

Meeting Minutes: Farmed Cervid Advisory Task Force

Date: August 6th, 2019
Time: 1-4 p.m.
Minutes prepared by: Lisa Ehlen
Location: Cabela's, Rogers, MN

Member Attendance

- Linda Glaser, Board of Animal Health
- Brenda Hartkopf, MN Elk Breeders Association
- Brooks Johnson, Farmed Cervid Producer at large
- Rich Meech, MN Deer Farmers Association
- Todd Miller, MN Deer Farmers Association, Alternate
- Don Myren, Board of Animal Health
- Daryl Simon, Non-Native species Cervid Producer
- Gary Olson, MN Deer Farmers Association
- Brian Wagner, MN Elk Breeders Association, Alternate

Non-Member Attendance

- Lisa Ehlen, Board of Animal Health
- Adda Gutman, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services
- Bev Herda, Farmed Cervid Producer

Members not in Attendance

- Mary Donahue, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services
- Mark Luedtke, MN Elk Breeders association
- Steve Uchytel, Hunting Preserve Producer representative
- Glen Zebarth, Cervid Veterinarian
- Scott Josephson, Cervid Veterinarian

Review of Minutes from June 25th, 2019 meeting

Linda Glaser sent the minutes to members before the meeting and asked for comments. None of the task force members had comments. The minutes were approved.

Discussion: Task Force- Linda Glaser

Dr. Glaser began the meeting by handing out a summary of the Farmer Cervid Advisory Task Force, she wanted to revisit the purpose of the statement and discuss what was expected from the Task Force. She also mentioned again that Dr. Mackenzie Reberg has left the Board for a field position with the USDA as a District Veterinarian in southeast Minnesota. The Board is currently working on filling the vacant position in its St. Paul office.

Physical Inventory requirements

The Board of Animal Health now requires a physical Inventory done on all herds every 3 years. This requires that all identification on the animal must be visualized, read, and recorded. Some concerns/questions that were brought up were:

- Not all producers can bring their animals through chutes
- Preserves might have a lot more issues with physical inventory, can special requirements be made for them?
- Why do we accept confirmed inventories by Veterinarians when they are not even there?
- Does only one tag need to be verified?
- Cannot read metal or 840 tags from a distance.
- Some Ear tags are put on incorrectly from beginning which in turn makes it more difficult to get visual confirmation on them
- Less and less people are doing testing for tuberculosis and brucellosis (which helped with the 3-year rotation)

Dr Glaser explained that if producers are unable to bring animals in through chutes than it is up to them to determine how to get it done. There are other options: Pictures of all animals in the herd that allows you to read all the digits and letters on all the animal identification. Some herds may have to sedate their animals to be able to read the identification. Farmed cervid herds are split into three groups with 1/3 of the herds required to do a physical inventory every year. This schedule was aligned with the same year producers test their herd for TB and/or brucellosis if they do this.

There is no requirement for veterinarians to be present at a physical inventory they are just vouching that it was done. If they do not want to sign off on the inventory without being there, then they should discuss their requirements with the producers. To date this year, most of the herds that have completed the physical inventories have been smaller herds. We do have some field staff verify the inventory for small herds.

Review of Task Force Objectives

The task force has been formed and approved by the Board to address two objectives:

- Develop guidelines for exclusionary fencing which can be approved by the Board to prevent commingling of farmed and wild cervids
- Provide recommendations to the Board for regulatory changes needed for farmed cervid businesses to remain viable in Minnesota. The group may also develop strategies or plans for this viability that do not involve the Board's authority.

Some concerns/questions that were brought up were:

- What is the exact definition of an "endemic" Should this be more than 1 deer in one area? How do we know that one is not a fluke? What *should* be the definition of endemic in Minnesota?
- How do we define an endemic area?
- Why are we calling areas an endemic but the Department of Natural Resources is not?
- DNR says that deer only move on an average of 15 miles. How do they regulate that?
- Concern for wild deer when only testing lymph nodes, only 50% accurate?
- Live testing?
- Would like to discuss movement restrictions in endemic areas.
- Frustration is felt that we are not doing anything for the actual disease.
- Should someone have the option to move from an endemic area? They have 6 months to double fence, but they also will have 6 months of additional months of exposure.
- Issues with producers getting penalized for being in a positive case area when they have followed all the rules laid out for them.

Dr Glaser reiterated our definition of an endemic area which is different than the DNRs. Our definition is found in Board rules (*MN1721.0370 Definitions. Subpart.7. CWD endemic area. "CWD endemic area" means a geographic area as determined by the board where CWD is present in wild Cervidae populations*). We have no control over what the DNR calls an endemic or what they do not call endemic. She can investigate what areas are used to assess the population and prevalence of CWD is the DNR definition of an endemic area.

A general discussion followed regarding a final report to the Board and recommendations the Task Force may want to make. The consensus was the group was not ready to present information at the September 2019 Board meeting but needed to have further discussion to outline recommendations or issues they could agree on should be addressed by the Board and potentially with rulemaking. These topics included:

1) Regarding the Board's CWD Endemic area

- a. Consider allowing the movement of farmed cervids from an endemic area within a limited time period after the endemic area is set. (Would the time period be 30, 60, 90, 180 days?)
 - b. Take away the exclusionary fencing requirement to be considered not part of an endemic area and let producers take the risk of accepting these animals into their herds
 - c. Change the wording regarding movement of animals into an endemic area from '...slaughter establishment having state or federal inspection' to a 'terminal facility'
 - d. Add a more specific definition of endemic area including considering adopting what the DNR considers endemic
 - e. Eliminate the section in 1721.0420. Subp. 3 that requires once the Board determines CWD is endemic in the state, then 'all locations within ten miles of a confirmed case of CWD in wild Cervidae in the state must be designated as part of the endemic area.' This is impacting farmed cervid producers with minimal evidence of CWD in the wild in the area. (ie. Board's designated CWD endemic area in Crow Wing County).
- 2) Change the penalty regarding advancing the surveillance period each time an animal over 12 months of age dies, is slaughtered, escapes or is lost and not tested for CWD (1721.0420. Subp. 1.I) to advancing the surveillance period for a percentage of animals in a herd not tested. The specifics of this was not outlined further.
- 3) Develop rules to regulate hunt preserves that are different from the rules for other farmed cervid facilities.

Dr. Glaser agreed to provide an outline of the rule making process so Task Force members could understand what would need to happen to change or add rules to the Board's farmed cervid program. She estimated it would take one to two years to complete the rule making process.

Exclusionary Fencing

The purpose of exclusionary fencing is to prevent the commingling of wild and farmed cervidae which includes contact through a fence. Dr. Glaser handed out the list of currently approved types of exclusionary fencing. The first three designs are approved as exclusionary fencing by the Board for preventing commingling of wild and farmed cervidae. The fourth design (electric fencing) is conditionally approved as exclusionary fencing and will be evaluated at one farm site where it is implemented over the next year (fall 2019).

- Approval of this fencing for interstate movement would be subject to meeting the receiving state's acceptable fencing parameters.
- Any variations to these options must be approved by the Board.
- Completed fencing must be inspected and approved by the Board before an exclusionary fencing designation is granted.

Some concerns/questions that were brought up were:

- One concern that was brought up was that there were too many changes in a small amount of time. Requiring producers to spend a lot of time and money to keep up with requirements.
- Questions about reindeer and their assumptive lack of interacting with anything outside of their species so should they be held to same guidelines?

Closing Remarks

The task force decided to meet again before going to the Board with their concerns and what they would like to see changed. The plan is to be ready for the Board meeting in December. In the mean time they will be formulating thoughts and plans on how to present the issues that they gave.

Next Task Force meeting:

Date: December 13, 2019

Time: 1-4pm

Location: Cabela's in Rogers, MN