

February 28, 2011

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
RHOB, 2362-A
Washington, D.C. 20515-6016

Dear Chairman Kingston:

On behalf of the nation's livestock producing farm families, we ask for your continued support of the livestock protection program of USDA's Wildlife Services (WS).

The undersigned organizations representing livestock producers and local government of the Eastern United States strongly oppose the Administration's proposed reductions in WS operations. Wildlife Services operations actually requires an increase of \$4.39 million beyond the FY 2010 level to adequately fund the livestock protection program in the eastern region of Wildlife Services.

We ask for your active opposition to the proposal of the Administration to reduce Wildlife Services by over \$10 million with elimination of the federal partnership in livestock protection in several states including South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. We are also concerned by the recent action taken by the House of Representatives on the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution (CR) with regards to reductions in APHIS funding for the remainder of the fiscal year. The FY2011 CR passed by the house cuts the funding for APHIS programs by approximately \$77.6 million from FY 2010 levels. Our concern is that agency funding cuts of this magnitude will have a disproportional effect on Wildlife Services livestock protection activities.

The Wildlife Services livestock protection program is vital to the economic survival of the livestock industry. Livestock protection is important to tens of thousands of farm families across the country, who recognize that even with federal assistance joining private and state agency efforts, over 250,000 sheep and nearly 150,000 cattle are still lost to predators each year. The value of livestock lost to predators and predator control costs are major expenses of livestock production.

The \$4.39 million needed for the Wildlife Services Eastern Region in the FY 2012 appropriations for agriculture would help fund livestock predation protection programs in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Mississippi, Minnesota, Michigan, Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky and Wisconsin. In recent years, Wildlife Services provided predator damage management assistance in 11 states of approximately \$878,000. Of this amount 70 percent or \$650,000, was cooperative funding from state and county governments, livestock groups and livestock producers themselves. This funding was in addition to funding designated to protect livestock from wolf depredation in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Livestock production is an important component of agriculture in our states; however, predator problems and wildlife conflict management are increasing. The proposed increase we support in livestock protection funding will assist our individual producers, state and county governments and the Wildlife Services Agency to better address predator management.

Alabama Cattlemen's Association
American Sheep Industry Association
Center for Dairy Excellence - PA
Century Commercial Lamb Producers and Feeders
Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Indiana Sheep Association
Iowa Sheep Industry Association
Kentucky Goat Producers Association
Kentucky Sheep and Goat Development Office
Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers Association
Keystone Beef Marketing Network - PA
Maine Sheep Breeders Association
Maryland Sheep Breeders Association
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations
Michigan Sheep Breeders Association
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producers Association
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Farm Bureau
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Lamb Feeders Association
National Rifle Association
New York Beef Producers' Association
North Carolina Sheep Producers Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Ohio Sheep Improvement Association
Pennsylvania Center for Beef Excellence
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association
Tennessee Sheep Producers Association
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
Virginia Sheep Producers Association
West Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
West Virginia Shepherds Federation
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative