



# Montana Board of Livestock Meeting Minutes

**(This Meeting was Open to the Public & By ZOOM)**

March 29, 2023

MT Department of Livestock Board Room #319  
301 N. Roberts, Helena, Montana

## Board Members Present

Gene Curry, Chairman (cattle producer)  
Alan Redfield (cattle producer)  
William Kleinsasser III (swine producer)  
Lily Andersen (dairy & poultry)

Greg Wichman (sheep producer)  
Jake Feddes (cattle producer)  
Nina Baucus (cattle producer)

**(Alan Redfield and Greg Wichman departed from the meeting at 3:09 pm)**

## Staff Present

Mike Honeycutt, EO  
Evan Waters, Centralized Services  
Buddy Hanrahan, Centralized Services  
Dale Haylett, Centralized Services  
Tom Shultz, Centralized Services  
Mike Spatz, Centralized Services  
Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection  
Darcy Alm, Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection

Donna Wilham, Adm. Assistant to EO  
Dr. Marty Zaluski, State Veterinarian  
Dr. Merry Michalski, Animal Health  
Dr. Greg Juda, Director, MVDL  
Dr. Bradley De Groot, Animal Health  
Ty Thomas, Brands Enforcement  
Jay Bodner, Brands Enforcement

## Public Present

Raylee Honeycutt, MT Stockgrowers Assn.  
Dalín Tidwell, USDA Wildlife Services  
Kim Ashmore, Sheep Mountain Creamery  
Logan O'Neil

Ian Kane, Montana Stockgrowers Assn  
Jim Ashmore, KJ'n Ranch  
George Hofer  
Motorola Moto G Pure

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## MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

**(:05) 8:00 AM**

Chairman Gene Curry called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM

## CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

**(:05) 8:00 AM**

Chairman Gene Curry called for BOL introductions, congratulating both the two new BOL appointees and Nina Baucus, the BOL re-appointee:

- Nina Baucus, Cattle Representative, Helena

- Ms. Baucus gave a brief history of the ranch she and her husband live on north of Helena, saying that they had turned management of it over to their son. The ranch had been started by her husband's great grandfather
- Although the ranch had originally started as a cattle ranch, it eventually was divided, with one part of it now owned by cousins of Nina's husband and was called the Sieben Live Stock and Cattle Company. The remaining part of the ranch had the topography and soil which were much more conducive to sheep, and now both cattle and sheep were raised on the property where Nina and her husband reside
- The cattle operation on the ranch, Ms. Baucus explained, was basically a cow/calf operation and the sheep raised there were purebred Rambouillet. The wool from the sheep was sold to the company that made Duckworth clothing
- Ms. Baucus said that the hay land they own in the Helena Valley was not part of the original ranch land, but had been owned by a Japanese family and had been sold to her husband's grandfather
- Lily Andersen, Dairy & Egg Representative, Livingston
  - Ms. Andersen said that growing up in Vermont, she used to milk 400 cows
  - She received her Animal Science/Livestock Management degree from Montana State University and Bozeman was also where she met her husband, who had a dairy
  - Currently, Ms. Andersen said, she and her husband milk 44 cows at their dairy in Livingston, utilizing the same milk parlor that was used there in 1950. They run beef cattle as well and put up their own barley and hay
  - Ms. Andersen said that she owned the Spur Line ranch supply and feed store in Livingston
- William Kleinsasser III, Swine Representative, Augusta
  - Mr. Kleinsasser said that he had been in Elk Creek Colony since 2011, but grew up at Milford Colony near Bowman's Corner
  - He said that in the early parts of his life he spent a lot of time in the dairy milking a lot of cows, but also helped with the chickens, hogs and sheep
  - Mr. Kleinsasser reported that he was put in charge of the swine operations at the Elk Creek Colony, where they don't finish their pigs, but ship them out when they reach 105 pounds. They sell to Latino markets in California, a fresh, not frozen market
    - Pigs were shipped every week, Mr. Kleinsasser explained, and they farrowed 45-50 sows per week
  - He said he had been a member of the Montana Pork Producers Council since 2019 and was on their board. He added that they were big in 4-H and that he enjoyed helping the kids with their 4-H projects
  - Nina Baucus thanked Mr. Kleinsasser for the information he shared with the Senate Ag Committee the day before on hogs as she felt it educated some of them and it helped her understand a lot
- Jake Feddes, Cattle Representative, Manhattan
  - Mr. Feddes shared that they had a registered Red Angus operation, that he was an independent representative for Superior Livestock and had a

