The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is pleased with the bipartisanship exhibited in the U.S. Senate that resulted in passage of the 2012 Farm Bill. The association now calls on members of the U.S. House of Representatives to muster similar support for the far-reaching legislation that has a tremendous impact on veterinarians and the practice of veterinary medicine.

“The Farm Bill is one of the nation’s most important and comprehensive pieces of legislation, and the AVMA is encouraged by the Senate’s vote,” said AVMA President Dr. René A. Carlson. “The AVMA has worked very closely with members of Congress to make sure that the interests of both people and animals are represented in the legislation. Food safety and public health are critical areas of importance, and the Farm Bill helps us ensure that we can continue to provide safe food for our nation and for people around the world.”

The AVMA is elated that the Farm Bill includes two of the association’s highest legislative priorities:

- A provision authorizing a new competitive veterinary services grant program to develop, implement and sustain veterinary services in rural/underserved areas.

- A provision that is identical to the Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act, which amends the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit any person from knowingly attending an animal fighting venture or causing a minor to attend such a venture.

“We are grateful to Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Ranking Member Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) for including the Veterinary Services Grant Program in the Farm Bill,” Dr. Carlson said. “This new program will bolster veterinary workforce and food-protection needs, and will help support practices of veterinarians who are participating in or have successfully completed the federal Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program or other similar federal or state programs.”

Other highlights of the Farm Bill include reauthorization of several of the AVMA’s priority programs, including:

- The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program, which pays up to $25,000 per year toward the repayment of qualified educational loans for veterinarians who sign contracts to provide food-animal or public-health services in designated areas.

- The Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD), which is used by veterinarians, livestock producers, and state and federal regulatory and extension specialists to ensure that drug, environmental and pesticide contaminants do not end up in meat, milk and eggs.

“The AVMA applauds the Senate’s efforts in passing the 2012 Farm Bill, and we look forward to continuing our work with members of the House of Representatives to further strengthen the high level of food safety and public health this nation deserves,” Dr. Carlson said.