



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

## TESTIMONY TO THE OHIO HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Rustin M. Moore, DVM, PhD, Diplomate ACVS  
Dean, The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine  
February 27, 2025

Chairman Creech, Vice Chair Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Agriculture Committee, thank you for inviting me to provide testimony today regarding the state's biennial operating budget.

We are most appreciative of Governor DeWine for including this funding targeted at addressing the state's veterinarian shortage in his executive budget. I am also grateful for Ohio State President Ted Carter and Provost Ravi Bellamkonda and other university leaders who have made Protect OHIO and the College of Veterinary Medicine a priority. They, like many of you, hear regularly of the challenges of animal owners in obtaining veterinary medical services, especially in rural areas, and they, as you, are aware of the continual threat of animal disease outbreaks in our state.

As the Dean of The Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, I'd like to share with you the many challenges and risks facing animals, people and agriculture in our great state of Ohio, and it is my privilege to inform you how Ohio's only college of veterinary medicine can address those challenges. Through my testimony and responding to your questions, I hope to gain and solidify your trust and support of our efforts to truly impact and protect Ohio's animals, people and agriculture.

### **Budget Request Overview**

The College of Veterinary Medicine is requesting an additional \$15 million per year over the FY 2026-2027 biennium. This is in addition to the current \$5 million line-item funding, for a total of \$20 million/year. The funding is essential to sustain excellence, train more veterinarians, and protect Ohio's animals, people and agriculture. I recognize this is a significant increase from our current funding, and I'd like to share with you today why this level of funding is necessary and how the college will use the additional resources.

Among the top U.S. veterinary colleges, Ohio State ranks third overall yet receives the least state funding when compared to top-ranked benchmark peer colleges, with an annual allocation of only \$23,600 per student compared to the national median of \$44,200 per student. Without additional state support, we cannot meet the growing demand for veterinarians, particularly in rural areas where shortages are most severe. In addition, the college cannot adequately protect Ohio's agricultural

industry against potential severe disease threats such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever and other infectious diseases.

The proposed investment will address these issues with a new initiative designed to strengthen Ohio's veterinary workforce, protect public health, and advance the agricultural economy through three interdependent pillars. Using a One-Health approach, the college will launch **Protect One Health in Ohio (OHIO)** to:

- **Train More Veterinarians:** Expand our class size from 165 to 200 students per year with priority for Ohio students from rural areas.
- **Address the Rural Veterinary Shortage:** Increase the number of students from rural areas applying to, and completing, veterinary training and working with rural communities to develop incentives for these graduates to return to practice in their communities.
- **Create an Emerging Animal Disease Center:** This will expand preemptive research, risk assessment and surveillance programs to protect Ohio's agricultural economy while fostering a One Health approach working in collaboration with key state partners, like Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Health.

More information about Protect OHIO is available on the college's website at [go.osu.edu/protect-OHIO](https://go.osu.edu/protect-OHIO).

### **Why Funding is Needed and Our Priorities**

Veterinarians play a crucial role in safeguarding Ohio's robust \$125 billion agriculture industry, the backbone of animal health and food security. In Ohio, over 80% of the veterinarians at the forefront of monitoring and stopping the spread of diseases from animals to humans and preventing the next global pandemic were educated and trained at Ohio's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Yet the veterinary profession is experiencing a critical shortage as demand for service outpaces the influx of new practitioners. Projections indicate a shortage in Ohio of 600 to 1,000 veterinarians by 2030. Currently, 500 counties nationwide and approximately 20 in Ohio are designated as underserved by the USDA. This is especially prevalent in rural areas. Without intervention, this crisis will exacerbate challenges in both animal and human health.

This shortage, coupled with the vital need for enhanced surveillance, risk assessment and proactive research of (re)emerging infectious diseases, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever, foot/hoof and mouth disease, and other infectious diseases heightens Ohio's vulnerability to potential outbreaks that could result in significant negative impacts to livestock, poultry, companion animals, wildlife and human health.

Rural veterinarians play a critical role in disease surveillance, early detection, and consultation with state and federal agencies. The College of Veterinary Medicine is actively recruiting students from underserved counties and piloting programs with public officials to address local veterinary needs. Students from rural areas tend to return to their communities to practice. Expanding rural

representation is essential to maintaining healthy animal populations, ensuring food security, and protecting community well-being. Protect OHIO emphasizes outreach, mentorship, and pipeline development by partnering with schools, 4-H, FFA, and local officials.

Expanding enrollment by 35 students per class, 140 students over a four-year period, requires increased faculty and staff resources and infrastructure improvements to support the additional students. The college currently has the worst student-to-faculty ratio among the top 20 colleges of veterinary medicine. By hiring additional faculty and staff, we are ensuring we can educate, mentor, and support veterinary students and expand research efforts in areas critical to Ohio. These investments are essential to maintaining high-quality education while addressing the critical needs of rural veterinary shortages. The college is committed to maintaining affordable education by limiting tuition increases and offering scholarships, but sustainable state funding is critical to ensuring high-quality training and faculty retention.

Currently, our faculty also play a critical role in risk assessment, biosecurity, disease surveillance and monitoring for diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza as well as helping the state to be prepared for the possibility of outbreaks like African swine fever, foot or hoof and mouth disease, and others. Our teams are working closely with livestock and poultry producers to rigorously monitor and create response strategies to protect the agriculture industry and public health. We collaborate with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the State Veterinarian's Office, the USDA, agricultural commodity groups, state and local health departments and many more in this One Health approach to animal, human, and environmental health and wellbeing. While the ODA's Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory specializes in diagnostics and disease response, there are very limited resources to preemptively monitor infectious diseases to predict and prevent future infectious disease outbreaks and to provide risk assessment.

The Emerging Animal Disease Center will further boost those efforts by focusing on preemptive research, surveillance, risk assessment and education especially at the farm level to protect Ohio's agricultural economy and public health. In collaboration with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Department of Health and other partners, the center will better prepare Ohio for potential infectious diseases emergence and ensure a coordinated response to emerging threats and protect Ohio's animals, people and agriculture.

This initiative complements—not duplicates—current efforts, fostering innovation in disease prevention and public health for the state of Ohio.

The current outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) provides a perfect case study for why the Emerging Animal Disease Center is so critical to protecting Ohio's agricultural industry. In 2023, Ohio produced more than 11 BILLION eggs. We are one of the largest egg farming states in the U.S. The impact of HPAI has been significant and Ohio is currently leading the nation in bird flu cases detected in 2025, hitting Mercer and Darke counties the hardest. Ohio has currently lost over 12 million egg laying hens, pullets, turkeys and ducks. Beyond the immediate loss of flocks, HPAI is causing economic disruptions. Poultry farmers are dealing with lost revenue, while businesses that rely on the industry,

including grain suppliers, feed transporters, and processing facilities, are also feeling the impact. This is significant considering the Ohio egg and turkey industries contribute more than \$11 billion in economic impact annually. The current outbreak of bird flu has also resulted in volatility in egg and poultry prices due to market disruption caused by the strain on the nation's egg and poultry supply. The latest monthly consumer price index showed that the average price of a dozen Grade A eggs reached \$4.95 in January.

Additionally, we know the disease has been transmitted to other species, including dairy cows. And the first human case in Ohio was recorded earlier this month. To combat HPAI, USDA has announced a [\\$1 billion comprehensive strategy](#).

Our faculty are at the forefront of HPAI research, surveillance, risk assessment, and education. They are monitoring not only the spread among poultry and dairy cows, but carefully watching human cases to identify mutations that could create a public health crisis and the next pandemic. It's also important to note that many of these outbreaks begin in small backyard flocks or herds, and these are the very rural areas and communities who don't have veterinarians. We need veterinarians in these areas to be doing surveillance, detection, risk assessment, and educating producers about biosecurity.

Ohio's only college of veterinary medicine and the veterinary profession are indispensable to Ohio's health and prosperity and protecting Ohio's animals, people and agriculture. Through dedicated research, education, service, and outreach we address critical health challenges, protect agricultural industries, ensure a safe and plentiful food supply, and promote public health. Continued collaboration is crucial to overcoming gaps in our animal health, public health, and food safety sectors.

I invite each of you for a personal behind-the-scenes tour of Ohio's College of Veterinary Medicine and our Veterinary Medical Center hospitals for farm animals, equine, and companion animals. You will see firsthand the commitment and excellence of our animal care teams now and for the future, and to learn about the impact we have on the health and well-being of animals and people and the benefits we provide to the people and animals of Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

#### Sources for HPAI/Ohio Stats

- <https://agri.ohio.gov/divisions/animal-health/hpai/01-poultry>
- <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/02/26/usda-invests-1-billion-combat-avian-flu-and-reduce-egg-prices>
- <https://www.limaohio.com/top-stories/2025/01/26/ohio-leads-nation-in-bird-flu-cases-among-commercial-poultry-operations/>
- <https://odh.ohio.gov/media-center/odh-news-releases/ohio-reports-first-human-case-of-bird-flu-021225>