

Meeting Minutes: December Quarterly Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday, December 6, 2023 | 9:30 a.m.
Minutes prepared by: Daniel Callahan
Location: Hocokata Ti (2300 Tiwahe Circle, Shakopee, MN 55379) and Teleconference

Attendance

Board Members

- Erica Sawatzke, President
- Peggy Anne Hawkins, DVM, Vice President
- Steve Neil
- Alex Stade
- Abigail Maynard, DVM
- Jessica Fox, DVM
- Brandon Schafer

Consultants to the Board

- Michelle Medina, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Stephan Schaeffbauer, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services
- Joni Scheftel, Minnesota Department of Health
- Laura Molgaard, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Michael Oehler, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Guests

- Paul Anderson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association, MVMA small animal welfare committee
- Jason Gilsdorf, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services
- Danny McCann, Minnesota Pet Breeders

Staff

- Jesica Aho
- Carissa Allen
- Veronica Bartsch
- Kate Brakefield
- Jason Cater
- Kaylyn Chapin
- Katie Cornille
- Erin Crider
- Michael Crusan
- Lisa Ehlen
- Addie Evans Engelke
- Brian Hoefs
- Erik Jopp
- Samantha Kappel
- Bliia Kha
- Tony LaBarre
- Krista Lautenschlager
- Betsy Lempelius
- Bonnie Miller
- Brad Peterson
- Kayla Pierson
- Allison Pollock
- Nancy Reeck
- Kelly Schenk

- Laura TeBrake
- Shauna Voss
- Heather Damico
- Daniel Callahan
- Tim Schultz
- Melissa Smith-Jantzen
- Courtney Wheeler
- John King
- Myah Walker
- Missy Sivigny

Call to Order/Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Dr. Peggy Anne Hawkins called the meeting to order. Ms. Erica Sawatzke and Dr. Jessica Fox attended the meeting virtually. Dr. Hawkins welcomed and introduced new board member Dr. Abigail Maynard.

After introductions, Dr. Hawkins asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes from the Sept. 27, 2023, quarterly meeting. Mr. Steve Neil made a motion, and Mr. Brandon Schafer seconded it. Dr. Hawkins called for a vote, with all board members voting aye to approve the agenda.

Dr. Hawkins asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Schafer made the motion, and Mr. Stade seconded it. Dr. Hawkins called for a vote, with all voting aye to approve the agenda.

After discussion, February 6 was agreed upon for the first quarterly meeting for 2024. April 3, 2024, was agreed upon for the second quarterly meeting. Locations are to be decided.

Welcome

Mr. Stade offered welcome on behalf of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

Board of Animal Health Update

Dr. Brian Hoefs gave an update on the actions of the Board staff since the last meeting.

The senior veterinarians on staff attended the United States Animal Health Association conference on Oct. 13-18. Dr. Hoefs said the event brought together many animal health professionals from across the country for education, networking, and to put forth resolutions to the USDA regarding policy or rules.

In all, 36 resolutions were voted to move forward including issues related to:

- African Swine Fever (ASF) how indemnity works for ASF outbreaks, preparing for incursion.
- Microchipping in horses.
- International movement of animals.
- Increasing funding around rabies research and mitigation.

Mr. Stade asked about ASF in the Caribbean. Dr. Hoefs said political instability in some of the Caribbean countries makes it difficult to enforce policy. The U.S. has sent teams to educate on biosecurity and depopulation of infected herds, among other issues.

Dr. Hoefs also gave an update on the Feral Swine and Mink Report requested by the legislature. The report is a collaborative effort between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, USDA-Wildlife Services, and Minnesota Department of Health. It will be presented to the legislature in February 2024. Three meetings and one open forum have been held so far. There is currently no oversight on the six mink farms operating in Minnesota.

Dr. Hawkins asked what other positions are still open at the board. Dr. Hoefs said the Staff Attorney position and an Office and Administrative Specialist Intermediate position in the cattle program are still open. Dr. Hoefs said this brings us up to full staffing, but HPAI takes a lot of resources, which might require additional positions to combat Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and other foreign animal diseases like African Swine Fever (ASF) and Foot And Mouth Disease (FMD).

Legislative Update

Ms. Michelle Medina gave a legislative update. The legislative session starts Feb. 12, 2024. The holiday breaks for the session have been released. This session will focus on policy, but there is also a surplus of nearly \$2.4 billion that will likely come into play. . MDA and BAH are working on monetary requests for the legislature and working with the governor's office on policy and budget requests.

USDA Update

Dr. Stephan Schaeftbauer of the USDA gave a presentation on the USDA organizational structure and broke down where her team functions in the large agency. She also spoke on the APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) Impact Report 2022 and the Defend the Flock educational campaign.

APHIS Impact Report 2022 outlined the actions of the USDA group and accomplishments including:

- Provided training to support a nationwide network of more than 71,000 USDA accredited vets who serve as a first line of defense for reportable domestic and foreign animal diseases (FADs).
- Approved 2,663 facilities to export U.S. animal products.
- Tested 23,783 samples for ASF and Classical Swine Fever and conducting 3,515 FAD investigations.
- 1.8 million tests through the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP).

The “Defend the Flock” is an educational program that offers free tools and resources to help everyone who works with or handles poultry to follow proper biosecurity practices. The program is online and is available in multiple languages.

Dr. Schaeftbauer said her team has several positions open and is looking forward to a new Ready Response Corps Veterinary Medical Officer starting in March 2024.

Mr. Schafer asked what the geographic scope for this work is. Dr. Schaeftbauer said it covers the state of Minnesota.

Dr. Hawkins asked about the Ready Response Corps VMO and what area would be covered by the position. Dr. Schaeftbauer said that the position is allocated for Minnesota. There is a possibility for a second position.

Minnesota Department of Health Update

Dr. Joni Scheftel, supervisor of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Zoonotic Diseases Unit and Minnesota State Public Health Veterinarian, gave a presentation on the state of backyard poultry in Minnesota and other diseases of interest in animals, specifically blastomycosis and tularemia.

Keeping backyard poultry is increasing in popularity, with nearly 50 million birds sold annually. Nearly 1.1 percent of U.S. households keep poultry. This puts the keepers at risk of enteric diseases like Salmonella and Campylobacter, though the risk is only to people with direct contact with the birds and their environment. MDH tracks Salmonella infections, and nearly 64 percent of infections bought chicks in the year they got sick.

BAH regulations state that people who sell live poultry need a permit, must source their chicks from NPIP hatcheries and keep records for three years. They must also submit to inspection.

In partnership with BAH, MDH, the MDH Public Health Laboratory and the University of Minnesota have been conducting a chick paper sampling project. The project involves sampling chicken papers from six anonymous feed stores and testing for Salmonella. In the current study, 82.4 percent of samples retrieved were positive for Salmonella.

Tularemia was a large concern in 2023. A BAH awareness campaign and UMN teaching habits have increased the number of cases being caught. Many of the cases found have been in urban areas, which counters the connotation of Tularemia being a rural disease.

Blastomycosis is a fungal disease found in soil. While it is not zoonotic (able to be passed between humans and animals), animals are often a sentinel for human disease. Treatment has come down in price, and fewer animals are being euthanized for the infection.

Dr. Scheftel is retiring as of Jan. 9, 2024.

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update

Dr. Laura Molgaard, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota (UMN) gave a presentation on the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL).

Dr. Hement Naikare has been named new director of the VDL. He brings to the VDL lots of experience with veterinary diagnoses from numerous agencies and organizations. The VDL is still recruiting for several open positions, including a role at the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL). Job fairs have been held in Willmar, MN, and St. Paul.

The VDL is financially sound. Revenue is down, but expenses are also down due to a large swine client going elsewhere. The overall number of procedures is down 8-percent. New grant funding has been secured.

The VDL continues to move forward with a new digester, including \$7 million in project funding from UMN. A new generator will be installed at the MPTL, and upgrades to IT will improve customer services. The annual National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) assessment has been completed and submitted. An audit conducted by American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) is coming up in September 2024.

College of Veterinary Medicine Update

Dr. Molgaard also gave an update on the UMN College of Veterinary Medicine's partnership with South Dakota State University (SDSU) and Food Animal Education program, along with other issues relating to veterinary education.

UMN and SDSU received full accreditation from the American Veterinary Medicine Association Council on Education. The addition of the SDSU students changes the student body male-to-female ratios. Additionally, a larger segment of student focus area will be on food animal practice in the class of 2025. Nearly 68 percent of students admitted are from rural environments.

The Food Animal Education program has experienced workforce shortages, causing challenges for treatment of individual food animals in the program. The food and production animal education program is strong, and UMN hopes to work with private-public partnerships to make sure students are gaining experience with large food animals on an individual basis.

The Minnesota Rural Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program is aimed at recruiting and retaining veterinarians in rural practice by repaying student loans. Currently, 30 doctors of veterinary medicine are receiving assistance. The program gives \$15,000 a year for five years to pay off eligible student loans, provided the veterinarians meet requirements, including at least half-time or more on food animal medicine.

Dr. Molgaard also gave an overview of the USDA Loan Repayment program that is working its way through the federal legislature as HR4355/S2829. Legislation would eliminate federal taxes (37 percent) on loan funds. Currently 28 federal representatives and 17 senators are supporting the bill, but it has received no committee attention so far.

During the 2024 Minnesota legislative session, the university is seeking licensure of vet techs, separate temporary license for those employed as faculty, a supplemental budget request for 2025 of around \$45 million and a \$500 million request for funding through the Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement program to augment and replace facilities relating to student education.

Mr. Schafer offered a comment about not clouding the distinction between companion and food animals. Ms. Sawatzke also commented that we must be careful with labeling a food animal as a companion animal. Also, she thanked Dr. Molgaard for following up on class breakdowns as requested.

Mr. Schafer asked whether the Board could do anything to support recruitment in rural animal education programs. Dr. Molgaard said the problem is often less about veterinary medicine and more about rural economic development.

HPAI Update

Dr. Shauna Voss gave an update on the work of BAH on highly pathogenic avian Influenza (HPAI) and the differences between HPAI and low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI)

LPAI is naturally occurring in wild migratory waterfowl without causing illness. Infected birds typically have mild respiratory signs and fewer eggs but are sometimes asymptomatic. Only H5 and H7 strains are covered under NPIP and USDA response. The response to LPAI is done on the state and local level and is dependent on serotype and planning.

HPAI is considered a foreign animal disease (FAD) and typically presents as a systemic infection with high mortality. It is extremely infectious within and between flocks and is not covered under NPIP. Since HPAI is considered a FAD, an immediate response is required.

Avian influenza is a reportable disease under Minnesota statute. Testing is a regular part of NPIP, and BAH typically receives notification via reporting of clinical signs or because of non-negative lab test results.

Since October 8, 2023:

- 32 cases of HPAI confirmed.
 - 20 commercial turkey farms.
 - 8 turkey breeder farms.
 - 3 backyard farms.
 - 1 commercial table-egg layer farm.
- 144 MN cases for 2022-2023.
 - 6.1 million birds.
 - 43 counties.

Dr. Hawkins asked how Dr. Voss and her staff are doing keeping up with this. Dr. Voss replied that it's tough, but the poultry team is small and relies heavily on the other units on the board staff. Long term stability of the response is unknown. Sustainable staffing levels might look different than current staffing.

Dr. Hawkins asked if the U.S. might go the way of France and vaccinate birds against HPAI. Dr. Hoefs mentioned that Minnesota gets accolades for how we respond to HPAI. Vaccination is part of a national conversation on the subject. We need a new approach and vaccination might be part of it, or even strategic vaccination. National meetings at USDA are upcoming on the subject. Dr. Schaeffbauer said that she would be happy to present to the board about planning. She noted that currently it's a relatively small percentage of the total industry that has been infected with HPAI. There are international political considerations that have to be solved before a new strategy can be established.

Ms. Sawatzke commented that it is important to remember the short lifespan of turkeys (and other meat birds) and the cost associated with vaccination may be high. Depending on the use of the birds, the value of vaccination might be different.

Mr. Stade asked about comparing last year's numbers compared to this year's. Last year 30 cases. We've already exceeded those numbers. Dr. Voss said a warm fall has helped the HPAI virus stick around.

HPAI Control Areas Overview

Ms. Krista Lautenschlager gave an overview on how BAH establishes and releases control areas when HPAI is detected in a poultry flock.

First, a control area is set up around an infected premises. The response zone data is collected using information from EMRS (the Federal database used for foreign animal disease response) and the state database (CoreOne). The surveillance team gathers lists and starts to notify premises owners in the control area and surveillance zone. When response zones overlap, premises owners are notified if their location is moved into an infected zone or buffer zone because Infected Zones have additional restrictions

- Infected Zone: 1.9 miles around the infected site.
- Buffer Zone: 4.2 from edge of infected zone.
- Surveillance Zone: is 6.2 miles from edge of buffer zone.

The Control Zone includes the infected zone and buffer zone.

All commercial flocks within a Control Zone are placed under quarantine. Poultry or poultry products cannot be moved off premises without a permit and permitted movement testing. The first round of testing should be

done within 48 hours. Flock owners must sample and submit every 5-7 days until the Control Zone is released. Samples are collected from 11 birds using oropharyngeal swab samples in one tube of Brain Heart Infusion (BHI) from each barn.

Within the Surveillance Zone, poultry flock owners are notified they are in that zone. They will be notified when they need to test and it will occur within a 14-day window after Initial Virus Elimination (IVE) date has been set. They must submit a sample once within that 14-day window. Samples are collected from 11 birds using oropharyngeal swab samples in one tube of Brain Heart Infusion (BHI) from each barn.

Control Zones can be released when the infected premises that established the Control Zone has been depopulated and the compost pile has been capped. After the IVE activities are complete, a 14-day window opens starting the day after the IVE date. Commercial testing and backyard surveillance need to be completed in this 14-day window.

Fifteen commercial control areas have been closed and hopefully should have 18 closed soon.

Dr. Hoefs commented that the process is complicated and there are a lot of moving parts. He commended Ms. Lautenschlager and the poultry team for their attention to detail in getting test results.

USDA HPAI In Wildlife Research Update

Mr. Jason Gilsdorf, of the USDA Wildlife Services division, gave a presentation on the HPAI Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment Project.

The HPAI Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment Project is a pilot project with funding from contingency programming and aims to look at facilities to see what can be done to increase biosecurity between domestic and wild poultry. It looks at commercial poultry operations not backyard flocks.

Agents from the project do an initial site visit and conduct a wildlife point survey to assess what wildlife are present, what wildlife attractants may be present and what other biosecurity concerns may be present at the sites. A report is provided to the property owner and discuss mitigation options. A subsequent visit is done to assess what, if any biosecurity issues have been resolved or continue to exist. The project is done at no cost to the operator.

Wildlife Services are a non-regulatory agency and do no enforcement, just advise and offer technical assistance. They have conducted eight site visits since October 2023 with three personnel, but hope to hire six more to conduct assessments.

Dr. Hawkins asked about cold weather impacts in January, February and March. Mr. Gilsdorf acknowledged the challenges and said the work is still accomplished.

Companion Animal Updates

Dr. Veronica Bartsch gave an update on the Companion Animal program at the Board including Atypical Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease (aCIRD) and the Companion Animal Advisory Taskforce.

There is no national surveillance system for CIRD at the moment, but veterinarians are aware there are a lot of infectious agents that can cause CIRD. Anecdotally, there is an increase in Atypical CIRD cases, specifically acute, severe respiratory disease in a dog that doesn't have underlying conditions that tends to be refractory to normal

interventions. Much is still unknown about the current anecdotal cases. No new pathogens have been identified on PCR tests. Questions remain, however aCIRD does not appear to be widespread at this time. The Companion Animal program works in partnership with the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and others to track illness and does outreach to veterinarians with alerts regarding reporting and testing.

The Companion Animal Advisory Taskforce was organized and ran between December 2021-December 2023 to identify zoonotic illnesses and diseases in animals of the highest concern. After discussion the following conclusions were reached:

- Regulation of foster based animal rescue groups
 - Need for regulation by BAH through statutory authority.
 - Animal census numbers would be criteria.
 - Organization would be responsible for ensuring foster home meet regulations.
 - BAH would have authority to investigate complaints.
 - Regulations should address records, minimum standards of care, program of veterinary care, import/export of animals.
 - Update language from “Kennel” to “Shelter.”
- Import regulations
 - Enforcement and education are the largest hurdles.
 - CVI limited in health at pin point in time.
 - Heartworm Disease
 - Recommendation of the group all dogs imported for resale or adoption must receive microfilaricide medication between 14 and 30 days before travel. Dogs with known heartworms must also get doxycycline. Medication must be stated on CVI.
 - Canine Brucellosis
 - Guidelines regarding canine brucellosis be treated by veterinarians, rescues and new rescue dog owners with information about canine brucellosis regarding but not limited to areas of concern and testing requirements.
 - External Parasites
 - Development of best practice guidance documents for animal rescue organizations regarding diseases and parasites found in high-risk origin locations but not found in Minnesota that would be distributed with adoption paperwork.

Mr. Paul Anderson interjected the small animal welfare community with MVMA has been working in concert with the guidelines and working on recommendations for heartworm testing and treatment. Also working to change the language from “Kennel” to “Shelter.” Documents should be ready to present at the February or April meetings of the Board.

Field Inspection Opportunities for Board Members

Dr. Courtney Wheeler gave a presentation on opportunities for members of the Board to attend field inspections with field staff. Board members should contact either Dr. Wheeler or Ms. Erin Crider to coordinate a field inspection experience. In 2023, field staff will have completed more than 1,000 inspections. Field staff are located throughout the state of Minnesota and can be found on the website through [an interactive field staff map](#) .

Opportunities for inspection field experiences cover the following areas:

- Poultry dealers
 - Cleaning and Sanitation
 - Husbandry (heat, feed, water)
 - Biosecurity/Public Health
 - Records/Animal Disease Traceability
- Hatcheries
 - Cleaning and sanitation
 - Disease testing
 - Biosecurity/Public Health
 - Records/Animal Traceability
- Shelters/Kennels
 - Cleaning and Sanitation
 - Facilities
 - Husbandry
 - Veterinary Protocol
 - Records/Animal Disease Traceability
- Commercial Dog and Cat Breeders
 - Cleaning and Sanitation
 - Facilities
 - Husbandry
 - Veterinary Protocol
 - Records/Animal Disease Traceability
- County Fairs
 - Cleaning and sanitation
 - No animals show signs of contagious or communicable disease
 - Official veterinarian
 - Records/Animal Identification
- Farmed Cervidae
 - DNR will conduct WTD inspections. BAH will conduct inspections for all other farmed Cervidae species.
 - Fencing and gates
 - Animal identification, inventory, movements, and deaths
 - CWD Testing
- Livestock Markets
 - Cleaning and sanitation
 - No animals show signs of contagious or communicable disease.
 - Official veterinarian
 - Records/Animal Identification
- Garbage Feeders
 - Cleaning and Sanitation
 - Garbage cooked to meet requirements.
 - Carcass Disposal
 - Records/Animal Identification
- Other opportunities for inspection field visits
 - Scrapie ID Compliance
 - Farmed Cervidae Fence Inspections
 - Livestock buying stations.
 - Rendering Facilities
 - Upland Gamebird Hatcheries
 - Slaughter Only Handling Facilities
 - Terminal Feedlots

Dr. Maynard commented on the value of attending field inspections as a veterinarian and recommended other board members take advantage of the opportunity.

Mr. Neil asked what the process is to go out on a field inspection. Dr. Wheeler said she would email the board members directly to coordinate. Mr. Neil asked about the average time commitment. Dr. Wheeler answered that accommodations could be made for whatever time is available.

Farmed White-Tailed Deer Authority Transfer for DNR

Ms. Addie Evans-Engelke gave an update on the transfer of authority for farmed White-Tailed Deer (WTD) to DNR.

Minnesota currently has 85 herds of non-WTD farmed cervids:

- 64 elk
- 9 reindeer
- 4 fallow deer
- 1 red deer
- 1 sika
- 1 muntjac
- 5 mixed species
- 15 WTD/mixed-species herds

There are no Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) positive herds in Minnesota. The last positive herd was found October 2022 in Winona County. The herd was depopulated.

The Genomically Estimated Breeding Value research project has been extended to Sept. 29, 2024, for farmed white-tailed deer producers. The research project looks at factors that reduce the susceptibility to CWD in farmed WTD.

Registration renewals for cervid farms are due Dec. 31, 2023.

Dr. Hoefs reiterated that WTD farms are decreasing in number and some farmers are waiting to see what happens during this legislative session before deciding to continue to farm cervids.

Ms. Evans-Engelke said the Board plans to increase communications to farmers, BAH/USDA staff and other stakeholders due to the new statutes. The Board and DNR will share specific responsibilities for farmed WTD/mixed herds:

- Inventories
- Inspections
- Compliance
- Disease investigations

Dr. Stephan Schaeffbauer asked about the funding for DNR's version of CoreOne (computer program). Ms. Evans-Engelke said they fund their own program. Dr. Wheeler noted that Evans-Engelke's time is paid for by DNR to support that programming.

Mr. Anderson asked what statutes are currently in effect. Ms. Medina explained that the law is in effect but will be clarified by improved language during the next legislative session. Dr. Damico said that the board has exclusionary fence guidelines that can be shared with anyone interested.

Mr. Michael Oehler, DNR Farmed Deer and Captive Species Coordinator, outlined the work of the DNR on WTD farms.

There are currently 117 WTD farms, but around 20 farms plan to close out operations by the close of 2023. At least five more will be closing out before the new fencing requirements go into effect in September of 2024. DNR has one staff member allocated to farmed WTD, and plans to hire another full-time position are underway.

Since July 1, 2023, DNR has taken over daily oversight of the WTD herds. Nearly 75-percent of inspections are complete and only three escape events have been reported. An interagency agreement with BAH has been put in place for administration of the WTD program, and a Memorandum of Understanding has been established between DNR, BAH and USDA to administer the herd certification program. A website and online payment portal has been created for producers as well.

Mr. Oehler said some challenges associated with the transition have appeared including producer confusion regarding the proper agency to report to, consistency in communications between producers and DNR and/or BAH and particular issues with WTD/mixed herds.

Dr. Hawkins thanked Mr. Oehler for his recognition of the work the Board staff has been conducting during the transition in regulatory concern.

Incident Management Team Structure

Ms. Lucia Hunt, director of MDA Office of Emergency Preparedness, gave a presentation on the incident command system (ICS) BAH and MDA use in cases of emergency outbreaks and Governor's Executive Order 13-23 that specifies the planning.

Governor's Executive Order 13-23 specifies:

- All agencies must use the ICS when responding to a disaster or emergency.
- Must have a HSEM qualified Emergency Manager.
- Must have a department emergency operations plan.
- MDA MUST coordinate with BAH on any emergency planning.

ICS is the framework for emergency response, nationally recognized, coursework available online for free.

Adjourn and Next Meeting

The next quarterly meeting of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health will be held on February 6, 2024, at a location to be determined.

Dr. Hawkins asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Stade made the motion, and Mr. Neil seconded it. Dr. Hawkins called for a vote, and members voted unanimously to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hoefs
Executive Director
State Veterinarian