



FARM BILL

ASI strongly supports reauthorization of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill). The Farm Bill should provide producers a reasonable safety net, encourage rural growth and support the production of U.S. food and fiber.

Wool Marketing Assistance Loan and Loan Deficiency Payment

- The 2014 Farm Bill authorizes nonrecourse marketing assistance loans (MALs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for wool to eligible producers who grow and shear wool for the 2014 through 2018 crop years.
- The national loan rate for graded wool is \$1.15/pound. The nongraded wool rate is \$0.40 per pound. These rates have not kept pace with market or producer costs.
- An examination of the wool loan rate strongly supports the need for an adjustment to a more appropriate level. Recent actual outlays have been nonexistent. Coarse micron wool prices are below the cost of production throughout 2017 and continuing in 2018 yet little to no support is expected to trigger for producers.
- When the 2014 farm bill was enacted, CBO estimated that the cost of the MAL/LDP was \$4 million for wool annually. Estimated (and actual) costs of the program are none or minimal.
- **ASI supports updating the rates in order to provide an effective risk management tool for sheep producers.**

Risk Management

Livestock Risk Protection (LRP)
- Lamb insurance is a key risk management tool for lamb producers as neither lamb nor wool are traded in the commodity futures market.

FDA Minor Use Animal Drug Program

- Continued access to key technologies is critical for the sheep industry.
- The targeted use of biologics and pharmaceuticals within a veterinary-client-patient relationship is key to our ability to maintain flock health and provide a safe, wholesome product.
- **ASI urges the creation of a mechanism for USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to fund critical minor use animal drug research through the National Research Support Project No. 7 (NRSP-7); NRSP-7 has an established record with Land-grant universities and has demonstrated excellent results for minor use drug research for nearly 40 years.**



Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Vaccine Bank

- An outbreak of a foreign animal disease has the ability to cripple the entire agricultural sector and would have long-lasting ramifications for the economic viability of the livestock industry.
- It is critical that the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) work collaboratively with state animal health officials to be able to rapidly respond to any such outbreak.
- In the event of an outbreak of FMD, U.S. producers must have immediate access to a viable vaccine bank. We join with others in the livestock industry in supporting the creation and maintenance of an FMD vaccine bank and continued research.
- **ASI asks Congress to provide \$150 million a year in mandatory funding for USDA APHIS to establish a vaccine bank and to protect the U.S. livestock industry from foreign animal disease outbreak.**

Export Programs of the USDA / Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS)

- Access to foreign markets is critical for the sheep industry
- Approximately 50% of U.S. wool is exported.
- **ASI supports funding for FAS programs (such as MAP and FMD) that help sheep producers promote the export of wool.**

Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program (SPMGP)

- The Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program (section 209 of the AMA of 1946) is intimately connected to the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center (NSIIC).
- The Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program (SPMGP) was authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and provided \$1.5 M for fiscal year 2014 (to remain available until expended) of Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funding to USDA/AMS for the SPMGP.
- The SPMGP provided funds on a competitive basis to national organizations whose mission is to strengthen and enhance the production and marketing of sheep and sheep products in the United States, including the improvement of infrastructure business, resource development, and the development of innovative approaches to solve long-term needs.
- NSIIC has been instrumental in the development of the LRP - Lamb Insurance product and the wool superwash capability in the United States.
- **ASI supports providing mandatory funding for the SPMGP.**

The Wool Research, Development, and Promotion Trust Fund,

- Authorized in 2000 the Wool Trust Fund provides grants to a nationally-recognized council established for the development of the United States wool market.
- The purpose of the Wool Trust Fund is to assist United States wool producers in improving the quality of wool and providing and assisting producers in the development and promotion of the wool market.
- **ASI strongly supports reauthorization of the Wool Trust Fund.**

For more information, please visit the ASI website at www.sheepusa.org.
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WILDLIFE SERVICES

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) urges Congress to provide sufficient funding to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services (WS) program. ASI opposes any effort to restrict or eliminate WS funding and strongly urges continued vigilance to stave off any potential WS program attacks during House/Senate consideration of the FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations Bill.



WS is an essential program in agricultural production in the United States. Wildlife causes more than \$12.8 billion in damage each year to natural resources, public infrastructures, private property and agriculture. WS works to prevent, minimize and manage this damage and to protect human health and safety from conflicts with wildlife.

Coyotes, mountain lions, wolves and bears kill thousands of lambs and calves each year. Livestock losses attributed to these predators cost ranchers and producers more than \$178 million annually, according to the most recent surveys by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Sheep are the most frequent victims: A 2010 NASS survey recorded 247,000 sheep and lamb losses are due to predators. These losses occurred despite the use of multiple management tools and techniques to safeguard livestock. Without these protection measures, livestock losses would be as much as two to three times higher.

In FY2017, WS spent \$9.8 million for cooperative work with federal and state agencies to protect and assist 187 threatened or endangered species in 40 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In more than 95 percent of the projects, local threatened and endangered species either increased or remained stable.

WS has the knowledge and skill, as well as the equipment, to track, capture and remove predators when they cause serious damage. Livestock producers are not the only group to benefit – so does the general public.

For years ASI has led the aggressive defense of the federal partner of livestock protection, by bringing together a diverse coalition of supporters in the areas of aquaculture, aviation, forestry, livestock production, range/forage management and state departments of agriculture to ensure the programs survival. In March, 206 organizations signed on to the following [www.sheepusa.org/IssuesPrograms GovernmentPrograms WildlifeServices](http://www.sheepusa.org/IssuesPrograms_GovernmentPrograms_WildlifeServices) in support of WS.

ASI supports **\$106, 776, 000, an increase to allow for \$3.4 million in NEPA compliance costs**, for Wildlife Damage Management and \$19.07 million for Wildlife Services Methods Development.

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Appropriations Bill
Agriculture

Agency
Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service

Account
Wildlife Services

Program
Wildlife Damage Management

Requested Amount
\$106,776,000

Description
The Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) program resolves human/wildlife conflicts and protects agriculture, human health and safety, personal property, and natural resources from wildlife damage and wildlife-borne diseases in the United States. This program protects agriculture by protecting livestock from predators, managing invasive species such as feral swine and beaver damage, conducting a national rabies management program, and managing wildlife species and diseases.

Livestock losses attributed to predators cost producers more than \$178 million annually, according to the most recent surveys by National Agriculture Statistics Service. Cost-benefit analyses have shown that for each dollar spent on livestock protection, APHIS saves producers between \$2 and \$7 in losses. APHIS prevents and reduces livestock predation through education, technical assistance to producers, and management programs. In FY 2014, APHIS' WDM program helped more than 11,000 producers in the western United States with livestock valued at more than \$2.3 billion.

Authorization
7 U.S.C 426-426d (Control of predatory and other wild animals)

President's FY 2019 Budget Request
\$46,331,000

FY 2018 House Report 115-232
\$103,375,000

Appropriations Bill
Agriculture

Agency
Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service

Account
Wildlife Services

Program
Wildlife Services Methods
Development

Requested Amount
\$19,070,000

Description
The Wildlife Services Methods Development (WSMD) program works with cooperators to conduct research and develop socially responsible methods to prevent and mitigate damage caused by wildlife and invasive species on agricultural productions, and to detect and prevent wildlife diseases that may impact animal health and agricultural biosecurity. This program provides scientific information to support the development and implementation of methods for managing wildlife damage. These methods enable APHIS, cooperators, and individuals to protect crops, livestock, natural resources, property, and public health and safety. The WSMD program serves as an international leader in non-lethal research to reduce wildlife damage.

