# APHIS Bolsters Animal Health Surveillance with Funding for Unexplained Morbidity or Mortality Investigations



### Stakeholder Announcement

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WASHINGTON – Feb. 27, 2024 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announces a collaboration with the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) to bolster national animal health preparedness. This vital $1 million in funding supports rapid investigations of unexplained morbidity or mortality events, or UMEs, in animals – unexpected deaths or illnesses that could signal emerging threats. This proactive approach to surveillance strengthens APHIS' commitment to safeguarding animal health across the nation.

"The ability to rapidly diagnose unknown illnesses in animals is vital for preventing outbreaks and safeguarding public health," said Mike Watson, APHIS Administrator.

“This new cooperative agreement marks a significant leap forward in our ability to detect emerging threats at the earliest stages through advanced testing and collaboration with the National Animal Health Laboratory Network."

This cooperative agreement is managed by Michigan State University’s Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, a member of the NAHLN. The funding will be used to reimburse testing expenses at any NAHLN laboratory for UME cases that meet specific criteria. Testing is essential to identify the causes of illness or death in animals and evaluating potential risks to other animals and public health. By providing funding for UME testing, APHIS is working proactively to identify and address potential disease threats before they become larger, more difficult-to-control outbreaks. This helps protects animal and public health, along with international trade. “Early detection and identification of potential threats to animal health is critical to our ability to protect the health of our nation’s animals, the food supply, and potentially human health,” said Sara Ahola, APHIS Veterinarian Medical Officer and UME project lead.

APHIS is dedicated to safeguarding animal health and preventing the spread of diseases. If a stakeholder or partner agency suspects they may have a UME event in non-wildlife animals for which initial testing for common causes does not determine the reason for the illness or deaths, they should report it to any NAHLN Laboratory for potential further testing. If a stakeholder or partner agency suspects they may have a UME in wildlife animals, they should report it to their local wildlife agency.

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