

Meeting Minutes: Quarterly Board Meeting

Date: September 9, 2020

Location: Microsoft Teams

(Most board members in person at Minnesota Farmers Union, 305 Roselawn Ave E, St. Paul, MN 55117)

Attendance

Board Members

- Dean Compart
- Dr. Matt Anderson
- Erica Sawatzke
- Jim Vagts
- Dr. Peggy Anne Hawkins

Consultants to the Board

- Stacy Holzbauer, Minnesota Department of Health
- Laura Molgaard, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Stephan Schaeffbauer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Veterinary Services (USDA – VS)
- Jerry Torrison, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Guests

- Karina Burger, USDA – VS
- Michelle Carstensen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Robyn Corcoran, USDA - VS
- Tony Dank, USDA-VS
- Gary Olson, Minnesota Deer Farmers Association
- David Priesler, Minnesota Pork Producers Association
- Brenda Hartkopf, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association

Staff

- Beth Thompson
- Linda Glaser
- Dale Lauer
- Shauna Voss
- Greg Suskovic
- Courtney Wheeler
- Stacey Schwabenlander
- Brian Hoefs
- Kara Schmidt
- Annie Balghiti
- Michael Crusan
- Erin Crider

Resolution to hold meeting remotely

Dean Compart called the meeting to order and began by reading from the “Certificate of the Board of Animal Health; Resolution to hold Meeting Electronically:”

“It is RESOLVED that this quarterly Board Meeting shall be conducted electronically, in a manner in which all Board members can hear one another and hear all discussion and testimony. All votes shall be conducted by roll call. Members of the public may monitor this meeting remotely by the teleconference line that is noticed on the Board of Animal Health website.”

Mr. Compart made the motion to approve this resolution, and Dr. Matt Anderson seconded. There was no discussion, and Mr. Compart asked board members to vote by role call. All members voted yea, and the resolution passed.

Approval of Agenda and April 15, 2020 Minutes

Mr. Compart asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Dr. Peggy Anne Hawkins made the motion, and Dr. Anderson seconded it. There was no discussion, and Mr. Compart called for a vote to approve the agenda. Board members voted by roll call, with all voting aye.

Mr. Compart then called for a motion to approve the draft minutes from the April 15, 2020, quarterly board meeting. Jim Vagts made the motion, and Dr. Anderson seconded. There was no discussion, and Mr. Compart asked for a vote to approve the minutes. Board members voted by roll call, and all voted yea.

Mr. Compart then introduced Dr. Peggy Anne Hawkins, the new board member replacing Dr. Graham Brayshaw. Dr. Hawkins said she has lived in Minnesota for 13 years and served mainly as a swine veterinarian here, in the Dakotas, Iowa and Wisconsin. She has worked on committees with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians. She is pleased to use her experience to assist in keeping Minnesota’s animals healthy.

Board of Animal Health Update

Dr. Beth Thompson said COVID-19 has affected all state agencies, and the Board is no exception. Morgan Grelson, the Board’s business manager, retired in July, and Kara Schmidt has taken over this position. The Board usually has about 45 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, but due to retirement and staff leaving for other positions, as well as those who have requested COVID-19 family leave, staffing is at 36 FTE as of this meeting. The state is under a hiring freeze, and Board staff have reprioritized workloads. However, staffing shortages are making it difficult to adequately perform program work. The Board will be presenting their case to Minnesota Management and Budget and requesting permission to fill some vacant positions. Dr. Thompson will keep board members informed of any hiring updates.

Dr. Thompson then summarized her involvement in national animal health organizations. She has been on the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) Coordinating Council and the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPREP). She discussed the 2020 Farm Bill funding available through each of the organizations. All Farm Bill funding proposals are due September 14.

Dr. Brian Hoefs has been very active in leading the Board’s swine program and in preparing for African Swine Fever (ASF). He is the chair of the Emergency Disease Management Committee (EDMC) for swine, which is working on the state’s ASF response plan, including planning for a 72-hour standstill, epidemiological questionnaires, testing protocols, and depopulation and disposal.

Dr. Thompson also mentioned national groups that have been formed recently to prepare for ASF, including the 72-hour examination “Sundberg at the SHIC” (Swine Health Information Center), a couple of national assemblies discussing how to communicate among state systems that track hog movement. North Carolina, Minnesota, Iowa and Indiana have regular phone calls to discuss issues among their states. Dr. Thompson also is a part of a USDA technical working group formed to bring together national wildlife staff to discuss surveillance practices in wildlife, and Center for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) staff to present different surveillance tests that are available. The goal is to find test(s) that could be used in surveillance for diseases like ASF.

College of Veterinary Medicine Update

Dr. Laura Molgaard said the University of Minnesota is working on plans for a careful, gradual return from reduced staffing. Throughout COVID, the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) remained more open than many of the other colleges at the university, but they still have a policy stating those who can work from home should do so. The Veterinary Medical Center is very busy and has returned to full operations. They are welcoming students slowly to on-site clinical rotations, while others are in virtual rotations or clinical externships.

College enrollment remains strong, with 105 new DVM students arriving as the Class of 2024, along with 9 new graduate students and 29 students in the DVM-MPH joint degree program. This year’s curriculum includes online lectures and small discussion groups, which have freed up students to be divided into small groups for their labs and other hands-on experiences.

Dr. Molgaard gave a brief overview of ongoing Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer (AGRETT) program research projects, including Peter Larsen’s projects focusing on biomarkers for predicting metabolic disease in dairy cattle and CWD diagnostics and transmission.

Recently, Dr. Larsen presented at a CWD informational hearing before the combined House and Senate Environmental and Natural Resources Finance Committee. At this hearing, Dr. Larsen shared information on Real-Time Quaking Induced Conversion (RT-QuIC) testing, and that the Minnesota Prion Research and Outreach (MNPRO) faculty is working with the USDA to validate the test for official CWD testing.

The Professional Program in Veterinary Medicine, the partnership between the University of Minnesota and South Dakota State University (SDSU), also referred to as the “Two-Plus-Two” Program, is now accepting applicants for enrollment in Fall 2021. This will be the first year students can apply for Two-Plus-Two Program. Selected applicants will be enrolled at SDSU in Fall 2021 and will move to the University of Minnesota in Fall 2023 for their third and fourth years. To prepare for the new program, SDSU has hired a director and two new faculty and has newly renovated facilities for its use.

Dean Compart asked if the CVM will be prepared to handle the additional students from the Two-Plus-Two program when they enter the CVM in 2023. Dr. Molgaard said they expect to expand their capacity for third- and fourth-year students and currently have a classroom large enough to accommodate the larger class size.

USDA Update

Dr. Stephan Schaeffbauer began with an overview of the Veterinary Export Health Certification System (VEHCS), which is an electronic system that can replace the use of paper health certificates. USDA accredited veterinarians logged into the system can issue and sign health certificates, which are then electronically submitted to the Veterinary Services

Endorsement Office for review and endorsement. In FY 18, 30 countries accepted VEHCS certificates, and in federal FY 20, 91 countries now accept them. The USDA is actively encouraging veterinarians to use VHECS.

Dr. Schaeffbauer shared Minnesota sample collection numbers for FY 20. Scrapie, swine hemorrhagic fevers (African Swine Fever and Classical Swine Fever) and Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis sampling numbers well exceeded target sampling minimums.

In early 2020, the USDA announced they would be distributing low-frequency RFID button tags for cattle and bison. They determined the number of tags to allocate to each state based on their percentage of replacement heifers. Minnesota was allocated 202,380 tags. There have been 54 orders placed for these tags, totaling 13,800 tags. The USDA recently awarded a contract to three different tag distributors to improve order fulfillment speed. Producers and veterinarians can order tags through the [Board's Order Official RFID Tags for Replacement Heifers web page \(https://www.bah.state.mn.us/order-rfid/\)](https://www.bah.state.mn.us/order-rfid/).

Dr. Schaeffbauer gave brief hiring update, first introducing the two new veterinary medical officers at Veterinary Services (VS). Dr. Jenna Fier is working in Southwestern Minnesota, and Dr. Tony Dank serves the northeast region of the state. Veterinary Services has one vacant Animal Health Technician position, which may be filled by the end of the year.

Dr. Thompson requested Dr. Schaeffbauer provide an overview of what USDA Wildlife Services is doing to keep feral swine out of Minnesota. Dr. Schaeffbauer agreed to do so at the December board meeting.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2 Update

Dr. Greg Suskovic provided an update on the U.S. outbreak of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2 (RHVD-2). Current outbreaks are on San Juan Island in Washington state and in the southwestern U.S., with infections found in both wild, domestic and feral rabbits.

Dr. Suskovic showed a map of the recorded RHVD-2 cases in the Southwest and discussed the disease response in the area's states. Most states have released quarantines 120 days following the last RHVD-2 death, with approved cleaning and disinfection protocols. All southwestern states are importing vaccine with USDA approval. RHVD-2 is still considered a foreign animal disease (FAD), but affected states may be reclassified as, "stable endemic." No states have requested the reclassification.

The Board sent out RHVD-2 information to the public through the *Animal Bytes* newsletter and has created a [RHVD-2 web page](#) to share current information with Minnesota veterinarians and rabbit owners. Messaging is focused on stating RHVD-2 is not in Minnesota or the Upper Midwest and providing best biosecurity practices. Minnesota currently does not allow any vaccine importation, though that issue would be revisited in the event RHVD-2 is found in the state.

Dr. Suskovic briefly updated the Board on the foreign animal disease (FAD) investigations in calendar year 2020. As of this meeting the Board has investigated 46 swine vesicular cases, five rabbit cases, three equine cases, and one case each in canine, turkey and bovine.

Mr. Compart asked if RHVD-2 was confirmed in Minnesota, who determines if the vaccine would be used. Dr. Suskovic said the state veterinarian would make that decision. Then the state then must apply to the USDA for approval.

Farmed Cervidae Research Update

Dr. Scott Wells gave an overview of his research on improving Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) biosecurity on cervid farms, which focuses on potential pathways for infection and ranks each one as high, moderate or negligible risk. These pathways include animal movements from an infected farm, shared equipment, contaminated feed or water, or fencing breaches. Ranking decisions also took into account if these pathways included contact with a farm later found to be CWD positive or occurred in an endemic area.

Researchers looked at the transmission pathways associated with confirmed CWD-positive cervid farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin since 2002. They also conducted a survey of Minnesota farmed cervid producers, asking about possible transmission exposures on their farms. The findings showed that CWD exposure risks have changed over time. Eighty-five percent of CWD-positive farms without higher-known risk exposures are in endemic areas with suspected indirect exposures. Annual farmed cervid networks are sparse, and movements between farms are unpredictable. There is also a low prevalence of high-risk biosecurity practices on farms, but there is a higher prevalence of moderate or uncertain risk practices associated with indirect exposures to CWD.

Dr. Wells then discussed a proposed study to use this information to prioritize the transmission pathways for cervid farm biosecurity. Researchers would collect data from CWD-positive farms and farms without CWD positives to evaluate possible CWD risk factors. They would also collect soil samples from these farms to test using the RT-QuIC assay at the MNPRO laboratory. They hope to use their findings to improve the development of CWD biosecurity programs, evaluate the potential of RT-QuIC to assess its ability to detect the CWD prion protein following the removal of cervids from an infected premises, and improve CWD-related biosecurity and policies on cervid farms.

Dr. Thompson asked if the study would look at soil types as a possible factor in transmission. Dr. Wells said they would be examining soil types and would be using previously available data to assist in the evaluation.

Gary Olson asked Dr. Wells if he could foresee double-fenced farms with closed herds having a different status or factors for risk management. Dr. Wells stated that farm biosecurity is important, but the information available is in the research stage; more information is needed to make changes in policy. Generally, the mitigation factors put in place on individual farms make a difference, but the risk of infection is higher for those farms within endemic areas.

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Stacy Holzbauer provided an update on the current COVID-19 situation. As scientists learn more about COVID-19, guidance concerning the virus continues to change. COVID-19 affects many different areas of the body because ACE-2 receptors, places where COVID-19 can connect to cells, exist on many body tissues. As a result, the list of possible symptoms is varied.

Dr. Holzbauer then shared the ways COVID-19 is spread and recent data on the virus incidence in Minnesota. She noted that case percentages are rising faster in rural areas than in urban areas. She displayed a graph showing the reported cases by week, showing a drop in positive cases at the beginning of June (as a result of “lockdown” measures) and then an uptick in cases as the state reopened. As the pandemic continues, the type of individuals infected has changed, with 20-24 year olds having the highest number of reported cases since the pandemic began.

Dr. Holzbauer shared an overview of Dr. Joni Scheftel’s work with meat packing plants to help prevent COVID-19 spread. MDH began outreach efforts and developing guidance for this industry, as well as consulting with various industry plants remotely and in person to provide a non-regulatory learning opportunity for both groups. MDH

continues to communicate with plants and provide updated guidance as conditions change. Dr. Holzbauer noted that processing plants have now recovered to 95 percent capacity.

Dr. Holzbauer shared MDH's plan for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. This plan includes expanding testing for residents and workers, providing testing support and troubleshooting to clear testing barriers faster, getting PPE to the facilities that need it, ensuring adequate staffing levels, and leveraging partnerships to better apply skills and talents. MDH also has performed risk assessments on health care workers exposed to COVID-19. In doing so, they have noticed a shift in exposures from workplace settings (patients or residents) to household or social exposures.

Dr. Holzbauer stressed the importance of slowing the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, and limiting exposures to other people, if possible.

Dr. Thompson asked if there was still a PPE shortage. Dr. Holzbauer said the state emergency operations center has a staff dedicated to purchasing PPE for the state, though they are competing with staff from other states for the same supplies. She noted the state's shortage of N95 masks and gloves.

David Preisler asked if MDH has seen a re-emergence of outbreaks in packing plants. Dr. Holzbauer said they have seen some introductions but no outbreaks similar to what was happening at the beginning of the pandemic. If everyone remains vigilant in reporting illness, transmission usually can be stopped.

Farmed Cervidae Advisory Task Force Update

Dr. Linda Glaser provided an overview of the group's membership, meeting dates, and objectives, which were to develop guidelines for exclusionary fencing and provide regulatory changes needed to keep farmed cervid businesses viable in the state. They last met in February and were scheduled to meet in April, but the meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19. Dr. Glaser is working on scheduling a meeting to finalize their work. She hopes to present the group's final report at the December board meeting.

Farmed Cervidae Rulemaking

Rulemaking process

Annie Balghiti stated that the Board is in the process of amending its rules regarding farmed Cervidae (Minnesota Rules 1721.0370 to 1721.0420) to incorporate the legislative amendments made to the farmed Cervidae statutes as of July 1, 2019. The Board is reviewing all the farmed Cervidae rules and proposing additional changes. She listed the guiding principles for the rule review.

Ms. Balghiti then outlined the steps of the rulemaking process. The Board is on the first step, which is publishing a Request for Comments. This was published in the State Register on June 29, 2020, which opened the public comment period and was recently extended to October 30, 2020. All comments received will help the Board develop the rules drafts.

The Board is encouraging public comments during the rulemaking process by offering several ways to participate.

- Submit a written comment on the [Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings eComments web page](#).

- Join a public listening session. The Board has held two sessions so far and has three more scheduled, including one tonight from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Meeting dates are posted on the [Board's Public Rule Making web page](#).
- Contact us directly by phone or email. Find contact information on the [Board's Public Rule Making web page](#).
- Participate in the public comment period at the end of a Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee Meeting. Meeting information is posted on the [Board's Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee Meeting web page](#).

Links to these options also are available on the [Board's "How to Participated in Rulemaking" web page](#). Ms. Balghiti noted that comments submitted during this period are not necessarily included in the formal rulemaking record. Those who want the administrative law judge to read their comments should participate in the second open comment period.

The Board has established a Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee to assist with the developing the rule changes. This committee consists of 15 members from various stakeholder groups. While this group does not have the final say in the rule changes, they have expertise and can provide valuable input on rule changes. As of this meeting, the group has met twice, and a third meeting will be scheduled soon. These meetings are held virtually and are open to the public. The last 15 minutes of each meeting is open for public comment. Information on how to join the meeting is posted on the [Board's Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee Meeting web page](#).

Ms. Balghiti discussed the rest of the rulemaking process. The second formal step is to publish a Notice of Intent to Adopt the rules, at which time a second 30-day minimum comment period begins, and the Board will publish a final draft of the proposed amended rules. The Board's timeframe for publishing the Notice of Intent is December 2020, which could proceed with a hearing before an administrative law judge, or without a hearing. A hearing before a judge would provide a third opportunity for the public to share comments on the rules. Ms. Balghiti noted if the Board proceeds with a hearing, they will hold at least two hearings. The Notice of Intent would include dates, times, and locations information for each hearing.

Dr. Michelle Carstensen, a member of the Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee, noted confusion among committee members concerning rule changes versus statutory changes. She asked if the Board was noting statutory changes that may need to be addressed with the legislature to give the Board appropriate regulatory authority. Dr. Thompson stated the Board can work with its legislative liaison and advisor in the Governor's office to recommend any statutory changes.

Erica Sawatzke asked how the advisory committee members were selected and notified. Ms. Balghiti said the Board first identified regulatory agencies like the USDA, DNR, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), MDH, cervid producers, industry groups, and a member of the public. Brainstorming helped identify more groups with an interest in and/or area of expertise to advise the Board regarding farmed cervid rules, including tribal members, a cervid veterinarian, and the Association of Minnesota Counties.

Proposed rules draft discussion

Dr. Linda Glaser displayed the [proposed Farmed Cervidae rules draft](#) and discussed reasons for the major changes. The Board is discussing these changes in great detail with the Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee and with those in the rule making listening sessions. NOTE: for brevity, the rules draft is not recorded in these minutes. Please refer to the [proposed Farmed Cervidae rules draft](#) for complete rules language.

1721.0370 DEFINITIONS.

Subp. 5. **CWD certified herd.** Dr. Glaser pointed out the omission of the word “certified” and adding “state level 6.” The term “certified” is used in federal language, specifically in the federal CWD certification and does not pertain to the state level.

Subp. 6. **CWD Contaminated premises.** The Board elected to delete this definition because they no longer use it, and it is not referenced elsewhere in the rules. Dr. Glaser said the current definition describes contamination based on animals in the herd and their time on the property. This is outdated and not applicable due to new science. New tools will hopefully more accurately define the level of contamination.

Subp. 7. **CWD management zone.** Dr. Glaser said “endemic” implies a certain level of infection in the area. “CWD Management Zone” will more accurately reflect the definition.

Subp. 9. **Herd.** Dr. Glaser said the definition of “herd” is being expanded to include a group of at least one animal. The other parts of the definition came from the definition of “herd” in the Board’s General Provisions section of the rules.

Subp. 11. **Terminal Hunt Facility.** This is a new definition added to the rules. Some comments indicate the language is not specific enough, so discussions will continue to determine the final language.

1721.0380 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.

Subp. 2. **Registration.** The Board proposes adding the following sentence to the end of the subpart: “An owner whose herd registration has been revoked by the board may not register a farmed Cervidae herd for at least two years after their registration has been revoked.” This is being added because herd cancellation requires a lot of staff time and resources. It would be prudent to restrict those producers who had their herds cancelled for at least two years.

Subp. 3. **Inspections.** Changes in this section are to align the rules with the statute changes made in 2019. The addition at the end of the subpart is to clarify the deleted language.

Subp. 4. **Herd inventory.** Dr. Glaser said the board wanted to be more specific about owner record keeping and when herd owners needed to submit herd inventories. The Board now requires all herd owners to conduct a physical inventory every three years, and to submit records of their inventory to the board annually. The added last sentence clarifies the board’s right to request a physical inventory at any time and the producer’s responsibilities regarding the physical inventory.

Subp. 5. **Fencing.** Changes reflect the 2019 statute changes, stating all repairs and new fencing installed after July 1, 2019, must be high tensile, and all farmed Cervidae entry areas must have redundant gating.

Subp. 10. **Record Keeping.** Dr. Glaser stated that the Board added specific language to clarify that an owner is required to maintain records for every animal in the herd and which records must be kept. Specifically, the Board wants to clarify that records include Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) test results.

1721.0390 ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION.

The Board proposes striking language that is no longer applicable and adding language in response to statutory changes made by the legislature. Specifically, the legislature made changes that require white-tailed deer (WTD) species to be identified by October 31 of the year in which they were born, at weaning, or when/if moved off the premises. All remaining cervid species will maintain the December 31 deadline for application of official identification.

1721.0400 IMPORTATION OF FARMED CERVIDAE.

Subp. 3. Chronic Wasting Disease. The Board proposes changing all instances of “endemic area” to “management zone” to keep rules terminology consistent.

1721.0410 INTRASTATE MOVEMENT OF FARMED CERVIDAE.

Subp. 1. **Movement Requirements.** Dr. Glaser explained the Board removed “Subp. 1. Movement Reports” because it is already outlined in state statute. The Board proposes adding language that would require a producer moving animals to another registered farmed Cervidae premises to have at least one Cervid in the herd tested in the previous twelve months.

Subp. 2. **Movement of Animals to Slaughter.** This language was previously part of the rules, but the Board proposes adding it as its own subpart.

Subp. 4. **Restriction on Herd Additions.** The proposed amendment adds language that “a person may not move a farmed cervid to a premises that is not in compliance with the legal requirements for possession of Farmed Cervidae in Minnesota”. Dr. Glaser explained that this amendment would require a producer to be in compliance with fencing requirements and be aware of regulations including record keeping, inventories and testing before they could move captive cervids to their premises.

Subp. 5. **Movement into, within, and out of CWD management zones.** The Board proposes striking language for movement of animals to slaughter here, moving this language to Subp. 2, and adding language to allow permitted movement to other registered premises within the same management zone. Dr. Glaser explained the Board’s proposal to add an allowance for movement to a terminal hunt facility outside of the management zone with the requirement that all animals in the facility be terminated within 12 months.

1721.0420. CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE.

Most of the changes in this section apply to the state’s CWD herd certification program. Primary changes include inserting language that addresses the requirements for cervids to be tested for CWD and striking though previous language related to surveillance periods and consequences for not testing, as, in practice, the surveillance periods and consequences were not effective at increasing CWD surveillance efforts.

Subp. 1. **CWD herd certification program.** Part(D) requires that any animal from a farmed Cervidae herd that is 12 months of age and over that dies or is harvested to be tested for CWD with an official test. The Board proposes insertion of language providing more clarification on consequences for not testing. If a producer has a test eligible animal that they do not submit samples for, or for which a successful test cannot be performed, this section would apply. Point two (1721.0420, Subp. 1 D(2)) clarifies that the surveillance status may be reduced based on [Farmed Cervidae Program Surveillance Standards \(draft\)](#)., which the Board is proposing in conjunction with the rule changes.

Point three (1721.0420, Subp. 1 D(3)) allows the Board to grant an exception to a missed sample if animals die from anthrax or another zoonotic disease where sample collection poses a public health risk, or if animals are lost due to an outside act of vandalism or due to a mass mortality event such as a natural disaster or infectious disease outbreak.

Subp. 2. **Quarantine procedures.** Changes in state statute require mandatory depopulation of all CWD-positive herds. The Board proposes removing all language related to outdated quarantine procedures and adding language related to USDA herd appraisal and depopulation.

Subp. 3. **Determining boundaries of CWD management zones in the state.** The Board proposes adding language that updates the terminology and removes the allowance for herd owners to avoid movement restrictions by building

exclusionary fencing within 180 days of the CWD management zone designation. As animals may have previously and unknowingly been exposed to CWD, allowing animal movement could potentially spread infection.

Gary Olson asked about the science behind the requirement for herd owners to substitute another animal for CWD testing when they have a failed or missed test on an animal that died or was harvested. Dr. Glaser said the Board is concerned that adequate surveillance is performed on all farms. While a substitute animal will not provide the exact same result, it will provide us with herd surveillance for infection.

Mr. Olson expressed concern about making changes to the rules when scientific research findings on CWD could require more rule changes in a few years. Dr. Thompson encouraged Mr. Olson to share specific scientific studies and his concerns with the Board by submitting formal comments during the current comment period.

Brenda Hartkopf shared the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association's (MN EBA) plan to monitor herds, which involves CWD testing for both dead and live animals. Mrs. Hartkopf praised Dr. Peter Larsen's research on live animal testing and said, if research shows this is a reliable test, the MN EBA would like to start using it right away and not wait through another rule making process. Dr. Glaser said the current rules regarding CWD surveillance in the state's herd certification program can be done via "tests as approved by the Board." The USDA requires the Board to align their testing requirements with the USDA's to allow interstate movement. However, under the current rules language, the Board could go beyond the USDA requirements and approve additional testing options for movements within the state.

Office of the Legislative Auditor Updates

Drs. Thompson and Glaser presented what the Board has done to address each of the Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) recommendations based on the 2018 Farmed Cervidae Program audit. They shared and went through a [document outlining each OLA recommendation and Board actions taken](#).

There was discussion on the potential reshaping and expansion of board membership. This requires legislative changes. There were several bills presented in the House and Senate in 2019, but legislative priorities shifted to COVID-19 issues.

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update

Jerry Torrison began by giving an overview of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory's (VDL) Classical Swine Fever (CSF) and African Swine Fever (ASF) surveillance. The VDL added ASF surveillance in fiscal year 2020 and now runs paired testing for CSF and ASF. The VDL ran 1,082 ASF and CSF tests, respectively, in fiscal year 2020, which ended June 30, 2020.

Dr. Torrison shared findings from the USDA's Swine Vesicular FAD Investigations from federal fiscal years 2015-2020 (October to September). Almost all of which are associated with Senecavirus-A (SVA). While top hog-producing states, like Minnesota and Iowa, are not at the top of the list for overall investigations, they do have the highest rate of on-farm investigations, suggesting a seasonal low to mid-level endemic SVA infection in the commercial herd. Also, slaughter swine that are in marketing and transportation channels for longer time frames are more likely to develop acute SVA infections.

Dr. Torrison then presented VDL activities related to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including distributing PPE and testing reagents to the University's medical school and MDH for human testing, developing a PCR test for use

with animal samples, loaning extraction machines to the medical school, and training and certifying staff to run SARS-CoV-2 PCR tests on human samples.

Dr. Torrison gave an overview of the VDL's partnership with the Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network (Vet-LIRN) and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). He also shared global and national numbers on SARS-CoV-2 animal testing. The VDL has not tested any Minnesota animals for SARS-CoV-2 but are ready to do so if Dr. Thompson and State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Joni Scheftel request it.

Dr. Torrison presented the VDL's annual numbers for submissions by species, procedures by species and by laboratory section. The Board will include all of these numbers in its fiscal year 2020 annual report, to be released this fall.

Minnesota Agricultural Incident Management Team (IMT) Actions

Lucy Hunt provided an overview of recent Minnesota Agricultural Incident Management Team (IMT) activities. This team includes staff from the USDA, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), and the Board, as well as subject matter experts from other agencies.

In January and February, the IMT planned and held a cold weather composting demonstration to see if composting could be effective in cold climates. The demonstration was held at the University of Minnesota Southwest Research and Outreach Center in Lamberton. In this demonstration, swine carcasses infected with PRRS were ground and spread and piled into three different wind rows. Each of these was then mixed with a different carbon source (wood chips, corn stalks, and a wood chip/corn stalk combination). The team found the piles heated up appropriately in a few hours, and the carcasses were fully composted within a few weeks. They also tested for the persistence of PRRS in and under the compost piles. Ms. Hunt stated these results are close to publication and will be released soon.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in early April, MDA administration called the IMT into standby service to source hand sanitizer for MDA employees. By mid-April, COVID-19 caused pork production plant closures, and the IMT was stood up to design a swine carcass disposal program for Minnesota pork producers with a backlog of animals.

The IMT received \$10.9 million in funding for the carcass disposal program through the COVID-19 Minnesota Fund. Based on the demonstration held in February, the daily cost to run a grinding and composting site was estimated at \$74,000 when running at full capacity. In addition to composting, the IMT explored other disposal options, including rendering, incinerating, burial and landfill disposal. They set up the emergency carcass disposal hotline, which connected producers with carcass disposal experts to help producers decide which disposal option would work best for their situation.

The team identified two sites for composting: one near Worthington in Nobles County, and one in Le Sueur County. Much work went into finding sites that met all state requirements, as well as collaborating with the counties, landowners and their attorneys to determine appropriate compensation. Ms. Hunt summarized the team's work to make each site operate smoothly for all involved, including getting site approvals from USDA's Natural Quality Conservation Service (NRCS) for producer reimbursement via the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); identifying and acquiring needed equipment; compiling a list of entities that could provide carbon sources; and developing a schedule that would allow for continuous operation without a backlog of carcasses on site.

Ms. Hunt showed a brief video of operations at the Nobles County site and shared information on the composting process. She stated the piles at both sites had a lifespan of about four to six weeks from the day they were built until the composting process was complete.

Ms. Hunt shared a summary of complaints and problems the team encountered while the sites were operational. There were very few complaints, and the ones that came in were related to odor and flies. The team hired an aerial application to reduce the fly population at both sites. The Nobles County site was very muddy and caused significant odor in the compost piles, so the piles were consolidated and moved to higher ground. One neighbor expressed concern over the water quality in his well. The NRCS provided their site reports to resolve the issue.

Neither site ever reached full capacity, as producers found other ways to manage the surplus in their herds. Poor conditions at the Nobles County site prompted its closure on June 30, and the Le Sueur site suspended operations due to low demand on July 7. The Le Sueur site is on standby in case there is need for it to reopen. Equipment was cleaned and returned, and composting experts will continue to monitor and turn active compost piles at both sites until composting is complete in the next few weeks.

In August, the IMT met for an after action review to identify highlights and areas for improvement in their response efforts. They are also working with the University of Minnesota on a plan to continue sampling the compost at both sites for nutrient content, structure and contaminants. Other current projects include construction of two depopulation trailers and planning for another cold weather depopulation and disposal exercise in 2021.

Mr. Compart asked if any Minnesota producers who used the compost sites received reimbursement for the cost of their animals. Ms. Hunt said they did not. Minnesota took on the cost of disposing of the animals. There may be compensation coming from the state or federal government, but there are no timeline or details available at this time.

Poultry Update

Dale Lauer began with an overview of Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL) functions, including National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) participation, surveillance testing, and authorized poultry testing agent (APTA) certification. He also covered the Mycoplasma rule change that became official in December 2019. This rule change removed Mycoplasma testing and classification requirements for backyard hatcheries, breeder flocks and hobbyists.

Dr. Lauer discussed the current shortage of Pullorum-Typhoid (P-T) antigen. The NPIP requested that each state develop a contingency plan to handle the shortage. Minnesota opted not to relax the requirements for P-T testing. The MPTL has a supply of expired antigen that is tested monthly for efficacy. Dr. Lauer stated if the shortage continues, he may need to discuss other testing options with the Board at an upcoming meeting.

Dr. Lauer briefly covered other MPTL activities, including providing timely reminders to producers to review their biosecurity plans and to stay vigilant for symptoms of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). MPTL and field staff continue to work on NPIP biosecurity plan audits of commercial flocks. They completed 51 plan audits in FY 2020 and have completed 130 total audits since beginning the audit process in 2018. The MPTL is completing its final internal review of the Minnesota H5/H7 Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) Initial State Response and Containment Plan (ISRCP), often referred to as the “Minnesota Plan.” Once they complete this review, the plan will be sent to USDA for approval.

Transition to RFID Official Identification Tags

Stacey Schwabenlander recapped the timeline of the USDA’s plan to request comments for the visual official ID phase out for cattle and bison. The comment period for response to these potential changes opened July 6 and ends October 5, 2020.

Dr. Schwabenlander reviewed Minnesota's current situation regarding visual ID. The Board depleted its supply of silver metal tags in December 2019. Orange brucellosis vaccination tags remain available until the supply is depleted. Plastic National Uniform Tagging System (NUES) tags are available for purchase from Leedstone.

The USDA has provided each state with a limited number of RFID tags at no cost. These tags are only for use in replacement heifers (dairy or beef). Producers can place a one-time order for these tags via the [Board's Order RFID Tags Form](#). Once submitted, Board staff review and verify the premises ID number and that a previous order has not been placed. Then, the Board forwards the order to the USDA for distribution.

Dr. Schwabenlander gave an update on the status of the electronic data platform the Board was hoping to test with the State of Oregon. Those plans are now on hold, as Oregon recently lost their state veterinarian and some state staff have been redirected to COVID-19 duties. The Board hopes to continue to pursue this platform, but there is no timeline for restarting the process.

In federal fiscal year 2019, the Board received funding from the USDA to purchase two pairs of panel readers and five low-frequency RFID wands, all of which were distributed to markets in the state. In federal fiscal year 2020, the Board was allocated a supplemental award. Upon legislative approval, the Board plans to use these funds to purchase 35 durable low-frequency RFID wands, which will be distributed to users who are associated with RFID-tagged cattle, have a willingness to learn how to use the readers, and are willing to work toward submission of eCVIs and other electronic records.

Dr. Schwabenlander shared the link to the [Request for Comments on the Federal Register website](#). She then shared the specifics of the USDA's solicitation for comments.

- 1) Should a transition to RFID identification devices as the only official identification in cattle/bison take place?
- 2) If so, this is the suggested timeline:
 - Beginning January 1, 2022, USDA would no longer approve vendors to use the official USDA shield in production of metal ear tags or other ear tags that do not have RFID components.
 - On January 1, 2023, RFID tags would become the only identification devices approved as an official ear tag for cattle and bison pursuant to § 86.4(a)(1)(i).
 - For cattle and bison that have official USDA metal clip tags in place before January 1, 2023, APHIS would recognize the metal tag as an official identification device for the life of the animal.

She offered several important factors for the Board to consider. Electronic ID would lend itself to the use of electronic forms, which would save taxpayer dollars. There would be no delay in transmitting information, and the data would be accurate and legible, all increasing the ability to trace cattle and bison efficiently. She also noted the need for better electronic forms that would allow for easy extraction of specific data. Additionally, concentration points would need to adopt the technology and software to continue to operate at the speed of commerce.

Dr. Schwabenlander asked the Board members if they thought the Board should make a formal comment and, if so, to share thoughts on what should be included. After discussion, the Board members directed staff to draft comments in support of the proposed transition, to be approved by members and then submitted before the end of the comment period on October 5.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Animal Health will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, starting at 9:30 a.m., location to be determined.

Mr. Compart asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Hawkins made the motion to adjourn; Mr. Vagts seconded. A vote was taken by role call, with all voting yeas.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth S. Thompson
Executive Director
State Veterinarian