

## Meeting Minutes: April Quarterly Board Meeting

Date: 4/3/2024

Location: Minnesota Farm Bureau (3080 Eagandale Place, Eagan, MN 55121) and on Microsoft Teams.

### Attendance

#### Board Members

- Erica Sawatzke, President
- Peggy Anne Hawkins, DVM, Vice President
- Jessica Koppien-Fox, DVM
- Steve Neil
- Brandon Schafer
- 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
- Hemant Naikare, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
- Albert Rovira, University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
- Karin Schafer, Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Graham Brayshaw, Animal Humane Society

#### Guests

- Paul Anderson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association, Minnesota Veterinary Medicine Association small animal welfare committee
- Kaitlin Heusel, Minnesota Milk Producers Association
- Ashley Kohls, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
- Elaine Hanson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association

#### Staff

- |                   |                  |                        |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| • Jessica Aho     | • Katie Cornille | • Diane Englin Elliott |
| • Carissa Allen   | • Susan Chapman  | • Addie Evans Engelke  |
| • Kate Brakefield | • Erin Crider    | • Erik Jopp            |
| • Avrey Bergum    | • Michael Crusan | • Duane Fox            |
| • Kaylyn Chapin   | • Lisa Ehlen     | • Samantha Kappel      |

- Blia Kha
- Tony LaBarre
- Krista Lautenschlager
- Betsy Lempelius
- Susan McClanahan
- Bonnie Miller
- Brad Peterson
- Kayla Pierson
- Robert Predmore
- Allison Pollock
- Nancy Reeck
- Jeanne Rothfork
- Shauna Voss
- Heather Damico
- Daniel Callahan
- Melissa Smith
- Courtney Wheeler
- John King
- Myah Walker
- Missy Sivigny
- Lisa Loots
- Suzanne Pedersen
- 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 made the motion. Dr. Fox seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

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

## Board of Animal Health Update

Dr. Courtney Wheeler, assistant director of the Board, gave an update on the work of Board field staff, an update on the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) situation in Minnesota and a brief history of the Board of Animal Health.

### HPAI

Timeline of recent HPAI outbreaks:

March 2022 – First Minnesota detection of HPAI in Poultry

March 2024 – First U.S. detection of HPAI in a domestic ruminant (Minnesota goat)

March 2024 – First U.S. detection of HPAI in dairy cattle (Texas, Michigan, Kansas, New Mexico, Idaho)

Dr. Stephan Schaeffbauer mentioned that when they are side by side, it appears there are similarities between the goat and dairy cow cases. But there is a distinction that the goats were on an actively infected HPAI premises, and it was likely a “spill-over event” because the goats were less than four weeks old and the virus was present, etc. This is very different from the cows.

Dr. Fox asked if PCR testing was the method of determining the cause of death of the dead goat kids. Dr. Schaeffbauer said that virus isolation testing was done. Dr. Wheeler noted that USDA did extensive testing to eliminate other causes of mortality in the dead goats.

Dr. Rovira further clarified some of the clinical and laboratory confirmed signs in mammals that do not appear in birds.

### Personnel

Dr. Veronica Bartsch has left the Board to return to private practice. Dr. Erik Jopp will serve as temporary director for the Companion Animal Program until a replacement senior veterinarian can be hired.

Dr. Wheeler noted recent positive attention to the work of Ms. Sawatzke and Ms. Myah Walker in television and print media, respectively.

## Legislative Update

Ms. Michelle Medina, legislative liaison from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, gave an update on the actions of the legislature.

The state legislative session has started. The session is scheduled to close May 20. The scheduled breaks for the session have changed. The Board does not have anything pending in the legislature. There are over 10,000 bills to pay attention to, but of importance are a few specific bills:

- SF 3703 - Re-adding language around stray animals
- HF 4533 - Grant program to help stop HPAI by keeping wildlife away from domestic birds
- SF 4654 - Bans poultry being hatched in schools
- HF 4844 - Domestic hog release prohibited, agency jurisdiction clarified, civil penalties established, outreach required, voluntary fur farm registration repealed, fur farm provisions modified, and money appropriated.

## USDA Update

Dr. Stephan Schaeftbauer gave an update from United States Department of Agriculture.

### Cooperative agreements

USDA provides annual funding to state partners and other cooperators to conduct work and activities aligned with its mission and goals. In the past year, USDA faced budget increases without funding increases. Subsequently, cooperative agreement funding has to be reduced. The cuts to the funding in the cooperative agreement with the Board are not as drastic as might have been projected, with reductions of roughly \$27,000 generally and \$8,000 in traceability.

Dr. Schaeftbauer said the budgetary numbers are not expected to improve on this front in fiscal year 2025.

Dr. Fox asked if there are areas where we could improve to be better in alignment and thus possibly increase the funding. Dr. Schaeftbauer said not much could be changed. The metrics may change into the future as cuts increase.

### Other updates

The Board and USDA will be working on a National Animal Health Monitoring System project together to continue research from all over the state.

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has a new website designed to help stakeholders more easily find information.

## Minnesota Department of Health Update

State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Stacy Holzbauer gave an update on the actions of MDH and what the agency is doing with regards to the reports of human infection of HPAI and outlined the zoonotic disease Q Fever.

In light of the goats and possible dairy cattle infections with H5N1, MDH recommends the same things for the people around sick animals:

- Wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Health monitoring for 10 days following last exposure.
- Voluntary testing for those who develop illness.

- Not consuming raw milk or raw milk products from suspected infected herds.

Dr. Holzbauer said there is currently no concern with pasteurized milk transmitting the infection.

## Q Fever

### *Coxiella burnetii*

- Hardy spore like, tough to kill and has a very low infectious dose. Can travel up to 10 miles if aerosolized.
- Goats, sheep and cattle are common source of human infections.
- Main source is occupationally acquired but not limited to that. 60-percent do not report direct contact with livestock.
- Can become vector borne through ticks, bed bugs, etc.
- Less than 5-percent of cases progress to chronic q fever.

### Risk factors

- Valvular implants
- Kidney issues
- Pregnancy
- Greater than 60 years old

Increase in cases over the last few years is likely due to better reporting and better diagnostics.

### Prevention

- Don't consume raw milk.
- Limit contact with birthing animals.
- Wear PPE during abortion events.

### Animal prevention

- Practice good biosecurity.
- Avoiding adding pregnant animals in a herd of goats or sheep.

### Other updates

FUN ON The FARM: Agritourism Workshop planned for April 25 online.

## College of Veterinary Medicine Update

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

Interviews for new students to the school have concluded, with 419 interviews for 106 open seats. Over 150 candidates were accepted to the program. Naturally, not all will choose to attend.

The school currently has a number of faculty openings. Dr. Molgaard noted the difficulty in hiring qualified candidates, though a few large animal veterinarians have been hired.

### Legislative activities

An institutional licensing bill is making its way through the legislature that would change language in statute, making it easier to hire internationally trained faculty.

The school's budget request may not be funded this year, which is not surprising, said Dr. Molgaard. It does mean that funding salary increases will have to come from budget reallocations.

## **Other Updates**

The university has a partnership with the Minnesota Zoo to build a new hospital at the zoo that will serve the state's exotic animals. A \$35 million budget request has been made to the legislature. The new hospital would provide opportunities for students at the university to work with exotic animals.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Raptor Center. It is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allen D. Leman Swine Conference, emphasizing animal health and profitability for swine producers in the state.

Dr. Fox spoke briefly to the challenges of being a large animal and rural vet and how many folks leave the profession. Dr. Molgaard noted that it's not just a matter of training more veterinarians, but also making the situation for large animal vets more attractive.

## **Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Update**

Dr. Hemant Naikare, Director of the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, gave an update on the work of the lab.

### **Personnel**

Since the arrival of Dr. Naikare to the VDL, Dr. Rovira will serve as assistant director.

The VDL conducted interviews for the poultry diagnostician position. The lab is also looking to hire two IT positions, a database analyst and an applications developer, to bolster the lab's IT abilities.

### **Facilities**

A new tissue digester for the Saint Paul-based lab has been ordered and should be in use by the first quarter of 2025. There will be three months (October, November and December of 2024) that the lab will be without a functional digester in place. Planning for waste disposal is ongoing. A new generator has been installed at the Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory in Willmar. This will ensure continuity of services and preservation of samples should there be a power disruption.

### **Projects**

The VDL has a number of ongoing projects. The lab is planning to complete a client feedback survey in May 2024 to gauge the needs of clients and fill gaps in the lab's services. In Fall 2024, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing will be moved in-house. The VDL will undergo an accreditation site visit from the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians September 29, 2024, to October 4, 2024. Ongoing IT improvements include an online submission form, the automation of sample processing and results reporting.

The lab was once again awarded Level 1 Lab status by the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN/USDA), which comes with funding support.

### **Diagnosis and Detections**

Dr. Naikare gave an update on the cases of avian metapneumovirus detected in many states and the tests used for the differentiation between subtypes. With regard to HPAI, during the fall/winter of 2023-2024, the VDL investigated 104 cases, with 42 presumptive positives, seven of which were backyard flocks and 35 were commercial poultry operations. The VDL detected the first U.S. case of HPAI in a domestic ruminant when a goat

tested positive in March of 2024. With regards to the detection of H5N1 in dairy cattle in several states, the VDL is prepared to run tests on milk samples. One testing request thus far has resulted in a negative result.

## Kennel and Breeder Data Privacy Bill

Dr. Graham Brayshaw, director of veterinary medicine for the Animal Humane Society (AHS), spoke in favor of proposed changes to current legislation on licensed commercial dog and cat breeder data privacy.

The Animal Humane Society is a local nonprofit group. Founded in 1878, the group is independent not affiliated with other humane societies. AHS policy work is largely focused on pet issues, not wildlife or agricultural animals.

### 2024 Policy Priority

Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill – As introduced, the bill reclassifies commercial breeder information as public and stipulates that information be available online. It would apply to state-licensed commercial dog and cat breeders only, and not hobby, or non-licensed breeders. This would include information relating to animal population size, the last three inspection reports, and any revocation of breeder licenses in the previous 3 years.

Amendments have since been added to the bill including:

- Removing the inspection report requirement
- Listing only the city/township where a breeder is located rather than listing a full address.

AHS argues that more information should be readily available to the public on commercial breeders since 2014 law limits what information can be shared about breeders.

Commercial Dog and Cat Breeder Laws enacted in 2014 required licensure and inspection of commercial dog and cat breeders but classified license and inspection data for licensees as non-public. The board must maintain and post in a timely manner on its website a list of commercial breeders licensed and in good standing.

Dr. Hawkins asked how often the Board has violations in breeder licensures. Dr. Wheeler explained that there are 26 inspection points and failure to comply with any of them is a violation. The exact details are available in the [Board's annual report](#). Erica asked if breeders have an opportunity to fix violations. Dr. Wheeler replied that breeders are given a Notice of Violation and Correction Order and given a timeline to correct deficiencies.

Dr. Wheeler said that the Board's main concern with this bill is the amount of time Board staff spend fulfilling data requests. If more data is public, there will be more requests to fulfill. Ms. Melissa Smith added that there will be additional costs associated with data retention and data storage.

Dr. Fox asked what sort of data is available for other animal groups, like swine or cervids. Dr. Wheeler said much of that data is currently non-public, and this law does not change that.

Ms. Elaine Hanson briefly spoke in opposition to the proposed law and offered information packets on the position of the Minnesota Pet Breeders Association.

## Budget Update

Ms. Melissa Smith, Business Manager for the Board, gave an update on the budget.

The Board is funded through:

- State Funds – general appropriation
- Federal Funds – cooperative agreements
- Restricted Misc. Special Revenue – funds received from annual fees

Misc. Special Revenue comes from

- Farmed Cervidae Fees
- Breeder Fees
- Kennel Fees
- Poultry Workshop – Pullorum-Typhoid

In 2024, state funding was \$6,241,000. In fiscal year 2025, state funding amounts to \$6,401,000. This includes \$200,000 in the first year and \$200,000 in the second year for agricultural emergency preparedness and response.

The Board has seven cooperative agreements with USDA:

- Umbrella
- Traceability
- United States Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP)
- HPAI Emergency Response
- 3 Chronic Wasting Disease Agreements

Revenue is down with the transfer of white tail deer to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Dr. Hawkins asked if the fees are then being collected by the DNR for the white tail deer revenue. Ms. Smith said yes, they are collecting those fees moving forward. Ms. Sawatzke asked if DNR can raise the fees on the Cervidae farmers. Dr. Wheeler said the fees are in statute, so they would have to be changed in the legislature.

## **H5N1 Detection in Dairy Cattle Update**

Dr. Katie Cornille gave an update on the detection of H5N1 in dairy cattle in some Southwestern states.

Case definition/profile (Testing and sampling recommendations have been outlined by USDA):

- Sudden drop in feed intake and rumen motility
- Subsequent drop in milk production
- Thickened to absent milk
- Tacky, dry manure

Currently, there are no lab-confirmed cases in Minnesota. No movement restrictions have been put in place, and no food safety concerns have been identified. It is still unclear if H5N1 is the sole causative agent. The Board will continue to emphasize the importance of biosecurity and monitor the situation as it develops.

Ms. Sawatzke asked what the role of the Board has been in working with industry on this issue. Dr. Cornille said the industry is largely self-regulating, but the Board has been working closely with industry to share information as it is available. Dr. Wheeler asked what the Board can do to support dairy farmers. Ms. Heusel said sharing information as it is available is the support they need to help Minnesota dairy farmers do what needs to be done.

Ms. Sawatzke asked if H5N1 is considered a FAD in dairy cattle. Dr. Cornille said USDA is calling it an emerging disease in the U.S. Dr. Wheeler said the Board is preparing an emergency plan and involving industry and agency partners in the process

Dr. Maynard asked if the response to poultry outbreaks of HPAI will change due to proximity to dairy operations.

Ms. Ashley Kohls asked why it's being called HPAI in cattle if the testing is being done for Influenza A. Dr. Naikare explained the testing and how it results in the bacteria or virus being also called HPAI.

## Election of Board

The Board of Directors held elections for its officer positions. Ms. Sawatzke opened nominations for Board president. Dr. Hawkins nominated Ms. Sawatzke for Board president. The Board voted unanimously yea.

Ms. Sawatzke opened the floor for nominations for vice president. Dr. Fox nominated Dr. Hawkins. The Board voted unanimously yea. Dr. Hawkins continues as vice president.

## Closed Session

Board members met in a closed session with Ms. Smith to evaluate the performance of Dr. Brian Hoefs, the executive director of the Board of Animal Health, and to discuss the appointment of the executive director for the coming fiscal year, July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. After discussion took place, a motion was made by Ms. Sawatzke to appoint Dr. Hoefs as the executive director. Dr. Hawkins seconded the motion. Discussion took place. A vote was taken by roll call to approve the appointment of Dr. Hoefs as executive director for the period July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. All voted in favor of Dr. Hoefs' appointment.

Dr. Hawkins made a motion to award Dr. Hoefs an achievement award in the amount of \$2,000. Dr. Fox seconded the motion. Discussion took place. A vote was taken by roll call to approve the achievement award for Dr. Hoefs. All voted yea in favor of awarding the \$2,000 achievement award to Dr. Hoefs.

## Adjourn and Next Meeting

The next quarterly meeting of the Board will be held September 17, 2024, at the Redhead Creamery in Brooten, MN.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hoefs  
Executive Director  
State Veterinarian