
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 1 **Approved**

SOURCE: **COMMITTEE ON ONE HEALTH**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Increased Fiscal Year 2024 Funding for the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services National Rabies Management Program and Request the Development of an Oral Rabies Bait/Vaccine Bank**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) has demonstrated that strategic implementation of cooperative oral rabies vaccination (ORV) programs targeting wildlife are cost-effective in reducing rabies transmission to protect human and animal health and reduce the cost of living with rabies. The World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) determined that the most effective strategy to control terrestrial rabies targets the sources of infection (i.e., wildlife vector populations) with landscape scale control efforts. ORV programs are designed to immunize target wildlife species by increasing the percentage of rabies-immune animals within vaccination zones, resulting in the reduction of rabies cases, prevention of viral spread (Phase 1 goal of the NRMP), and eventual raccoon rabies variant elimination (Phase 2 goal of the NRMP).

A comprehensive raccoon rabies management strategy has been cooperatively developed with federal, state, provincial and local partners for the elimination of the raccoon rabies variant in the United States (US) and Canada. In fiscal year 2021, the NRMP and cooperators distributed >9 million ORV baits in 16 Eastern Regional states to combat raccoon rabies and >1.1 million in Texas to prevent the reemergence of canine rabies in coyotes and grey fox rabies along the border with Mexico. The NRMP continues to make progress towards raccoon rabies elimination by removal of a Virginia ORV zone where raccoon rabies has been eliminated and by adding new zones in Alabama to prevent movement into western Mississippi. Another new ORV zone was added in eastern Lake Ontario of New York where raccoon rabies has been enzootic. To date, there were no new NRMP initiated contingency actions in 2020 or 2021. The Canadian Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick remain free of raccoon and red fox rabies.

The existing national supply chain problems are causing concern for the NRMP to meet the needs of licensed bait/vaccine units for ORV distribution. There are two companies manufacturing vaccines and the units are made to order but the shelf life is only 18 months.

[continued]

The important annual ORV distribution is time sensitive depending on the geographic location-- Maine to Alabama for raccoon rabies and Texas for canine rabies in coyotes and grey fox rabies. Timing for newborns to be successfully vaccinated is critical. Emergency distribution in ORV sensitive areas can occur at any time of the year. Thus, an oral rabies bait/vaccine bank is required to eliminate any lapse in the ORV schedule.

Successful ORV programs in Texas continue with rabies elimination in gray foxes and maintenance of an immune barrier along the Mexican border to keep the US free of canine rabies in coyotes and gray fox rabies.

The NRMP has been level funded since 2018. The requested total funding of 35 million dollars will allow USDA to:

- Continue the enhanced rabies surveillance program including support of a Wildlife Services biologist conducting between 5,000-7,000 field rabies tests each year (8% of all rabies testing in the US).
- Implement contingency actions in response to rabid animals in sensitive areas.
- Continue Phase 1 of the NRMP, to maintain existing ORV programs to control rabies and prevent spread in wildlife populations.
- Continue the evaluation of novel and US-licensed vaccines and baits.
- Continue studies related to rabies control in skunks, mongoose, and vampire bats.
- Initiate and enhance the operations of Phase 2 of the NRMP to eliminate the raccoon rabies variant in the US
- Plan and implement a rabies bait/vaccine bank (similar in nature to the North American Foot and Mouth Disease vaccine bank) for the purpose of stockpiling oral rabies vaccines for annual and/or emergency ORV use.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests the 118th Congress to appropriate a minimum of \$35 million for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS), National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) and requests that USDA-APHIS-WS initiate the development of a critically needed oral rabies bait/vaccine bank for the NRMP.