Authorization
7 U.S.C 426-426d (Control of predatory and other wild animals)

President's FY 2019 Budget Request
\$18,820,000

FY 2018 House Report 115-232
\$18,855,000



U.S. SHEEP EXPERIMENT STATION (USSES)

In FY 2019 and beyond, Congress must preserve the USSES to ensure that valuable livestock, rangeland and wildlife research efforts and an irreplaceable field laboratory are not lost forever. The station must be funded at \$4.141 million in FY2019.

The 100 year old research station has demonstrated an impact on all of agriculture, especially the nation's sheep industry. Its 48,000 acres of land provides a unique location and is exclusively positioned for collaborative large-scale integrated livestock, wildlife and rangeland research.

The USSES present state and strengths include:

- A large, high quality, intact, landscape-scale field laboratory;
- Historical and on-going high quality research and long term data;
- Significant potential for future research to benefit numerous wildlife species including those considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act;
- Location in rural areas and positive local economic impact;
- Veterinary medicine intern program nationally known and respected; and
- A model for production and management practices, including infectious diseases, for university extension and industry to utilize.

The USSES unique opportunities and needs for the future:

- An expanded mission, focus, landholdings and budget that tie into other western/national priorities like fire mitigation, climate change and interactive livestock/wildlife grazing and disease issues.

To address the future needs of the station, the formation of a **Western Integrated Rangeland Research Consortium** has been proposed to perform research that focuses on productive domestic livestock enterprises while maintaining healthy rangeland systems assuring sustainable and healthy wildlife habitat.

Consortium Strategy:

1. To fully utilize the irreplaceable resources and opportunities of the sheep station in ongoing and future collaborative research efforts with the Animal Disease Research Unit, other ARS facilities, universities and partners.
2. Utilize USSES as a large, nationally unique, field laboratory to add value and management application to research efforts at other USDA-ARS facilities and improve recruitment and retention efforts by co-locating scientists in larger research communities.
3. Maintain the USSES-Dubois location as a worksite for research projects, which would be locally managed by an ARS Research Leader and critical scientific and support staff.
4. Long-term fiscal viability is ensured through consolidation of administrative support and sharing of scientific laboratory space and instrumentation at the University of Idaho and Washington State University.

Sage Grouse — Population and habitat has been studied for 49 years at the USSES, leading to irreplaceable historical rangeland data. Sage grouse populations thrive on USSES lands where sheep graze, with annual USSES lek counts often exceeding regional counts. Efforts are underway to: enhance current monitoring programs for grizzly bear and sage grouse; combine USSES sage grouse records with the USSES Rangeland and Climate Databases; and research the effects of fire, climate, and grazing management on sage grouse lek populations. These efforts are needed to identify factors most associated with sage grouse presence and viability, which in turn will be used to craft science-based strategies for effective and responsible management of rangelands and wildlife.

For more information, please visit the ASI website at www.sheepusa.org.

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**Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

Agency

Agriculture Research Service

Account

Salaries and Expenses

FY2019 Requested Amount

\$4.141 million

Description

ARS is the principal in house research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Congress first authorized federally supported agricultural research in the Organic Act of 1862, which established what is now USDA. That statute directed the Commissioner of Agriculture “to acquire and preserve in his department all information he can obtain by means of books and correspondence, and by practical and scientific experiments.” The scope of USDA’s agricultural research programs has been expanded and extended more than 60 times since the Department was created.

The 100 year old research station has demonstrated an impact on all of agriculture, especially the nation’s sheep industry. Its 48,000 acres of land provides a unique location and is exclusively positioned for collaborative large-scale integrated livestock, wildlife and rangeland research.

The mission of the USDA, ARS, Range Sheep Production Efficiency Research Unit, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station is to develop integrated methods for increasing production efficiency of sheep and to simultaneously improve the sustainability of rangeland ecosystems.

Authorization

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) was established on November 2, 1953, pursuant to authority vested in the Secretary of Agriculture by 5 U.S.C. 301 and Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953, and other authorities.

