RESOLUTION NUMBER:  28 Combined with 11       APPROVED

SOURCE:  COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH

SUBJECT MATTER:  Funding Request in the 2018 Farm Bill for the Elimination of Raccoon Rabies in the United States

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Terrestrial wild animals are the primary sources of human and domestic animal exposures to rabies in the United States (US). Approximately 92.6% of reported rabies cases are confirmed in wildlife species, with rabid raccoons dominating the wild animal submissions. Domestic animals have accounted for approximately 50% of all animals submitted for testing to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention during recent years, with an excess of 92 million cattle at risk of rabies exposure annually. Rabies is commonly misidentified in pastoral animals because individuals typically present with depression and an unwillingness to eat or drink, with the appearance of an obstruction in the mouth or throat that may result in multiple exposures to family members, farm employees, friends, neighbors, and veterinary personnel. Associated animal mortality and farm quarantines add to the direct economic losses that are sustained by the US agrarian industry. An estimated 40,000 people also receive costly post-exposure rabies treatments each year in the US. Approximately $300 million was spent to live with rabies in the US during 2014. Presently, an expenditure of $634 million/year is projected to combat a fatal virus that gravely impacts all mammalian species.

Annual vaccinations of domestic livestock herds are often considered too costly and in some cases, not even possible. Conversely, canine rabies in domestic dogs was eliminated several decades ago through widespread vaccination in the US. Continual vaccination of pets and livestock serves to decrease domestic animal and human exposures to the fatal rabies virus; however, it does nothing to resolve the disease in free-ranging wildlife vector species. Accordingly, baits containing federally licensed, oral racies vaccines have been widely distributed to control and eliminate terrestrial racbies in wild animal populations in North America. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) presently coordinates Phase 1 of a cost-effective, National Rabies Management Program (NRMP), in cooperation with numerous state, local and federal agencies, universities, and other partners. Oral racies vaccination (ORV) previously eliminated and continues to prevent incursions of canine racbies in south Texas coyotes and gray foxes along the US-Mexico border. Similarly, the ORV program has successfully sequestered raccoon racbies to the east coast and prevented costly westward viral advance into naive states beyond
the Appalachian Mountain Range. When implemented, Phase 2 of the NRMP seeks to systematically eliminate terrestrial rabies variants in the US. The local elimination of raccoon rabies from Long Island alone provided for cumulative financial benefits exceeding $14 million in NY during 2016. Similarly, the Provinces of Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick (Canada) have derived positive One Health and financial benefits by eliminating periodic incursions of raccoon rabies from New York and the New England States.

The North American Rabies Management Plan provides a firm foundation for the US, Canada, and Mexico to establish international partnerships to control and eliminate rabies. Recent pharmaceutical evolutions and bait developments have resulted in novel products that have enhanced rabies vaccination efficacy in raccoons and skunks, thereby providing advanced tools that have successfully eliminated raccoon and fox rabies variants in the US and Canada. Strategic planning has also been completed in the form of expert panels and a DELPHI process, to formulate wildlife vaccination strategies and establish associated costs that are required to definitively achieve the goal of raccoon variant elimination in North America. An increase of $12.5 million, added to the current USDA APHIS WS budget for wildlife rabies control, will facilitate initiation of Phase 2 of the National Rabies Management Plan. USDA will be provided with the means to implement a coordinated and systematic approach towards raccoon rabies elimination. The programmatic successes that have already been achieved in the US and Canada will be expanded. As rabies elimination milestones are achieved within regions and states, it is expected that funding will also become increasingly available from state and local partners to accelerate the ultimate goal of terrestrial rabies elimination in North America.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the United States Congress add $12.5 million in the 2018 Farm Bill for the current annual, United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services budget to initiate Phase 2 of the National Rabies Management Plan, raccoon rabies elimination in the United States.