

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 14, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We urge you to safeguard American livestock at risk from the ongoing spread of New World Screwworm (NWS) and other pests or highly contagious and transmissible diseases by immediately reversing foreign assistance cuts for international transboundary animal disease prevention programs. The reemergence of NWS, with 45 confirmed cases in the United States, poses a costly agricultural biosecurity threat, imperiling America's food security.

Investment in measures that prevent additional NWS from reaching our borders is necessary to ensure that recent investments in sterile fly production and dispersal are effective. The dissolution of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) terminated \$250 million in funding for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) and \$72 million for 16 Feed the Future Innovation Labs, including labs that supported improvements to livestock management in countries vulnerable to transboundary animal diseases. As NWS spreads, this Administration's cuts to foreign assistance puts the welfare of American livestock, wildlife and agricultural businesses at risk and could cost the Texas cattle industry \$1.8 billion annually.

FAO's transboundary animal disease work focused on strengthening developing countries' laboratory capacity, establishing early warning and disease surveillance systems in more than 130 countries, assisting in more than 250 outbreak responses of avian influenza, African swine fever, foot-and-mouth disease and more. Prior to this outbreak, ECTAD provided trainings to veterinarians, identified resource gaps and improved farmers outbreak action response plans for NWS in Central America – the source of NWS cases currently entering the United States. The loss of the United States' support significantly reduced international capacity to respond timely to outbreaks. We welcome additional multilateral efforts to renew this work and urge you to quickly mobilize and distribute funding for these purposes, which we understand remains unobligated despite the ongoing outbreak.

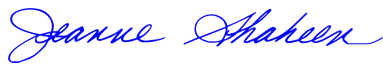
Another critically important global surveillance capability is FAO's Emergency Prevention System Global Animal Disease Information System (EMPRES-i+), a global early warning surveillance system that monitors disease outbreaks and provides long-term risk management across animal and food chains. FAO works with a global network to provide real-time digital surveillance data, horizon scanning and global intelligence, which includes mapping hundreds of thousands of animal diseases across 190 countries. We urge you to ensure this critical tool remains available for continued use.

Feed the Future Innovation Labs, specifically at the Washington State University and the University of Florida, also reduced food security risks by supporting improvements to veterinary health and livestock systems, in countries vulnerable to transboundary animal diseases. Despite Congress's renewed support for the Innovation Labs in the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations bill, the Administration has been slow to restart and identify new university partnerships to continue the scientific progress we were making in monitoring transboundary animal diseases.

American farmers are already struggling with inflation, as well as rising costs for fuel and fertilizer, cannot afford the financial and operational devastation of NWS. These foreign assistance investments are critical to America's economic and food security and without these tools, American agriculture is left vulnerable and exposed to biosecurity challenges like New World Screwworm.

We urge you to restore U.S. funding for international animal disease surveillance, prevention and response capabilities that protect our food supply.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



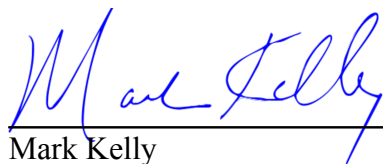
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