



## U.S. SHEEP EXPERIMENT STATION (USSES)

In FY 2026, Congressional recognition that USSES' unique role in ensuring valuable livestock, rangeland and wildlife research efforts and an irreplaceable field laboratory continue is appreciated. As such, ASI supports increasing the station's funding to \$5.141 million in FY2026 in order to meet the increased and unique demands and mission USSES faces.

This 100-year-old research station has long resulted in beneficial results, particularly for the nation's sheep industry. This one-of-a-kind USDA research "Living Laboratory" consists of a "real-world" fully functional research infrastructure situated on extensive land holdings of native rangelands and forests representative of the public and private lands that over 40% of US livestock (sheep and beef) ranchers depend on for their livelihood and to feed America. The USSES mission is to solve problems. To do so the USSES brings a unique and collaborative approach that has gathered a diverse group of stakeholders.

- **USSES Rangeland Collaboratory:** Incorporates over 50 interested parties directly into research from the livestock industry, conservation and environmental sector, university research and extension, rural communities, and federal and state land management agencies to co-produce new knowledge urgently needed to manage public lands for both food production and conservation goals. A key component is the ability to establish funded Research Support Agreements with partners, such as the University of Idaho.

- **Rangeland Fire & Grazing Research:** The USSES has 100 years of legacy rangeland, fire, and grazing research captured in its scientific records and in the actual fauna and flora dominating its research rangelands. USSES research in this arena provides **critical insights** about the effects of fire and grazing on forage quality, fuels management, soil health, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and how grazing livestock can shape the structure and composition of rangeland plant communities, which serves livestock producers, land management agencies (like US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management), wildland and prescribed fire managers and operators, wildlife conservation groups, and university partners.

- **Land Use and Habitat Conflict Research:** Because of its unique location near Dubois, ID, the USSES is able to help address many key issues of the day, including habitat conflicts between wildlife and livestock, and resource conflicts between human recreation, sport, industry, and wildlife. Some examples of these types of conflict include species of concern like the sage grouse and bighorn sheep, and protected species such as grizzly bears.

- **Livestock & Wildlife Conflict Research:** *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* pathogens are at the heart of the conflict between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep on the rangeland. Its presence impacts the sustainability of both the domestic sheep industry and bighorn sheep. To date, the main method for protecting the health of bighorns from potential pathogen contamination is to separate the animals from domestic sheep, which has resulted in the considerable loss of sheep industry access to grazing allotments. The USSES is part of two key projects addressing this conflict:

- The *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* Project, is designed to identify appropriate and economic ways to prevent disease in livestock and wildlife and importantly to provide for shared land use promoting economic growth, and
- The Intelligent Virtual Fence Initiative, which is designed to aid in the separation of wild and domestic sheep on open range and could serve to allow the continued use of sheep grazing allotments. These two project examples are supported by ASI and their continuation will require all current staff positions to be retained.

The research at the USSES will ultimately reduce and possibly eliminate conflicts between the agriculture and conservation communities. Such an accomplishment would benefit both the livelihoods of sheep ranchers and enhance wild sheep conservation, benefiting rural communities and their continued viability.

For more information, please visit the ASI website at [www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org).

Please contact Jim Richards at [jrichards@cgagroup.com](mailto:jrichards@cgagroup.com) or (202) 448-9509 for more information.



## **Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

### **Agency**

Agricultural Research Service

### **Account**

Salaries and Expenses

### **FY2026 Requested Amount**

\$5.141 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 FY2026 Report Language**

The Committee recognizes the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station’s valuable and historical role in basic and applied research on grazing lands and sheep genetics. The Station is also the repository of over five decades of sage grouse research and data. It is not only valuable for the domestic livestock industry, but also the Western region’s wildlife interface. The Committee provides an additional \$1 million to enhance the viability and multi-species health resulting from wildlife and domestic sheep interaction on shared landscapes 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 2025 Budget Request**

TBD