February 28, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairwoman Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Thad Cochran  The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Lucas, Ranking Member Cochran, and Ranking Member Peterson:

As you begin your work to pass a new bipartisan, five-year farm bill, the Animal Agriculture Coalition (AAC)—which is comprised of most major animal and animal-related commodity organizations as well as allied organizations representing veterinary medicine, animal science and various livestock sectors or animal agriculture interests in the United States—looks forward to working with you to ensure that farm policy benefits all agriculture interests. It is critical that the new draft bolsters the long-term ability of U.S. animal agriculture to be competitive in the global marketplace and provides consumers around the world with safe, wholesome, affordable food that is produced in a sustainable manner. We urge Congress to pass a comprehensive 5-year farm bill this year, as the agriculture industry cannot weather another temporary extension.

A renewed commitment to scientific agriculture research and extension programs that translate into an affordable, high-quality food supply for consumers is required. AAC believes that research and education productivity is hampered by insufficient funding for both the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture’s (NIFA) Agriculture, Food and Research Institute (AFRI). AAC urges you to invest more resources on animal health, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture production, as well as in new animal products research. Expenditures for animal health are just 7 percent of those which are designated for human health research. Investment in animal health and production innovation for the world’s 25 billion chickens and turkeys, more than 1 billion cattle and sheep, 750 million pigs and goats, and more than 1 billion companion animals is grossly insufficient. AAC continues to support a full range of research and extension programs including intramural research at ARS and the Economic Research Service (ERS), as well as extramural base funding (Formula Funds) and competitive grants through AFRI. In order to build the appropriate animal agriculture infrastructure for the future, the AAC has confined its focus on initiatives, at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which enjoy broad consensus of support within the AAC. Most of our priorities were included in the versions of the farm bill that passed through the House and Senate Agriculture committees during the 112th Congress and we will detail that list later in this letter.

An issue not addressed in either of the farm bills offered in the 112th Congress concerns the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS). AAC urges you to include a provision in the 2013 farm bill addressing its concerns over regulatory agency domination of this research program. NARMS has historically been a cooperative program between FDA’s Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. The equality of these three agencies has been emphasized through previous appropriations report language. Currently the program focus has moved away from ARS and toward regulatory agencies—CVM as well as FSIS—that may limit farmers and veterinarians participation in NARMS and thus limit the valuable information the program provides.
As the gatekeepers to sound policy that leads to good legislation supporting abundant food, fiber and energy production, the AAC urges you to include the following provisions in the final 2013 farm bill:

- **Market Access Program (S. 3240, Sec. 3102; H.R. 6083, Sec. 3102).** AAC supports reauthorizing the program at $200,000,000 per year through 2017.

- **Foreign Market Development Program (S. 3240, Sec. 3103; H.R. 6083, Sec. 3102).** AAC supports reauthorizing the program at $34,500,000 per year through 2017.

- **Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (S. 3240, Sec. 7601).** AAC supports this foundation to supplement the USDA’s basic and applied research activities, and supports providing it with total mandatory funding of up to $100,000,000 from the Commodity Credit Corporation. Federal funding is available only to the extent that the foundation secures an equal amount of non-federal matching funds for each dollar of expenditure. The foundation will solicit and accept private donations to award grants or enter into agreements for collaborative public-private partnerships with scientists at the USDA and in academia, nonprofits, and the private sector.

- **Competitive grant program with qualified entities to develop, implement, and sustain veterinary services (S. 3240, Sect. 7103 and H.R. 6083, Sec. 7104).** AAC favors the House’s provision because it excludes a 25 percent cost-sharing requirement, which was proposed in the Senate bill. The nearly identical provision contained in both bills would establish a competitive veterinary services grant program with qualified entities to develop, implement, and sustain veterinary services. Grantees would be required to carry out programs that relieve veterinarian shortage situations, support private veterinary practices engaged in public health activities, or support practices of veterinarians who are participating in or have successfully completed a specified service requirement. The new program would be authorized at $10,000,000 for each fiscal year 2013 through 2017.

- **High-Priority Research and Extension Initiatives (S. 3240, Sect. 7207).** AAC supports the initiatives outlined in the section and urges a Minor Use Animal Drug Program (MUADP) be added to High-Priority Research and Extension Initiatives. Inclusion of MUADP is necessary to help ensure the diversification of our nation’s agricultural base. Because most drug approvals are sought only for those animal species that are produced in sufficient numbers to support large volume sales, specifically the major species (i.e., cattle, swine, chickens and turkeys), the private sector has little incentive to secure label claims for minor or specialty species. High costs associated with generating data necessary for FDA-CVM approval with limited economic return has precluded adequate drug development for management of diseases in minor species (i.e., farmed bison, reindeer, deer and fallow deer, meat and dairy goats, sheep, catfish, trout, finfish, lobster, game birds, rabbits, and honey bees). In 2012 there was a backlog of 41 pharmaceutical compounds that had been requested by producers of specialty animal species. With an annual $2,000,000 investment from the federal government, MUADP will help stimulate the U.S. niche animal markets while maintaining animal health and ensuring a safe, healthful food supply for consumers. U.S. gross annual farm gate income from production of minor animal species has been estimated by producer groups at over $4.8 billion—these farm gate revenues produce an economic stimulus to the Gross Domestic Product estimated at another $37 billion.

- **Competitive, Special and Facilities Research Grant Act (H.R. 6083, Sec. 7405).** AAC supports adding research on animal drug needs, generation and dissemination of data for the safe and effective therapeutic applications of animal drugs in minor species and for minor uses of such drugs in major species. AAC urges both NIFA and ARS to focus resources to this area of research.

