

ASI 2018 FARM BILL CONFERENCE PRIORITIES

NATIONAL ANIMAL DISEASE PREPAREDNESS 3 AND RESPONSE PROGRAM—An outbreak of a foreign animal disease can cripple the entire agricultural sector and would have long-lasting ramifications for the economic viability of the livestock industry. We join with others in the livestock industry in supporting the creation and maintenance of a vaccine bank and continued research. ASI strongly supports the House provision, with emphasis on funding availability for development of animal drugs for minor use and minor species. **Conference Position:** Senate Recedes

Nonrecourse Marketing Assistance Loans—The 2014 Farm Bill authorizes nonrecourse marketing assistance loans (MALs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for wool to eligible producers who produce and shear wool for the 2014 through 2018 crop years. The national loan rate for graded wool is \$1.15/pound. Nongraded wool is \$0.40 per pound. When the 2014 farm bill was enacted, CBO estimated that the cost of the MAL/LDP was \$4 million for wool annually. Recent actual outlays have been nonexistent. With the recent low levels of producer income, ASI supports a re-examination of the wool loan rate and supports an adjustment to a more appropriate level. **Conference Position:** House with Amendment, increase the rate of graded wool to \$2.00 and non graded wool to \$0.80 per pound.

Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program—ASI strongly supports reauthorization and the House funding of \$2 million vs. \$1.5 million in Senate. **Conference position:** Senate Recedes

Wool Trust Fund Extension/Textile Trust Fund—ASI supports extension of the Wool Research, Development, and Promotion Fund whereby CCC makes annual payments for research and promotion purposes. **Conference Position:** Both versions contain the provision.

Foreign Market Development and Market Access Programs—Continued strength in the international marketing of lamb and wool requires a commitment to the promotion and export of U.S. wool to export markets through strong USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Program funding. **Conference Position:** Silent

HOUSE SECTION. 8338. VACANT GRAZING ALLOTMENTS MADE AVAILABLE TO CERTAIN GRAZING PERMIT HOLDERS— 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 as well as meat plants and wool mills and customers including the United States military.

- 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 *M. ovipneumoniae*.
- 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. John Helle, Montana sheep producer, testified before Congress this month on the threat to their ranch posed by the bighorn issue and his statement is at this link: <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/preserving-opportunities-for-grazing-on-federal-land/> ASI strongly supports this section. **Conference Position:** Senate Recedes

Senate section 12511. Restriction on use of certain poisons for predator control

(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to restrict the use of sodium cyanide to kill predatory animals given the risks posed by sodium cyanide to— (1) public safety; (2) national security; (3) the environment; and (4) persons and other animals that come into accidental contact with sodium cyanide.

(b) PROHIBITION.—The Secretary shall use sodium cyanide in a predator control device described in subsection (c) only in accordance with Wildlife Services Directive Number 2.415 of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, dated February 27, 2018, and the implementation guidelines attached to that Directive.

(c) PREDATOR CONTROL DEVICE DESCRIBED.—A predator control device referred to in subsection (b) is— (1) a dispenser designed to propel sodium cyanide when activated by an animal; (2) a gas cartridge or other pyrotechnic device designed to emit sodium cyanide fumes; and (3) any other means of dispensing sodium cyanide, including in the form of capsules, for wildlife management or other animal control purposes. ASI opposes restricting USDA Wildlife Services from updating guidance on the use of sodium cyanide for predator control. **Conference Position:** Senate Recedes.

For more information, please visit the ASI website at www.sheepusa.org Please contact Jim Richards at jrichards@cgagroup.com or (202) 448-9509 for more information.