

National organizations call for full funding of nation's early warning surveillance and testing system for animal diseases

(Washington, DC) April 27, 2015 – Today the undersigned organizations call upon Congress and the Obama administration to fully fund the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). Congress authorized a new budget line of \$15 million for the NAHLN as part of the 2014 Farm Bill. Full funding for this program is absolutely critical because when large-scale animal disease outbreaks occur – such as we what are experiencing now with highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI) and last year with porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) – tracking the progress and performing diagnostic tests on thousands of diagnostic samples requires surge capacity, ample staffing, and integrated communications systems.

The NAHLN is the first responder to each HPAI incident. As of April 20 there were more than 13,800 tests performed by 13 NAHLN laboratories with hundreds of test being performed daily, seven days a week. Since Dec. 14 our country has seen HPAI spread from Washington state eastward and is now present in 16 states.

Many diagnostic laboratories have reached capacity and need additional resources now. Millions of turkeys and chickens have been afflicted and producer's livelihoods are at stake. This disease has immediate ramifications for the poultry industry and may dramatically impact the availability of poultry products in the United States for the foreseeable future if Congress does not act now.

NAHLN is the nation's early warning surveillance and testing system for animal disease including HPAI, PEDV, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (otherwise known as mad cow disease), classical swine fever, chronic wasting disease, scrapie, swine influenza virus, and swine pseudorabies virus, exotic Newcastle disease, foot and mouth disease, and vesicular stomatitis virus.

We urge the administration and Congress to fully fund the NAHLN in fiscal 2016 and provide every resource necessary to tackle this and future animal disease outbreaks.

Joel Brandenberger, president, National Turkey Federation

Mike Brown, president, National Chicken Council

Tom Burkgren, executive director, American Association of Swine Veterinarians

Barry Carpenter, president and CEO, North American Meat Institute

W. Ron DeHaven, executive vice president, American Veterinary Medical Association

Neil Dierks, CEO, National Pork Producers Council

Michael J. Gilsdorf, executive vice president, National Association of Federal Veterinarians

Barbara P. Glenn, CEO, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

Chad Gregory, president and CEO, United Egg Producers

Charles L. Hofacre, executive vice president, American Association of Avian Pathologists
Bruce King, president, U.S. Animal Health Association
Jim Kistler, executive director, American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
Andrew Maccabe, executive director, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Joel G. Newman, president & CEO, American Feed Industry Association
John E. Starkey, president, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association

###

For additional information please contact any of the following federal relations representatives:

Kevin Cain | Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges | 202.371.9195 | kcain@aavmc.org
Gina Luke | American Veterinary Medical Association | 202.289.3204 | gluke@avma.org
Brad Mollet | American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians | 202.540.1942 | bmollet@capitolcounsel.com
Damon Wells | National Turkey Federation | 202.730.9636 | dwells@turkeyfed.org