The American Association of Avian Pathologists
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POSITION STATEMENT

Statement on the Future of the Research Programs At USDA-ARS Avian Disease and Oncology Laboratory

(AAAP Tumor Virus Committee, July 2010)
(Approved by the AAAP Board, August 2010)

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service (AIS-86, December 2008) poultry meat and eggs added $36.7 billion to the U.S. economy. The poultry industry is the second largest food animal industry in the U.S. Poultry meat and eggs are one of the most popular and economic sources of protein for American consumers and trade partners around the world. In the U.S. alone, the consumption of chicken meat exceeds 80 lbs per capita (higher than any other meat product). In addition, approximately 70% of the worldwide commercial egg layers, broilers and turkey industries depend on poultry breeding stock supplied by primary breeding companies based in the U.S.

Currently, the U.S. and global poultry industries face numerous and growing challenges that could detrimentally affect production and supply of these vital products. Continued concerns about the effects of viral infections capable of causing tumoral diseases in poultry flocks are a major issue for the future of the poultry industry. The development of new and improved vaccines against evolving Marek's disease field virus (MDV) strains; new diagnostic and virus assay methods for the detection and elimination of all groups of exogenous Avian Leukosis (ALV) and Reticuloendotheliosis viruses (REV) from both primary breeding populations and live vaccines; and improved genomic/immunogenetic tools are some of the most important areas of concern to ensure the health, welfare and continued productivity of the U.S. poultry industry.

The USDA-ARS conducts highly relevant basic research on tumor virus diseases that is critical to the future well-being of the U.S. poultry industry. For over 50 years the USDA- ARS Avian Diseases and Oncology Laboratory (ADOL) in East Lansing, Michigan has been the world's leading institution on avian tumor virus research with an impressive record of accomplishments. Since 2005 ADOL has served as the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) Reference Laboratory for Marek's disease, the national and international Center of Excellence for Avian Tumor Virus Research, and is the national reference Diagnostic Laboratory for tumorous diseases of poultry. ADOL's staff is comprised of renowned scientists who have been leaders in various areas related to research and diagnosis of avian tumor viruses, poultry genomics and immunogenetics and genetic resistance to disease. Further, these scientists develop and maintain unique and highly specialized poultry lines essential in distinguishing endogenous and exogenous ALVs, genetic disease resistance research, and the production and quality assurance of poultry vaccines.

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Over many years the ADOL research programs and services have substantially benefited the commercial egg laying, broiler, turkey, and allied industries such as primary breeders, vaccine manufacturers and commercial diagnostics. In addition, ADOL has been a preferred center for the education and training of many poultry disease specialists working in academia, private sector and government institutes in the U.S. and around the world.

Based on all of the above facts, the American Association of Avian Pathologists fully supports the on-going efforts by the U.S. poultry industry and professional organizations urging the United States Department of Agriculture and Agriculture Research Services to continue placing a high priority to ADOL's tumor virus and genetic resistance to disease programs, and the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriation committees to secure necessary funding to ensure that the ADOL poultry research capabilities are preserved and enhanced to continue research in these important areas.