

Meeting Minutes: February Quarterly Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024 | 9:30 a.m.
Minutes prepared by: Daniel Callahan
Location: Willmar Conference Center (240 23rd Street SE, Willmar, MN 56201) and
Teleconference on Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Board Members

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

Consultants to the Board

- Michelle Medina, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Stephan Schaeffbauer, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services
- Stacy Holzbauer, Minnesota Department of Health
- Laura Molgaard, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Albert Rovira, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Guests

- Paul Anderson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association, MVMA small animal welfare committee
- Lucas Sjostrom, Minnesota Milk Producers Association
- Ashley Kohls, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
- Brenda Hartkopf, North American Elk Breeders Association
- Elaine Hanson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association
- Kelly Schenk, Minnesota Department of Health

Staff

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| • Jessica Aho | • Kate Brakefield | • Katie Cornille |
| • Carissa Allen | • Jason Cater | • Erin Crider |
| • Veronica Bartsch | • Kaylyn Chapin | • Michael Crusan |

- Lisa Ehlen
- Diane Englin Elliott
- Addie Evans Engelke
- Brian Hoefs
- Erik Jopp
- Samantha Kappel
- Bliia Kha
- Tony LaBarre
- Krista Lautenschlager
- Betsy Lempelius
- Susan McClanahan
- Bonnie Miller
- Brad Peterson
- Kayla Pierson
- Allison Pollock
- Nancy Reeck
- Shauna Voss
- Heather Damico
- Daniel Callahan
- Tim Schultz
- Melissa Smith
- Courtney Wheeler
- John King
- Myah Walker
- Missy Sivigny
- Lisa Loots
- Stacey Eissinger

Call to Order/Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Ms. Erica Sawatzke called the meeting to order. After introductions, Ms. Sawatzke asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Peggy Anne Hawkins moved. Mr. Alex Stade seconded. Motion carried.

Ms. Sawatzke asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Steve Neil moved to approve the agenda for the meeting, Dr. Abigail Maynard seconded. Motion carried.

Board of Animal Health Update

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

Dr. Hoefs welcomed new general counsel Stacey Eissinger to the Board.

There have been no recent highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) cases, but cases could still appear in the future. The fall 2023 outbreak has 39 confirmed cases, 1 dangerous contact, 1 presumptive positive, 20 negative suspects, and a grand total of 2,043,637 birds affected in the state. All control areas are closed, and surveillance activities are complete. Two premises still have active composting. Three sites have pending environmental sampling. All barns expected to be sampled by February. 26. Once the laboratory testing clears these sites, quarantines will be lifted, and the premises will be allowed to restock.

Dr. Hoefs outlined the costs of the continuing HPAI outbreak:

- Regular labor hours 4345.50
- Cost \$64,387.10
- Overtime hours 842.25
- Cost \$49,962.02

Ms. Melissa Smith noted that money is budgeted for HPAI response from our regular allocation from the legislature.

The Board has been partnering with the Minnesota Pork Board and Dr. Tom Wetzell on augmenting the U.S. Swine Health Improvement Plan in Minnesota:

- Working to move sites from enrolled to certified
- Working with swine veterinarians to get growers to apply
- Working on other underrepresented groups for enrollment
 - Packing plants

- Live animal marketing
- Non-commercial (show pigs)
- Small holding (usually less than 100 animals)

The Board has also engaged in pilot programs with 13 other states to develop a movement records repository to track animal movements and improve disease tracking.

Legislative Update

Ms. Michelle Medina gave a legislative update.

The legislative session will start on the following Monday. This is the second year of the biennium, which makes it a policy year. Legislators will address bonding and the supplemental budget. What the supplemental budget will look like is unclear at this point but should become clearer as the session goes on. There are 6705 bills outstanding from the previous session, in addition to those that will be submitted this session.

BAH Board members will need to be confirmed by the senate but a timeline for that confirmation is not set. Board members are typically confirmed first in senate agriculture committee and then to the full senate. Dr. Hawkins' term expired in January, but she has agreed to stay on until July. Ms. Medina plans to coach board members on the process prior to the confirmation hearing.

Last day of session should be May 20.

USDA Update

Dr. Stephan Schaeffbauer gave an update on USDA happenings.

The new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan, Kansas, will replace the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (Plum Island, NY) as the preeminent biosecurity facility in the country.

In the past 30 days, there have been 8 commercial flocks confirmed to be infected with HPAI, as well as 13 backyard flocks in the U.S.

Internship opportunities with the USDA exist for students in veterinary medicine and biomedical sciences:

- Saul T. Wilson Internship
 - For students in veterinary medicine or biomedical sciences
 - \$7,500 for undergrad; \$15,000 for grad students
- Daniel E. Salmon Internship program
 - Nonveterinary field of study
 - \$7,500 for undergrad; \$15,000 for grad students

Minnesota Department of Health Update

Dr. Stacy Holzbauer has become the State Public Health Veterinarian with the retirement of Dr. Joni Scheftel. Dr. Holzbauer gave an overview of rabies and histoplasmosis and how these two diseases intersect human and animal health.

Rabies

This is the “quiet time” of the year for rabies cases in Minnesota. The response to active cases is a collaborative effort among MDH, the Board, the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the MDH Public Health Laboratory. In 2023, 2,370 animals submitted for rabies testing. As the population of skunks with rabies has gone down, so has the number of cases. Bats make up most of the positive cases, though a Wabasha County fisher, an animal in the weasel family, recently tested positive for rabies.

Histoplasmosis

Histoplasmosis is one of two major fungal infections endemic to Minnesota; blastomycosis is the other. Both are found in the soil and are associated with bird or bat droppings. Histoplasmosis in humans is reportable to MDH, but animal cases can often act as indicators to test for human cases. Testing is available, though some tests are better than others, and testing can take months. Treatment is antifungal medication.

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update

Dr. Albert Rovira, interim director of the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL), gave an update on the lab.

The VDL’s new director, Dr. Hemant Naikare, starts next week. The VDL also hopes to hire a poultry diagnostician and to fill some IT positions in the near future.

A new generator has been installed at the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory in Willmar, MN. This will ensure continuity of operations and security of samples, should there be power issues. The VDL is preparing for an American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) audit, which is conducted every five years. The audit should be completed in September 2024. The new tissue digester will be installed at the VDL during the winter of 2024-2025. A new online submission form will streamline service for testing clients. The VDL hopes it will be able to bring chronic wasting disease testing back in house by fall 2024.

Dr. Rovira spoke on the common diseases the lab tested for in the last year:

- African Swine Fever
- Foot and Mouth Disease
- PRV
- *Brucella sp.*
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
- *Mycoplasma synoviae* in turkeys
- Canine blastomycosis
- Canine Influenza
- Tularemia in a cat

Mr. Alex Stade asked if the VDL is doing any testing for COVID in deer. Dr. Rovira said there are ongoing research projects at the University, but the VDL is not actively testing for COVID in deer. The VDL has tested for COVID in cats, but only in a few particular cases with prior approval from MDH and the Board.

College of Veterinary Medicine Update

Dr. Albert Rovira gave an update on the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine.

With record levels of applicants, nearly 400 interviews have been completed for the class of 2028. The next step is verbal offers. The school had nearly 1500 applicants for the class. South Dakota State University, which works in collaboration with UMN CVM on the “Two plus Two” Program, also set a record with 239 applicants for around 20 seats.

The Minnesota Rural Veterinary Loan Repayment Program is in the process of selecting its seventh cohort. Currently, 30 veterinarians are getting support. Twenty-four of those remain in rural practice. The program is investigating updating the criteria to make it more accessible to veterinarians. Possible changes discussed include:

- Drop the UMN graduation requirement
- Expand to 5 years post-grad
- Reduce the required time on livestock care from 50% to 20%

The Minnesota Veterinary Medicine Association is looking to request additional funds for the program.

Ms. Sawatzke asked about lowering the time spent on livestock. Dr. Rovira said there could be mixed-animal veterinarians who work in rural areas but would not qualify for the program because they work more than 50% with companion animals.

In addition to the shortage of veterinarians, there is a shortage of qualified faculty to provide instruction at the CVM. There are more than 10 faculty openings, some of which have been open for 2-3 years. The school is taking action help with these issues by increasing class sizes, boosting the VetFAST program, which encourages veterinary students to work in food animal practice, and exploring the expansion of the Minnesota Rural Vet Loan Repayment Program.

CVM is working with MVMA on following legislative initiatives:

- Licensure of veterinary technicians
- Institutional Licensure
 - Faculty positions could be filled by people who may have been trained in other countries.
- Minnesota Rural Veterinary Technician Loan Repayment Program
- Minnesota Rural Veterinary Practice Recruitment Incentive Program
- Minnesota Veterinary Student Food Animal Summer Internship Program
- Include veterinary medical education in the Governor’s Task Force on Academic Health

Mr. Lucas Sjostrom asked if companion animal veterinarians’ return on investment is better than it is for livestock veterinarians. Dr. Abigail Maynard shared that in her experience, that statement is accurate.

Dr. Katie Cornille asked if Dr. Maynard considered if the change in percentage would increase the number of veterinarians who would consider working in large animal practices. Dr. Maynard said yes.

Foreign Animal Diseases Overview of Activities

Dr. Erik Jopp gave an update on foreign animal disease (FAD) cases in Minnesota. The Board relies on veterinarians to report diseases as they are reportable under Minnesota state law. Veterinarians can report cases to the Board directly, to the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory, or to the Minnesota Duty Officer.

Foreign Animal Diseases (FADs) are diseases not known to be existent in the United States or our territories. Some diseases we are watching out for:

- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
- African Swine Fever
- Foot and Mouth Disease
- Rift Valley Fever

Foreign Animal Disease Diagnosticians (FADDs) are veterinarians specially trained to recognize FADs. FADD training includes two weeks of hands-on training, which was previously held at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center but will be moved to the new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan, KS. Training is currently on hold.

FAD responses have three main goals:

- Detect, control and contain the disease.
- Eradicate the FAD.
- Provide science-based approaches to facilitate continuity of business.

There were 102 FAD investigations in Minnesota in 2023, including 64 poultry and 27 swine.

Dr. Hawkins asked if Seneca Valley virus is still appearing in swine. Dr. Jopp said that Seneca Valley virus is still circulating.

Dr. Maynard asked what FAD was detected in rabbits. Dr. Bartsch answered that it was Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV2), and there only have been a handful of cases.

Overview of Rulemaking Process

Ms. Stacey Eissinger, general counsel to the Board, gave a brief overview of the rulemaking process.

Under Minnesota statute, a “Rule” is defined as:

“Every agency statement of general applicability and future effect, including amendments, suspensions and repeals of rules, adopted to implement or make specific the law enforced or administered by that agency or to govern its organization or procedure.”

An agency can only make rules after the legislature has given the agency authority to do so. The Board’s authority to make rules comes from Minnesota Statutes section 35.03.

The high-level process of rulemaking:

- 1) The Board wants to make a rule and passes a resolution.
- 2) The Governor's Office does a preliminary review.
- 3) Publish notice of request for comments in state register at least 60 days before publishing notice of intent to adopt.
 - a. During the request for comments period, notice is shared with those "persons or classes of persons who might be affected by the proposal." This could include mailing lists, email lists, trade groups, media outlets, etc.
 - b. The Board may appoint an advisory committee to comment on the proposed rule.

Dr. Hawkins asked for clarification as to who "the Board" is under the process. Ms. Eissinger said the Board in this case means the board of directors.

- 4) Prepare a Statement of Need and Reasonableness (SONAR). Why is this rule needed? This process begins while the comment period is on-going.
- 5) SONAR and Proposed Rule must be approved by the Governor's Office.
- 6) Revisor's Office must approve the proposed form of the rule.
- 7) MMB is consulted for financial impact.
- 8) Publish Notice of Intent to Adopt Rule in state register. This can be done in one of three ways:
 - o With hearing
 - o Without a hearing
 - o Dual Notice
- 9) Submit the final rule to the Governor's Office for review.
- 10) Signed Order to Adopt gets sent to the Office of Administrative Hearings.
- 11) The Office of Administrative Hearings files the rule with the Secretary of State (SOS).
- 12) The SOS Office serves the Final Rule on the Governor's Office
- 13) Publish Notice of Adoption in the State Register

Ms. Eissinger noted there are alternative rulemaking laws that can lead to exemptions of this process, but specific criteria must be met before they can be pursued.

Ms. Sawatzke asked for clarification of the interactions between rules and statute. Ms. Eissinger said the statute is the guide for rules both in intent and process.

Equine Exhibition Official Veterinarian Pilot Project

Dr. Heather Damico gave an overview of a pilot project within the equine program.

The current veterinarian shortage makes finding an official veterinarian difficult for certain exhibitions. The size and impact of the Minnesota horse industry justifies flexibility to maintain continuity of business while also maintaining animal health. A listening session was held, where Board reps met with equine veterinarians and UMN Equine Extension.

Goals for the pilot program:

- Address industry economic concerns.
- Adapt to veterinarian shortage.
- Meet the agency mission with a new approach to exhibitions.

The pilot program would entail a training program for exhibition managers to recognize illnesses and ensure regulatory standards are being met. Along with the following responsibilities on site:

- Retain service of an Official Veterinarian.
- Ensure livestock building and exhibit areas are clean and disinfected prior to animal entry and between groups, when applicable.
- Ensure sanitary conditions are maintained throughout event.
- Comply with Board staff and official veterinarians.
- Maintain animal records for five years.
- Walk through animal areas daily and contact official vet to address concerns.

Under the pilot program, the responsibilities of the official veterinarian would be slightly different:

- Remain on call for the duration of the event and respond if the exhibition manager has questions or concerns.
- Refuse admission or quarantine horses showing clinical signs of communicable disease or not meeting entrance requirements.
- Contact the Board with reportable diseases.
- Maintain list of animals needing removal or quarantine and submit it to the Board within a week.

Ms. Sawatzke asked if a rule change would be required if the pilot program is successful. Ms. Eissinger said that the rulemaking process would kick in if the program is successful.

Dr. Hawkins asked if any category 1 or 2 veterinarian can be an official veterinarian or if it must be a Board veterinarian. Dr. Damico said any accredited veterinarian except Board veterinarians can be an official veterinarian. Board vets CANNOT act as official vets due to a conflict of interest.

Cold Weather Swine Depopulation Exercise

Ms. Lucy Hunt of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) gave an overview of a recent cold weather swine depopulation exercise.

The MDA owns a lot of equipment for depopulation and disposal and thus, has a larger role in this part of disease response. Since 2020, MDA has worked to augment and develop new areas of proficiency in depopulation methods, including cold weather actions.

Ms. Hunt noted that MDA maintains a library of operational plans for the following:

- CO2 Depopulation
- Grind and Compost Disposal
- Depopulation and Disposal (D&D) Cleaning and Disinfection
- D&D Environmental Sampling
- CO2 Depopulation Trailer System Build
- Water-based Foam (WBF) Foam Depopulation

A recent cold weather swine depopulation exercise saw nearly 240 pigs depopulated using a water-based foam. The carcasses were then composted. The pigs were donated for the exercise from a research project; they

would not enter the food supply. The first day depopulation was conducted over four rounds using water-based foam. The second day a nitrogen foam was used to depopulate 90 pigs over 3 rounds. The carcasses were then composted. After all the depopulation was conducted, the equipment was cleaned and sanitized and then sampled for testing.

Poultry Update

Dr. Shauna Voss gave an overview on *Mycoplasma Gallisepticum* (MG) and *Mycoplasma Synoviae* (MS) in breeder birds. Both diseases are reportable under Minnesota statute. Dr. Voss also spoke about Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV).

Under statute:

“Commercial egg-type chicken, commercial meat-type chicken or commercial turkey hatcheries or breeding flocks determined by the board to be infected with (MG) or (MS) must be quarantined and participate in an approved salvage program or be disposed of in a manner approved by the board.”

In January, a commercial turkey breeder flock was found to be infected with MS during routine testing. The flock was not showing clinical signs. The premises was placed under quarantine, and a salvage plan was agreed upon, which included:

- Antibiotic treatments for the infected flock.
- Segregation and dipping of the eggs at the hatchery.
- Antibiotic injection of the poults.
- Notification of poult recipients.
- Monitoring of poults to evaluate effectiveness of mitigation measures.

Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV) is a highly infectious respiratory disease that causes turkey rhinotracheitis and swollen head syndrome in broilers as well as reproductive disorders with significant egg drop. aMPV can also infect pheasants, ducks and guinea fowl. In January, aMPV Subtype B was confirmed in samples from Virginia and North Carolina.

Historically, Minnesota dealt with aMPV Subtype C in the late 1990s through the mid-2000s. Surveillance of commercial flocks in Minnesota ended in 2010, and surveillance of breeders ended in 2018. Currently, the Board does not believe aMPV is circulating in Minnesota. The University of MN VDL and Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL) on expanding testing capabilities to test for all Subtypes of aMPV. The Board is recommending testing of clinically ill birds and evaluating if a coordinated active surveillance program is necessary.

Adjourn and Next Meeting

The next quarterly meeting of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health will be held on April 3, 2024, at a location to be determined. The September meeting of the Board will be held September 17, 2024, at a location to be determined.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hoefs
Executive Director
State Veterinarian