

Meeting Minutes: Board of Animal Health Quarterly Meeting

Date: 12/09/2020

Location: Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Board Members

- Dean Compart, President
- Matt Anderson, Vice President
- Erica Sawatzke
- Jim Vagts
- Peggy Anne Hawkins

Consultants to the Board

- Mary Donahue, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) Veterinary Services
- Peder Kjeseth, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Laura Molgaard, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Joni Scheftel, Minnesota Department of Health
- Jerry Torrison, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Guests

- Sarah Anderson, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
- Karina Burger, USDA-APHIS
- Michelle Carstensen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Tony Dank, USDA-APHIS
- Jamie Davis, USDA-APHIS
- Pam Debele, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
- Bruce Dokkebakken, Minnesota Dairy Herd Improvement Association
- Jenna Fier, USDA-APHIS
- Brenda Hartkopf, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association
- John King, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Tony Kwilas, Lobbyist, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association/Minnesota Pork Producers Association
- Michelle Medina, Minnesota Farmers Union
- Nicole Neeser, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Tamara Nelsen, Minnesota AgriGrowth Council
- Gary Nohrenberg, USDA Wildlife Services
- David Preisler, Minnesota Pork Producers Association

- Marc Schwabenlander, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Lucas Sjostrom, Minnesota Milk Producers Association
- Antoinette Sneed, USDA-APHIS
- 10 unidentified users

Staff

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

Call to Order/Approval of Agenda and Sept. 9, 2020 Minutes

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 a motion to accept the resolution and asked for a second. Matt Anderson seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and Mr. Compart asked board members to vote on the motion by roll call. All voted yea.

Mr. Compart then asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes from the September 9, 2020, meeting. Peggy Anne Hawkins made the motion, and Erica Sawatzke seconded it. There was no discussion, and Mr. Compart asked board members to vote by roll call. All voted yea.

Mr. Compart asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Erica Sawatzke made the motion, and Dr. Anderson seconded it. Mr. Compart asked board members to vote on the motion by roll call, with all voting yea.

Board of Animal Health Update

Beth Thompson shared that Dr. Arnold Johnstock, a former Board veterinarian, passed away on December 5, 2020. He retired from the Board six years ago but remained active in MVMA and as a volunteer at the State Fair Miracle of Birth Center. The Board plans to send a memorial to Arnie’s family.

Dr. Thompson stated national and regional groups continue to work toward African Swine Fever (ASF) preparedness. Dr. Brian Hoefs is an active participant in these meetings. Last week, the Board and other associated state agencies and industry partners met with their counterparts in Iowa to discuss comfort levels for animal movement during an ASF outbreak. She also mentioned Dr. Marie Gramer’s (University of Minnesota) working group devoted to determining tests and testing protocols for animal movement during an outbreak.

Dr. Thompson then discussed the current situation with mink and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. There have been outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 at mink farms in both the European Union and the U.S. Symptoms in farmed mink are respiratory illness and a significantly increased death rate. It is thought the disease was spread to the mink from infected farm workers. Mink can spread the disease to mink and other animals on the farm.

The Board is working to make sure Minnesota's mink farms are aware of the SARS-CoV 2 risk. The Board does not regulate mink farms in Minnesota, but the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have some fur farm regulations. The Board received a list of mink farms from these agencies and shared SARS-CoV-2 information with them. Board field staff also contacted the farms. Based on the information gathered, Minnesota has 11 farms that could have mink, and of those, less than five produce mink for pelts.

Budget Update

Kara Schmidt introduced herself as the new business manager for the Board. Ms. Schmidt began her presentation by discussing the FY 2020 expenses, noting expenses by program were led by Miscellaneous Disease Control and All Other Animal Health Programs, followed by the MPTL and Poultry Programs, Farmed Cervidae, Executive Administration, Emergency Planning, and the Commercial Dog and Cat Breeder (CDCB) Program. Salary and Benefits led the expenses by category at 68 percent. She noted that "Other Expenses" increased from three percent in FY 19 to 10 percent in FY 20, mostly due to moving the St. Paul office from the fourth to first floor and the space remodel required by the Minnesota Department of Administration.

Ms. Schmidt discussed the Board's revenue sources for FY 20-21. Of the Board's \$5.9 million budget, \$4.6 million was funded by the State's General Appropriation. She noted the Board used nearly all State funding appropriations for Emergency Preparedness (\$200,000) and the Farmed Cervidae Program (\$120,000). She also mentioned the increase in spending in Restricted Miscellaneous Special Revenue, which mostly came from a surplus accumulated over several years in the Farmed Cervidae and CDCB accounts. The Board ended FY 20 with a small surplus, largely due to pandemic-induced changes (remote working, hiring freeze, staff attrition) and changes to the rental contract for the St. Paul office.

She next discussed funding and the FY 21 budget. The legislature provided \$200,000 each for Emergency Preparedness and the Farmed Cervidae Program for FY 21. The total Board FY 21 budget is \$6.3 million, which includes a reduction in Salary and Benefits due to the hiring freeze combined with staff resignations and retirements.

Ms. Schmidt shared information from the most recent biennium budget forecast. The FY 21-22 budget is forecasted to have a \$641 million surplus, and a \$1.273 billion deficit is forecasted for the FY 22-23 budget. These projections are significantly improved from those in the May budget forecast, as agencies have reduced spending and revenue has been higher than was anticipated at the start of the pandemic.

Ms. Schmidt said the Board does not anticipate major budget cuts during the upcoming legislative session. This could change based on legislative changes or cuts in federal funding.

Mr. Compart asked if the Board is still under a hiring freeze despite being understaffed. Ms. Schmidt said yes; however, the state does have an exception process, which the Board has used to apply to fill some positions. As of this meeting, the Board has filled one position and is approved to hire for two more data entry positions, which they hope to have filled by the end of January. When fully staffed, the Board has 45 positions; the roster stands at 41 today.

Legislative Update

Peder Kjeseth mentioned the budget forecast Ms. Schmidt discussed clearly shows just how difficult it is to forecast accurately during these uncertain times. He expects the state will be very cautious moving forward based on the forecasted \$1.273 billion deficit. The governor is expected to call the seventh special session of the year very soon. It is likely the governor and the legislature will use some funds to create a state-level COVID relief package for those that have been hit financially by the pandemic.

In addition to the reduction in state spending and higher-than-expected revenue, part of the reason we had a financial turnaround is the federal relief package set to expire at the end of December. Mr. Kjeseth expects a new federal relief package to be released at some point, though congress is still working out the details. This package would have a great impact on the budget forecast for the next biennium.

The next legislative session begins on January 5. Governor Walz will come out with his budget towards the end of January, and another budget forecast will come out in February. Mr. Kjeseth said the forecast could improve, but he anticipates the legislature and governor's office to move conservatively in developing the next budget.

Mr. Kjeseth mentioned several changes in the legislature since the November election, mostly in the House. Representatives Poppe and Brand, chair and vice chair of the House Agricultural Committee, did not win reelection. The new committee chair is Rep. Mike Sundin; the new vice chair is Rep. Todd Lippert. Mr. Kjeseth also mentioned changes to House and Senate committees. The House combined the Environmental Policy and Environmental Finance Committees into one committee chaired by Rep. Rick Hansen. The Senate combined the Agriculture Policy and Agriculture Finance Committees into one committee chaired by Senator Torrey Westrom.

USDA Update

Dr. Tony Dank introduced himself and shared an update on human resources. He said Dr. Schaeffbauer has been serving on a couple of details and will return toward the end of January. As of this meeting, Dr. Jamie Davis from Ohio is serving as Acting Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) until December 20, after which time, three Minnesota Veterinary Services (VS) staff will rotate in as Acting AVIC until Dr. Schaeffbauer's return.

Adda Gutman, an animal health technician (AHT) in the Central District, recently left for a new position with USDA Plant Protection and Quarantine in Colorado. The vacant AHT position in the South District closed for applications on November 5, and the interview process is underway. VS hopes to have the position filled before the next board meeting.

The USDA is rolling out an oral fluids pilot project in states with large swine populations. The project goal is to assess the viability of oral fluids for African Swine Fever (ASF) surveillance and diagnosis. Foreign animal disease diagnosticians (FADDs) can collect oral fluids from case-compatible investigations while also collecting an approved sample type for ASF testing.

The National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) Swine Study will begin in 2021. This study was delayed due to COVID-19 and will include an assessment of the impact 2020 and COVID-19 has had on swine producers. Producers selected for the study will be contacted in June or July. Minnesota will be participating in both the large (sites with more than 1,000 pigs) and the small (sites with less than 1,000 pigs) enterprise studies.

In October, National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) notified accredited veterinarians of an update to their dual pathogen platform (DPP) submission requirements. DPP applies to brucellosis and tuberculosis testing for

farmed cervids. Accredited veterinarians must send samples to the NVSL within five days of collection, and all sample submission forms need to be accurate, complete, and include a sample collection date. VS will classify any samples received that do not meet these requirements as invalid. Veterinarians who submit incomplete paperwork can submit a corrected copy of the VS10-4 to the AVIC, state animal health official, and the NVSL.

Dr. Dank gave a brief summary of USDA CWD indemnity for the farms connected to the CWD-positive Houston County farm.

- Houston County herd: USDA cervid staff completed appraisal and assigned it as a low priority for indemnity.
- Morrison County herd: USDA offered indemnity to the owner, who accepted it. USDA depopulated the three exposed animals.
- Stearns County herd: USDA offered indemnity to the owner, who accepted it. USDA depopulated the one exposed animal.
- Beltrami County herd: USDA is scheduling appraisal for the exposed animals.
- Winona County herd: USDA has not scheduled appraisal of the exposed animals.

USDA Cervid staff do not expect full indemnity appropriations until March 2021, as they are waiting for the budget approval.

Dr. Thompson asked if Dr. Dank could comment on possible changes to USDA administration, hiring or budgetary questions. He said he was not privy to much information in those areas, though VS has requested to fill the AHT position vacated by Ms. Gutman.

Power BI TB Dashboard Demonstration

Dr. Stacey Schwabenlander shared the Board's progress on tuberculosis (TB) trace investigations via Power BI, a business intelligence tool. Michael Herrmann, a Board staff member, is experienced with Power BI and created a dashboard for the Board's trace investigations, as well as dashboards for other Board programs.

Dr. Schwabenlander began the demonstration by showing the TB summary dashboard, filtered to display different sets of data collected since the trace investigations began in 2017. The Board's TB investigations have involved 167 Minnesota premises. Eighteen states sent or received traces from the Board. The number of traces performed in Minnesota is 317, with two open traces remaining. One trace is a steer in quarantine until it goes to slaughter, and the other involves animals that likely have been slaughtered, but the Board is waiting for records to confirm slaughter. Once the Board receives this confirmation of slaughter, they will close both traces. She highlighted the table showing TB test types used, the number of head that tested negative and the number that were responders. Of the 2,830 head tested, none were found to have TB.

She continued by showing the "Number of Cases" map, which displays the Board's TB trace investigations by location of premises and indicates if premises were part of primary, secondary, tertiary, quaternary, and/or quinary investigations.

Dr. Schwabenlander returned to the full summary dashboard and pointed out the "Number of Head" table, which shows the number of animals involved in certain investigative actions as a part of each investigation level (primary through quinary). She noted that 16,706 head were involved in primary epidemiological investigations, and of these, the Board traced 12,246 head out of state.

She then showed the TB trace flow map, which shows the number and location of trace investigations as of a certain date. She began the map demo in March 2017, when the Board received the first traces from South Dakota, and progressed through time, stopping at certain dates to show the complex progression of traces involving other states and the increasing number of epi investigations.

Mr. Compart asked if many of the animals came into the state through auction markets or concentration points. Dr. Schwabenlander said most traces that came into Minnesota for the first time came to producers. However, many times producers elected to move those animals through markets or concentration points, so markets eventually became involved in many of the investigations.

Dr. Anderson asked how he could access the dashboard. Kara Schmidt stated the dashboard is an internal-only tool, as Minnesota Information Technology Services (MNIT) does not have the capability to allow any external partners to access it. Dr. Schwabenlander added that this dashboard could not be public facing because it drills down to premises addresses, which are non-public data.

College of Veterinary Medicine Update

Dr. Laura Molgaard shared the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) continues with its hybrid curriculum, as discussed at the September meeting. Online lectures give students flexibility and allow for a larger number of small-group labs and clinicals so students can perform them safely. The spring semester will have a similar structure and will follow the usual academic schedule to help students graduate on time.

The CVM's partnership with South Dakota State University (also known as the "Two-Plus-Two" Program), had a robust applicant pool for the 20 seats entering the program in Fall 2021. Program staff will be reviewing the applications this winter. CVM and SDSU staff will meet for a retreat next week to discuss the SDSU's curriculum and faculty hiring plans for the program.

Dr. Molgaard stated the CVM is required to submit three budget models with a reduction of three, six, and nine percent, respectively, on top of the usual \$1 million University reallocation. The University has enacted furloughs and pay cuts for short-term savings in the current fiscal year, but the University has requested recurring reductions in the budget models they are developing.

