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ASI Prepares Ag Appropriations Testimony

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) this week presented formal testimony to the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies and the counterpart subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives in support of U.S. Department of Agriculture programs for the next fiscal year. ASI President Burdell Johnson (N.D.) outlined the industry's priorities in appropriating funding for critical agricultural programs.

Scrapie Eradication. Adequate funding is essential to the scrapie eradication effort being accomplished in a timely manner. The industry supports the appropriations approved in fiscal year (FY) 2006 of 18.4 million and urges the subcommittees to increase funding to this level in FY 2008.

Wildlife Services (WS). The value of sheep and lambs lost to predators and predator control expenses are second only to feed costs for sheep production. ASI supports the FY 2006 appropriations level for WS operations and methods development programs, particularly as it relates to livestock protection.

Risk Management Agency (RMA). The U.S. sheep industry is working with RMA on the development of the Livestock Risk Protection-Lamb insurance product to help producers manage price risk in their operations. ASI urges the subcommittees to support the agency's research and developmental costs to design creative new programs for the livestock sector along with the appropriate maintenance expenses.

Foreign Agricultural Service. Full funding for these programs is encouraged. This includes the Market Access, Quality Samples and the Foreign Market Development Programs. ASI is the cooperator for American wool and sheep pelts and has achieved solid success in increasing exports of domestic product.

Research Initiatives. ASI also recommended continued funding for numerous research projects that are relevant to the sheep industry. Included in these research projects are the Minor Use Animal Drug Program, emerging and exotic diseases, rangeland restoration, grazing, wool laboratory research and scrapie research.