

House Ag Committee Chairman Investigates No Ag Funds, Vet School May Close

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Alarmed by a proposal to close Pennsylvania's only veterinary school and substandard conditions at the state-run animal health

laboratory at Summerdale, Rep. Kenneth J. Cole, D-Adams, has proceeded to conduct an investigation of benefits versus expenses at the two facilities.

As chairman of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, Cole is concerned about the possible effects of eliminating funding to the University of Pen-

sylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine from the state budget. "I have met personally with officials at Penn and I fear that the absence of state funding can only result in one situation — closure," said Cole.

"I feel it is our duty to first investigate the plausibility of this statement and secondly to determine the economic impact of such a result of the commonwealth."

Majority executive directors from the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and the House Appropriations Committee were directed by Cole to conduct a comprehensive tour of the facilities at the veterinary school that are facing possible elimination.

"This is a preliminary fact finding mission that will be followed up with extensive work by all interested parties," Cole said.

"We must take responsibility to prioritize our animal health and diagnostic facilities to ensure that our agricultural interests are being met with the best technology in order to maintain our status as an industry leader."

Less than a month ago Cole and Rep. Dwight Evans, D-Phila., toured the Summerdale Animal Health Laboratory and said they found conditions there "disturbing."

The Summerdale, state-run facility is the only sentry responsible for detecting animal disease and abnormalities. Animal agriculture is in critical condition, according to Cole.

"I know the Animal Health Commission has been working diligently on this problem and I am sure they feel we must move forward to improve our animal health regulatory and diagnostic facilities," Cole said.

Cole said he plans to attend a Thursday special meeting of the the Animal Health Commission to hear recommendations from the Secretary of Agriculture on the fate of the facility.

The meeting is to be held in the state Agriculture Department building located adjacent to the state Farm Show building complex in Harrisburg.

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