President’s FY 2019 Budget Request

\$0



BIGHORN SHEEP IN DOMESTIC SHEEP GRAZING ALLOTMENTS

In 2010, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) prohibited 13,000 sheep from grazing on their historic grazing allotments within the Payette National Forest in Idaho, driving one ranch out of business entirely and drastically reducing the operations of three others. The *supposed* reason for this reduction was an obscure regulation of the National Forest Management Act allegedly requiring each national forest to maintain “minimum viable” populations of all vertebrate species found there. Environmental activists argued that by allowing domestic grazing to persist, the USFS violated this regulation.

Not only are Payette decision impacts spreading to other national forests with bighorn sheep populations, the Bureau of Land Management is considering grazing restrictions on federal lands under its administration, creating a west-wide issue that threatens a substantial part of the domestic sheep and wool industry. Forest Service officials continue to make decisions on the future use of “*high risk*” allotments grazed by domestic sheep, even though only 3 percent of federal sheep allotments overlap with occupied bighorn habitat, and IN SPITE of the fact that *M. ovipneumoniae* (Movi) has now been confirmed present in bison and whitetail deer. While it is impossible to accurately predict the total impact of this approach, at a minimum 400,000 domestic sheep, and the families who raise and care for them, may be affected. The impacts are serious, affecting not only sheep operators and their employees, but meat packing plants, woolen mills, and even the military, which purchases twenty percent of the nation’s wool production to help equip America’s service men and women.

The facts are these:

- Domestic sheep and bighorns have co-existed in many of the same areas for decades without, apparently, decimating bighorn herds.
- While *M. ovipneumoniae* is often identified as the pathogen that causes respiratory disease in bighorns, there is no single pathogen responsible for causing the most common respiratory diseases in bighorn sheep clearly be tied to contact with domestic sheep on the open range. In fact, there are documented die-offs of bighorns in areas far removed from any domestic sheep and healthy bighorn populations that carry Movi.
- USDA is heavily involved in research to identify the causes of bighorn diseases and transmission vectors and the sheep industry strongly supports this research. Yet, research conducted by USDA’s intramural science agency, the Agricultural Research Service, is specifically being *ignored* by USFS. In abject contravention to congressional direction.

ASI recognizes the legal obligations of the Forest Service and BLM to analyze all threats to the viability of bighorn sheep. However, ASI does not recognize “single species viability” as trumping all legal obligations for multiple use of federal lands, including grazing. Calls for closing various allotments and removing domestic sheep, in spite of the lack of clear scientific cause and effect, have already occurred. Given this, ASI requests a simple, equitable exchange: find suitable alternative allotments for those sheep operators whose permits in bighorn habitat have been reduced. This exchange represents more than just good intentions—making alternative allotments available will require completion of an environmental analysis and other clearances, and this can take some time. Therefore, no translocations of domestic sheep to alternative allotments should be mandated until NEPA is complete and all challenges to the use of those allotments by domestic sheep are resolved. ASI strongly supports this equitable approach allowing for the survival of the domestic sheep industry in the face of mounting challenges related to bighorn habitat.

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FY2019 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Request

Proposed FY2019 Report Language:

Bighorn Sheep Conservation.—The Committee directs the Service to complete Risk of Contact analyses using the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' occupied bighorn habitat maps, telemetry data, and recent bighorn observations. The Service is further directed to transparently and promptly share findings with other federal land management agencies, state and local governments, state wildlife agencies, and state and federal animal health professionals, including the Agricultural Research Service, permittees, and stakeholders. The Committee directs the Forest Service to engage the Agricultural Research Service and the aforementioned cooperating agencies and participants to ensure the best professional scientific understanding of where and if disease transmission occurs, and the degree of that risk, before making further management decisions that impact permittees. In direct acknowledgment of the fact that the presence of the pathogen most commonly blamed for causing respiratory disease in bighorn sheep, *M. ovipneumoniae*, has recently been confirmed in bison and whitetail deer, the Committee directs the Service to sample other wildlife in occupied bighorn habitat for the presence of *M. ovipneumoniae*. The Forest Service is further directed, if warranted, to use this base of information to identify and implement actions to resolve high-risk of disease transmission allotments, including if agreeable to the permittee, the relocation of domestic sheep to lower-risk allotments, with minimal disruption and displacement of permittees. However, translocation of a permittee cannot be ordered until a proper analysis, in direct coordination with the Agricultural Research Service, of the risk of pathogen conveyance from species other than domestic sheep has been conducted. The Forest Service is directed to provide quarterly briefings to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, both in writing and in person, on its progress and adherence to the directives contained herein.

