



## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The American Sheep Industry (ASI) is the national organization representing the interests of the 100,000 sheep producers located throughout the United States.

### FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION AND NEED FOR RISK MANAGEMENT TOOL

- ASI thanks Congress for the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21) which delivered on key provisions for the sheep industry by updating the marketing assistance loan rate for wool, increasing funding for trade promotion programs, reauthorizing and funding orphan programs like the Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program, Agriculture Wool Apparel Manufacturers Trust, Wool Research and Promotion and Animal Disease Prevention and Management.
- U.S. sheep producers are dealing with record high input costs alongside depressed and stagnant lamb and wool markets. Meanwhile, the industry does not have a viable risk management tool allowing producers to hedge against risks, especially in times of increasing domestic and international market volatility and adverse weather events.
- **ASI strongly supports the reauthorization and enhancement of a new five-year farm bill for the remaining titles and sections not otherwise covered in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The inclusion of language directing USDA to assess the feasibility of a margin coverage like risk management program tool for domestic lamb producers modeled after existing livestock production and risk management protection programs is a key priority for the industry.**

### LEVEL THE TRADE PLAYING FIELD

- In 2025, imports accounted for 73% of total U.S. lamb and mutton consumption. a market share that has steadily increased over the last 25 years. It has now reached a criticality that threatens the livelihood and sustainability of America's sheep and lamb producers and the families and communities reliant upon them. Australia and New Zealand account for 75 and 24% respectively of the foreign lamb imported to the U.S. And that market share has solely come at the expense of domestic producers.
- In October 2025, ASI formally submitted a request with personal injury data to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) urging the U.S. International Trade Commission to initiate a global safeguard investigation into U.S. imports of lamb meat, pursuant to Sections 201-202 of the Trade Act of 1974.
- In January 2026, the House and Senate addressed letters to USTR further urging the Commission to support ASI's request to pursue meaningful trade relief measures with respect to foreign lamb imports.
- **ASI strongly encourages Congress and the Administration to utilize tariffs and any other viable remedies to help stem the destructive rise in foreign lamb imports and protect our broader domestic industry.**

### H2-A TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

- U.S. sheep farmers and ranchers are largely dependent on a workable temporary agriculture labor program to help care for more than one-third of the ewes and lambs raised 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 the specific regulatorily defined special procedures for sheep producers, giving our members a fighting chance to compete in an increasingly difficult financial environment, all while employing and protecting both domestic and foreign ag workers.

For more information visit [www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org) or contact Jim Richards: [jrichards@cgagroup.com](mailto:jrichards@cgagroup.com) (202) 448-9509



- **ASI strongly supports any efforts from Congress and the Administration to address and pass meaningful agricultural labor reform. Such legislation must include a herder specific allocation of not less than 2,500 annual visas and the codification of the current shepherd specific special procedures as contained in H.R. 1773, the Agriculture Guestworker Act of 2013.**

### **ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR WOOL**

- U.S. wool producers have experienced sustained market losses since 2018; however, unlike other export-dependent agricultural commodities, the American wool industry has remained consistently excluded from federal trade and market relief programs.
- Most recently, the wool industry was excluded from the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program that was created to help farmers traverse times of market disruption and increased production costs.
- **ASI strongly encourages Congress to explore options to provide additional economic assistance for the agricultural sector with an emphasis on explicitly including wool as an eligible commodity.**

### **MINOR USE MINOR SPECIES ANIMAL PHARMACEUTICALS**

- U.S. sheep producers have limited access to approved veterinary pharmaceuticals essential to animal health, welfare and food safety, placing domestic producers at a competitive disadvantage to imports from countries that have access to and utilize significantly more animal health products.
- Rising development costs and ineffective incentives under the Minor Use and Minor Species Animal Health Act of 2004 (MUMS Act) have resulted in virtually no meaningful expansion of sheep drug approvals in two decades.
- **ASI urges Congress to restore and fund the USDA Minor Use Animal Drug Program, strengthen Food and Drug Administration Office of Minor Use, provide incentives for minor species through meaningful economic tools such as priority review vouchers and enhanced exclusivity, and consider an reform of the approval pathway to ensure regulatory parity with foreign competitors.**

### **LIVESTOCK MANDATORY PRICE REPORTING**

- Amending and reauthorizing the Livestock Mandatory Reporting (LMR) Act of 1999 must be accomplished to rectify an ongoing data gap. While supportive of the program, we ask USDA and Congress to address shortcomings in current confidentiality rules and its chilling effect on price reporting.
- While LMR was reauthorized in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the 3/70/20 confidentiality guidelines continue to limit producer access to market price reporting and should be amended to ensure timely, transparent and accurate reporting of market data.
- **ASI urges USDA to continue working with the sheep industry to explore administrative pathways that would ensure access to vital price reports, despite continued market consolidation.**

### **FY27 APPROPRIATIONS REQUESTS**

- USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service Wildlife Services Operations
- U.S. Sheep Experiment Station
- Scrapie Eradication
- Bighorn Sheep in Domestic Sheep Grazing Allotments



## ACCESS TO ANIMAL DRUGS

Access to safe, effective animal health products and new pharmaceuticals would support flock health and welfare, ensure food safety, protect environmental stewardship and sustain producer viability.

- **Need for approved pharmaceuticals for the treatment and prevention of important sheep diseases in the U.S.**— U.S. sheep producers face preventable animal health, welfare and production losses and escalating costs due to limited drug availability. Without approved and practical treatment options for parasites, infectious disease, pain management, and reproductive health, the American sheep industry is at a severe competitive disadvantage in both domestic and global markets.
- **Veterinary pharmaceuticals are essential tools in modern sheep production** –Many of these technologies are routinely available in countries exporting lamb into the U.S., yet our domestic producers consistently face:
  - Minimal sheep-labeled drug approvals,
  - Loss of federal support for minor species drug development,
  - A zero-tolerance residue standard increasingly incompatible with advancing detection technology, and
  - Competitive pressure from imported lamb produced using tools unavailable domestically.
- **The Animal Medicinal Drug Use Clarification Act (AMDUCA)** – Clarified that extra-label drug use (ELDU) in animals is illegal unless conducted under specific veterinary oversight exemptions. While ELDU provides limited flexibility, the need for sheep-specific drug approvals remains and the regulatory risk and uncertainty for veterinarians and producers is increased.
  - Restoring MUADP funding would allow development of a coordinated database under INAD exemptions, enabling the sheep industry to gather real-world data on efficacy, safety, and environmental impact similar to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service AADAP model.
- **The Animal Drug Availability Act (ADAA)** – Enacted to improve access to animal drugs, particularly for minor species such as sheep. ADAA did not sufficiently address the economic disincentives associated with minor species drug development.
  - Providing programmatic directions to and increasing funding for FDA OMUMS would create the capacity and incentive structure necessary to deliver measurable approvals rather than MUMS designations alone.



- **The USDA Minor Use Animal Drug Program (MUADP)** – MUADP was established to generate safety, efficacy, food safety, and environmental data to support FDA approvals. However, MUADP no longer receives consistent funding, and some completed studies have not resulted in approvals, effectively eliminating a pathway for advancing sheep-specific approvals.
- **The Minor Use and Minor Species (MUMS) Animal Health Act** – MUMS was designed to incentivize sponsors to pursue approvals for minor species. Since its enactment, only two drugs were approved for sheep – in 2005 – approvals that can hardly be attributed to MUMS incentives. In 20 years, there has been virtually no measurable progress in expanding sheep drug approvals through MUMS or MUADP.
- **Growing Trade Imbalance and Competitive Disadvantage** – In 1990, 93 percent of lamb consumed in the United States was domestically produced. In 2025, only 27 percent of lamb consumed in the U.S. is domestic, with imports primarily from Australia and New Zealand. Producers in those countries have access to approximately 100 times more veterinary pharmaceutical products than U.S. producers. Imported lamb is accepted under established Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), while U.S. producers operate under a zero-tolerance framework combined with increasingly sensitive detection technology. This regulatory imbalance penalizes domestic producers for biologically insignificant residue levels and undermines competitiveness.
  - Aligning residue tolerance standards with those accepted for imported lamb would eliminate an inequitable regulatory barrier and restore competitive balance.
  - Unless action is taken, U.S. sheep producers will continue to lose market share and remain at a structural disadvantage relative to global competitors.



