

ASI'S PRIORITY POLICY ISSUES

ASI is the national organization representing the interests of the 100,000 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.

MINOR USE MINOR SPECIES ANIMAL PHARMACEUTICALS

- Continued access to key technologies through the animal drugs for minor uses and minor species is critical for the sheep industry.
- ASI STRONGLY supports an annual allocation to USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture for critical minor uses and minor species R&D through the former National Research Support Project No. 7 (NRSP-7).
- ASI requests an appropriation of \$1 million for the Minor Use Animal Drug Program to fund R&D to support the approval of new animal drugs for the U.S. sheep industry, specifically antiparasitic drugs.

H2-A TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

- Sheep farmers and ranchers depend on a workable temporary foreign labor program to help care for more than one-third of the ewes and lambs in the U.S. and, for over 50 years, have used and helped craft the current provisions of the H2A program.
- Any guest worker 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.
- The "Limited Allocation for Certain Special Procedures Industries" in any final legislation must include not less than 2,500 annual visas and a codification of key special procedures.

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 and its chilling effect on price reporting.
- ASI urges the USDA to continue working with the industry to ensure access to vital price reports, despite continued market consolidation.
- The 3/70/20 guideline to protect confidentiality hinders the price reporting available to sheep producers and should be reviewed to ensure consistent reporting of market data.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE PRIORITIES

- On January 3rd, 2022, USDA finalized the TSE rule which would allow sheep genetic materials, lamb meat and other products from the United Kingdom, Canada, and other nations to be eligible for import to the United States
- ASI members have significant concerns on the impact the finalization of this rule will have on the domestic lamb market and the health and safety of our domestic flocks
- ASI believes export opportunities for U.S. sheep and wool producers should be prioritized before additional import pressure is allowed to move forward
- ASI is therefore requesting this rule be fully evaluated and the industry provided a report before this rule is allowed to move forward
- **ASI asks support for H.R.6232/S.3354 - A Bill to delay the implementation of a rule relating to the importation of sheep and goats and products derived from sheep and goats, and for other purposes.**

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.



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 2023 Agriculture Appropriations Bill.

Wildlife Services (WS) provides Federal leadership and expertise to resolve conflicts between people and wildlife and allow them to coexist by protecting agriculture; natural resources, including threatened and endangered species; property and infrastructure; and public health and safety. Wildlife damages U.S. livestock, aquaculture, small grains, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products each year.

Wildlife predators cause more than **\$232 million** in death loss to livestock. WS prevents and reduces livestock predation through technical assistance (education and outreach) to producers and operational management programs.

In FY 2021, WS provided more than **20,500** technical assistance activities that enabled **44,115** livestock producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing, and predator dispersal. These activities included **31** predator management workshops attended by more than **1,200** individuals from **10** states.

In FY20, Wildlife Services supported APHIS's emergency response efforts to animal diseases, natural disasters, hazardous spills, and wildfires. WS deployed 44 personnel on 55 deployments assisting with the COVID-19 National Vaccination Campaign. WS collaborated and coordinated with the USGS, CDC, VS and State agencies and deployed employees to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks in domestic mink, sampling 265 animals from 14 different species. WS responded to ASF detection in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and assisted the USFS in a New Mexico wildfire response.

Wildlife Services 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.

ASI supports \$ 125,000,000, an increase to allow for \$2.02 million in NEPA compliance costs, for Wildlife Damage Management and \$25,000,000 million for Wildlife Services Methods Development.

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**Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

AgencyAnimal and Plant Health Inspection
Service**Account**

Wildlife Services

Program

Wildlife Damage Management

Requested Amount

\$125,000,000

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 2023 Budget Request

TBD

FY 2022

\$116,312,000

Appropriations Bill

Agriculture

AgencyAnimal and Plant Health Inspection
Service**Account**

Wildlife Services

Program

Wildlife Services Methods Development

Requested Amount

\$25,000,000

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 2023 Budget Request

TBD

FY 2022

\$23,363,000

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U.S. SHEEP EXPERIMENT STATION (USSES)

In FY 2023 and beyond, Congress must preserve 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 and be permanently removed from the ARS closure list.

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.

Over the past 5 years, collaboration with the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station has created and supported new research positions at: University of Idaho, Montana State University, University of Wyoming, the University of Nebraska, North Dakota State University, and Virginia Tech. This research also has an international educational impact.

- Science-based rangeland management solutions once flowed abundantly from the USSES rangeland research program. Many publications authored by former USSES scientists are currently used by USFS and BLM to propose long-term rangeland management strategies to restore sage grouse habitat, mitigate catastrophic wildfire risk and manage livestock grazing.
- Because USSES still maintains monitoring integrity of several of these former scientists' experiments there is opportunity long term follow-up evaluation. Use of this information in developing sound long-term management plans will be important in understanding and predicting the effects of climate change and accurately determining net carbon flux (release and sequestration) of livestock grazing.

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Appropriations Bill

Agriculture

Agency

Agricultural Research Service

Account

Salaries and Expenses

FY2023 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.

Proposed FY2023 Report Language

The Committee recognizes that the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station is a valuable asset for grazing lands and sheep industry genetic research, and the repository of over five decades of sage grouse research and data. The station is not only valuable for the domestic livestock industry, but also the Western region’s wildlife interface. The Committee provides an additional \$2 million for rangeland research and urges ARS to continue engaging collaborators to ensure the station functions as an agricultural research facility while also evaluating opportunities through a domestic livestock / wildlife collaboration.

