

To the office of U.S. Senator Eric Schmitt

Re: S 5253 (119th Congress), Tick-Borne Livestock Disease Research Prioritization Act • Latest action (2026-08-05): Read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.
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Office of record (Congress.gov): 404 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510, Washington, DC • (202) 224-5721

Livestock Tick-Borne Disease Research Prioritization and Sunset Act

The measure, as described from the official record: To prioritize and fund research on emerging tick-borne diseases affecting livestock in order to protect animal health, agricultural productivity, and potential public health risks.

THE PROPOSAL

This Act amends the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 to establish a targeted research program within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) focused exclusively on emerging tick-borne diseases affecting livestock. The program shall be administered by the Agricultural Research Service and shall prioritize research on disease detection, prevention, treatment, and vector control. Grants shall be awarded competitively to land-grant universities, veterinary schools, and other eligible research institutions. The program is funded at \$50 million per year for five years, with total authorization not to exceed \$250 million. The USDA Office of the Inspector General shall oversee the program and submit an annual report to Congress on research progress, fund allocation, and any findings of waste or fraud. Grant recipients must submit interim and final results; failure to comply shall result in clawback of unspent or improperly used funds. The program shall sunset five years after the effective date, unless reauthorized by Congress. The effective date shall be 90 days after enactment.

OPERATIVE PROVISIONS (VFA PROPOSAL)

Funding Source	Direct appropriation from the General Fund of the Treasury, authorized at \$50 million per year for five years.
Funding Amount	\$250 million total over five years
Sunset Years	5 years
Oversight Body	USDA Office of the Inspector General
Enforcement Mechanism	Grant recipients must comply with research standards and reporting requirements; noncompliance triggers clawback of funds. Annual reports to Congress.
Effective Date	90 days after enactment

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

- Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 (Commerce Clause)
- Amendment X (reserved powers, but this program is within federal authority as it addresses interstate commerce impacts)

Concerns with the measure as written:

- The original bill is likely constitutional under the Commerce Clause, as livestock diseases can substantially affect interstate commerce. No major concerns.

WHY BOTH SIDES CAN BACK IT (VFA'S ASSESSMENT)

Democratic priorities: Supports public health, animal welfare, and evidence-based scientific research on emerging diseases. Republican priorities: Limits federal spending with a five-year sunset, encourages targeted rather than open-ended funding, and respects state roles by focusing on federal research infrastructure without imposing mandates on livestock producers.

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