Proposed FY2018 Bill Language:

SEC. XXX. The Secretary of the Interior, with respect to public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to National Forest System lands, shall make vacant grazing allotments available to a holder of a grazing permit or lease issued by either Secretary if the lands covered by the permit or lease are unusable because of drought, wildfire, or conflict with wildlife, as determined by the Secretary concerned. *Provided*, That the terms and conditions contained in a permit or lease made available pursuant to this section shall be the same as the terms and conditions of the most recent permit or lease that was applicable to the vacant grazing allotment made available. *Provided further*, That Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332) shall not apply with respect to any Federal agency action under this section.



ADDITIONAL ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE

ASI is the national organization representing the interests of 88,000 sheep producers located throughout the United States. From East to West, farm flocks to range operations, ASI works to represent the interests of all producers.

H2-A Temporary Agricultural Workers – The Sheep industry depends on a workable temporary foreign labor program to help care for more one-third of ewes and lambs in the U.S. For over 50 years, the sheep industry has used and helped craft the current provisions of the H2A program. While changes to that program and the creation of an H2C program have been discussed, issues regarding health insurance requirements and the numerical cap remain a challenge. Any guest herder program must maintain special procedures for sheep producers and give our members a fighting chance to compete in an increasingly difficult financial environment, while protecting both domestic and foreign ag workers. **ASI supports passage of H.B. 4092 (the Ag Act) to fulfill this critical labor requirement of the U.S. sheep industry.**

Scrapie Eradication – The U.S. sheep industry, working collaboratively with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and state partners, has nearly eliminated scrapie. Official identification, surveillance, and traceability of both sheep and goats is critical to continuing and maintaining these efforts in order to preserve and enhance current and future export markets. Scrapie continues to cost the U.S. sheep and goat industry over \$25 million per year. Through the investment of substantial resources, the U.S. sheep industry is within 5 years of being declared scrapie free, with an additional two years of surveillance, but in order to achieve this result the U.S. Scrapie Eradication program must continue to be fully funded. **ASI urges Congress to fund the U.S. Scrapie Eradication program at \$19 million in FY18 within the Equine, Cervid and Small Ruminant Health Line.**

U.S. Sheep Experiment Station – As our nation's only experiment station primarily dedicated to sheep production, it is vital to our industry that this station continue its work as part of the USDA Agricultural Research Service. Over the past century, USSES has developed new sheep breeds, conducted rangeland research, and collected unparalleled sage grouse research data. Ongoing USSES research is critical for in not only ensuring economic competitiveness for producers, but also in understanding range interactions between domestic livestock and wildlife. In addition to rangeland research programs, USDA/ARS' Animal Disease Research Unit is dependent on USSES to carry out its infectious disease problem solving mission. **ASI urges funding for USSES at a level of \$4.141 million as part of our nation's strong commitment to continued agricultural research, with Congressional direction that the facility fully staff by filling the two open researcher positions.**

Mandatory Price Reporting – The reauthorization of the Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999 has been disappointing for sheep producers, due to the implementation of current confidentiality rules followed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its chilling effect on price reporting. Further complicating the issue is the effect on insurance products available to the sheep industry. ASI hopes to address this issue administratively, but will look to the Farm Bill to address the issue legislatively if necessary. **ASI urges the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to continue to work with the industry to ensure access to vital price reports despite continued market consolidation.**

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