- meat slaughter and processing facility in Churchill called Amsterdam Meat Shop and Feddes Family Meats
  - Mr. Feddes reported they were nearly done calving and had their bull sale on March 13, 2023. He was rolling into getting cattle delivered
  - Aling of his cows would start in about three weeks he said, and that he was ready for green grass and Spring
- Greg Wichman, Sheep Representative, Hilger
  - Mr. Wichman reported that they had given pre-lambing shots to their ewes and suspected that they would have some lambs that morning. Courtesy of the neighbor's bulls, Mr. Wichman said they just started calving
  - Unlike the past couple of years, Mr. Wichman said the reservoirs were running full and he hoped they could put up some hay this year, rather than buying it. He said he hoped lamb prices would perk up and that calf prices would stay up
- Alan Redfield, Cattle Representative, south of Livingston
  - Mr. Redfield shared that he and his wife work her family ranch south of Livingston, on the foothills. He grew up in northeastern Montana on a grain and cattle ranch and that he had met his wife when he went to MSU
  - Most of the cattle were bred by AI, which Mr. Redfield said was now done by his daughter, who did a good job with it. He added that when he was in the Legislature, he would cash his per diem check and sneak \$100 bills into his daughter's car to pay her for doing the AI work
  - Mr. Redfield said he was the only male on the place, being surrounded by 3-4 women all the time, who he said, don't tear up the machinery very much
- Gene Curry, Cattle Representative, Valier
  - Mr. Curry said that he graduated from MSU before Jake Feddes was born. Before going to MSU, he said his parents ran a grocery store in Valier and also had a small operation of cattle
  - They sell bred heifers and run some stockers in their cattle operation, summering them in Butte, Big Sandy and Browning. They also have a little livestock trucking business and farmland
  - Mr. Curry reported that they were about done calving heifers
- Ian Kane, the new Membership Rep from the Montana Stockgrowers Association introduced himself

## **BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**(18:32) 8:18 AM**

### **(8:22) 8:18 AM – BOARD APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES**

Gene Curry requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Montana Board of Livestock February 22, 2023 Meeting

- Nina Baucus expressed her appreciation of receiving the minutes way ahead of the meeting, as it made it easy to review them

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(18:40) 8:18 AM**

**Nina Baucus moved to approve the minutes from the Montana Board of Livestock February 22, 2023 Meeting. Jake Feddes seconded. The motion passed.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**(19:17) 8:19 AM**

### **(19:21) 8:19 AM – UPDATE ON GOVERNOR’S OGSM STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER STRATEGIC GOALS**

Mike Honeycutt reported on the March 14, 2023 OGSM (Objectives, Goals, Strategies and Measures) meeting with the Governor:

