

Meeting Minutes: Quarterly Board Meeting

Date: March 27, 2019

Location: Minnesota Farmers Union, 305 Roselawn Avenue, #200, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55117

Attendance

BOARD MEMBERS

- Dean Compart, Producer
- Graham Brayshaw, Veterinarian
- Peter Ripka, Producer
- Erica Sawatzke, Producer

CONSULTANTS TO THE BOARD

- Trevor Ames, Dean, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Mary Donahue, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Veterinary Services
- Joni Scheftel, Minnesota Department of Health
- Jerry Torrison, Director, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

GUESTS

- James Byrne, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association
- Michelle Carstensen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Robyn Corcoran, USDA, Veterinary Services
- Lou Cornicelli, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Pam Debele, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
- Brenda Hartkopf, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association
- Stephanie Johnson, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Fellow
- James Kincheloe, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Peter Larsen, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Mari LaMoore, Veterinarian and MPH Intern, Minnesota Department of Health
- Michelle Medina, Minnesota Farmers Union
- Nicole Neeser, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Tamara Nelson, Minnesota AgriGrowth
- David Preisler, Minnesota Pork Producers Association
- Kevin Spiegel, Student Extern, USDA, Veterinary Services
- Mike Starkey, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Tiffani Turinski, University of Wisconsin College of Veterinary Medicine

STAFF

- Beth Thompson
- Linda Glaser
- Dale Lauer
- Shauna Voss
- Greg Suskovic
- Stacey Schwabenlander
- Courtney Wheeler
- Mackenzie Reberg
- Annie Balghiti
- Morgan Grelson
- Erin Crider

Approval of Agenda and December 5, 2018 Minutes

Dean Compart called the meeting to order, and he asked for any changes to the draft minutes from the December 5, 2018, meeting. Hearing none, he requested a motion to approve the minutes. Peter Ripka made the motion, and Erica Sawatzke seconded. A vote was taken, with all present voting aye.

Mr. Compart asked for any changes to the agenda. Beth Thompson noted that she would be giving the Legislative Update, as Peder Kjeseth was unable to attend. Linda Glaser asked that part of the Farmed Cervidae Update be moved to after Michelle Carstensen's update on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in wild deer. Noting those changes, Mr. Compart called for a vote to approve the amended agenda, with all voting aye.

Board of Animal Health Update

Beth Thompson gave an update of Board activities. Due to a recent retirement, the Board is in the process of hiring a field veterinarian. The Board currently has 44.4 employees, which includes the open veterinarian position and services contracted with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA).

The Board currently has a slight budget surplus and is looking into the possible need for more staff, especially with the proposed legislative changes to the Farmed Cervidae Program. Dr. Thompson will give an update on this at the next quarterly meeting of the Board.

Dr. Thompson referred to the biennial budget overview, noting the Governor's recommended budget changes for the next two fiscal years: 1) The Farmed Cervidae Program would receive an additional \$208,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 and \$529,000 in FY 2021. 2) The Board would receive an additional \$250,000 in annual funding for agricultural emergency and response. The MDA would also receive an additional \$300,000 in annual funding and a one-time appropriation of \$325,000 for this purpose in FY20. The legislature has not approved a budget yet, so it remains to be seen if the Governor's recommendations will hold.

Legislative Update

Dr. Thompson gave an overview of bills proposed in this year's legislative session. A bill creating a Companion Animal Health Board, which would remove the Companion Animal Program from the Board of Animal Health, was discussed in both the House and Senate, but no further action has been taken.

The House and Senate are discussing several bills concerning the Farmed Cervidae Program.

- Senate Bill 874 and House Bill 305 both propose a white-tailed deer moratorium and buyout, as well as transferring farmed Cervidae responsibilities to the DNR, and mandatory depopulation of farmed herds in the event CWD is found.
- House Bill 2302 establishes financial responsibilities of farmed Cervid herd owners.
- Senate Bill 1995 was heard in the Senate Agriculture, Rural Development and Finance Committee on Monday. This bill divides commercial and noncommercial herds, adds requirements for two redundant gates on commercial facilities, official identification numbers for all farmed cervids, and separate commercial (\$250) and non-commercial (\$100) fee caps for inspections. A herd owner's license could be revoked if their facility has two escapes in a year. This bill lowers the age of an animal required to be CWD tested from 18 months to 12 months. If CWD is detected on a farm, depopulation would be required, and land owners may be required to disclose that CWD was found on the property when selling it.

- Representative Poppe will be proposing a bill soon that requires double fencing or a high-tensile fence and moves the deadline for identifying newborn animals from December 31 to October 31 of each year. It also allows MDA to assist in inspections, if needed. The inspection fee for a commercial herd would be raised to \$500 (\$1,000 if animals are sold for hunts) and \$150 for noncommercial herds. Owners would also pay \$10 per animal in 2019 and \$5 per animal in subsequent years to establish an indemnity fund to help the state reimburse herd owners if USDA indemnity funds are not available.

USDA Update

Mary Donahue said Minnesota is scheduled to conduct a consistent state review for scrapie in July and August. This review will take about a week to complete and will evaluate Minnesota's scrapie regulations, official identification, movement, quarantine records, and program standards. The last review was done in 2013.

The USDA has updated their scrapie regulations and program standards. The changes include removing genetically-resistant and less susceptible sheep from the high-risk category and updating specific goat identification and recordkeeping requirements to increase animal disease traceability.

From July 1 to December 31, 2019, the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service will be conducting its second national study of the U.S. goat industry. Robyn Corcoran will be the NAHMS Coordinator. About 4,700 goat producers from 25 states will have an opportunity to participate. The USDA will offer incentives for participation.

Veterinary Services (VS) has had three retirements in Minnesota field positions since the December Board Meeting, bringing their vacancy total to five (four Veterinary Medical Officers (VMO) and one Animal Health Technician (AHT)). Two VMO positions have been submitted for priority hiring. VS hopes to fill all positions soon.

Dr. Donahue discussed access to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) epidemiology reports and findings and how that information is shared between states. Epidemiology reports from CWD cases are only visible for the state in which the cases occurred. A state veterinarian can request a specific report from another state, and that state can grant access, but otherwise, there is no information available across state lines. There are monthly cervid health calls during which states present brief updates, but the information is not comprehensive.

There is a need for a national epidemiology report, similar to what is done for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, or Mad Cow Disease). She also suggested the possibility of having a risk assessment scorecard for each case. The completed scorecard could be posted on a national website for other states to view to get a comprehensive picture of disease spread and risk factors.

The [USDA Cervid Health Program webpage](#) was updated in January. Dr. Tracy Nichols added and updated a lot of information so answers to basic questions and good resources are available to the public. She also added emergency preparedness and biosecurity information and the 2018 Cervid Action Plan.

Dean Compart agreed that there needs to be a way to share comprehensive case findings with other states to raise awareness of risk factors and change behaviors. Dr. Thompson stated she has shared her concerns with the national assembly of state health officials.

H5/H7 LPAI in Minnesota Update/Virulent Newcastle in California Update

Dale Lauer provided an overview of the H5N2 Low-Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) outbreak in Kandiyohi, Stearns and Chippewa counties in 2018-19. A total of nine (9) commercial turkey premises were affected, with all flocks controlled marketed by February 8, 2019. The Chippewa County flock was found to be positive based on serology only.

It was determined by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) that the H5N2 LPAI virus detected was a North American wild bird lineage virus. USDA-APHIS-VS Guidance Documents and the 2012 version of the Minnesota H5/H7 LPAI Response Plan were used to direct response activities. Approximately 400,000 turkeys were controlled marketed as part of the response.

The index flock in Kandiyohi county was identified as part of the poultry industry's enhanced surveillance initiative, drinker biofilm swab sampling. Drinker biofilm swab sampling is a research project headed by Dr. Carol Cardona that has proven effective in identifying influenza viruses in turkey flocks because of the open drinker water systems used in turkey production. It is not considered official testing by the Board but is a beneficial tool in detecting influenza infections early. It is being used during the "high risk" fall and spring wild bird migrations. Part of the industry's surveillance strategy in Minnesota is to test all turkey flocks at least 12-14 weeks old are tested weekly in poultry-dense counties, in addition to all flocks within 36-48 hours prior to movement to slaughter.

A H5N2 LPAI Hot Wash was held January 3, 2019, which brought together Board and USDA-APHIS-VS individuals involved in the H5N2 LPAI response. Areas that were identified for improvement included staff training and overall communications.

Dr. Lauer provided an update on the outbreak of virulent Newcastle Disease (vND) in California, which began in May 2018. Over 400 cases have been reported in five (5) counties, including the most recent case, 350 miles away from where the other cases are centered. This is the third vND outbreak in California in the last 50 years (past outbreaks were in 1971 and 2002-2003). Robyn Corcoran, who has been deployed to assist with vND response efforts, said the approach to stopping the virus spread is changing. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has been placing control areas around infected premises, similar to what is done for an avian influenza (AI) response. Positive birds are depopulated quickly. However, the virus has appeared in the same places again due to the continued movement of birds in and out of control areas. The USDA shifted an additional \$45 million from its emergency fund budget to be used for the vND response. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has created large regional quarantine areas over Southern California to enforce movement restrictions, mandate reporting, enforce quarantines and implement depopulation orders.

Poultry Rule Change Update

Shauna Voss gave an update on the proposed rule change to require Mycoplasma-clean status for commercial turkey flocks only. The rule change is open for public review and comment until April 22, 2019. The Board has added a webpage for the status of proposed rule changes, which gives links to the rule and contact information for comments. The public also can find this information and make comments on the Office of Administrative Hearings website. Once the request for comment is complete, the Board will prepare the rule change to go to the Governor's office.

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update

Jerry Torrison showed how the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL) continues to strive for efficiency in test sensitivity and cost, which is different depending on the disease and the animal. Dr. Torrison described the different sampling strategies for identifying influenza in swine and poultry. He also discussed the samples needed for chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing and how difficult it is for untrained individuals to collect the right samples. The VDL continues to validate different tests for African swine fever (ASF). Currently, they can test spleen, lymph node and tonsil samples and are validating oral fluid PCR testing. They will also continue to participate in foreign animal disease (FAD) exercises to strengthen partnerships and prepare for emergency response activities.

College of Veterinary Medicine Update

Trevor Ames said the regional veterinary education program agreement with South Dakota State University (SDSU) continues to advance. The South Dakota Veterinary Medical Association voted unanimously to endorse the program, and the South Dakota governor and legislature voted to financially support SDSU students in their third- and fourth-year studies at the University of Minnesota. The College will be pursuing University of Minnesota provost and regents' approvals in the next few months.

The College has prepared and presented information on ASF for the swine industry and anyone who has concerns about the disease. Information focuses on biosecurity and compliance as the best defenses against infection.

The Minnesota Veterinary Loan Repayment Program had many deserving applicants this year. This program offers a senior veterinary student \$75,000 over five years in exchange for a commitment to serve five years in a designated shortage area and are involved in food animal care at least 50 percent of the time.

One million dollars in recurring funding for the VDL is included with the University's request from the state legislature. This would include funding for inflationary increases and Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL) operations. The University's request also includes one-time funding for the College's research into new CWD testing methods.

Farmed Cervidae Program Update

Linda Glaser stated the CWD-monitored herd in Crow Wing County does not yet have an offer of indemnity from the USDA. If the USDA makes an offer, the herd owner would have to accept it before depopulation could proceed. Dr. Glaser will discuss the CWD Endemic Area after the DNR presentation.

Mackenzie Reberg said that, based on the Office of the Legislative Auditor's recommendations, the Board has created a program for individuals who want to become authorized CWD sample collectors. The first step is to take a classroom training. The first class was held on March 23, and about 100 people attended. There will be four more training sessions held in different areas of the state through the end of April. After they have attended a class, the next steps are to have a hands-on sample collection training with a Board staff member, and then to submit two successful samples to the VDL in 2019. The Board will be evaluating the success rate of each collector, which will allow for identifying those who need retraining or possible revocation of authorization. After 2019, only authorized individuals will be allowed to collect samples for CWD testing.

Six of the 383 herds in the state have been identified as having one or more repeated, unresolved compliance issues. One of these herds was cancelled on March 14, and two others have received notices of cancellation if they are not in compliance as required by their notification letter. The Board is using a herd cancellation process for all noncompliant farms. First, the Board uses a field staff Investigation Report(s) and an historical document review for historical noncompliance, showing the herd owner's minimal effort to bring their herd into compliance. Next, the Board issues a Notice of Violation for current violations. If the herd owner remains noncompliant, a Notice of Civil Penalty is issued, along with a notification letter giving a compliance deadline. After the deadline, if they are still noncompliant, the Board issues a "Findings of Fact and Order" for cancelling their registration.

Dr. Reberg said the herd that was recently cancelled had gone through all the steps listed above. The herd owners did not contest the case and decided to depopulate their herd. All animals were CWD tested, and the results of about half of the animals have come back, with all being CWD not detected. The other two herd owners going through this process have not discussed their intentions with the Board.

Graham Brayshaw asked how long the cancellation process takes. Dr. Reberg stated that the process for all three herds began in January. The two herds going through the process have been notified that their licenses will be cancelled if they do not come into compliance by the deadline on their notification letter.

CWD Update in Wild Deer

Michelle Carstensen said last fall's CWD surveillance tested 1,236 deer and detected 13 CWD-positive animals, including three located outside of Zone 603 in Southeastern Minnesota. The DNR expanded the boundary around Zone 603 for two special late hunts in December and issued landowner shooting permits. Dr. Carstensen said 407 deer were harvested, and no additional positive animals were found. USDA targeted culling began in January and has brought in 508 additional animals, with 11 positive deer found. Targeted culling will end on Friday. Dr. Carstensen stated the infection prevalence in Zone 603 is still low but has increased over 2017 and appears to be persistent around the Preston and Lanesboro area.

A CWD-positive case was found in Houston County. This is the first Houston County CWD-positive case found since the DNR began surveillance in the area in 2016. The yearling male was found 8.5 miles from the CWD-positive Winona County farm and 25 miles from positive cases found in Wisconsin. In response, the DNR offered late-season hunting in Area 346, during which one positive case was found about 2.5 miles from the CWD-positive farm in Winona County. Landowner shooting permits were issued for February 23 through March 10. USDA targeted culling operations are in effect until Friday.

Dr. Carstensen stated that a CWD-positive deer was found dead in Crow Wing County on January 23. The adult doe was located less than a half mile from the CWD-positive farm. They have tested over 8,800 deer in the area since 2016, and this is the first positive case found in the wild. They believe the disease is not established in the area, and the farm is likely the source of infection. The DNR has increased surveillance around the Crow Wing County CWD-positive farm. Landowners with more than 10 acres of land within two miles of the farm received shooting permits. The DNR held a public meeting in Merrifield to share information with the public and contracted with the USDA for targeted removal of animals. They have also increased their efforts to sample "sickly-looking" animals. They have taken 86 samples, with no CWD detected (some results are pending).

Based on their Southeast Deer Movement Study findings, the DNR will be increasing the boundaries of their surveillance areas from 10 miles to 15 miles around each CWD-positive case. Doing this will encompass most of the Southeast corner of the state. They will also continue to do outreach to increase public understanding of CWD and the importance of efforts to stop disease spread.

The DNR has released its updated CWD Surveillance and Management Plan, which was written to align with other states' plans. This plan is meant to provide general guidelines for any CWD finding and includes response steps for initial detection, transition to persistent infection, persistent infection and endemic disease.

Request to Increase Board CWD Endemic Area

Linda Glaser stated that the Board is required to draw their own CWD endemic area when the DNR establishes an endemic area in the wild. In Southeast Minnesota, the Board placed a 10-mile endemic area around all CWD-positive wild animals found. Considering the findings from the Southeast Deer Movement study and the size increase in the DNR's endemic areas, Dr. Glaser asked the Board to increase the Board's minimum endemic area to 15 miles around any CWD-positive wild deer. This would include five more farmed cervid herds in Southeast Minnesota and one in Crow Wing County. Dr. Glaser added that they should also consider if all of Houston County should be included in the Southeast endemic area because of its proximity to Wisconsin and Iowa CWD-positive cases. This would affect one additional farm.

After discussion, Dean Compart asked for a motion to approve all of Houston County as an endemic area and to increase the Board's endemic area from 10 to 15 miles around each CWD positive found in the wild. Graham Brayshaw made the motion, Peter Ripka seconded, with all voting aye to approve both requests.

University of Minnesota CWD Rapid Test Project

Peter Larsen provided an overview of ongoing research to developing new tests to detect CWD. First, Dr. Larsen described the currently available tests, their strengths and weaknesses. Scientists at the University of Minnesota are working on developing a test that would reduce cost, processing time, and the potential for false positives and negatives, while increasing acceptable sample types and ease of use.

The University of Minnesota Diagnostic Development Team is performing research focused on RNA and the CWD prion proteins. RNA research is centered on Dr. Pamela Skinner's previous scrapie research, which identified about 20 predictive RNAs for the disease. The corresponding genes have been identified in the white-tailed deer genome, so they are hoping to identify CWD in early stages of infection by examining RNA expression profiles in blood. The team also hopes to use new antibody repertoire sequencing to identify antibodies that will bind to the CWD prion or malformed infectious regions more efficiently than the antibodies used in current testing methods. They believe this will increase test sensitivity and accuracy, as well as allow the test to be used with both biological (post- and antemortem) and environmental samples.

The team is collaborating with several individuals and organizations, including the DNR, the Board, the USDA and the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association, on test development, sample collecting, validation and deployment. The project has received funds from the Rapid Agricultural Response Fund to set up equipment and laboratory space needed for the project. They also have asked the state legislature for \$1.8 million to develop the next-generation test prototype, which they plan to have ready in two years.

Dr. Larsen also invited everyone to attend the CWD Public Outreach Event scheduled for September 14 at the Bell Museum of Natural History in St. Paul.

CWD Transmission Pathways to Minnesota and Wisconsin Cervid Farms

James Kincheloe shared details of a study, headed by Scott Wells, into identifying pathways of CWD transmission to cervid farms. The study looked at CWD-infected farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin since 2002 and identified risk exposures caused by direct or indirect contact with infected cervids. They also determined high, lower (or unknown), and negligible risk factors that may have contributed to infection.

Dr. Kincheloe stated that (56 percent) of the 34 infected farms in both Minnesota and Wisconsin had high-risk exposures, such as introducing animals from a CWD-positive farm, animal escapes and re-entry or wild cervid entry, or introduction of cervid parts (from hunting or taxidermy practices). Problems that may have contributed to these exposures include CWD testing of only dead animals, later detection of CWD through surveillance, weaknesses in perimeter fencing, the spread of CWD in the wild, a lack of knowledge about proper biosecurity practices.

Forty-four percent of the 34 farms had lower or unknown risk exposures, which do not clearly indicate how the infection may have come to the farm. Many (64 percent) of these farms became CWD-positive within the last five years, indicating a shift from higher to lower risk CWD exposures over time. Eighty percent had added cervids from test-negative herds in the last five years, while the rest were closed to herd additions. Several farms were located less than 50 miles from CWD-infected wild deer. Fifty-three percent of these farms had single perimeter fencing, while 20 percent had double fencing.

The goal of the study is to protect cervid farms from future exposure by identifying these transmission pathways. What is not known is how many cervid farms experience these exposures, the sensitivity of the current CWD surveillance system on farms, and the actual risk from indirect exposure pathways.

Dr. Kincheloe also mentioned that the University of Minnesota and the Board of Animal Health are working together on an assessment of CWD biosecurity on the state's cervid farms. A survey assessing biosecurity practices was sent to all Minnesota cervid farms, and 140 farms have replied to date. They plan to share the data collected with key industry audiences and provide risk assessment tools to improve biosecurity.

Brenda Hartkopf asked if the survey was sent to Wisconsin farmers. Dr. Kincheloe said they are discussing this possibility with Wisconsin officials and farmed cervid groups, but it would require additional funding to move forward.

African Swine Fever Exercises

Mike Starkey gave an overview of African Swine Fever (ASF) preparedness activities. Last May, Minnesota participated in the Agriculture Response Management and Resources (ARMAR) Exercise focused on foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the beef industry. The next planned exercise was to be for FMD in the swine industry, but in response to the ASF outbreak in China and Eastern Europe, the focus has shifted to ASF. Planning for ARMAR took five years; the ASF exercise is being planned in nine months.

An ASF Policy Meeting was held in North Carolina November 25 and 26, 2018. At this meeting, 14 of the largest swine producing states, federal and private sector representatives discussed ASF immediate response policies during an outbreak, from initial foreign animal disease (FAD) investigation to continued surveillance after the outbreak is over. They also went through three ASF detection scenarios, one in Canada or Mexico, one in feral pigs in the U.S., and one in commercial swine in North Carolina and Iowa. Participants identified policies and strategies needed to meet response goals, equipment and supplies needed for the response, and make plans for the next exercise.

The ASF Planning Exercise was held in Ames, Iowa, on February 27 and 28. The same 14 states participated and discussed each of the 13 critical activities that must occur in a FAD response. Discussions helped identify needed modifications to FAD response plans to prepare for a well-coordinated ASF response.

The next meeting will be an ASF tabletop exercise on April 25 and 26, which Minnesota will host. During the exercise, the group will validate the revised ASF response plan. The ASF functional exercise will be held September 23 through 26, which will include four separate exercises (FAD investigation, diagnostics and lab messaging; national movement standstill/state-based stop movement; depopulation and disposal; and permitted movement, Secure Pork Supply, and Emergency Management Response System (EMRS)).

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next quarterly meeting of the Board of Animal Health will be on Wednesday, April 24, 2019, starting at 9:30 a.m., location to be determined. Dean Compart asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Peter Ripka made the motion, Graham Brayshaw seconded, with all present voting aye.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Thompson
State Veterinarian

