

Oregon Veterinary Medical Association

Budget – Department of Agriculture

**Joint Committee on Ways & Means
(Subcommittee on Natural Resources)**

Dear Co-chairs Devlin and Rayfield and Committee Members:


On behalf of our 1,000 members across all regions of Oregon, I am here in support of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and, more specifically, in support of the Animal Health Division.

We have had ongoing concerns about budgetary support for the ODA and AHD. While we believe the Animal Health Division should be fully funded from the State's general budget, we recognize that this is unlikely to happen. This only increases our concerns:

- Oregon law assigns the ODA with the general sanitary and disease control responsibilities for livestock in the State.
- The Animal Health Program (AHP) with ODA functions to enhance economic production by controlling and eradicating animal diseases – including those that are transmissible to humans.
 - Issues import permits and processes veterinary health certificates,
 - Monitors and manages animal movement,
 - Investigates and traces disease reports and outbreaks
 - Applies appropriate disease control measures
 - Collaborates with other state and federal agencies as well as the private sector – veterinarians and producers. All of these actions

All of the above actions are necessary to keep the State's livestock healthy, support public health, and maintain a safe food supply.

- The urgency for more resources for AHP has become even more vital and necessary since the 2012 closing of the only USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services office in Oregon. Three regulatory veterinarians and five support staff positions were removed from the State, and this has represented a significant loss of federal support to our State's animal health infrastructure.



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- Foreign animal diseases (FAD) are highly contagious and virulent diseases that do not normally exist in the United States. However, these diseases represent a constant threat to the health and well-being of Oregon's livestock.
- The costs related to controlling an outbreak can be staggering. Millions of dollars can be lost daily from livestock mortality and sickness related losses, costs associated with controlling the disease, and costs associated with restricted national and international trade.
 - As an example, the detection of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in CA, ID, OR and WA since December 2014 has resulted in more than 30 countries imposing trade restrictions on the United States. Trade restrictions range from local and state level embargos to restrictions on the entire country. Responding quickly and appropriately to eliminate these outbreaks will help to mitigate these trade impacts.
- The Oregon Veterinary Emergency Response Team (OVERT) program was established about 14 years ago in response to the reality that the combined staff and resources of ODA and USDA-Veterinary Services in Oregon will not be adequate to carry out all of the obligations that is required for an immediate and effective response to the incursion of a foreign animal disease. These diseases could be the Avian Influenza or Foot-and-Mouth Disease. This group of trained veterinarians and certified veterinary technicians is fundamental to Oregon's emergency animal disease response. It warrants continued support.

Not funding the Oregon Department of Agriculture – Animal Health Program adequately potentially jeopardizes Oregon public health, food safety, and economic security – and it could have national far-reaching consequences.

In your deliberations of the Department of Agriculture's overall budget, we ask that you pledge support for the funding of the Animal Health Division. Where you can, please increase the support.

Sincerely,

Glenn

Glenn M. Kolb
Executive Director



Oregon Veterinary Medical Association

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