

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer,

As Congress considers legislation to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the undersigned members of the Animal Agriculture Coalition ask that you support livestock and poultry producers who have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic by including the RELIEF for Producers Act in the next relief package.

Introduced by Senators Inhofe, Burr, Ernst, Grassley, and Tillis, the RELIEF for Producers Act offers our nation's livestock and poultry farmers desperately needed assistance. The bill would provide compensation for farmers forced to euthanize or donate animals that cannot be processed into the food supply because of COVID-19. The bill also would amend the Commodity Credit Corporation charter to authorize the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to extend financial assistance for euthanasia and disposal of livestock and poultry caused by this public health emergency.

Processing facilities have faced a long-standing labor shortage in rural America, which was compounded by COVID-19 related plant disruptions. In the pork industry, for example, during the April-May period harvest capacity was reduced nearly 40 percent. According to industry economists, as of June 1, nearly one million pigs have been euthanized or donated and approximately two million hogs remain backed up on farms. Tragically, farmers may have to euthanize animals to prevent suffering associated with overcrowding. In addition, the turkey industry has and will continue to make production adjustments, including depopulation, because of the crisis. This will negatively affect turkey growers, plant workers, and the many allied companies that support the industry and the rural communities where the majority of turkey processing plants are located.

Furthermore, the bill would provide funding of \$300 million for Section 10409A of the Animal Health Protection Act, which includes the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) and the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank. Many NAHLN laboratories have utilized their considerable testing capacity and staff expertise to supplement their state's public health laboratory capacity and activities during the COVID-19 crisis. However, this activity has diminished the capacity of these labs to address an animal disease outbreak. These laboratories need additional resources to ensure the nation is prepared to respond effectively to animal disease outbreaks and other emergencies, while they continue their vital work in processing human COVID-19 tests.

With millions of animals backed up and rising COVID-19 case numbers in many states, U.S. farmers could have no choice but to euthanize animals if harvest capacity is affected again. Your support of the RELIEF for Producers Act will extend a lifeline to our nation's livestock and poultry farmers. Without it, thousands of generational family farms could go out of business.

On behalf of:

AAC Commodity Members

American Dairy Goat
Association

American Horse Council

American Sheep Industry
Association

National Milk Producers
Federation

National Pork Producers
Council

National Turkey Federation

North American Meat Institute
United Egg Producers

AAC Allied Animal Agriculture Members

American Association of Avian
Pathologists

American Association of
Bovine Practitioners

American Association of Swine
Veterinarians

American Association of Veterinary
Laboratory Diagnosticians

American Dairy Science
Association

American Feed Industry
Association

American Society of Animal
Science

American Veterinary Medical
Association

Animal Health Institute

FASS

National Association for the
Advancement of Animal
Science

National Association of Federal
Veterinarians

National Association of State
Departments of Agriculture

National Institute for Animal
Agriculture