

## **Farm Bill Alert: Horse Industry Supports Three-Pronged Program to Protect Animal Health**

### **Background:**

The U.S. horse industry, which supports nearly one million American jobs and contributes \$122 billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), urges Congress to pass farm legislation that maximizes protections from threats to equine herd health that could potentially undermine the agricultural economy and disrupt interstate commerce. Disease outbreaks are an ever present concern felt by anyone who takes his or her horse off the farm, or brings a new horse into their barn. These health concerns catalyzed development of the industry-led and funded Equine Disease Communication Center, a web based tool that monitors outbreaks and their subsequent quarantines, reporting factual and up-to-date information on the threats that exist to our animals nationwide.

### **Status:**

On June 21, the House narrowly passed the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2). The House bill addresses some of the horse industry's top priorities by adopting a three-pronged approach to protect herd health: authorization of a new National Animal Disaster Preparedness and Response (NADPR) program; additional support for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN); and creation of the National Animal Health Vaccine Bank that prioritizes risks posed by Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), among other threats. H.R. 2 creates a level of certainty by adequately funding key animal health initiatives through FY 2019, but reducing those funds during subsequent years. For example, the horse industry and its partners requested \$70 million each year to fund the NADPR, but received \$30 million for 2020 and beyond. H.R. 2 authorizes \$150 million for a "priority FMD vaccine bank," opening the door to fund vaccines that will combat other diseases.

The following week, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to pass its version of the farm bill (S. 3042). While the horse industry appreciates the inclusion of a NADPR in both the House and Senate versions, the horse industry urges Congress to adopt the House provisions authorizing the three-pronged program to protect animal health, including specific dollar amounts. While the senate bill authorizes a three-part program to protect herd health, it only authorizes "sums as necessary" to fund the NADPR and vaccine bank, creating uncertainty for stakeholders.

### **Take Action:**

Congress must pass a farm bill that fully funds a three-pronged program to combat threats to the agricultural economy posed by animal diseases. To that end, Congress should adopt provisions from H.R. 1 to authorize a NADPR, additional support for laboratories, and creation of a National Animal Health Vaccine Bank, in its final bill.