

## September Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Date: September 17, 2024

Location: Redhead Creamery, 31535 463rd Ave, Brooten, MN 56316, and teleconference on Microsoft Teams

### Attendance

#### Board Members

- Erica Sawatzke, President
- Peggy Anne Hawkins, DVM, Vice President
- Jessica Koppien-Fox, DVM
- Steve Neil
- Brandon Schafer
- Alex Stade
- Abigail Maynard, DVM

#### Consultants to the Board

- Michelle Medina, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Amy Green, 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
- Karin Schafer, Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Thom Peterson, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

#### Guests

- Paul Anderson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association, Minnesota Veterinary Medicine Association small animal welfare committee
- Lucas Sjostrom, Minnesota Milk Producers Association
- Elaine Hanson, Minnesota Pet Breeders Association
- Lucy Hunt, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Jose Rojas, Jennie-O
- Carrie Cremers, Jennie-O
- Katie Schlist
- Kelly Schenk, Minnesota Department of Health

## Staff

- Jessica Aho
- Carissa Allen
- Kate Brakefield
- Avrey Bergum
- Kaylyn Chapin
- Katie Cornille
- Susan Chapman
- Erin Crider
- Michael Crusan
- Lisa Ehlen
- Diane Englin Elliott
- Addie Evans Engelke
- Erik Jopp
- Duane Fox
- Samantha Kappel
- Bliia Kha
- Tony LaBarre
- Krista Lautenschlager
- Betsy Lempelius
- Susan McClanahan
- 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

## 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 from the April meeting. Mr. Brandon Schafer made the motion. Mr. Alex Stade seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Sawatzke asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Jessica Koppien-Fox moved to approve the agenda for the meeting, Mr. Steve Neil seconded. Motion carried.

## Board of Animal Health Update

Dr. Brian Hoefs gave an update from the Board.

There have been multiple outbreak responses running simultaneously leading to a very busy summer. The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak has been running since 2022 and continued this year. Complicating HPAI detection is Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV) which mimics many of the signs of HPAI making discerning which disease is affecting birds difficult.

### H5N1

The H5N1 outbreak in dairy cattle appeared in a Texas dairy in March 2024. Since then, 14 states have been affected with 204 premises testing positive for the virus. The first Minnesota case appeared in June 2024. While it's the same virus as HPAI, the H5N1 response is a new experience for this nation. It's not considered a foreign animal disease and so the national response is different.

The dairy outbreak brought HPAI vaccination back into the discussion. It has not been allowed previously because of import rules in other countries not allowing vaccinated products. With dairy, there is a push for vaccination and there are multiple vaccine candidates preparing for market.

## Rabies

Seasonality of rabies was odd with cases starting earlier than usual this year. The mild winter allowed for skunks to keep running around, which are a main vector for rabies.

- 112 cases of rabies involving BAH investigation.
- 7 bovine positive or equivocal.
- 1 feline positive.

## Personnel

The Board has staff vacancies in the general counsel and field veterinarian positions. Interviews are in process for both jobs. Dr. Steve Kivisto has joined the Board in the companion animal veterinarian role. He previously worked in private practice and has experience teaching in veterinary technology.

## Legislative Update

Ms. Michelle Medina gave a legislative update.

With the election coming up in November, the possible impacts of Gov. Tim Walz leaving the state to serve as vice president are unknown. Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan would become governor. Which would mean the DFL control the governor's office, house, and senate. But this could change with this election, which could mean committees could change as well. We'll learn more after the election.

The next session begins Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025. Minnesota runs a two-year budget cycle, and this year is a budget year but also a policy year. Bonding likely to be an issue this year as it missed a vote last year.

Questions came up about board member confirmations. Board members were not voted on by the senate floor. All board members were automatically appointed because the senate did not act. Even if the governor changes, the board members will maintain their appointment.

## Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine Overview

Dr. Pamela Johnson, executive director of the Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine (MBVM) gave an overview on the organization's role in veterinary oversight. The MBVM regulates veterinarians, setting licensing requirements, standards of care, etc. The organization also responds to inquiries and complaints and provides reports to the public based on these investigations.

The recent passage of HF5247 created a statutory requirement for licensing of veterinary technicians. MBVM is creating a rulemaking taskforce to implement the new licensing requirements.

Board is anticipating budget deficit for FY 2025. To counteract this, MBVM plans to increase fees.

Board will be expanding by two members.

Dr. Fox asked with the increase in licenses, will there be more expenses but more income too?

Dr. Johnson said yes, the board will have to hire someone to help with workload. They are a self-funded organization, and all of the budget comes from fees. MBVM can't collect more than can be put into reserves.

## 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.

### Personnel

The lab has two open positions that have active searches. The poultry diagnostician position is still open. The first search was not successful, so a second round is in progress. A food animal diagnostician/pathologist position has been advertised. The lab also filled IT staff positions for an applications developer and a database analyst to strengthen internal systems.

### Caseload metrics

The lab conducted over 800,000 tests in the past fiscal year. This is less than the previous fiscal year. The total includes more than 25,000 cases from Minnesota stakeholders, around 10,000 cases from outside of Minnesota, as well as international cases. Each case can include multiple tests.

### Emerging Diseases and diagnostic caseloads

Regarding current disease outbreaks, the lab has conducted numerous tests with the following results:

- HPAI: 7,262 PCR tests for the disease between both Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL) and VDL as of Sept. 12, 2024.
- H5N1: 207 confirmed cases, 131 PCR tests
- aMPV: FY24 16,736 tests

### Projects Completed

CWD testing brought in-house.

Tularemia PCR.

Porcine lymphotropic herpesviruses (PLHV-1, PLHV-2, PLHV-3).

PRRSV differentiation PCR.

### Client survey

A client survey was completed to gauge the service needs of the lab's client base. The last survey was in 2017, and subsequent efforts were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 104 responses were collected with distribution across animal industry. Some highlights from the survey include:

- Around 81% Excellent or Good in overall satisfaction with laboratory services
- Goal was to create a baseline.

- More than 85% would use the VDL or MPTL again for lab services

## Projects in pipeline

The VDL has several projects in progress for the near future:

- AAVLD accreditation site visit (every 5 years)
- Digital and Physical Infrastructure Assessment
- Mapping of current, future clients and stakeholders
  - Courier logistics, collection centers, limited sample processing
- Applied research projects through competitive grant funding.

## Update on Global Trade and Minnesota's Livestock Industry

Mr. Thom Petersen, MDA commissioner, gave an update on global trade and Minnesota's livestock industry.

New plants are opening in outstate Minnesota for processing animals. This bolsters the ability of small processors to get their products to market.

On average nearly 20 percent of Minnesota's livestock products leave the country. International trade is important to the economy of the state. Canada and Mexico are top trading partners and Minnesota is lucky to have consulates from both in the state. Keeping negotiations and conversations open and ongoing means trade can be maintained.

Mr. Peterson has had the opportunity to host delegations and trade missions from other countries to our state including markets in Europe, South America, Asia, and elsewhere. Minnesota looks at exports and imports of animals and produce to these areas. In many places the changing demographics of both the people and the agriculture has resulted in changing food tastes creating new markets for poultry.

Ms. Sawatzke asked once you establish new markets, how do you maintain relationships. Once you establish new markets what does the education look like in terms of using the products? Mr. Peterson said keeping up relationships means there's someone to contact.

## USDA Update

Dr. Amy Green, acting area veterinarian in charge for the state of Minnesota, gave an update on the actions of USDA.

## NAHMS Sheep 2024

The National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) sheep study is conducted every year to establish a baseline for animal health.

Field staff questionnaires and biologics collection went from April to September 2024. Thirty-six farms were turned over to Minnesota:

- 21 questionnaires completed

- 4 questionnaires scheduled
- 16 biologics completed
- 7 biologics scheduled
- 6 declined to participate

Participation was high in the study this year. The questionnaire is lengthy and involves discussing with producers problems and diseases in herds as well as what mitigation steps are being followed.

## National Scrapie Eradication Program Update

Scrapie was first diagnosed in the United States in 1947. The eradication program has been on-going since 1952. The last positive case of scrapie in the U.S. was in 2021. As of 2028, if no cases appear, all states could be scrapie free. This opens a lot of opportunities for trade and export of sheep. In fiscal year 2025, the program will decrease total testing samples. The last three cases of scrapie were found through routine surveillance at slaughter.

## MDH Update

Dr. Stacy Holzbauer gave an update from the Minnesota Department of Health.

Regarding the HPAI and H5N1 in dairy cattle outbreaks, MDH takes action to monitor human health and respond as needed and support the responding agencies like the Board and USDA. MDH recommends personal protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, N95 masks, coveralls and boots be worn by those working with infected or suspect animals. Once an outbreak has been noted, MDH conducts a voluntary program for occupational workers to test and monitor the health of those who might have been exposed to the virus.

- 2,300 exposures reports to MDH, 172 flocks and 9 dairy herds
  - 2,171 poultry
  - 118 dairy
  - 11 companion animal
  - 2 people in monitoring

In Minnesota, no cases of have been found in humans, but some COVID-19 and rhinovirus have been found through testing.

## National Monitoring of Exposed Persons

Around 14,200 people have been monitored nationally for exposure to H5N1 in dairy cattle and HPAI.

Human cases in the U.S.: 15

- Poultry: 10 (Colorado)
- Dairy: 4 (Texas, Michigan, Colorado)

In September 2024, a case appeared in Missouri that has no known animal exposure. It was detected through routine influenza surveillance. The patient has multiple underlying conditions.

There is no evidence of person-to-person transmission of the virus and the risk to the general public remains low.

## **Tularemia**

MDH partners with the Board to conduct tularemia surveillance and 2024 has been a busy year. There have been five human cases of tularemia with four being the pneumonic variety and one ulceroglandular case. Fourteen animal cases have been detected with four canine cases and 10 feline cases. Canine cases are unusual.

Dr. Maynard asked if MDH has a distribution map for blastomycosis. Dr. Holzbauer maps are available on the MDH website, noting that it is interesting to see the distribution of cases based on exposure versus where the cases live. Most exposures are outside the metro area, but most cases live in the metro area.

Dr. Maynard asked if a member of the public sees a rabbit acting strangely what should they do. Dr. Holzbauer said if they are willing to incur the cost, they can bring the animal to the VDL for testing. MDH does environmental testing (collecting flies or ticks in places where cases are known).

Mr. Lucas Sjostrom of Minnesota Milk noted that the Board and MDA offered the services of Mr. David Weinand to complete a biosecurity plan for his dairy farm. The plan helped think about things they would change if they contracted a foreign animal disease on the premises.

Dr. Holzbauer said the Zoonotic Disease Unit at MDH does enteric investigations as well and offers a training program called Safer FACES (Farm Animal Contact Exhibits).

## **UMN College of Veterinary Medicine Update**

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

UMN is ranked 6th in the nation of employability of veterinary graduates, 11th in the world (tied with University of Liverpool).

The class of 2028 has started off with 125 students, 105 in St. Paul, 20 in Brookings, S.D. at South Dakota State University. Reciprocity has ended between South Dakota and Minnesota but will continue for veterinary students entering this year. This decision was a surprise to the institutions. A shortage of academic veterinarians continues, and UMN instructors are continuing to teach a few sections of SDSU classes.

Dr. Fox asked if there are any other successful programs that do not have reciprocity. Dr. Molgaard said that she did not have an answer. Struggles are common for programs like this.

Dr. Fox asked if there were any efforts from folks who are involved in the program on both sides to make exceptions for this program regarding reciprocity. Dr. Molgaard said those conversations sometimes begin at the legislative level and sometimes at the university level. This came out of the blue. We did look into keeping just this program included and we could not. Even getting just this year was a heavy lift.

Ms. Sawatzke asked if there is an increase in applicants, is there an opportunity to increase your class size. Dr. Molgaard said that is the College's plan, but multiple challenges, including funding, faculty, facilities and equipment, remain.

## HPAI and aMPV in Poultry

Dr. Shauna Voss gave an update on HPAI and aMPV in poultry in Minnesota.

### Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV)

aMPV is a highly infectious respiratory disease affecting poultry. It causes significant immunosuppression in birds which leads to secondary infections. Symptoms sometimes appear similar to HPAI which has resulted in an increase in Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) investigations to rule out HPAI.

#### April 19-June 30, 2024

- 288 positive premises (PCR+) in 37 counties
  - 276 Type A
  - 9 Type B
  - 4 Type A and B

Biosecurity measures seemed largely ineffective in slowing the spread of the disease and it moved very quickly throughout the state. aMPV is reportable in Minnesota, but it's not "actionable," meaning there are no indemnity/compensation programs, no regulatory control actions required by law.

The only vaccines currently available are inactive (killed) virus vaccines. Killed vaccines are less effective at providing protection compared to modified-live vaccines and difficult to administer to large numbers of birds. The industry is encouraging USDA to allow the importation and use of modified-live vaccines from other countries to try to limit the impacts of the disease.

### HPAI

Around 8.4 million birds have been depopulated due to HPAI detections in Minnesota since the start of the outbreak in 2022. Minnesota will be eligible for an HPAI free status once all current premises quarantines have been lifted and the remaining non poultry prems have completed their fallow periods. Fallow period by flock (Stearns 23) ends mid-November 2024. *Note: Minnesota self-declared HPAI free on Oct. 19, 2024.*

USDA will be implementing an interim rule specific to HPAI with the following requirements:

- Biosecurity audits for placements into Buffer Zones; and
- Biosecurity audits for HPAI restock. Farms must be reaudited every six months until the state is declared free from HPAI.

The new rule will include an updated version of the Control Area Audit Checklist that is currently being used. The Interim Rule is expected to be in effect in 2025.

Dr. Wheeler asked if a third-party audit will be allowed for the USDA rule. Dr. Voss said she did not know.

Ms. Sawatzke asked if the audit every six months is virtual or in person. Dr. Voss reported that the initial restock audit had to be conducted in person but was not sure if the follow-up (every 6 month audits) could be done virtually or if it has to be in-person.



## H5N1 in Dairy Cattle

Dr. Katie Cornille gave an update on the ongoing H5N1 in dairy cattle outbreak. In Minnesota, there have been a total of nine affected dairy herds, all found through diagnostics and clinical signs, and none through premovement testing.

### Response strategy

- Quarantines designated animals/items cannot enter or exit the premises without permitted approval.
  - Livestock, manure, milk
  - Lifted after 3 consecutive negative tests
- Incident Command Structure
  - Overlap with poultry, but different needs
  - Interagency

Dr. Katie Schlist asked if there are any considerations for testing waste milk/any milk not slated for pasteurization to leave a farm, regardless of the status of the farm. Dr. Cornille said there is nothing like that in place but noted that if milk is being collected from an unaffected animal, it would be pasteurized. And pasteurization does kill the virus.

## H5N1 Epidemiology

Dr. Sandy Larson, Minnesota Department of Agriculture public health veterinarian, gave an update on H5N1 epidemiology.

The first case was found in Texas in March 2024. It was considered a “spillover” event. The virus mutated into a new genetic genotype and was given a new name, H5N1 in Dairy Cattle.

The first confirmed farm in Minnesota was in June 2024. Although the exact timeframe is not known on when the virus first arrived in the state, but it is likely that it was circulating in Minnesota for weeks or even months prior to first confirmed detection. Farms where the disease was found were concentrated in West Central Minnesota.

The USDA and MDA have been conducting on-site investigations to determine how the virus is spread, including sampling of wild rodents and birds, testing other animals on the affected farms, and utilizing genetic sequencing to assess viral spread. The investigations also involved on-farm interviews with producers to look for epidemiological links to other farms. The on-site information gathered includes:

- General layout of the farm
- Feed storage
- Water sources
- Lagoon/manure storage locations
- Animal Housing
- Other animals on the farm.

Other factors that have been examined are:

- Tracing cattle movement on and off affected premises
- Tracing equipment movement shared with other facilities
- Tracing people movement on and off affected premises
- Looking at wild bird presence on the farm

Poultry are very susceptible to HPAI and dairy shed a lot of the virus in their milk. Small amounts of the virus being carried by people, equipment or other vectors could be enough for poultry to contract H5N1 from an otherwise unrelated dairy operation. What we don't know is how the virus is being moved from dairy to poultry.

The epidemiology in Minnesota suggests that the virus may be spread through the spreading of manure. Even though feces has not been determined to be a high source of shed virus, waste milk is often disposed of in/with manure. Other states have found links between people working on both dairy and poultry operations. Workers from separate dairy and poultry operations living together has also been noted.

Studies are ongoing and there is still a lot to learn about the disease.

Mr. Stade asked how close the dairy farms that contracted the virus were to poultry. Dr. Larson said it varied case by case.

Ms. Carrie Cremers asked if there is extra surveillance testing we could do to try to control these areas. Dr. Hoefs said there has been a learning curve. We're building the ship as we sail.

## Cervid Fencing Requirements Update

Dr. Heather Damico stated the 2023 legislative changes that went into effect Sept. 1 of this year require a physical barrier between wild and farmed Cervidae.

The plan for implementation by the Board includes the fencing plan approval:

- Producers submit plan
- Plans are reviewed by a fencing panel consisting of BAH and USDA employees
- Approved Plans are entered into BAH database
- Field inspectors verify fence matches plan during inspection

Additional inspection for 2024:

- If fence was approved prior to inspection, field inspector verifies the fence matches the plan.
- If no fence plan was submitted prior to inspection, form is filled out at inspection and submitted to office for approval.
- Moving forward this will be included as part of annual inspections.

Types of exclusionary fencing

- Double 8-foot fence
- Secondary coupled fence
- Solid fencing as part of existing 8-foot fence
- Electric Fence

- Combination of Types of Fencing

## Inspections Update

- 48 approved fencing plans
- 3 to be reviewed at next meeting
- 24 have incomplete plans or have not submitted a plan
- 12 exclusionary fencing inspections completed.
- DNR inspects all enclosures that house WTD

## Herd update

- 71 non WTD herds
- 13 WTD mixed herds

Since January 2024, 13 producers have gone out of business. To date, nine additional producers have informed us that they are getting out before the end of the year. The majority of those leaving the industry have cited the expense of putting up new fencing as their reason.

Ms. Sawatzke asked how many cervid producers were able to secure funding through the livestock grant for fencing. Dr. Damico answered that she did not know how many. A lot of people did not know what their plans were for fencing, so they had not applied. The grant also has a \$10,000 cap, and many of these fencing projects have a significantly higher cost estimate than that.

## U.S. SHIP Summary

Dr. Erik Jopp, assistant director of the Board, gave an update on the U.S. SHIP program.

The United States Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP) is based on the idea of the National Poultry Improvement Plan. The goal is to monitor for African Swine Fever (ASF) and Classical Swine Fever (CSF) and plan for a response in the event of an outbreak of either disease. It is a voluntary program for both producers and states. Currently 36 states are participating in the program with roughly two thirds of the U.S. swine population enrolled. In Minnesota, 57 farms/companies are enrolled, with around 5.35 million pigs.

One of the main goals of the program is to establish a database or repository of data that could be accessed by officials to track enrollment of farms and disease status.

The US SHIP House of Delegates met Sept. 3-5 in Bloomington and held sessions on proposed standards and resolutions. Three standards passed (requirements), and seven resolutions passed (explore content and direction). Minnesota has 13 voting members of a total of 249 voting members. A transitional plan to become an official USDA program was enacted, with a timeline in the next 12-18 months.

Dr. Wheeler asked whether the database would be public like the NPIP. Dr. Jopp said no. Dr. Hoefs said the point of the repository is for regulatory officials to be able to access and track down information.

## Next Meeting

The next quarterly meeting of the Board will be held 9:30 a.m. on December 10, 2024, and on Microsoft Teams.

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