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2005 MONTANA LEGISLATURE
House Joint Resolution 22
Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee
Montana Department of Livestock Testimony
March 7, 2005

The Montana Department of Livestock (DOL) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of House Joint Resolution 22 (2005 Montana Legislature). The DOL applauds this committee in continuing to recognize the importance of addressing the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) brucellosis problem.

The issues surrounding brucellosis in the GYA are complex. The presence of brucellosis in elk and bison in the GYA, along with brucellosis-free cattle in the area, has been, and remains, the source of numerous concerns and conflicts. The following eleven state or federal agencies have management responsibilities and authorities for wildlife, livestock, or lands in and around Yellowstone National Park:

- Montana Department of Livestock
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
- Idaho Department of Agriculture
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Wyoming Livestock Board
- Wyoming Game and Fish
- USDA-Forest Service
- USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- USDI-National Park Service
- USDI-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDI-Bureau of Land Management

All of these agencies have recognized it is essential to sustain populations of free-ranging elk and bison in the GYA and protect the public interests and economic viability of the livestock industries of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. In addition, these agencies have recognized the need to develop and implement brucellosis management plans to eliminate *Brucella abortus* from elk and bison, and their habitat, in the GYA. However, because no single agency has been named as a lead agency in developing and coordinating an encompassing and holistic brucellosis elimination plan for the GYA, little if any progress has been made, to date, to that end.

Long-term, it is in the best interest of the wildlife and livestock in the GYA, as well as the public, to have a healthy, brucellosis-free wildlife population and environment in the GYA. The DOL concurs that USDA-APHIS should be named as the lead agency to coordinate the development of a brucellosis elimination plan. As such, collective agency efforts can be implemented to expedite the elimination of brucellosis in the GYA. The DOL further recognizes it will be essential for USDA-APHIS and the responsible agencies to cooperate and work collectively to achieve the desired outcome of eliminating *Brucella abortus* from the GYA.

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