## 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 declared 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 tied to domestic sheep contact on the open range. In fact, there are documented die-offs of bighorns in areas far removed from any domestic sheep, not to mention healthy bighorn populations that carry Movi.
- *M. ovipneumoniae* has been confirmed present in moose, caribou, mule and white-tailed deer, bison and other species. In many cases Movi has shown to be endemic if several species.
- 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, has specifically being *ignored* by USFS. In abject contravention to previous 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: provide suitable alternative allotments for those sheep operators whose permits in bighorn habitat have been reduced as a result of arbitrarily applied “science”.

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.



## FY2027 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Request

### Proposed FY2027 Report Language:

*Bighorn Sheep Conservation.*—The Committee directs the BLM and the Forest 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 been confirmed as endemic in other wildlife species, 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, transplantation 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 FY2027 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.



## SCRAPIE ERADICATION

Scrapie is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) affecting sheep and goats. It is a degenerative and eventually fatal brain disease in the same class as BSE in cattle and Chronic Wasting Disease in elk and deer. The presence of classical scrapie in the U.S. sheep and goat population affects the industry economically through production losses, lost exports, and increased production and disposal costs. Vital to the success of achieving the longstanding goal of eradicating Scrapie from the U.S. sheep flock is USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP).

- **The U.S. is now in year 6 of the 7 years needed to be declared free of Scrapie by the World Organization for Animal Health.** If successful, scrapie-free status will open and preserve export markets for US sheep products.
- Scrapie was first discovered in US sheep in 1947 and has since been diagnosed in thousands of flocks throughout the U.S. In 2004, one in 359 sheep were found to be positive for Scrapie. That same year, in fear for its future, the sheep industry asked APHIS to revamp the NSEP to accelerate its scrapie eradication effort by emphasizing surveillance, traceability, and the development of genetic resistance in sheep.
- These changes in the NSEP – prioritizing surveillance, genetic resistance and traceability – as well as strong collaborative effort between industry, USDA and the States, has directly led to a reduced scrapie prevalence rate of 99%, and nearly eliminated scrapie from the U.S. sheep flock. The accelerated scrapie program has successfully brought the U.S. to within two years of being declared free of scrapie, after 79 years of effort.
- These last two years are crucial to ensure the disease has been truly eradicated. Scrapie has a long incubation period of approximately 5 years so it is necessary to wait at least seven years after the last case to declare the disease fully eradicated. The last case of scrapie identified in the US was in January 2021. Efforts must continue to ensure the goal is reached.
- Funding scrapie eradication within APHIS' Equine, Cervid and Small Ruminant Health Line must be maintained at no less than FY2024 levels. **Accordingly, ASI urges Congress to fund the NSEP at \$19 million in FY2027.**



## **Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

### **Agency**

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

### **Account**

Salaries and Expenses

### **Program**

Equine, Cervid, and Small Ruminant Health Program

### **FY2027 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. Until then 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 2027 Budget Request**

TBD

### **FY 2026**

\$35,000,000



## **H-2A AND TEMPORARY AG WORKER PROGRAMS**

The H-2A foreign worker program has been essential to the sheep farmers and ranchers dependent on temporary labor to help care for over 1/3 of the ewes and lambs in the U.S. and, for over 50 years, have used the current provisions of the program. While it historically fulfilled its purpose, the program has become a heavy regulatory and cost burden for employers. Last year the Department of Labor (DOL) amended the non-range worker rule to reflect a more realistic wage and experience-based methodology better suited to agricultural workers. However, the compensation factor for range workers was not adjusted and the program remains cost prohibitive and continues to harm the ability of American sheep producers to compete with imported lamb. While the program remains critical for a secure American supply of food and fiber, that criticality will disappear without the regulatory and statutory changes needed to provide an affordable and stable workforce that shores up a producer's ability to continue delivering a high quality, affordable product. Congress, the DOL and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must address the following to achieve this mission:

### **Dept. of Labor (DOL) Request to Improve the Existing H-2A Program**

**The Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR).** The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) delegates authority to DOL to (1) determine there are not sufficient able, willing and qualified U.S. workers available to perform the agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature for which an employer desires to hire temporary foreign workers; and (2) the employment of the H-2A worker(s) will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of workers in the U.S. similarly employed. The INA is silent as to how the Secretary of Labor is to determine the effect of U.S. employers hiring H-2A employees, whether adverse or not. However, it clearly places an affirmative duty to the Secretary to ensure any effect is not adverse, resulting in the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR).

New regulations promulgated by the DOL last October made a standard downward adjustment to the hourly AEWR's based on annual Fair Market Value (FMV) data from HUD to account for the compensation disparity U.S. workers face when H2A workers are being paid for the same work and receive free housing. Skill-based adjustments were also made based on job qualifications and duties performed for most of the workday. Similar adjustments need to be made to the range worker rule even though a monthly wage is used when formulating those rates. Some of the same disparity factors also come into play for range workers. Consideration should also be given to production-based wage calculations recently developed by the University of Idaho.

Ironically, these mandated minimum wages have not proven to have had any adverse impact resulting from the employment of H-2A employees. Rather than performing an accurate evaluation of the potential effects of the H-2A program, the DOL forced an arbitrary minimum wage on employers that is often compounded by unrealistic state overtime wage rules devoid of economic rationale. The livestock range industry petitions the Secretary to amend or repeal existing regulations to conform to the INA requirement. If an adverse effect is found, all current methods used to determine the various AEWR levels warrant amendment to reflect applicable market conditions and sound economic rationale.



**Special Procedures.** A portion of the livestock industry utilizes special provisions within the broader H-2A program. The ability to hire temporary foreign herders dates to World War II, years before the INA and the current H2A created in 1986, when Congress directed that DOL use “special procedures” in recognition that range herding is significantly different than crop agriculture. DOL issued special provisions beginning in 1989. Their existence is a direct result of the unique requirements of range production and shearing. Adjustments and updates to the current special procedures are needed to better serve the needs of today’s livestock producers. Some of the more urgent needs would be:

- An adjustment of the required “on call” work schedule to qualify for a range herder occupation.
- Afford Sheep Shearers the exemption from filing deadlines that range herders already have.
- Recognize the exemption from Migrant and Seasonal Protection Act given to Sheep Shearers and remove the requirement for employers to carry multiple and overlapping surety bonds.

### **DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) REQUEST TO IMPROVE THE EXISTING H-2A PROGRAM**

**Asylum Fees.** As of April 1, 2024, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) arbitrarily began assessing an “Asylum Fee” to each petition submitted for approval to employ an H-2A. In addition to the regular fee increases, the cumulative cost impact ranges from an 83% increase for a small employer to 268% increase for large employers. While USCIS cites increasing costs of processing forms to justify the fee increase, there is no clear nexus to form processing expenses. Employers are assessed a fee (\$300 per form for small employers/\$600 per form for employers with more than 25 FTE) each time a nonimmigrant form is filed. DHS fees should reflect actual costs, and any increase must result in improvements and efficiency. Shifting the cost of other immigration programs to H-2A program users by adding onerous fees is patently unfair. The asylum fee should be removed immediately.

### **REQUEST FOR STATUTORY CHANGES TO THE H2A TEMPORARY AG WORKER PROGRAM**

**Create a Workable H-2A Temporary Ag Guestworker Program.** The current program is broken, expensive, flawed and plagued with red tape. A guestworker program should help sheep producers who are willing to pay a fair wage, employ law abiding, dependable noncitizen workers when no American workers are available or in the case of range herders, do not exist. Instead, H-2A employers are burdened with costly mandates and exposed to frivolous litigation. Employers must pay an artificially inflated wage rate (some states require additional overtime payments) that is higher than the prevailing wage in their region as well as housing, food, clothing, and transportation for their workers. These unnecessarily burdensome requirements place H-2A employers at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace and threaten the future of over one third of U.S. sheep producers. A new H-2A guestworker program must be reliable, efficient, and fair, ensuring sheep farmers and ranchers legal access to a seasonal and year-round workforce. Key components of any legislation should include the following industry specific provisions:

- A fair wage rate based on production cost limitations and marketplace realities that is not artificially inflated or subject to unreasonable overtime requirements and accounts for all employer borne costs.
- Codification of the specific Special Procedures for Herders.
- A streamlined process to allow Herders to return to the same farm or ranch year after year.
- Extended stays for Herders up to 3 years.
- Allocation of a minimum of 2500 visas for “range herders” subject to the Special Procedures.
- Elimination of unnecessary fees and advertisement requirements.

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

In FY 2027, continued Congressional recognition is appreciated for the USSES as an irreplaceable field laboratory providing a unique role in conducting valuable livestock, rangeland and wildlife research critical towards sustaining rural and agricultural livelihoods.

### **USSES unique mission and justification for additional investment:**

A \$1,000,000 increase for new research and collaborative efforts. Specifically, \$500,000 to complement FY 2026 funding which enables collaborative science-based efforts ultimately resulting in domestic and wild sheep sharing common landscapes while preserving domestic sheep-ranching livelihoods and enhancing wild sheep population viability. Furthermore, \$500,000 to expand rangeland fire-focused research for developing solutions to mitigate risk of catastrophic wildfire that threatens the economic and ecological welfare of the U.S. West's rangelands, forests, and rural communities.

With the support of sheep ranching, wild sheep conservation, and rangeland management communities, this USSES-led research program produces widely applied solutions impacting the Intermountain West. The research would:

- elucidate domestic sheep phenotypes and genotypes with reduced to no shedding of *M. ovipneumoniae*,
- test landscape-scale remote herding technologies/strategies for reducing wildlife-domestic sheep interaction on shared landscapes, and
- develop rangeland-forest management strategies to manage fuel loads, optimize vegetation biodiversity, and facilitate adaptive capacity towards mitigating risk of catastrophic wildfire, while ensuring wildlife habitat, grazing resources for ranchers, and security for rural communities.

Headquartered at the USSES in Dubois, scientists would design research in collaboration with the University of Idaho and consider input from sheep-ranching and wild-sheep stakeholders. Problems associated with *M. ovipneumoniae* have often put wild sheep conservationists and domestic sheep producers at odds, resulting in the closure of domestic sheep grazing allotments on public lands. Currently, the only management tactic employed to prevent potential pathogen transmission between the wild sheep and other species with endemic *M. ovipneumoniae* is geographical and/or temporal separation, which has led to conflicts over public land use and the loss of grazing opportunities for domestic sheep producers. Better long-term solutions are needed to allow for both sheep species and others with endemic *M. ovipneumoniae* to share the landscape. The research enabled by the proposed increase would ultimately reduce and possibly eliminate conflicts between the agriculture and conservation communities.

Headquartered at the USSES in Dubois, researchers will work with universities, land management agencies, producers, and public-land users to address catastrophic wildfire risk. Problems associated with excessive or mismanaged rangeland-forest fuel loads include loss of livestock grazing resources, disruption and loss of habitat, and risk to community infrastructure. Following catastrophic wildfire, livestock ranchers suffer significant long-term economic loss as grazing resources are lost from the fire and outdated public-lands management policies prohibiting a prompt return to grazing allotments. The research enabled by the proposed increase would generate livestock grazing and land management solutions to mitigate wildfire risk through promoting resilient and robust rangeland vegetation and biodiversity, programmatic rangeland fuels management, and adaptive grazing strategies simultaneously benefiting conservation and livestock production.



## **Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

## **Agency**

Agricultural Research Service

## **Account**

Salaries and Expenses

## **FY2027 Requested Amount**

\$4.641 million

## **Description**

The Agricultural Research Service (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.

Through scientific discovery, the ARS’ 100-year-old US Sheep Experiment Station has demonstrated an impact on all agriculture, especially the nation’s sheep industry and vast rangelands and forests. 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, 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 FY2027 Report Language**

The Committee recognizes the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station’s valuable role in basic and applied research on rangelands and sheep genetics. The Station is also the repository of over five decades of sage grouse data and nearly 100 years of rangeland fire research. It is not only valuable to the nation’s livestock industry, but also to the Western region’s wildlife and rangeland conservation efforts. 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 develop rangeland management solutions to mitigate risks and impacts of catastrophic wildfires. The Committee urges ARS to continue engaging collaborators to ensure the USSSES 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 2027 Budget Request**

TBD

## **FY2026**

\$3,641,000



## WILDLIFE SERVICES

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) urges Congress to provide sufficient funding to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services (WS) program. ASI strongly supports a sorely needed increase in WS' funding and looks forward to supporting the House and Senate Appropriations Committees throughout consideration of the FY 2027 Agriculture Appropriations Bill.

Wildlife Services provides Federal leadership and expertise to resolve conflicts between people and wildlife, allowing them to coexist while protecting aircraft, pilots and the passengers they transport; agriculture; natural resources, including threatened and endangered species; property and infrastructure; and public health and safety. WS personnel and programs help minimize the billions in losses annually incurred by livestock, aquaculture, small grains, fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products producers.

Wildlife annually causes more than **\$12.8 billion** in damage to natural resources, public infrastructure, private property and agriculture. Additionally, wildlife predators' predation causes more than **\$232 million** in mortality loss per year. The more than 300,000 direct control actions WS annually assist farmers and ranchers in all 50 states and three territories, helping prevent and reduce livestock predation through technical assistance (education and outreach) and program management. These efforts contribute directly to the protection of 9.4 million cattle, 5.2 million sheep, and 57 million heads of other livestock. And, WS partners with and leverages the investments of state and local governments, tribes and producers, maximizing every dollar Congress appropriates.

In FY25, WS provided more than 28,000 technical assistance activities that enabled 7,367 livestock producers to implement improved husbandry and methods such as use of guard animals, exclusion, fencing and predator dispersal. Amongst these activities were 99 predator management workshops attended by more than 19,079 individuals from 15 states.

WS also supports APHIS' emergency responses to animal diseases, natural disasters and hazardous spills. These efforts have been critical for the domestic sheep industry, especially at a time when animal diseases such as New World Screwworm, Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever, and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, are knocking at our domestic doorstep or are in some cases already here.

Wildlife Services is an Agency that is uniquely important to the livestock industry and is the only agency with the knowledge, skill and equipment to track, capture and remove damaging wildlife. Livestock producers are not the only beneficiaries – every single American citizen also benefits every single day.

ASI supports **increases of \$7 million** for Wildlife Damage Management **to account for increased predation and wildlife interaction and reduced services resulting from increased NEPA compliance and inflationary costs and \$1 million for WS Methods Development.**

**Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

**Agency**

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**Account**

Wildlife Services

**Program**

Wildlife Damage Management

**Requested Amount**

\$127,250,000

**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.

**Authorization**

7 U.S.C 426-426d (Control of predatory and other wild animals)

**President's FY 2027 Budget Request**

TBD

**FY 2026**

\$120,250,000

**Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture

**Agency**

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**Account**

Wildlife Services

**Program**

Wildlife Services Methods Development

**Requested Amount**

\$25,500,000

**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 2027 Budget Request**

TBD

**FY 2026**

\$24,500,000