MINNESOTA
BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH

Meeting Minutes: February Board Meeting

Date: 2/4/2026
Location: Animal Humane Society, 845 Meadow Lane North, Golden Valley, MN 55422, and on Microsoft Teams.

Attendance

Board Members

- Erica Sawatzke, President
- Peggy Anne Hawkins, DVM, Vice President
- Brandon Schafer
- Alex Stade
- Jesica Fox, DVM
- Steve Neil

Consultants to the Board

- Stacy Holzbauer, Minnesota Department of Health
- Laura Molgaard, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
- Hemant Naikare, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Guests

- Jason Gilsdorf, USDA Wildlife Services
- Mackenzie Reberg, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- Graham Brayshaw, Animal Humane Society

Staff

- Brian Hoefs
- Shauna Voss
- Steve Kivisto
- Heather Damico

Call to Order

Ms. Erica Sawatzke called the meeting to order. Dr. Graham Brayshaw, Chief Medical Officer for the Animal Humane Society (AHS), gave a brief overview of the history and work of AHS. Following introductions, Ms. Sawatzke asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes from the December quarterly meeting. Mr. Alex Stade made a motion. Dr. Peggy-Anne Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Sawatzke asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Brandon Schafer made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Stade seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Board of Animal Health Update

Dr. Brian Hoefs, State Veterinarian and Executive Director of the Board of Animal Health, gave an update on actions of Board staff since the last meeting.

The USDA HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge awarded nearly $100 million to organizations nationwide. The Grand Challenge has three aims: develop novel vaccines, develop novel therapeutics, and research for improved response activities. Six proposals were accepted in Minnesota, including five from the University of Minnesota and one from the Minnesota Turkey Research and Promotion Council. Organizations awarded funds need to begin using them by May 2026.

On the H5N1 in livestock front, Minnesota is still classified as category 4 in the National Milk Testing Strategy. There have been no new detections from Minnesota farms in more than four months. The testing of milk samples continues, but the focus has shifted from the farm level to testing milk silos. Two strains of the virus, B3.13 and D1.1, have been found in cattle and were likely introduced by wild birds. Interstate premovement testing continues for dairy cattle. In the fall, Wisconsin reported a single case in a dairy cow with the D1.1 strain, and there have been no reports since then.

Cases of New World Screwworm (NWS) have been reported in Veracruz and Tamaulipas, Mexico. These cases have not been attributed to cattle movement, which means the flies are resident in those areas now and can replicate, infest and continue to move north. USDA and its Mexican counterparts plan to target sterile fly releases in that area and near the Texas border to combat the continued spread of NWS, which also has led to an emergency declaration from the governor of Texas. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the conditional and emergency use of treatments for the infestations in both cattle and companion animals, such as dogs and cats. Feral dogs and cats are a particular issue in Mexico and can act as a host for the flies.

USDA announced the NWS Grand Challenge to award $100 million in funds for proposals in the following areas: enhanced sterile fly production, development of novel NWS traps and lures, development and increased understanding of NWS therapeutics/treatments for animals, and development of other tools to bolster preparedness or response to NWS.

The Board is coordinating with the Minnesota Department of Health on possible outreach and education for agricultural workers who may travel between states to help prevent any future migration of the flies.

As weather warms, ticks will be back as an annual concern. Increasing prevalence of different tick species has continued. Both the Asian Longhorn tick and the Lone Star tick have been spreading west and north. The United States Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP) has been codified as a USDA program. This is similar to the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) but differs in that NPIP was developed out of a focus on domestic disease, while the US SHIP came out of concerns of foreign animal diseases like African Swine Fever (ASF). ASF cases in wild boar have been increasing in Europe, particularly in Spain. The closest confirmed cases to the U.S. have been in Haiti/Dominican Republic. In Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has started a “Squeal on Pigs MN” campaign to help track feral hogs appearing in the state. Residents can call a special hotline to report sightings. The campaign aims to launch in March.

Minnesota will participate in a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) exercise with representatives from Kansas and Iowa in late June. The month-long exercise aims to walk states through developing mock vaccine distribution plans and the process of distributing and administering the vaccines.