- In tracking the livestock per capita fee, Mr. Honeycutt said that the collections and reporting were all ahead of last year, at this point in time, but lower than in 2021
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that he attributed the increased number of reporters so far, as possibly some timing issues and also, that producers were more familiar with the Department of Revenue per capita reporting system than they were in the past
- Total liquid cash available to the DOL was going up with per capita coming in, Mr. Honeycutt said, with a cash balance up over \$14 million at the present time
  - Expenses were lower than the appropriated budget, Mr. Honeycutt reported, but, revenues were lower than expense,
  - If there were less livestock out there, Mr. Honeycutt said it would start to catch up, as the month of February, with per capita fees coming in was one of the first months in a long time where more revenue came in than money went out and he expected those two bars to even up in the next couple of months
- The DOL was doing really well in filling vacancies, Mr. Honeycutt said, explaining that this part of the dashboard was important because the DOL’s ability to provide service to people depended on those positions
  - In the Meat & Poultry area of the DOL, both the EIAO and the Label Specialist positions and some Inspector positions were close to being filled
- Mr. Honeycutt reported that in the market cattle movement in the state, there was significantly less cattle movement through the 13 Commission companies in 2023 than there were in 2022 and less than 2021, and less than 2020 by around 10,000 to 20,000
  - Cattle movement had slowed down, Mr. Honeycutt said, not being anything like the “24-month Fall Run” time of 2021-2022
- One high point that Mr. Honeycutt was able to report to the Governor was the Secure Beef Supply meetings getting traction and moving
- Mr. Honeycutt said that DOL staff did a great job finding locations for cattle, headed to Idaho for processing, that had come across at the Coutts border crossing and got trapped in Montana because of Monida Pass closing

- Mr. Honeycutt thanked Headwaters Livestock and Beaverhead Livestock for helping with the situation
- Mr. Honeycutt explained that the cattle trailers were sealed coming across the border into the United States and normally would remain sealed until they got to their final destination, but, those trailers had to be unsealed for the cattle to be off-loaded, fed and watered overnight. Veterinarians had to reseal those trailers before the cattle could continue their journey to Idaho, once Monida Pass was reopened
- Mr. Honeycutt said that the situation was a good training exercise, in a small way, for dealing with a stop-order movement, adding that for future reference, back roads would need to be monitored as well, when main roadways were blocked to traffic
- Alan Redfield wondered what would happen if truckers hauling cattle decided to take a back road when the main road was blocked and they got stuck on a back road with no facilities for the animals. Nina Baucus asked if there was a feedlot or place that would be able to house hogs temporarily, as you couldn't just unload them anywhere
- Mike Honeycutt said that in a biosecurity situation, the hope would always be that the USDA would allow things that were on the road to proceed to their final destination and not have to stop where they're at, as the DOL was pretty unprepared with facilities for all those animals that could be on the road, not to mention the lack of manpower, even with so many agencies helping, to cover the entire state
- The bison hazing operations around Yellowstone Park, at the time of the OGSM meeting, Mr. Honeycutt said, were proving successful
  - Pressure was being kept off the boundary between Zone 2 and Zone 3, Mr. Honeycutt said, and that some Tribal members would be hunting through the end of March
    - May 1<sup>st</sup> was when Zone 2 tolerance began for cow/calf pairs, meaning that if any bison came into Zone 2, there might need to be a cow/calf haze back. Bulls had year-round tolerance within Zone 2, Mr. Honeycutt said
    - Within Zone 2, the DOL was always trying to haze bison back to the Park boundary after May 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Honeycutt said, but, lethal removal was done when the bison got into Zone 3, north of Yankee Jim, Tom Meyer or around Dome Mountain, as in some of those places, they cannot be hazed back into the Park
    - Mr. Honeycutt hoped that the Forest Service, Park Service and FWP would help the DOL with hazing, if needed
  - The DOL helped with bison offal and carcass removal from the bison hunt in Beattie Gulch, working with the Forest Service, to get the area cleaned up before the bears started waking up
- Mr. Honeycutt was able to report to the Governor that the DOL Legislative budget and policy agendas were progressing well

