
MEMORANDUM

TO: American Sheep Industry Association
FROM: Cornerstone Government Affairs
SUBJECT: Status of Agriculture Appropriation with Respect to ASI Priorities
DATE: July 28, 2023

Going into the August recess, please see below an update of where the agriculture appropriation bills in both the House and Senate currently stand.

House of Representatives

- On June 14th, the House Appropriations Committee held a Full Committee markup of H.R. 4368 – the Fiscal Year 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Bill. In a long and contentious markup, members engaged in a partisan debate over funding levels in the bill. Republicans spoke in favor of rescinding unobligated funds from pandemic-era legislation and limiting authority of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), whereas Democrats saw Republican spending cuts as excessive and undermining current programs. The House bill was ultimately favorably reported, as amended on a party-line vote (34-27).
 - o [Full Committee Markup – House Bill Text](#)
 - o [Full Committee Markup – House Bill Report](#)
 - o [Full Committee Markup – House Summary](#)
- On Wednesday, July 26th, the House Committee on Rules held a meeting during the last week of session before the August recess to discuss H.R. 4363, as the last step before moving the bill to the House floor. Most of the discussion featured exchanges of partisan priorities and members were given the opportunity to provide testimony and answer questions on filed amendments.
- While most hoped H.R. 4368 would make it onto the floor before the August recess, the House ended up adjourning early on Thursday, July 27th, before the bill could make it out of Rules and onto the House floor for a vote, postponing any additional Rules meetings until September.

Senate

- On June 22nd, the Senate Appropriations Committee held a Full Committee markup on S. 2131 - the Fiscal Year 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Bill. The Senate markup featured strong bipartisan support, unlike the House’s version. Democrats and Republicans agreed the bill would support farmers and safe food access for families, and that facilitating a regular and quick appropriations process is critical to avoiding harmful funding cuts. The bill was reported favorably to the Senate floor, as amended with a unanimous vote (28-0).
 - o [Full Committee Markup – Senate Bill Text](#)
 - o [Full Committee Markup – Senate Bill Report](#)

- [Full Committee Markup – Senate Summary](#)
- This was the first markup the Senate Appropriations Committee has held in over 3 years.
- Currently, there is no set date of when S. 2131 will be considered by the full Senate.

Additional Comments

- Funding for operations of federal government agencies is set to expire September 30th, 2023.
- Military Construction-Veteran Affairs is the only appropriations bill which has been approved by the full House of Representatives. If there is not swift action to pass the remaining 11 appropriations bill after the August recess, the reality of a government shutdown looms ahead.

ASI Priorities Featured in Current Bill Report Language

House of Representatives

Please see below direct text pulled from the committee report accompanying the FY 24 House Ag Appropriations Bill related to ASI priorities:

Livestock Protection.—The Committee recognizes the challenges caused by infectious disease problems arising from wildlife-domestic animal agriculture interactions, particularly between domestic sheep and wild bighorn sheep. Researchers have recently produced an experimental vaccine to protect bighorn populations from disease, but much work is still required. The Committee encourages ARS to pursue research to determine the role of domestic sheep in causing die-offs of bighorn sheep from respiratory disease and to develop methods to reduce transmission and enhance immunity in domestic and bighorn sheep. (*Agricultural Research Service Section, Page 19*)

U.S. Sheep Experiment Station (USSES).—The Committee recognizes the unique and valuable contributions of the USSES in increasing production efficiency and improving sustainable rangeland ecosystems. The Committee is pleased by the collaboration of a diverse variety of stakeholders on the use of pastures, monitoring of wildlife interactions, and studies of mutual interest. The Committee encourages ARS to engage directly with stakeholders and State and Federal agencies with biological expertise to expand research programs 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. (*Agricultural Research Service Section, Page 23*)

Wildlife Services.—The Committee is concerned with livestock predation in areas with the highest populations of sheep and goats and provides an increase of \$1,000,000 for improved predator management methods and tools in cooperation with partner agencies serving these areas. This amount includes \$500,000 for operating and maintaining fixed wing aerial operations for predator control. (*Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Section, Page 37*)

Wildlife Services Education and Training.—The Committee is aware of the wide range of hazardous procedures and materials utilized by APHIS personnel in the conduct of daily duties. To ensure a safe working environment, the Committee provides no less than 2023 levels to maintain a National Training Academy focused on those areas of greatest concern such as pyrotechnics, firearms, hazardous materials, immobilization and euthanasia drugs, pesticides, animal care and handling, land vehicles, watercraft, and zoonotic diseases. (*Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Section, Page 37*)

Senate

Please see below direct text pulled from the committee report accompanying the FY 24 Senate Ag Appropriations Bill related to ASI priorities:

U.S. Sheep Experiment Station.—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 funding 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. (*Agricultural Research Service Section, Page 33*)

Non-Lethal Strategies.—The Committee is aware that Wildlife Services has worked with landowners to deploy non-lethal strategies, such as fladry, electric fencing, and livestock guardian dogs, to reduce predator depredation on livestock. The Committee provides \$4,500,000 for Wildlife Services to hire personnel exclusively to promote and implement non-lethal human-predator conflict deterrence techniques in interested States, with a focus on reducing human-wildlife conflicts related to predators and beavers in the Western Region and Great Lakes States and to assist in providing training in these techniques to agricultural producers, landowners, and other agency personnel in collaboration with the National Wildlife Research Center. (*Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Section, Page 52*)

Wildlife Damage Management.—APHIS is responsible for providing Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife. The Committee provides \$121,957,000 for wildlife damage control to maintain priority initiatives, including preventing the transport of invasive snakes and other harmful species. The Committee provides no less than the fiscal year 2023 funding level for the agency to reduce blackbird depredation in the Northern Great Plains. The Committee maintains support for assistance to catfish producers to help mitigate wildlife depredation, particularly as it pertains to fish-eating and disease-carrying birds. The Committee provides no less than the fiscal year 2023 level for damage management efforts and the development of methods to assist producers in combatting the persistent threat and economic hardship caused by cormorants, pelicans, and other birds. The Committee recognizes the importance of the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program in reducing adverse

ecological and economic impacts caused by feral swine across the country. The Committee provides no less than the fiscal year 2023 level in support of APHIS' efforts to decrease these invasive pests' damage and risk to agriculture, natural resources, and property. The Committee also encourages the use of all approved measures as a force multiplier and to prioritize areas with the most populous swine population. The Committee provides \$28,000,000 for the National Rabies Management Program to fortify existing barriers and advance prevention and eradication efforts. *(Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Section, Page 54)*

Wildlife Services Education and Training.—The Committee is aware of the wide range of hazardous procedures and materials utilized by APHIS personnel in the conduct of daily duties. In addition, a recent comprehensive study noted the critical need to provide standardized safety training, certification, and database management for tracking to ensure the safest working environment possible. As such, the Committee provides \$2,000,000 within Wildlife Damage Management to maintain a National Training Academy focused on those areas of greatest concern such as pyrotechnics, firearms, hazardous materials, immobilization and euthanasia drugs, pesticides, animal care and handling, land vehicles, watercraft, and zoonotic diseases. *(Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Section, Page 54)*