTS.—The Wildlife Health Co-
 17 ordinators shall be appointed in accordance with the
 18 following, using amounts made available through
 19 grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements pro-
 20 vided with amounts made available to carry out this
 21 section:

22 (A) The position of National Wildlife
 23 Health Coordinator described in paragraph
 24 (1)(A) shall be appointed by the Association of
 25 Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

1 (B) The position of Tribal Wildlife Health
2 Coordinator described in paragraph (1)(B) shall
3 be appointed by the Native American Fish and
4 Wildlife Society.

5 (C) The 4 positions of Regional Wildlife
6 Health Coordinators described in paragraph
7 (1)(C) shall be appointed by each of—

8 (i) the Western Association of Fish
9 and Wildlife Agencies;

10 (ii) the Midwest Association of Fish
11 and Wildlife Agencies;

12 (iii) the Northeast Association of Fish
13 and Wildlife Agencies; and

14 (iv) the Southeastern Association of
15 Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

16 (3) REGIONS.—The Regional Wildlife Health
17 Coordinators appointed under paragraph (2)(C)
18 shall—

19 (A) serve 4 distinct regions in the United
20 States, including the Northeast, Southeast,
21 Midwest, and West, which shall be defined as
22 each region represented by the Regional Asso-
23 ciations described in clauses (i) through (iv) of
24 that paragraph; and

1 (B) collaborate across those regions for
2 unified work.

3 (4) QUALIFICATIONS.—A Wildlife Health Coor-
4 dinator shall have expertise in wildlife health, veteri-
5 nary science and medicine, epidemiology, or another
6 related field.

7 (5) DUTIES.—A Wildlife Health Coordinator
8 shall—

9 (A) establish relationships with relevant
10 Federal, State, and Tribal agencies to carry out
11 the purposes of this Act;

12 (B) facilitate information sharing about ex-
13 isting and emerging wildlife diseases, including
14 disease threats to livestock and domestic ani-
15 mals, and zoonotic disease outbreaks or emerg-
16 ing disease threats between States, including
17 State departments of agriculture, environment,
18 natural resources, fish and wildlife, and public
19 health and State animal health officials, Indian
20 Tribes, the National Animal Health Laboratory
21 Network, the National Wildlife Health Center
22 of the United States Geological Survey, the De-
23 partment of Agriculture, the United States Fish
24 and Wildlife Service, the Centers for Disease
25 Control and Prevention, the Department of

1 Homeland Security, and other relevant Federal
2 agencies, as determined by the Director of the
3 United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the
4 Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health
5 Inspection Service;

6 (C) assist States and Indian Tribes in ac-
7 cessing resources, including applying for fund-
8 ing, to work on wildlife health and zoonotic dis-
9 ease issues, including diseases—

10 (i) with potential to transmit between
11 wildlife and livestock or domestic animals,
12 especially in areas where wildlife has fre-
13 quent contact with livestock and domestic
14 animal populations; and

15 (ii) with zoonotic potential;

16 (D) coordinate—

17 (i) between States, including State de-
18 partments of agriculture, environment,
19 natural resources, fish and wildlife, and
20 public health and State animal health offi-
21 cials, and Federal agencies; and

22 (ii) with other relevant entities en-
23 gaged in wildlife disease and zoonotic dis-
24 ease testing, research, monitoring, surveil-
25 lance, and management activities, includ-

ing entities convened by the Association of
Fish and Wildlife Agencies;

(E) develop and share best management
practices relating to wildlife health threats and
zoonotic diseases prepared by the Department
of Agriculture, the United States Fish and
Wildlife Service, the Centers for Disease Con-
trol and Prevention, and State and Tribal agen-
cies between those Federal agencies and State
and Tribal agencies, including State depart-
ments of agriculture, environment, natural re-
sources, fish and wildlife, and public health and
State animal health officials; and

(F) submit to Congress a report on rec-
ommendations for improving interagency co-
ordination and additional resources necessary to
address and prevent wildlife diseases of concern
and zoonotic disease outbreaks, particularly dis-
eases that threaten public health.

(6) BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.—Best
management practices developed and shared under
paragraph (5)(E) may include voluntary guidance
relating to the humane dispatch of animals in the
field, disease surveillance and monitoring techniques,
biosecurity and biosafety measures, public education,

1 and other information, as jointly determined nec-
2 essary by the Director of the United States Fish and
3 Wildlife Service and the Administrator of the Animal
4 and Plant Health Inspection Service.

5 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
6 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
7 \$900,000 for fiscal year 2027 and each fiscal year there-
8 after.

○