

»»» Maintain the Federal Research Enterprise

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We must continue to invest in innovation, research and development to maintain America's competitive edge and support the U.S. economy. Laboratories in our nation's colleges of veterinary medicine provide critical support to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the National Science Foundation (NSF) and other agencies).

To ensure that the United States continues to have the safest and most abundant food supply in the world, and to protect the health and well-being of our citizens, we ask Congress to:

1. **End holdups or "pauses" in federal grant research programs.** These can cause immeasurable damage to ongoing research, resulting in the loss of research personnel and even the loss of research animals. It is critical to restore stability and predictability to these grant programs, as they are the basis for university-wide funding decisions.
2. **End the proposed 15 percent cap on indirect costs at NIH.** As detailed in [this article](#), rodent and monkey labs are particularly in danger from such an arbitrary cap. "NIH indirect cost payments support major animal research facilities, where complex housing, staffing, medical care, and regulatory oversight requirements push up costs."
3. **Stop indiscriminate mass layoffs at agencies such as NIH, NSF and USDA.** In the federal system, employees are considered probationary for up to two years and are also under probationary status if they are promoted or change agencies (such as from USDA to CDC). Layoffs of this nature create a drain of talent and institutional knowledge that the country can ill afford during the current avian influenza outbreak.

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»» Pass a New Farm Bill, With Improvements for Animal Agriculture

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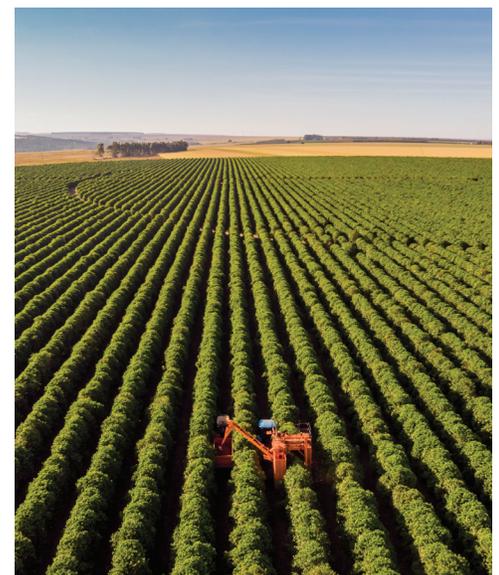
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It is imperative that Congress pass a bipartisan Farm Bill reauthorization, so that critical programs related to research, education and infrastructure do not lapse. The current legislation is set to expire on September 30, 2025.

AAVMC has several priorities in the new bill, including:

- 1. Reauthorize the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) and the Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP).** These programs are more important than ever given the ongoing shortage of rural veterinarians.
- 2. Double the current authorization for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) from \$2.5 million to \$5 million.** FARAD is housed at 5 colleges of veterinary medicine: The University of California-Davis, The University of Florida, North Carolina State University, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, and Kansas State University. FARAD develops and maintains data the producers rely on to keep harmful drug residues and chemical exposures out of the food animal supply chain. The cost of research and the cost to house and maintain the database have both risen precipitously.
- 3. Protect the Foundation for Food and Animal Research (FFAR).** AAVMC currently collaborates with FFAR to offer the FFAR Veterinary Student Research Fellowship program. The fellowship is designed to cultivate the next generation of veterinary researchers by providing veterinary students with immersive research experiences that address critical challenges in global food security, sustainable animal production, and public health. Per the FFAR charter, each dollar put in by FFAR is matched by funding from AAVMC.

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»» Co-Sponsor the Rural Veterinary Workforce Act S.1163 & HR 2398

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The Rural Veterinary Workforce Act was formerly known as the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Enhancement Act. The new bipartisan bill will help ensure that veterinary medicine is able to provide modern animal health, public health, and disease control services throughout rural areas of the United States. The VMLRP program assists with the rising costs of education, and removing the tax will help lessen the shortage of veterinarians in areas of need.

The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program provides loan repayment of up to \$25,000 per year for three years. Payments are made to veterinarians with qualified student loans who have agreed to practice in areas that the US Department of Agriculture has designated as having a shortage of veterinarians, especially for food animals.

Since the inception of the VMLRP in FY2010, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) has made 883 awards as new and renewal service agreements. In that time, NIFA received 2,197 applications from 1,530 unique applicants.

Unfortunately, the program is subject to a 37 percent withholding tax. Essentially, for each dollar appropriated for the program, 37 cents is withheld and transferred back to the US Treasury. If this were not the case, one additional veterinarian could be provided with loan repayment for every three awards currently being made. This legislation would eliminate that disparity.

The National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, providing for physicians and nurses, is already tax free.

A [recent report](#) from the Farm Journal Foundation highlights the current shortage of rural veterinarians.

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