Feral Swine Control in Minnesota

Dr. Gary Nohrenberg, Minnesota State Director of USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, introduced himself and shared a brief background on Wildlife Services. Its mission is to provide federal leadership and expertise to resolve human and wildlife conflicts.

The current national feral swine population is about six million across at least 37 states and U.S. territories, with most located in southern states. Current feral swine damage and control costs about \$1.5 billion annually. Wildlife Services' National Feral Swine Damage Management Program works with states to eliminate feral swine where populations are low or emerging and reduce feral swine numbers to minimize damage in states with large populations. Control methods include a variety of traps and shooting from the ground and air. Funding for feral swine control is distributed to states and territories based on the number of feral swine in the state. Levels range from zero (no feral swine) to Level 5 (over 750,000 feral swine).

Minnesota is at the “Detection” level, which means the state has removed all feral swine but receives funding to continue monitoring for two years. Minnesota first received funding in fiscal year 2014, when they formed the Feral Swine Working Group, comprised of representatives from the Board, DNR, APHIS Veterinary Services, and Wildlife Services.

Dr. Nohrenberg summarized Minnesota Wildlife Services activities since FY 14. Reports have included damage to crops, pasture, landscaping and natural resources, and threats to human safety. He explained the protocol the Minnesota working group developed and that Wildlife Services uses today. When someone reports feral swine, DNR, Board or area management staff attempt to verify the report to see if there are loose pigs. If so, attempts are made to determine ownership, capture the animals and return them to captivity. If these attempts are unsuccessful, and after discussions with the property owner, the working group will discuss and decide if Wildlife Services needs to remove the pigs from the landscape. Animals removed have blood and tissue samples tested for pseudorabies, brucellosis, and classical swine fever.

Mr. Compart asked if feral swine found in North Dakota, along the Canadian border, were true feral swine or escaped domestic pigs. Dr. Nohrenberg said Saskatchewan has a high incidence of true feral swine, and there have been a few found in North Dakota. Most cases in Minnesota are loose or escaped domestic swine, but that does not mean they cannot cause problems. He said the sow and piglets removed from Marshall County in FY 16 caused significant damage to a wildlife management area.

Data Practices Act Overview

Philip Pulitzer, Minnesota Assistant Attorney General, provided an overview of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (or DPA, Minnesota Statute Chapter 13), focusing on the main areas that pertain to the Board. He noted the Board also created its own [Board Data Access Policy](#) for staff and the public understand how data requests are handled and data is disseminated to the public.

The DPA is a state law controlling how government collects, creates, stores or releases data to the public. It creates rights for the public to have access to data and places obligations on the Board to protect certain data. The Board maintains sets of data: Public, nonpublic and protected nonpublic. All government data is presumed to be public unless there are federal laws, state statutes, or temporary classifications that make data nonpublic. Non-public data cannot be shared with the public.

Examples of the Board’s non-public data include:

- Animal premises information: Names, addresses, premises locations where animals are kept, and the identification number of the premises or animal. (Minn. Stat. 13.643, subdivision 6(a))
- Commercial Dog and Cat Breeder data, except for a list of licensees in good standing. (13.643, subd. 6(b))

Mr. Pulitzer noted that 13.643, subd. 6(c) gives the Board the right to disclose nonpublic data as public for law enforcement or for the protection of public or animal health or safety. These requests are rare and are evaluated based on facts on a case-by-case basis. He also noted that Minnesota Statute 13.04 gives producers the right to view their own non-public data. However, if the Board is investigating a farm, the information is protected nonpublic data, and the producer will not be able to access it until the investigation concludes.

Other relevant provisions of the DPA include temporary classification (13.06), security information (13.37, subd. 1(a)), trade secret information (13.37, subd. 1(b)), civil investigations (13.39), and licensing data (13.41).

The Board has an internal procedure to receive data requests. Requests come into the Board via the [Data Request Form](#). Board staff will review the request and determine the classification of the available data. Then, the Board will produce the data that is public and include an explanation if any of the data was nonpublic.

CWD in Wild Deer Update

Dr. Michelle Carstensen said the DNR had three new CWD surveillance areas, for a total of five areas. The DNR is focusing on these areas for hunter-harvested sample submissions; they will sample sick deer wherever those animals are in the state.

Dr. Carstensen showed a map of counties where the DNR has banned deer feeding and/or attractant use. A deer feeding ban is in place in counties where CWD was detected in farmed deer; both deer feeding and attractant bans are in effect in counties surrounding a case of CWD in wild deer.

Dr. Carstensen then gave an overview of the work done in the DNR's new surveillance zones this fall.

- **West Central Surveillance Zone:** The DNR formed this new zone in response to the CWD-infected farm in Douglas County. They piloted a new risk-based model, giving points to animals with higher risk factors. The DNR partnered with area taxidermists and meat processors to collect samples from hunter-harvested deer.
- **East Central Surveillance Zone:** This new zone was formed in response to the CWD-infected farm in Pine County. The DNR expanded the boundary around the farm to over 15 miles, as the CWD risk is higher. They performed voluntary testing for hunters during firearms season until they tested 1,000 deer.
- **South Metro Surveillance and Management Zone (Dakota County):** This new zone was established because a wild deer in this area tested positive for CWD in March. They established a CWD management zone (Deer Permit Area (DPA) 605) in the area immediately surrounding the positive deer's location, in which they collected as many samples as possible during the firearms seasons. They also established a surveillance zone surrounding DPA 605, with the goal of testing 750 deer.

The DNR expanded their dumpster program into all three of these areas to provide a way for hunters to dispose of harvested carcasses and comply with whole carcass movement restrictions and keep deer remains off the landscape.

The DNR made changes to their CWD surveillance processes due to COVID-19. CWD sampling was made voluntary and self-service to minimize social interaction.

Dr. Carstensen stated the DNR has sampled 6,187 deer to date statewide. Eighteen deer tested positive for CWD in the Southeast zone. Ten of these were in the Preston/Lanesboro area, where the disease has been most persistent; five were in the area surrounding the CWD-positive Winona County farm identified in 2017; and one in Houston County, one near LaCrescent, and one in the City of Rochester. Two deer also tested positive in the new South Metro zone. One was located about a mile from where the CWD-positive deer was found in March, and the other was found near Farmington, about nine miles to the northeast of the first case.

Dr. Carstensen summarized the DNR's planned winter CWD management activities, which include two late-season special hunts, targeted culling and landowner shooting permits in the Southeast and South Metro CWD management zones. They will also continue to perform genetic testing to study how related animals and social interaction play into CWD transmission.

Dr. Anderson asked if the DNR's genetic testing study is looking for disease resistant animals. Dr. Carstensen said they are evaluating the genotype of the animal related to prion protein (PNRP) genes but also studying how CWD-positive deer are related to each other, as these social groups may be an anchor for disease spread.

Houston County CWD-Positive Herd Update

Dr. Linda Glaser stated CWD was found in a two-year-old white-tailed doe that died of pneumonia on a Houston County farm. Samples were collected and sent to the VDL, which identified the samples as CWD suspect. They forwarded samples to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory for confirmation, and the Board quarantined the herd. Testing confirmed the doe was positive for CWD on October 14. The Board investigated the herd records, which traced animal movements in and out of the farm over the last five years. The Board has identified all of the exposed animals in the state and quarantined the farms involved. The USDA is working with the herd owners on appraisal for indemnity of the CWD-exposed animals.

- Houston County herd: Owner purchased the infected doe from a Winona County producer about a year prior to her death. The Houston County herd owner only brought in animals from the Winona County farm and only moved animals to a Wisconsin hunt ranch, which has been notified of the movements.
- Winona County herd: Herd has 113 exposed animals. In addition to the Houston County farm, they sold animals to two farms, one in Beltrami and one in Morrison County (six exposed animals).
- The Beltrami County farm has 11 exposed animals (no movements).
- Morrison County herd: sold two of its six exposed animals to farms in Stearns and Clearwater Counties (one exposed animal at each farm).

The CWD-exposed animals in the Morrison, Stearns and Clearwater County herds have been depopulated and tested, and no CWD was detected. The Board has released these herds from quarantine. The Beltrami County herd owner has been out of state but is scheduled for a USDA appraisal for indemnity of his exposed animals. The Winona County herd owner is still deciding if he is interested in appraisal of his herd.

Mr. Compart asked about the Winona County herd's recent CWD testing history. Dr. Glaser said they tested nine other animals this fall, with all being CWD not detected. In all of 2020, they tested 16 animals; 26 in 2019; and 10 in 2018.

Farmed Cervidae Rulemaking

Farmed Cervidae Rulemaking Process Update

Annie Balghiti began by explaining why the Board is making changes to the farmed Cervidae rules. She said the Board has completed the first step in the process, which was a formal comment period. The Office of Administrative Hearings website received 18 written comments, and the Board directly received seven written comments (links to view these comments are available on [the Board's Public Rule Making web page](#).) During the comment period, the Board also held four public listening sessions and three separate listening sessions for tribes and tribal organizations and opened the last 15 minutes of each Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee Meeting for public comments. The Board reviewed and considered all comments and developed a third draft of the proposed rules. The draft will continue to change based on public comments and in consultation with tribes and the advisory committee.

Ms. Balghiti shared the membership of the [Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee](#) and their role in the rulemaking process. The committee has had seven meetings and will continue to work with the Board on developing the rules until they are adopted.

The next step in the rulemaking process is to publish the Notice of Intent to Adopt, in which the Board would publish the proposed final rules draft. This would also open a second public comment period. The Board plans to publish the notice in January 2021. Ms. Balghiti said the Board would publish the notice and include hearing dates that would be held before an administrative law judge, which would provide a third opportunity for public comments.

Ms. Balghiti outlined the role of Board members in this process. Right now, they should be listening and considering public input. Once the Notice of Intent to Adopt is ready for publication, Board members will review the proposed final rules draft and pass a majority resolution to approve the rules draft and publish the notice. Once the administrative law judge has reviewed and approved the Board's full rule making record and the final rules draft, the Board members need to pass a majority resolution to approve and adopt the final rules.

Jim Vagts commended the Board for including a broad range of groups on the advisory committee. He has listened in on several of the meetings, and most of the input seems to come from only a few committee members on one side of the issue. He advised that, in the future, Board staff should select members that would allow for equal participation. Ms. Balghiti thanked him for his comments and expressed the difficulties that virtual meetings can present to full participation from all attendees. Brenda Hartkopf added that everyone on the committee has the right to speak; however, many members are attempting to understand the industry and the current rules while also trying to make comments on changes to them, which presents challenges to participation.

Overview of Proposed Rules Draft

Dr. Glaser gave an overview of the third draft of the proposed rules, highlighting major changes since the first draft was presented at the September 9, 2020, quarterly meeting. NOTE: For brevity, only the reference is given for each section. Please refer to the [draft rules on the Board's website](#) for exact language.

1721.0370 DEFINITIONS.

Definitions for annual inventory, authorized CWD sample collector, CWD test, official animal identification, physical inventory, redundant gating, and successful CWD test result have been added. "Terminal hunt facility" was added and later deleted.

1721.0380 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.

The language added to Subparts 2 (Registration) and 3 (Inspections) has been slightly modified for clarification.

Subp. 4. **Herd inventory.** The Board inserted a requirement of a physical inventory that two individuals must verify the inventory.

Subp. 5. **Fencing.** The Board modified the language regarding fencing that is installed or repaired to allow for use of materials equivalent or more effective than high tensile at preventing ingress or egress of cervids, as determined by the Board. They also inserted that after January 1, 2022, all new WTD fences must have perimeter fences of at least 120 inches in height.

Subp. 6. **Running at Large.** The Board added language regarding the ownership of an escaped cervid. Dr. Glaser said this language may be modified again in a future draft. They also added that all escaped animals harvested or found dead must be tested for CWD, regardless of age.

1721.0390 ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

The Board proposes adding that all animals in the herd must be identified with two forms of identification before any animal can be moved off the premises. This will improve the ability to track these animals for inventory purposes.

Dr. Anderson asked what the two forms of identification would be. Dr. Glaser said all animals have to be officially identified, and the identification must be unique to each animal within the U.S. Official identification options include NUES metal ear tags, or NUES or AIN plastic ear tags, or AIN microchips if they can be read by Board staff. The second form of identification has to be one that is unique within the herd.

1721.0400 IMPORTATION

Subp. 3. **CWD.** The Board modified the language regarding the existing requirements, including those for live cervid imports and the import of antlers and other cervid parts. They also added language on cervids returning from display.

1721.0415 EXHIBITION

The Board added this new section to outline the existing exhibition rules.

1721.0420 CWD

Subp. 1. **CWD Herd Certification Program.** The Board proposes to delete language requiring an annual CWD herd certification program agreement and added the requirement that samples be collected by a CWD authorized sample collector. They modified language for the impact to herd status for a missed CWD test and the modified program standards. They also inserted language to require both origin and destination herd owners to report animal movement.

Subp. 2. **Quarantine Procedures.** Changes in this section pertain to differentiating “CWD Exposed” and “CWD infected” herds. The Board proposes reinstating sections A. and B. of this subpart and adding language to clarify quarantine release for CWD-exposed herds. They also added language to state the Board may require the CWD-infected herd to minimize commingling of farmed and wild cervids until the herd is depopulated, and that an owner may not possess farmed cervids on a CWD-infected premises for five years.

