

January 19, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The American livestock industry is committed to producing safe, affordable, and nutritious food for consumers in the United States and around the globe. In 2017, your department expects total cash receipts from cattle and hog sales alone to top \$87 billion. The livestock industry's growth and the prosperity of rural America depend on functioning markets. Therefore, we ask that the Department of Agriculture ensure the Livestock Mandatory Reporting (LMR) program administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) continue to operate should a federal government shutdown occur.

Not long after its implementation in 2001, LMR became the sole source of market information on sales to packers of cattle, swine, and lambs and on the subsequent sale of meat products. Other entities in that business simply could not compete from a cost perspective nor were they able to access the level of data required by LMR. Because LMR is a critical tool used by livestock producers, packers, and others when making marketing decisions, it plays a central role in ensuring competition in the meat and that the livestock industry is vibrant.

For example, livestock contracts between buyers and sellers are often based on prices reported under LMR. As was experienced just a few years ago, disruption of the program has a materially, adverse effect on operations for farmers, ranchers, and other organizations. The benefits of maintaining LMR program continuity far outweigh the minimal costs attendant to ensuring the small number of employees needed to run the program remain on the job.

For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully request the AMS staff directly involved in operating and administering the LMR program be deemed essential personnel in the event of a federal government shutdown.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef
Association
National Pork Producers Council
North American Meat Institute

Cc: Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget