

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

Thank you for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) continued efforts to address Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in cattle and other livestock. We recognize that the first focus is on identifying and preventing these threats before they become endemic in our livestock production systems. Protecting the safety and security of our animal agriculture industry is critical to food safety for consumers and the economic security of our livestock producers.

With over 1000 confirmed dairy cattle infections in at least 17 states, it is apparent that additional steps are necessary to eliminate this virus from circulating in our livestock herd. In addition to all the positive actions and funding provided by USDA to enhance biosecurity, we believe the next phase of USDA's response must be to promptly review and approve HPAI vaccines for cattle.

We believe USDA must aggressively prepare for an emergency cattle vaccination strategy. While USDA's decision to begin accepting applications for a vaccine trial is a step in the right direction, it is necessary for the agency to prepare for widespread outbreaks. Therefore, it is our view that USDA should expeditiously review vaccines and work to procure the necessary doses effective against H5N1. This will be a precautionary step in the ongoing, multi-pronged approach to address this animal disease outbreak.

While we fully recognize the sensitivities and potential implications of a vaccination strategy in cattle, we strongly urge USDA to be prepared for all potential options in the fight against HPAI. This would include stockpiling vaccine doses for HPAI just as USDA does for other potential diseases of concern. Again, we appreciate all the ongoing work of USDA to address HPAI as quickly as possible and look forward to working closely with you on this critically important challenge.

We look forward to working with you on this issue.

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M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martin Heinrich", written over a horizontal line.

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator