

Family Farming and Animal Disease Protection and Research 2015 Special Order of Business

NFU is concerned by USDA's proposal to weaken disease protection measures critical to protecting domestic livestock from the introduction of animal diseases such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) from other countries. Inconsistencies between animal health disclosures by some countries, as reported by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), erode domestic confidence in the safety of our beef imports from countries and regions with a history of FMD presence.

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease impacting cows, pigs, sheep and all other animals with cloven hooves. The threat of a FMD outbreak is particularly alarming because of the susceptibility of pigs and feral hogs to FMD and the high populations of feral hogs and javelina in the southern U.S. An outbreak would be swift and unstoppable. FMD is considered one of the most economically devastating diseases in the world. An outbreak in the U.S. would be highly destructive to the livestock industry.

NFU calls upon the administration to defend U.S. farmers and ranchers by opposing imports of live animals and processed or frozen animal products from countries or regions with a history of FMD. The economic livelihood of producers and the health of consumers is critical and at stake. APHIS's decisions should be science based without political considerations.

While the study of contagious animal diseases such as FMD will always pose a contamination risk to the U.S. livestock population, this risk has thus far been mitigated to the extent possibly by locating the research center outside the mainland United States, at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center of New York.

The plan to move the facility to the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kansas poses significant risk. The inadvertent release of any of the diseases researched at the facility, which will be closely located to domestic livestock production, would be devastating to the U.S. livestock industry.

The purpose of animal disease research is twofold: protecting a U.S. industry from economic harm, and protecting U.S. consumers from contamination of the domestic food supply. By moving highly contagious animal disease research to Kansas, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are putting at risk the very stakeholders they propose to protect.

NFU opposes moving research on highly contagious animal diseases to the mainland U.S. As the project moves forward, despite NFU's objections, NFU urges USDA and DHS to make every effort possible to ensure the diseases are contained. NFU also urges Congress to provide adequate funding of the Kansas facility to ensure it has all available resources to contain these highly contagious diseases and prevent contamination of the U.S. herd.