Subp. 3. **Determining Boundaries of CWD Management Zones in the State.** The Board proposes modifying the language to state CWD management zones will include all locations at least 15 miles around the location of a CWD positive wild deer.

Brenda Hartkopf, a member of the advisory committee, commented that the farmed cervid industry has concerns on several key points that have not been addressed. The industry is a long way from accepting the draft rules.

Ms. Sawatzke asked about the inspection process on CWD-positive premises during the five years after disease detection. Dr. Glaser said owners enter into a herd plan with the Board (and USDA if they received indemnity for the herd) in which they agree to maintain fencing and post biohazard signs for five years, as required by statute. The Board has an inspector who does quarterly inspections of the premises to check that fences and signage are being properly maintained and that no wild cervids have gotten inside the fence.

Mr. Compart thanked Dr. Glaser and Ms. Balghiti and encouraged Board staff to engage all members of the Farmed Cervidae Advisory Committee to get their input, as all perspectives on the rule changes are important.

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update

Jerry Torrison began by presenting a list of recent Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL) staff presentations, publications and awards. The virtual format of most meetings and conferences has allowed for increased staff participation. He noted the VDL held a successful Lehman Conference and Lehman China Conference, with around 8,000 attendees (no VDL staff attended in person).

The VDL and the other National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) labs have participated in SARS-CoV-2 testing for both humans and animals. This fall, the VDL helped MDH and the University with supplies and equipment, reagents, and human sample testing for about a month. The VDL developed a SARS-CoV-2 test for animals, which is used when approved by the State Veterinarian and the State Public Health Veterinarian. They received funding from the state and the USDA to purchase new equipment to increase their testing capacity.

Dr. Torrison shared a list of the VDL's 2020 USDA NAHLN-funded projects, including developing a point-of-care (POC) genomics testing tool that could be used to detect and sequence foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and other vesicular diseases like Senecavirus A in the field. These projects will help the VDL meet some of their strategic planning goals, which include individual goals in operational efficiency, quality and turnaround time; staff recruiting and retention; and client networking.

Finally, he shared the VDL's new mission statement: "We empower animal health professionals with accurate and timely diagnoses, innovative research and exceptional education."

COVID-19 Update

Joni Scheftel said Minnesota has had over 350,000 cases of COVID-19, with over 18,000 people hospitalized and over 4,000 deaths. It took six weeks to get to 200,000 cases and 15 days to get from 200,000 to 300,000 cases. The state is expected to reach 400,000 cases by Christmas. The virus is affecting all areas of the state, with the highest incidence per 100,000 in rural counties. While the virus has more serious effects for older people, the infection rate is highest in working-age people.

Dr. Scheftel then gave an overview of how COVID-19 greatly affected meat packing plants and other large manufacturers and distributors early in the pandemic. Since June, the state has seen a shift to mainly clusters of cases at small-to-medium sized workplaces of all types, in all areas of the state. Workplace infections more often are spillover from community spread.

Much of what was learned from the meat packing plant outbreaks informed the prevention strategies recommended for all critical businesses. The most important practices are employee screening for every employee, every shift; careful isolation and quarantine; social distancing, particularly while coming and going and during lunch and breaks; mandatory masking and personal protective equipment; and cleaning and disinfection.

Dr. Scheftel then discussed COVID-19 in animals. Dogs, cats and ferrets are susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and can transmit the virus to their species, but there is no evidence they can give it to their owners. Humans can give the virus to their pets, so the recommendation is to limit contact with your pets if you have COVID-19. There have been 48 cats confirmed with COVID-19 in the U.S., including one in Minnesota. The Board handles all COVID-19 testing for animals, and they have posted the [COVID-19 and companion animal testing policy](#) on their website.

Mink are the domestic animals most susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, which causes severe pneumonia and death in the species. SARS-CoV-2 is very contagious on mink farms, as witnessed in Denmark, where 17 million mink were euthanized after 214 human cases of SARS-CoV-2 were associated with strains found on mink farms. There were also two cases of suspected transmission from mink to people in the Netherlands. This is noteworthy because this is the first evidence that COVID-19 could be transmitted from animals to people.

As of this meeting, 16 U.S. mink farms have been confirmed with SARS-CoV-2. None of these cases are in Minnesota. Local, state, and federal agencies are working together on investigating these cases and to learn more about the virus. Preliminary data shows infected people can spread SARS-CoV-2 to mink, who can spread it to other mink. It's not known if mink can spread it to humans. The CDC has a [national mink farmer training](#) on steps to prevent SARS-CoV-2 on the farm, which includes wearing an N-95 mask while working with mink.

Poultry Update

Shauna Voss gave an overview of avian influenza (AI) and its symptoms. She noted some subtypes have been known to infect people, in which case the Board will work with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) on the response. All suspected cases of influenza in poultry must be reported to the Board. For reporting purposes to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), "avian influenza" is defined as infections of poultry caused by any influenza A virus defined as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) or H5 and H7 subtypes of Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI). LPAI non-H5 and non-H7 influenza A virus detections are not defined as avian influenza and are not notifiable to OIE.

Dr. Voss then gave a summary of HPAI outbreaks around the world. Asia and the Middle East have seen an uptick in cases. The newest outbreaks have occurred in Israel, Japan and Korea. There is an ongoing H7N7 outbreak in Australia. In Europe, several countries have reported outbreaks of HPAI since October. More than 300 cases have been reported in 2020, with most being detected in wild birds.

She then gave a history of HPAI in the United States. In 2014-2015, an H5N2 outbreak affected 21 states, including Minnesota. Tennessee had an H7N9 outbreak at 14 premises in 2017, and South Carolina identified H7N3 in 2020. The Tennessee and South Carolina outbreaks likely mutated from a circulating LPAI H7 virus.

Minnesota has had several LPAI identifications this fall, including six detections in commercial turkey flocks and one commercial breeder flock in Meeker County, and one in a Waseca County commercial turkey flock. The Meeker County detections were all H6N1 LPAI, with flocks displaying mild respiratory signs and a noticeable egg production drop in the breeder flock. The Waseca County case was H1N3 LPAI, possibly of swine origin. The flock did not present any clinical signs.

Dr. Voss covered the steps the Board takes when there is a suspected AI case. When the producer or veterinarian notifies the Board, staff will collect 30 samples per barn for testing at the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL). Usually, samples are collected by the producer if they are Board-authorized sample collector. If tests are positive, the samples are sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) for confirmation. The Board will send suspect disease alerts to Minnesota poultry veterinarians, the Emergency Disease Management Committee (EDMC), the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association (MTGA), and the Chicken and Egg Association of Minnesota (CEAM). The MTGA and CEAM share the alerts with growers. The Board sends out a follow up message on the disease alert once NVSL confirms the test results. Dr. Voss noted that these disease alerts are confidential. She explained the different alert levels, which are displayed and defined in each disease alert.

Dr. Voss said in the event of an H5 or H7 detection, the Board will initiate the Minnesota Initial State Response and Containment Plan, also known as “The Minnesota Plan,” a document outlining the response to an H5/H7 LPAI outbreak in Minnesota poultry. In a non-H5/H7 detection, the poultry industry, in collaboration with the Board, drives the response.

Two backyard flocks and three commercial turkey flocks tested positive for Mycoplasma Gallisepticum (MG). This is not usually found in commercial flocks, which is very problematic. MG causes significant respiratory signs that lead to condemnation at processing. The Board is working with the companies to help identify what caused the infections and eliminate further spread. A commercial turkey breeder flock tested positive for Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV), which was widespread in Minnesota approximately 20 years ago. There have been cases reported in other states as well. The Board has alerted veterinarians to be vigilant for its symptoms to stop potential disease spread.

Mr. Compart asked about the protocol for managing an aMPV outbreak. Dale Lauer said this would involve a longer discussion, but aMPV is more transmissible than AI. Having veterinarians watching for it and identifying positive flocks as soon as possible would be crucial to stopping aMPV spread. He offered to discuss this in more detail at the next meeting.

Dr. Voss said the antigen used to test for Salmonella Pullorum-Typhoid (P-T) had been back ordered since early 2019. In the meantime, the Board has been testing expired antigen for use in continued P-T testing. Charles River, the antigen manufacturer, obtained production approval earlier in 2020 and has ramped up production. The Board now has a good supply and has begun discontinuing the use of expired antigen.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next quarterly meeting of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health will be held on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, beginning at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams. *[NOTE: the date of this meeting has since been changed to Wednesday, February 24, 2021, starting at 9:30 a.m.]*

Mr. Compart asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Anderson made the motion, and Ms. Sawatzke seconded it. A vote was taken by roll call, with all voting yea.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth S. Thompson
Executive Director
State Veterinarian