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 2023 Budget Request

TBD



BIGHORN SHEEP IN DOMESTIC SHEEP GRAZING ALLOTMENTS

In the Payette National Forest in Idaho, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) prohibited 13,000 sheep from grazing on their historic grazing allotments, 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.

Forest Service officials continue to make decisions on the future use of “*high risk*” allotments grazed by domestic sheep using the Payette decision, even though only 3 percent of federal sheep allotments overlap with occupied bighorn habitat. 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.

- Domestic sheep and bighorns have co-existed in many of the same areas for decades without, apparently, decimating bighorn herds.
- While *M. ovipneumoniae* (Movi) 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.
- *M. ovipneumoniae* has now been confirmed present in moose, caribou, and mule, white-tailed deer, and bison.
- 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 despite 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, translocations of domestic sheep to alternative allotments should not 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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FY2023 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Request

Proposed FY2023 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 FY2023 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.

FY 2023 House Report Language: BIGHORN SHEEP The Committee is aware that the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) use the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' occupied bighorn habitat maps, telemetry data, and recent bighorn observations in conducting Risk of Contact analysis and that risk of contact models are currently being run on a State-wide basis where sufficient data exists. The Committee expects the agencies to continue to share findings transparently and promptly 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. This will ensure the inclusion of the most directly affected interests in a common understanding of the Risk of Contact analysis, the search for suitable alternative allotments, and the development of options for wild and domestic sheep. The Forest Service and BLM are further directed to continue to engage the Agricultural Research Service, research institutions, state wildlife agencies, and other scientific entities to ensure the best professional scientific understanding of the risk of disease transmission between domestic and bighorn sheep is known before making management decisions that impact permittees.

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SCRAPIE ERADICATION

Scrapie is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) affecting sheep and goats. The presence of classical scrapie in the U.S. sheep and goat population affects industry economically through production losses, lost exports, and increased production and disposal costs. Public health concerns related to the transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) to humans have resulted in efforts to eradicate all TSEs in food-producing animals.

- Scrapie is a degenerative and eventually fatal brain disease of sheep and goats. It is in the same class of diseases as BSE in cattle and Chronic Wasting Disease in elk and deer.
- Since its discovery in 1947, scrapie has been diagnosed in more than 1,000 flocks throughout the United States.
- No breed of sheep is known to be immune, though the disease does have a higher occurrence in certain breeds, such as the Suffolk.
- The U.S. sheep industry, working collaboratively with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and state partners through the National Scrapie Eradication Program, has nearly eliminated scrapie. In fact, the program has directly led to a reduced prevalence rate of 99%.
- USDA's mandated identification, surveillance, and traceability of both sheep and goats is critical to continuing and maintaining Scrapie elimination efforts in order to preserve and enhance current and future export markets.
- In late 2015 USDA/APHIS proposed to amend the scrapie eradication regulations, which when published will accelerate the Scrapie Eradication program to identify any remaining pockets of the disease in the U.S. Sheep and Goat populations. USDA published the final rule in April 2019.
- In order to implement the amendment to the scrapie eradication rule and to be able to claim that the U.S. has eradicated scrapie from U.S. sheep and goats in a timely and cost-effective manner, the current amount of federal spending on scrapie eradication within the Equine, Cervid and Small Ruminant Health Line will need to increase by at least \$6 million over the next two years. **Accordingly, ASI urges Congress to fund the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) at \$19 million in FY2023 within APHIS' Equine, Cervid and Small Ruminant Health Line.**

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Appropriations Bill

Agriculture

Agency

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Account

Salaries and Expenses

Program

Equine, Cervid, and Small Ruminant Health Program

FY2023 Requested Amount and Language

The Committee directs that not less than \$19 million shall be reserved for the **National Scrapie Eradication Program**.

Description

Scrapie is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) affecting sheep and goats. The presence of classical scrapie in the U.S. sheep and goat population affects industry economically through production losses, lost exports, and increased production and disposal costs. Public health concerns related to the transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) to humans have resulted in efforts to eradicate all TSEs in food-producing animals.

Surveillance for scrapie in the United States is conducted through the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP), a cooperative State-Federal-industry program. The surveillance components of the NSEP include:

1. Regulatory Scrapie Slaughter Surveillance;
2. Non-slaughter surveillance (e.g., trace investigations, on-farm testing); and
3. The Scrapie Free Flock Certification Program.

The program's goals are to eradicate classical scrapie from the United States and to meet World Organization for Animal Health criteria for disease freedom. Since 2002, the prevalence of scrapie has decreased significantly through existing eradication efforts, largely a result of effective slaughter surveillance.

Since slaughter surveillance started in FY 2003, the percent of cull sheep found positive at slaughter (once adjusted for face color) has decreased 99 percent. However, in order to declare the U.S. "scrapie free", we must be able to prove to the world that we have conducted testing in all sheep and goat populations. This is why your submission of samples from sheep/goats over 18 months of age found dead or euthanized on your farm is extremely important. Without your help, we will not be able to declare the US free of scrapie, costing the sheep and goat industries approximately \$10 to \$20 million, annually.

Authorization

U.S.C. 8301-8317; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.4

President's FY 2023 Budget Request

TBD