The Board's Companion Animal Program oversees the licensing of 99 kennels in the state and 79 commercial breeders. Board staff also assisted with 12 animal welfare cases in 2025. The Board has limited authority over animal welfare cases but still tries to be involved either through on the ground response, partnership with other groups, or proactive education. Tularemia, Canine Brucellosis and Rabies continue to be concerns for companion animals in the state.

On the traceability front, Minnesota is in the final stages of transitioning from accepting paper Certificates of Veterinary Inspection to only accepting electronic CVIs. Free and paid options are available for veterinarians to submit the documentation. Minnesota was one of the first states to enact the change, and other states are following suit.

The Board is facing several non-disease-related challenges. With changes in federal administration have come different philosophies, priorities, staffing, communication, and policies, which have posed unique challenges for local staff attempting to focus on disease mitigation and eradication efforts. Additionally, sporadic funding uncertainties persist on the federal level. Approximately one-fourth to one-third of the Board's operating budget comes from federal sources.

Dr. Hawkins expressed gratitude to Dr. Hoefs and the Board staff for continuing to work under nebulous funding situations.

Legislative Update

Ms. Michelle Medina, Director of Government Relations for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Board, gave an update on legislative activity impacting the Board.

The next legislative session will begin Feb. 17, 2026, and must end by May 18. Investigating and combatting fraud will likely be the overarching theme of this session. Fraud is not a great concern for the Board because it does not issue grants, and the budget is relatively small compared to the overall state budget.

The agriculture committee has oversight of the Board's budget. The Board will likely be called to give presentations early in the session to the committee centering on topics like Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), NWS and ASF. Companion animals will also likely be a topic of interest to the committee members.

As this is the second year of the legislative biennium, it is a policy year. More than 6,900 bills were introduced last session, and many are still in play. New bills are expected to be introduced this year as well. It is likely there will be some bonding related to capitol improvement projects and possibly some funding bills coming through. A deficit is predicted in the next biennium and could mean reductions in budgets for state agencies.

The mid-term elections are coming up in November. Gov. Tim Walz has decided not to run for re-election. A new governor in office next year means new commissioners could be appointed to lead executive branch agencies. At the same time, more than 20 legislators are retiring, and 16 others are running for different positions than the ones they currently hold. So, the dynamics of the state legislature might change in the future.

Dr. Hawkins asked whether there are any big topics coming before the ag committee this session. Ms. Medina said budgeting and funding will be the primary issues of conversation.

Dr. Hawkins asked if there has been any federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity on farms. Ms. Medina said some of the larger processing companies have seen ICE raids recently.

Dr. Kivisto asked about the timeline for a proposed companion animal program audit. Ms. Medina said she suspects other priorities have taken center stage, but the audit will still likely be completed by the end of the year.

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update

Dr. Hemant Naikare, Director of the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL), gave an update on the lab's work.

The VDL conducts between 800,000-850,000 tests per year, and the schedule remains very busy. Funding challenges are on the horizon, and the lab is looking to diversify its offerings and focus energies on becoming a bit more entrepreneurial. The USDA Secretary of Agriculture suspended funding to the VDL at the start of this year, and cooperative agreements were frozen, leading to potential shortfalls. Luckily, on Jan. 20, 2026, the freeze was officially rescinded and the VDL funding was restored.

The VDL has seen several new developments in the last year and has more on the horizon. In spring 2025, a new tissue digester was installed. In spring 2026, new equipment for bacteriology will be installed to replace aging machines. The VDL was involved in testing during several outbreaks last year including HPAI, H5N1 in dairy cattle, avian metapneumovirus in poultry, and wildlife surveillance testing. The VDL added surgical biopsies to its slate of services in spring 2025, which is particularly helpful for keepers of cats and dogs. This service helps bring new revenue to the lab.

During the year, the VDL added new staff to bolster scheduling and services offered. Both the VDL and the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL) in Willmar operate with a skeleton crew. In 2025, the lab was able to welcome five CDC APHL fellows. This is a critical time for the VDL to solve sustainability challenges with staffing. The lab's ability to respond quickly to foreign animal disease investigations and economically significant disease testing could be impacted by staffing shortages. Analysis shows the lab needs at least two more positions in lab testing to avoid these pitfalls

There are opportunities and risks for the VDL in the future. Growth in collaboration for new services and research, new clients, and innovation in services offered to the protein market and pet market are possible. However, increased costs for personnel, maintenance and goods could negatively impact the lab. Economic volatility impacts animal protein markets and could lead to less testing, which could impact the lab's bottom line.

Dr. Hawkins said she appreciates Dr. Naikare's enthusiasm for the work.

Mr. Schafer commented that as a cattle and swine producer, he utilizes the services of the VDL frequently and is continually impressed with the work and customer service coming from the lab.

College of Veterinary Medicine Update

Dr. Laura Molgaard gave an update on the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM).

Seventeen new faculty members, including a pathologist and a few clinicians, joined the college. New team members mention that the CVM offers a lot of opportunities for research and career growth.

The One Health pilot project continues to gain momentum. A philanthropic gift funds the program, which aims to bolster the partnership with the UMN medical school to provide care for both people and their pets.

There have been a lot of questions around how the university is responding to the recent federal actions in the Twin Cities and the disruptions those actions are causing. The university has been communicating with faculty, staff and students about what is known. There have been no verified reports of ICE agents on campus, but students, faculty and staff do not all live on campus. Students can request accommodation and flexibility outside of the ADA exemptions for things like relaxed attendance requirements for lectures and others. Experiential participation is still required in certain areas. This is happening concurrently with the requirements from the U.S. Department of Education to reduce the virtual experiences available to students.

The CVM's Companion Animal Teaching Clinic is in a soft launch period. The project is funded through a $5 million grant to provide hands-on learning for veterinary students.

The college is in the predesign stage of building a new large animal isolation facility. When complete, the $20 million facility will replace the school's aging animal isolation facility.

Minnesota Department of Health Update

Dr. Stacy Holzbauer, State Public Health Veterinarian, gave an update on the work of Minnesota Department of Health related to zoonotic disease.

A recent outbreak of infant botulism related to ByHeart Infant Formula has led to a multi-agency response in Minnesota. Three cases were found in the state. Nationally, there were 51 suspected or confirmed cases from 19 states. All cases were hospitalized, and no deaths were reported. MDH works with MDA and the Public Health Laboratory to investigate, coordinate sample testing, and report information to the CDC. The manufacturer issued a recall for the baby formula, and they have since expanded the recall to ensure the tainted formula is taken off the shelves. The FDA investigation is ongoing.

Botulism spores colonize in a baby's large intestine and create a neurotoxin. Suspected cases need immediate treatment, which should begin even before laboratory confirmation.

Histoplasmosis is a fungal infection caused by inhaled fungal spores. It is typically found in soil, especially if the soil is enriched with bird or bat guano. The infection takes between a few days and a few weeks to incubate, but causes fever, cough, night sweats, chills, myalgia and fatigue in patients. Annually, Minnesota sees between 150-200 cases of histoplasmosis.

The disease is an occupational risk for bridge inspectors, construction workers, spelunkers, gardeners and those who work with soil movement. MDH encourages those engaged in high-risk activities to minimize exposure by using personal protective equipment (PPE), especially if immuno-compromised, and use professional companies for guano or bird waste clean-up whenever possible.

MDH is currently monitoring 24 people with HPAI-positive poultry premises. Three people reported illness, and one person was tested. There were two H5 wastewater detections near Mankato around the end of 2025. Wild bird incursion could be responsible for those detections. UMN Extension is distributing PPE kits at backyard poultry workshops.

There have been 129 cases of West Nile Virus in humans, including 14 deaths in Minnesota. Twenty-seven of those cases were from asymptomatic blood donors. All blood donated is tested for WNV.

The Zoonotic Diseases Unit (ZDU) recently published an article on rabies clusters in Minnesota's 2025 rabies outbreak in dairy steers. The outbreak cost more than $3,500 to the producers in direct costs. Also, the ZDU published an article on the 2024 rabies deaths in Minnesota and California, which were both due to having known bat exposures and not seeking public health care.

MDH recently held the annual Emerging Issues Gathering. The event was well attended and helps promote information sharing for those working at the intersection of human and animal health.

A workshop on promoting healthy and safe agritourism events is slated to be held on March 26 at the Rosemount Library. Registration is required for the in-person event.

