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.

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

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 USSES 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

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