April 18, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

The Honorable Mike Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Peterson:

As you begin your work to pass a new bipartisan five-year Farm Bill, the Animal Agriculture Coalition (AAC), which is comprised of most major animal and animal related commodity organizations as well as allied organizations representing veterinary medicine, animal science and various livestock species sectors or animal agriculture interests in the United States look forward to working with you to ensure that farm policy benefits all agriculture interests.

An outbreak of a foreign animal disease has the ability to cripple the entire agricultural sector and have long-lasting ramifications for the economic viability of U.S. livestock production. It is critical that the new Farm Bill address these risks to animal health while likewise 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.

The AAC calls on Congress, in the 2018 Farm Bill, to establish a two-tiered program to deliver the sufficient development and timely deployment of all measures necessary to prevent, identify and mitigate the potential catastrophic impacts that an animal disease outbreak would have on our country’s food security, export markets, and overall economic stability.

It is essential that the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and state animal health officials have: (1) forward looking disease prevention and rapid response activities; and (2) robust laboratory capacity for surveillance. We cannot wait, we have seen the implications of these diseases, both financially and from an animal welfare standpoint and it is devastating. The two-tiered program is outlined in greater detail below.

**PREVENTION: ANIMAL PEST AND DISEASE DISASTER PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM**
(AAC requests CCC funding of $70M per year)

Modelled after the highly successful plant pest and disease management and disaster prevention programs, a new Animal Pest and Disease Disaster Prevention and Response Program, administered by APHIS, would be established to provide a proactive and concerted preventative “boots on the ground” effort focusing on early detection and rapid response to protect the nation’s animal agriculture industry. It is envisioned that this program would be structured to take full advantage, through support and collaboration, of the science generated by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) program established under section 1433 of the National...
Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, the Continuing Animal Health and Disease Research Program.

**SURVEILLANCE: NATIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY NETWORK**

(AAC requests CCC funding of ($30M per year)

Building upon the 2014 Farm Bill’s authorization of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), the Animal Disease and Disaster Prevention Program will help support NAHLN and bring together the federal government with states, industry, universities, and other interested groups to reduce the impact of high-consequence animal diseases, provide rapid detection and response capabilities to respond to animal diseases, develop disease prevention and mitigation technologies including vaccines, prevent the entrance and spread of foreign animal diseases into the United States, and identify and support critical research needs.

The AAC is eager to work with you to pass a 2018 Farm Bill as expeditiously as possible. Thank you for your consideration of our priorities. If you would like to discuss the this proposal further please contact Damon Wells, AAC Vice Chairman, (dwells@turkeyfed.org and 202-730-9636) or Ashley Morgan, AAC Vice Chairman (AMorgan@avma.org and (202) 289-3210).

Sincerely,

A LIST OF AAC MEMBERS THAT AGREE TO JOIN THE LETTER