USDA Update

Dr. Mackenzie Reberg of the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services gave an update on the work of the USDA.

Combatting potential NWS infestations on U.S. soil is a prime focus for USDA right now. Many new positions will be hired to work along the southern border in production and dispersal of the sterile flies to help curtail NWS spread.

Many positions remain open at the agency due to attrition, and prospective hiring remains unclear. Minnesota's division of USDA was not selected to receive new personnel in a recent wave of hiring.

Recent funding fluctuations in the federal government did not affect the USDA, as their funding has been secured through the end of the federal fiscal year in September.

New World Screwworm Update

Dr. Reberg also presented on the New World Screwworm situation and some background on the insects.

NWS is a (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) fly that feeds on living tissue, which makes it unique among flies of this type. There are no reports of NWS in the U.S, but cases have been moving northward through Central America and Mexico in the past few years.

Historically, economic impacts from NWS in the United States have been monumental. Current estimates for the economic impact of a new outbreak are in the billions of dollars. It is a priority of USDA and its partners to keep an outbreak from occurring in the U.S.

The lifecycle of the NWS fly is quick. Adult flies mate, females lay eggs in a wound or orifice, and eggs hatch in 12 to 24 hours. Larvae emerge in 5 to 7 days, then pupate in 6 to 8 days into adult flies, and the cycle begins again. NWS can infest any warm-blooded animal, including livestock, birds and humans.

Female flies deposit eggs around wounds as small as a tick bite or in mucous membrane openings such as the nose, eyes, ears and umbilicus. Larvae enter the wound to feed on living tissue. There can be multiple species of flies around a single wound, not just NWS.

Larvae are typically visible in the wound by day three. There may be hundreds of larvae present. While the wound may appear to be small, deep pockets of infestation can exist below the skin. Clinical signs of infestation in animals include bloody discharge, foul odor from the wound, anorexia, self-isolation and headshaking.

Morbidity and mortality varies with conditions, i.e., age, organ affected, etc. Animals can become systemically ill from secondary bacterial infections. Treatment with parasiticides can be successful when the infestation is detected early. Left untreated, infestation usually results in death in 7 to14 days.

In the late 1950s, the flies were pushed all the way south to the Darien Gap in Panama. COPEG (Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworm) is the current partnership between U.S. and Panama to eliminate and manage NWS. Current interventions for eradication include the sterile insect technique, field surveillance and stakeholder engagement, and robust regulatory controls. Flies move small distances on their own but can move large distances through animal movement.

Sterile Fly Production and Dispersal involves facilities that create flies, sterilize them, then release them. Females mate with the sterile flies, reducing the number of new flies produced. One hundred million sterile flies can be produced per week at COPEG. New facilities are under development in Texas and elsewhere to enhance this production. There are also multiple trapping sites along the southern border, which may trap some flies that are released by the program, and will fluoresce under UV light if they are produced in a sterile facility.

In July 2025, all imports from cattle, horses and bison from Mexico were stopped. Dogs can still be imported but must be examined by a veterinarian within five days of movement then be quarantined upon arrival in the U.S.

If someone suspects NWS, they can call their veterinarian, the state veterinarian, USDA field office or a local extension agent. Seeking treatment immediately is necessary. Animals should not be moved except to get veterinary care. Potentially infested animals should be quarantined and monitored. USDA has launched the Screwworm.gov website to provide outreach materials in multiple languages to the public.

NWS infestation in humans is usually associated with recent travel to areas where the flies are endemic.

Ms. Sawatzke asked about the facility in Panama and its ownership. Dr. Reberg said it is owned through a partnership between the USDA and the Panamanian government.

Ms. Sawatzke asked how much coverage is provided by the weekly sterile fly drops. Dr. Reberg said she does not know the actual coverage area, but that multiple flights are launched each week to areas of particular concern or recent cases.

Dr. Hoefs said a large component of concern is wildlife as well. Mexico doesn't have an agency that covers wildlife in the same way the United States does. This means that less is known about how feral dogs or other wild animals could be moving the flies around.

Dr. Naikare asked how the larvae are identified. Dr. Reberg said there is a team at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory handling NWS identification.

Mr. Stade asked if there is a ground-based treatment that could prevent the spread. Dr. Reberg said she's not aware of any.

Dr. Hoefs said there has been at least one horse reported with NWS larvae in the U.S., but because it was in quarantine and could be treated it was not reported as a case.

Dr. Holzbauer said there have been detections in people who have traveled to endemic countries. Public health workers are aiming to raise awareness among clinicians who work with travelers to identify cases.

USDA Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment Program Update

Jason Gilsdorf with the USDA Wildlife Services gave an overview of the Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment (WBA) Program.

The WBA program is voluntary and provided free of charge for producers. It is an assessment of the outside of the premises looking for hazards or avenues for wildlife to access the inside of the barn. The program also documents wildlife sightings on the property. The final step is direct control wildlife management activities, including non-lethal (lasers, etc.) to deter wildlife from accessing an area, and lethal methods (shooting, trapping/disposing), to reduce the population.

The initial pilot program has concluded, and the WBA program is now available nationwide. A reimbursement agreement with the producer is not required for a WBA. If after three assessments no mitigation is observed, USDA may determine further assessments will not be conducted or may ask the producer to pay for the service. If no Wildlife Services employee works in the region, direct control may not be available to the premises.

Wildlife Services has assessed 83 poultry premises for 13 producers and conducted 65 follow-ups. The geographic area of WS personnel in Minnesota is a slight hinderance to reaching more facilities. A few positions will likely be opening soon to do this work more broadly in Minnesota.

WBAs are conducted quarterly. The most common issues found on sites are compromised exclusion (small openings allowing entry for wildlife), open holes in foundations, walls (damage or construction issues), foundation issues (breaches or erosion), and attractants (spilled feed, standing water, exposed carcasses).

The Wildlife Biosecurity Management Summary is an annual report combining WBAs, wildlife surveys and direct control over the past year. Reports include a table of species and numbers, graphics showing threats, a heatmap of wildlife observed, and habitats used by wildlife. The summary also provides a heat map of the property showing where wildlife was managed.

Wildlife Services also conducts sampling for HPAI while doing WBAs. Since Oct. 2023, 338 samples have been collected. In 2025, 238 samples were collected from 36 species on 14 premises in 12 counties. Sampling for HPAI will continue to help better understand the spread of HPAI in wildlife and how it can impact commercial operations.

Dr. Shauna Voss asked if data exists to correlate premises that have had a WBA and then tested positive for HPAI. Mr. Gilsdorf said that data exists and can be shared.

Dr. Voss asked if there are premises that have no issues when a WBA is conducted. Gilsdorf said that hasn't happened yet. There can be very few issues, but there's always something that can be worked on.

Ms. Melissa Smith asked if standing water issues would require a return visit to check how long the standing water exists. Mr. Gilsdorf said it's simply noted on the WBA that it should be addressed if the standing water is still there in 48 hours.

Ms. Medina asked if WBAs se are conducted at independent premises or mostly commercial organizations. Mr. Gilsdorf said they cannot share specific details about site types or ownership.

Dr. Hawkins asked if the WBA is the same or different from a BCAP audit. Mr. Gilsdorf said the WBA and the BCAP audit are different and operate in different sections of the USDA.

Ms. Sawatzke asked if data could be provided regarding WBAs and positive HPAI tests to the Minnesota Turkey Producers Association. Mr. Gilsdorf said they would be willing to coordinate, and the program is always looking for more producers to participate.

Dr. Hawkins asked if the future of the program could include training for producers to do their own sorts of assessments and checks. Mr. Gilsdorf said it's possible, but producers are often so busy with the work of a farm that it becomes burdensome to do the work themselves.

Poultry Update

Dr. Shauna Voss, Assistant Director of the Board, gave an update on the state of poultry diseases in Minnesota.

The current HPAI outbreak has been ongoing for nearly four years. In Minnesota, there have been 216 confirmed cases in 53 counties with around 10.3 million birds depopulated to slow the spread of the disease.

Minnesota has seen new cases in mid-January after a quiet month late in 2025. The virus is not going away, and the Board is preparing for future waves of infection. There is natural fluctuation in the case levels, but the outbreak will likely continue. Genomic sequencing shows current poultry infections are tied to wild birds. Transmission routes are still being studied. D1.1 remains the primary strain found in commercial poultry. No spillover cases have occurred between dairy and poultry recently. The D1.5 and D1.6 variants are unique to Minnesota. Other variants are being seen as influenza viruses continue to mutate.

As of Feb. 4, 2026:

- 15 premises currently under quarantine
- 4 premises undergoing disposal (composting)
- 10 premises pending BCAP auditing
- 3 active control areas

Nationally, there have been 55 confirmed infected flocks within the past 30 days.

Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV) is an ongoing issue. Vaccines are available, with vaccinations happening at the hatchery, and boosters being applied on the farm to boost immunity. The disease is still present and causing illness in flocks, but significant impacts are down. This could be due to seasonal variation versus vaccine protection. Flocks experiencing high mortality rates will continue to be tested for aMPV and HPAI.

All samples submitted for the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) or Board requirements must be collected by an authorized poultry testing agent (APTA) by Minnesota law. Courses are coming up in February for Commercial APTAs on Feb. 12, 2026, and for Pullorum-Typhoid Testing APTAs on Feb. 27, in St. Cloud.

The NPIP Biennial Conference will be held Aug. 11-14, 2026, in Salt Lake City. Minnesota is still looking for delegates to represent the state. Proposed changes to the NPIP and program standards are being accepted until

March 14, 2026. NPIP is soliciting nominations for individuals to serve on the NPIP General Conference Committee (GCC) for the South Atlantic, South Central and West North-Central regions.

Dr. Hoefs asked about the status of pullorum antigen this year. Dr. Voss said there are not any issues with antigen supplies.

Ms. Lucy Hunt asked if aMPV is also a wild bird problem. Mr. Gilsdorf said he is unaware if it is an issue, but WS is not sampling for it at this time. Dr. Voss noted that funding to look for aMPV in wild birds is not currently available. Mr. Gilsdorf said it's possible that it could be done in the future.

Dr. Holzbauer said a study is underway looking at HPAI in wild birds, and it might also include aMPV.

Ms. Medina asked how the vaccine is administered for aMPV at the hatchery level. Dr. Voss said there are multiple methods, but it is typically aerosolized.

Animal Welfare Coordination

Dr. Steven Kivisto, senior veterinarian in charge of companion animal programs at the Board, gave an overview of animal welfare coordination between multiple agencies in Minnesota, including AHS. Dr. Kivisto introduced AHS animal welfare representatives Ms. Ashley Pudas (Humane Agent) and Ms. Liv Hagen (Director of Animal Welfare). Both assist with welfare investigations in coordination with the Board, law enforcement and/or animal shelters or rescues, as needed.

The role of the Board in relation to animal welfare is to make sure stakeholders are meeting the standards of care that are written into statute. For things that fall under Board purview, the agency works with the stakeholders directly. However, there are things outside Board jurisdiction, and the Board works with other agencies like the Animal Humane Society to address welfare concerns. Veterinarians are obligated by the state to report suspected animal welfare issues.

Law enforcement, humane societies, and animal control officers investigate animal welfare cases. Law enforcement often does not have the training or time to address animal welfare issues, and specialized attention is necessary.

The Board's welfare investigation process:

- Complaint is received
- Board staff research the complaint
- Assign field staff to investigate
- Schedule on-site investigation

There are limits to actions the Board can take in these investigations. Additionally, there are only two humane agents in the state of Minnesota.

Dr. Hoefs mentioned that historically the Board has been criticized for not doing enough to protect animal welfare in the state. So having partnerships with organizations like AHS and their agents makes a difference when there are instances where the Board does not have jurisdiction, but other agencies do. Collaboration between the Board and animal welfare organizations is vital to protect animals.

Ms. Sawatzke asked how often the Board receives complaints about breeders who claim they did not know they needed a license with the Board. Ms. Pudas said many breeders claim they didn't know they needed a license to be a breeder. Dr. Kivisto said many breeders also keep their animal counts just below the threshold to be licensed and regulated by the Board.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The second quarterly meeting of 2026 will take place April 1, 2026, at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul Campus Student Center. The third quarterly meeting of 2026 will take place Sept. 16, 2026, at a location yet to be determined.

Ms. Sawatzke asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Stade made the motion. Dr. Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hoefs
Executive Director
State Veterinarian