- One low reported to the Governor was the loss of Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, the Assistant State Veterinarian, who took a Federal position with USDA, and now would have to be replaced
- There was a delay in the launch of the Brands software system as user group testing was being done and that had brought up some critical bugs in the system that needed to get worked out before launching, which hopefully would happen on May 7th
  - There was a set back with the PDF generator, which was a problem, because the PDF was needed to download it to your phone to use it as a transportation document. Mr. Honeycutt said that staff had identified a number of issues with the software, which would be worked through with the vendor in terms of processing sales at the markets
  - The forms had all been built for the ServiceNow platform, the one used electronically do transportation permits, etc. But, a lot of that working was tied up in the launch of the Brands software. Mr. Honeycutt said that 13 of the 50 items identified to transition online or digital had been done...the livestock dealer application, bison permits, market permit and sheep permits
- Mr. Honeycutt explained to the new BOL members that the OGSM idea was brought by the Governor to the Executive Branch of State Government where he asked every agency to identify what they would be focused to work on for the next six months and track results
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that the objective of the DOL was always to serve Montana's livestock producers and related businesses by fostering, growing, promoting and protecting the industry
  - The goal of the DOL was always to try and create an environment for 100% market access for our livestock producers that they could sell to whom they want to, where they want to
  - The horizon for the next six months, Mr. Honeycutt said, was June of this year and the four strategies the DOL had to meet the OGSM goal were: to support value-added processing, to monitor animal health disease prevalence, to maintain integrity and livestock ID marketing movement and improve the online and digital services for real-time data and improve the speed of commerce
  - At the next BOL meeting, Mr. Honeycutt said that they would be talking about the December horizon and what initiatives the DOL would be looking at fulfilling during the second half of the year
- Three producers had signed up in the Swine Health Improvement Program (SHIP) as of March 14, 2023, Mr. Honeycutt said, but, there were 34 that hadn't started the paperwork and the process to sign up for SHIP
  - Dr. Zaluski said that for both the Secure Pork Program and the Secure Beef Program, a biosecurity plan needed to be developed with their Veterinarian, and that had been part of the hold-up, along with short-staffing issues on the DOL side
  - William Kleinsasser explained that they had a program in place that tracked all of their animal movements, semen moves of every pig they

- ship. He said that another part of the program was to get producers certified to do labs and swabs if there were a shortage of staff to test animals in the event of a breakout
- Mike Honeycutt said, that unlike the Secure Beef Supply Plan, the Secure Pork Supply Plan had a lot of the same Veterinarians working with a lot of facilities rather than having a different Veterinarian at each facility
  - Mike Honeycutt said that OGSM Meetings were attended by the Governor, the Chief of Staff, the Director of the Department of Administration, the Director of the Office of Budget Program Planning, the Budget Director and Brian Simonson and himself from the DOL
  - The Governor requested that the DOL track State-inspected and custom exempt slaughter facilities activities
    - Mr. Honeycutt said that he did not think that the state would ever match the 2022 numbers, but that currently, the state numbers were progressing well to outpace 2021, which was systemically much higher than 2019 and 2020
    - There were systemic gains the last quarter in processing. Mr. Honeycutt reporting that some facilities had added to their ability to process more. The Colonies, he said, were certainly doing a lot more poultry than they used to do, probably because a lot of them could operate under the 10,000-bird exemption
    - Mr. Honeycutt said that there had been reports recently of a custom exempt operation selling meat versus selling animals on Facebook
    - In the slaughter by species numbers, Mr. Honeycutt reported that there had been a lot of increase in poultry, especially through the holiday season, when poultry numbers spike
    - There were fewer State-inspected facilities reported than custom exempt, and Mr. Honeycutt said it could possibly be because some State-inspected plants had gone to Federal inspection, but, the DOL had not been able to get those numbers from USDA
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that a plant in the Billings/Forsyth area was going to go to Federal inspection, but after a year, still had not, and so, the DOL figured they better hire someone to inspect in that area. A plant in the White Sulphur area had desires to go to Federal inspection as well, Mr. Honeycutt said, but, were still under State inspection

**(1:06:02) 9:05 AM – REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE OFFICER EVALUATION FORM – FUTURE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS**

Gene Curry and the rest of the BOL completed the annual evaluation process of the Executive Officer by identifying performance objectives and development goals:

- Mr. Curry explained that when the Executive Officer was evaluated each year, which had happened a couple months previous, the BOL had requested goals he should reach and evaluated him on his performance of those during the past year. Now, a list would be put together of goals each individual BOL member would like to see him perform in the future

- According to Mr. Curry, Mike Honeycutt had identified seven objectives for the next year for himself
- The first item Mr. Honeycutt listed was the Lab reaching groundbreaking before year-end
- The BOL discussed the USDA Audit item
  - The DOL must make sure that recommendations made in the past audit were rectified
  - Mike Honeycutt said that the DOL was trying to do a better job of being proactive with facilities that were chosen for the audit, helping them prepare for the audit
  - With new directives on HACCP plans just issued, the DOL needed to make sure facilities were up to date on those directives, as finding fault in an audit with that would not only be an issue for the plant, but for the DOL as well
- The BOL identified an item for Mr. Honeycutt that could be looked at during next year's performance evaluation: Fully engages the BOL
- During discussion regarding Union wage negotiations, Alan Redfield said that across State Government, Labor Unions negotiate wages off the Legislative cycle to give themselves leverage
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that if the DOL could negotiate with the Labor Unions on the right cycle, there would be six months of budget to manage and the DOL might be willing to take more budget risk. He didn't see any reason for not trying to change the timing of their two-year negotiation sessions
- Develop a recruitment plan, especially for Brands employees, and Gene Curry thought that Meat Inspectors could be added to that plan as well
- Mr. Honeycutt said that the DOL should connect with education programs in the state, based around Meat Processing, such as in Miles Community College, Big Sky High School in Missoula, or even the program at the college in Havre and put in more effort promoting that career field, letting them know that working as a Meat Inspector was a good option that was a fairly well-paid job with good benefits and that training was on-the-job
- For the Brands side of things, Mr. Honeycutt said that the DOL had the most success with employees that had attended Northwest College, Dawson Community College, Miles Community College and that the DOL should work to recruit students there
- Mr. Honeycutt reported that conversations had been started with the Department of Labor and that the DOL would like to see a high-school level certification program going through their Ag programs, maybe putting together a Brands livestock identification curriculum that teachers could teach students and get credentials from the DOL or take some of the students to markets and have them read brands
- A lot of Local Inspectors would need to be replaced over a short period of time in the near future, Mr. Honeycutt said, and the DOL needed some people that had some understanding of that job, and the credential program would be a good place to find them. Jake Feddes added that the Brand side was probably his

biggest concern as he thought the DOL was going to lose a lot of those Inspectors in the next 10 years

- Mike Honeycutt said that sometimes the DOL might have to accept hiring people that don't have all the certifications needed and some may have to be acquired while on the job
  - He had discussed with Mike Spatz to try and put together, for every position classification, the credentials needed for that position, what on-the-job training do they need and what professional development had the DOL seen people go through that had been successful
- Nina Baucus said that the salaries needed to be high enough so that employees were not snatched away by somebody else
  - Mike Honeycutt reported that there had been a low amount of applications on the Veterinary side and that a lot of it was the pay. He said that another challenge was filling Sanitarian positions, as it was hard to find folks with that background. Meat Inspection turnover, Mr. Honeycutt said was not as much about quantity of applicants as it was about quality of applicants and fit for that type of working environment. With District Investigators, some take a job in a certain area of the state to get their foot in the door, but, when a more desirable area comes open, they move there
  - Gene Curry said that with State employees, there was not an option to offer whatever salary it took to fill the position. Mike Honeycutt added that in some cases, such as filling the Assistant State Veterinarian position, the DOL was competing with the national marketplace and that in some of the specialty positions at the VDL, such as a Board-certified Veterinary Pathologist, only certain schools produce those people and the number of them produced was few
  - Nina Baucus said that affordable housing could be hard to find for employees
  - Alan Redfield reported that the Ag programs offered at high schools had gone down in number and that at the college level, they weren't offering programs like that as much to get Ag teachers into schools. He added that even the Veterinarians being trained in colleges, many were going into small animal rather than large animal training
- Mike Honeycutt said that to help recruit Veterinarians to work at the VDL, the DOL offered loan reimbursement for student loans at MSU in Bozeman for every year they work at the VDL, until their student loans were paid off. So, even though the VDL may pay \$10,000 less than a position at another lab, you get a certain amount of your student loan debt forgiven by working there
- Gene Curry said that some other items listed for next year's Executive Officer performance evaluation were, Facilitate with Working Groups That are Not Cattle Groups But Pay DOL Per Capita Fees for Equal Treatment; Develop a Successful Program for Identifying Livestock Owners; Work with the DOR to Successfully Access Livestock Owners that Don't Pay Per Capita Fees. He said if the BOL chose to evaluate the Executive Officer on those items they would have to have a metric measure in mind of what was success in those areas