- **Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) (S. 3240, Sec. 7306 and H.R. 6083, Sec. 7307).** FARAD is authorized at $2.5 million annually, but is funded at below 40 percent of that level. This university-based consortium prevents or mitigates the risk of illegal chemical and drug residues in animal-derived foods, thereby helping ensure consumer food safety. FARAD scientists identify, gather, extract, analyze, generate, and extend residue avoidance information to determine scientifically-based withdrawal advice for veterinarians and producers in situations involving accidental
contaminations (such as gas fracking), agro-terrorism or legal extra-label drug use in both major and minor animal species. Due to inadequate funding, FARAD is unable to carry out all of the valuable services it could otherwise offer, namely: improving the “real time” determination of withdrawals for legal extra-label drug use in food animal species; providing expert advice in situations involving accidental or intentional contaminations of food-producing animals; validating higher-level mathematical approaches for determining safe withdrawal periods; validating FARAD withdrawal estimates and expanding into contaminant exposure; broadening the Department of Homeland Security data elements and analyses; and one of the most important services, strengthening global FARAD for both safe imports and expanded domestic exports.

**National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).** AAC urges full compliance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive-9 which would 1) optimize surveillance and surge capacity of the NAHLN by increasing the number and level of participating state labs; 2) fully develop the infrastructure for electronic transmission of data between sample collectors, labs and state and federal databases; and 3) increase efficiency and effectiveness of lab personnel training and employment both regionally and nationwide. AAC also urges an increase in authorized funding for Biosecurity Planning and Response (S. 3240, Sec. 7119; H.R. 6083, Sec. 7125). The Senate’s provision authorized an increase to $20,000,000; however, an increase up to $30,000,000 is necessary to provide support for necessary personnel, equipment, training, surveillance, surge capacity, biosecurity upgrades, information technology support (secure communication, alert and reporting system), interagency coordination, data collection, evaluation, and processing. Obsolete individual surveillance labs need to be modernized to bring about diagnostic capabilities to conduct surveillance of the U.S. livestock population for all major foreign animal diseases of concern on a species by species basis.

**Animal Health and Disease Research Programs (S. 3240, Sec. 7108; H.R. 6083, Sec. 7110).** AAC supports a continuation of the Animal Health and Disease Research Programs at $25,000,000 for each fiscal year 2013 through 2017.

**Regional Centers of Excellence (S. 3240, Sec. 7210; H.R. 6083, Sec. 7214).** AAC favors the Senate version of the provision as it authorized $10,000,000 for each fiscal year 2013 through 2017.

**Wildlife Reservoir Zoonotic Disease Initiative (S. 3240, Sec. 12101).** AAC supports the creation of a competitive grant program to improve diagnostic testing and vaccines for Bovine Tuberculosis, Brucellosis and other zoonotic diseases in livestock authorized at $7,000,000 for each fiscal year 2013 through 2017.

**National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP).** The AAC asks that the committees reaffirm through language that directs USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, through the NPIP, to continue to administer an avian influenza surveillance and control program to ensure that the United States sufficiently meets all appropriate World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) standards.

**Trichinae Certification Program (S. 3240, Sec. 12102; H.R. 6083, Sec. 12102).** AAC supports reauthorization of the Trichinae Certification Program as part of a comprehensive surveillance program.

**National Aquatic Health Plan (S. 3240, Sec. 12103; H.R. 6083, Sec. 12103).** AAC supports a reauthorization of the National Aquatic Health Plan.

**Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program (S. 3240, Sec. 12104).** AAC supports establishing a competitive grant program within the Agricultural Marketing Service for the purposes of improving the U.S. sheep industry. The grant program would help to strengthen and enhance the production and marketing of sheep and sheep products, including improvement of infrastructure, business, resource development and innovative approaches to solve long-term needs with $1,500,000 in mandatory funds and authorized at $3,000,000 for each fiscal year 2013 through 2017.
✓ **Pilot to Eradicate Feral Swine (S. 3240, Sec. 12105).** AAC supports the establishment of a pilot study to assess the nature and extent of damage caused by feral swine; to develop methods to eradicate or control feral swine in the pilot area; and to develop methods to restore damage caused by feral swine. The program would be authorized at $2,000,000 for each fiscal year 2013 through 2017.

AAC is eager to work with you and your committee staff to see that a 2013 farm bill is passed as expeditiously as possible. Thank you for your consideration of our views and priorities. We also thank you for your leadership and service to the country in these challenging times.

If you would like to discuss the AAC’s recommendations further, please contact Damon Wells, AAC chairman at DWells@TurkeyFed.org or 202-730-9636, or Gina Luke, AAC vice chairman at GLuke@AVMA.org or 202-289-3204.

Sincerely,

American Association of Avian Pathologists
American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners
American Association of Swine Veterinarians
American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
American Dairy Goat Association
American Dairy Science Association
American Feed Industry Association
American Goat Federation
Animal Health Institute
American Horse Council
American Meat Institute
American Sheep Industry Association
American Society of Animal Science
American Veterinary Medical Association
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Veterinary Biologics Companies
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Federation of Animal Science Societies
Livestock Exporters Association
Multistate Initiative on Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Aquaculture Association
National Chicken Council
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Institute for Animal Agriculture
National Livestock Producers Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Renderers Association
National Turkey Federation
North American Meat Association
Poultry Science Association
US Animal Health Association
US Poultry & Egg Association

CC: Senate Agriculture Committee members
    House Agriculture Committee members
    U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack