

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 11, 2026

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

The Honorable Dudley Hoskins  
Under Secretary for Marketing and  
Regulatory Programs  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins and Under Secretary Hoskins,

We write to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to take prompt action to assess and mitigate the potential threat posed by Yellow Catfish Virus (YcCV), a recently identified pathogen documented in aquaculture operations in China, and Channel Catfish Virus.

Emerging research<sup>1</sup> indicates that YcCV is highly transmissible among catfish species and is associated with mortality rates approaching 90 percent in infected populations. The virus has demonstrated the ability to remain viable through freezing and thawing processes, creating a credible pathway for introduction to the domestic market via imported fish products. These characteristics present a serious biosecurity concern for global aquaculture and warrant immediate attention from U.S. regulators.

In addition, Channel Catfish Virus (CCV), a known and highly pathogenic virus affecting catfish, underscores the broader vulnerability of the domestic industry to viral disease outbreaks. The existence of CCV within the U.S. highlights the importance of preventing the introduction of additional viral threats, such as YcCV, which could compound risks to fish health, production, and economic stability.

The domestic catfish industry is a critical component of the broader agriculture economy in the Southeast, supporting rural economies, providing jobs, and contributing to national food security. An outbreak of a highly pathogenic virus such as YcCV or CCV could have devastating economic and ecological consequences. We therefore respectfully request that APHIS prioritize a formal risk assessment of YcCV and CCV, including evaluation of potential pathways for entry, establishment, and spread within the United States. The mounting evidence surrounding YcCV and CCV underscores the need to ensure that emerging aquatic animal diseases receive appropriate attention and resources commensurate with their risk.

Along with conducting a risk assessment, we strongly encourage APHIS to adopt a precautionary, science-based approach that places the burden of proof on exporting countries. Exporters of Siluriformes products, including China, Vietnam, and other relevant trading partners, should be required to demonstrate that their products are free from YcCV and CCV

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9431444/>

prior to export to the United States. The obligation to ensure product safety should rest with exporters rather than U.S. regulators or domestic producers to prove the absence of risk.

We further urge APHIS to engage with international counterparts and trading partners to ensure that effective surveillance, biosecurity, and certification measures are in place to prevent the export of infected products. Countries exporting catfish and related species to the United States should demonstrate all necessary steps to detect, control, and eliminate the presence of YcCV and CCV in their aquaculture systems and processing chains.

Congress stands ready to work with APHIS and USDA to protect the health and viability of the domestic catfish industry. We look forward to your response outlining the steps APHIS will take to address this emerging threat and to ensure that appropriate safeguards are implemented.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



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Katie Boyd Britt  
United States Senator



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Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



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Tom Cotton  
United States Senator



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Cindy Hyde-Smith  
United States Senator



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Tommy Tuberville  
United States Senator