

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION – 2007

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 15 Combined with 64 **APPROVED**

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON WILDLIFE DISEASES
COMMITTEE ON SHEEP AND GOATS

SUBJECT MATTER: COOPERATIVE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT OF
WILDLIFE/LIVESTOCK DISEASE INTERACTIONS

DATES: RENO, NEVADA, OCTOBER 18 – 24, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The significance of diseases involving wildlife and livestock has increased opportunities for conflict between natural resource and livestock interests. The concerns are valid for the potential for disease transmission in either direction between wildlife and livestock. Domestic and wild species frequently share the same habitat and may share several pathogens. This interface creates many complex problems. Unfortunately, these problems are not always easily solved scientifically and so remedy is sought through political and/or legal channels.

Agriculture and wildlife interests share common risks and threats such as foreign animal disease introduction, loss of land/habitat to urban sprawl and land developments. It is imperative that we work together to preserve our common interests. Working together will require extensive cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration between several agencies and interest groups. It will also require respect for the responsibilities, authorities, skills, and livelihoods of all partners, and will help to develop trust.

Of immediate concern is domestic sheep/bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis* spp.) disease interactions. Bighorn sheep are currently at just 1-2% of their historical numbers with the majority of them inhabiting public lands in the western United States (US) managed by federal and state agencies. In recent years, some but not all bighorn sheep die-offs and declines have been temporally and spatially associated with domestic sheep contact. The complete range of mechanisms/causal agents that lead to epizootic disease events are not fully understood. Separation of wild and domestic sheep has been practiced to reduce the potential for additional bighorn sheep die-offs. Consequently, bighorn/domestic sheep disease interactions and their management impact the domestic sheep industry as well as bighorn sheep conservation.

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) Committees on Wildlife Diseases and Sheep and Goats are establishing a working group comprised of representatives of

state and federal animal health agencies, wildlife and public land managements, the American Sheep Industry and Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) to develop best management practices for raising domestic sheep (and goats) on public lands where contact between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep may occur.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Secretary of Agriculture and the United States Secretary of the Interior to seek resources through the President's budget to fund research to better elucidate the epidemiology and pathogenesis of bighorn/domestic sheep disease interactions so informed and effective management decisions can be made.