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March 1, 2010

Congressman Collin C. Peterson
Minnesota - Seventh District
2211 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Peterson:

We are respectfully submitting an Appropriations Request for your consideration for Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) Disease, Control and Eradication Program. The University of Minnesota (UMN) is supporting seven appropriations requests, of which this joint request with Michigan (Michigan State University) was deemed critical to animal agriculture in Minnesota and Michigan.

As we have discussed in length, bTB is a critical issue that needs resources designated for research efforts that will lead to control measures that will minimize the risk to Minnesota, Michigan and the Midwest from this devastating disease. Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) has now been diagnosed in wildlife in northeastern lower Michigan for more than 15 years. Outbreaks of bTB in cattle have been diagnosed in the same area since 1994. A similar situation has occurred in the state of Minnesota in 2005. The re-emergence of bTB has a unique feature: the disease is now established in wildlife, which has created new challenges for control and eradication programs. This is the first time bTB reservoir has been established in North America. The public health, sociological and economic costs associated with bTB have negatively affected the economy and the citizens of Minnesota and Michigan. It is critical to develop new approaches aimed to controlling and eradicating bTB in cattle and deer.

Agriculture is Minnesota's second largest industry and the state's \$54.9 billion in agricultural cash receipts are sixth in the national. Dairy products are Minnesota's fourth largest agricultural commodity and cattle and calves rank fifth. Agriculture is also the second largest industry in Michigan, valued at \$74 billion and growing. Michigan ranks 19th in the country in agricultural cash receipts. Milk is the top commodity in the state and cattle/calves rank fifth, based on cash receipts. Cattle movement has been severely restricted by the loss of bTB-free status. Disease control (including cattle testing and depopulation) which are paid by federal and state departments of agriculture have been enormous. Despite efforts to eradicate bTB in cattle, the disease persists in white-tailed deer (a wildlife disease reservoir). This wildlife disease reservoir makes the situation in Minnesota and Michigan unique and requires continued research to solve the growing problem.

Tourism is another important sector of both states' economies with outdoor recreation, including deer hunting, as a major component of revenue in both Minnesota and Michigan. Public concerns about the health of the state's deer herd and attitudes toward current bTB control measures in wildlife could potentially weaken the tourism sector. After a hunter contracting bTB from field-dressing an infected deer, citizens and public health agencies became and remain seriously concerned. Reducing or eliminating bTB infection in wildlife is important to maintaining a vibrant outdoor recreation industry in both states.

Because of the geographical and agricultural similarities between Minnesota and Michigan, it will be extremely beneficial for the two states to work together on research and extension education to develop and evaluate novel disease prevention, control and eradication strategies. To further develop collaborative research and extension education between UMN and Michigan State University (MSU) both universities have committed seed funding.

The unique presence of a wildlife reservoir of TB in Minnesota and Michigan requires novel approaches to disease control and eradication. Research on the current bTB outbreaks in livestock and wildlife have been conducted at MSU, UMN, and the National Research Laboratories in Ames, Iowa and has produced information critical to helping solve the problem. However, there are still many gaps in knowledge in areas vital to developing effective strategies for disease control and eradication including:

1. In-depth understanding of the dynamics of the disease in cattle and deer populations and intervention strategies to limit deer-cattle interaction.
2. Methods to overcome livestock and wildlife manager resistance to adopting new research-based strategies and policies aimed at significantly reducing bTB in Michigan and Minnesota.
3. Development of fast, accurate and cost-effective diagnostic tests for live animals (cattle and deer) as well as environmental samples (hay, grain, soil, water).
4. Development of effective vaccines for livestock and wildlife for disease.
5. Sustainable funding for integrated and interdisciplinary basic and applied research (including physical, social, and behavioral research) on bTB eradication.

The creation of this collaboration between MSU and UMN devoted to TB research that has significant funding will increase the interdisciplinary intellectual capital focused on solving the bTB problem. Potential research areas include developing new vaccines, molecular diagnostic tests, surveillance methods and techniques to enhance stakeholder acceptance and implementation of disease control and eradication strategies and policies.

This enhanced approach to research will:

1. Speed up bTB eradication in cattle in both Minnesota and Michigan.
2. Significantly reduce the incidence of bTB in deer in both states.

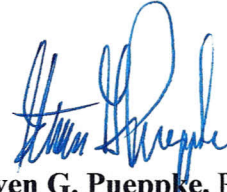
3. Serve as a national and international model for dealing with a wildlife reservoir in a chronic disease that has important public health and economic implications.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if we can provide you any additional details.

Sincerely,



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Attachments (appropriations request proposal and U of M earmark list)