

DARO raises \$2.5 Million to scale disease surveillance across U.S. Swine industry

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Round led by Grit Road Partners and backed by leading pork producers, agricultural investors and Nebraska institutions



DARO, a Nebraska-based biotechnology company developing next-generation disease surveillance for the swine industry, today announced the closing of a \$2.5 million funding round. The round was led by Grit Road Partners, with Invest Nebraska and Nelnet serving as co-leads.

DARO is building a new approach to disease surveillance for pork producers and swine veterinarians. Its whole-herd, non-invasive molecular surveillance platform is designed to help production systems identify pathogen signals earlier and gain a more representative view of herd health without relying solely on samples from individual animals or a subset of the population.

The company's initial focus is porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus, or PRRSV, one of the most costly and persistent disease challenges facing the swine industry. DARO has also expanded its capabilities across multiple endemic and foreign animal diseases, including porcine epidemic diarrhea virus and African swine fever virus, as it works toward a more comprehensive disease surveillance platform for producers and veterinary teams.

"PRRS costs the U.S. pork industry an estimated \$1.2 billion each year, and producers still need surveillance tools that can identify disease signals sooner and more consistently," said Kristen Bernhard, Founder and CEO of DARO. "This investment allows us to scale the laboratory, data and commercial systems behind DARO so more producers can use routine, whole-herd surveillance to gain time when disease emerges."

DARO combines simple, non-invasive sample collection with a highly sensitive, proprietary molecular laboratory assay designed to capture pathogen signals across large populations of pigs. The approach is intended to give veterinary and production teams earlier, more representative information, and more time to respond.

In commercial nursery studies, DARO detected PRRSV an average of 3.91 days earlier than oral fluid surveillance and was the first method to detect the virus in all 11 rooms evaluated. In a separate controlled PRRSV challenge study, DARO detected the virus one day before serum and two days before oral fluids. DARO's broader pilot work has also shown higher early-stage detection reliability than oral fluid surveillance in the settings evaluated.

DARO's patent-pending platform integrates whole-herd surveillance, sensitive molecular detection and genomic characterization of emerging swine disease threats without requiring individual animal handling or blood collection. "What has changed for DARO over the last year is the level of adoption we are seeing across the swine industry," said Josh DeMers, Co-Founder and COO of DARO. "We are working directly with leading pork producers and veterinary teams and learning where earlier, more representative surveillance creates the most value. Our focus now is execution: increasing capacity, expanding the pathogens we can detect and making DARO easier to deploy across large production systems."

The new capital will support DARO's next stage of growth, including expanding laboratory capacity and automation; advancing molecular and genomic capabilities across additional swine pathogens; building data and reporting infrastructure for veterinary and production teams; and expanding commercial deployment with pork producers, veterinary organizations and diagnostic partners.

"Kristen, Josh, and the DARO team are fundamentally changing how the livestock industry approaches disease management by turning surveillance from a reactive test into a proactive, whole-herd intelligence tool," said Mike Jung, Managing Partner at Grit Road Partners. "Pathogens like PRRS cost the U.S. swine industry over a billion dollars annually, yet producers have historically lacked tools that detect health threats early enough to minimize impact. DARO's platform delivers a step-change in early detection, giving veterinarians and production teams vital lead time to protect herd health."

The financing follows DARO's previous \$1.1 million round and marks another step in the company's progression from early research and pilot validation toward commercial disease surveillance within the swine industry. "Our goal has remained simple from the beginning: find disease first and give producers more time to act," Bernhard said. "The more swine populations we can bring under routine surveillance, the closer we get to changing how the pork industry manages infectious disease."