- Mr. Curry said that he thought the BOL had a better understanding of another goal for the Executive Officer, which was Simplification of Animal Identification and that the BOL had also touched on the goal of Address the Local Brand Inspector Issue
- Mike Honeycutt said that although the Board of Milk Control controls the collection of the inspection fees on the volume of milk being shipped to processors, it was the BOL's responsibility to establish those inspection fees. He said that because of the geography of the state, another Sanitarian was added to staff, and now the DOL was operating by spending more than what was coming into that program, and had probably a year or year and a half until the fund balance being utilized to balance things out would have to be addressed
- Gene Curry said that the future objectives and goals would be compiled and Mike Honeycutt would send them out to the BOL to be utilized for next year's Executive Officer Evaluation

(1:56:50) **9:56 AM RECESS**

(1:56:59) **10:10 AM RECONVENE**

Gene Curry called the BOL meeting back to order

## **NEW BUSINESS**

(1:57:02) **10:10 AM**

### **(1:57:05) 10:10 AM – PROGRESS UPDATE ON DOL POLICY AND BUDGETED LEGISLATION**

Mike Honeycutt reported that the Legislative Session was starting to wind down and that his Legislative Update should be relatively quick:

- **HB44**, a bill that would revise State Stock Inspector documents, had been signed by the Governor
- **HB51**, the State Indemnity Fund, was signed by the Governor
- **HB59**, that would extend the sunset on all the LLB programs and the predator control statutory appropriation, had been signed by the Governor
- **HB66**, a Department of Revenue bill that would harmonize the due date of per capita fee with the reporting date was signed by the Governor
- **HB84**, the bill to eliminate commercial garbage feeding of swine permit and program had been signed by the Governor
- **HB100**, a containment bill which required owners, in a disease investigation, to gather their animals for testing, had been signed by the Governor
- **HB104**, the bill to remove the residency requirement for our Aerial Hunting Program, had been signed by the Governor
- **HB153**, a bill to modernize the livestock market language, particularly around satellite video auctions was signed by the Governor
- **HB158**, a bill carried for the DOL by Representative Kassmier that would update the custom-exempt laws to match the Federal Meat Inspection Act received

unanimous Executive action the day before and would be headed to the Senate floor

- **HB159**, repeal of the Livestock Crimestoppers Act, received unanimous Executive Action in Senate Ag the day before, and was headed to the Senate floor
- **HB388**, a bill carried by Representative Kassmier, but not a DOL bill, would increase penalties for livestock that were brought into Montana without meeting State health requirements, received unanimous Executive action the day before from Senate Ag and was headed to the Senate floor
- **HB662**, a bill, carried by Representative Fred Anderson, would prohibit grazing on public land without permission. The DOL went in informationally but did not take a position on the bill. The bill was tabled
  - Representative Anderson, according to Mike Honeycutt, said he had some constituent concern with people's livestock roaming on their Forest Service and BLM allotments and he wanted to make that more illegal than it already was
- **HB767**, a bill, carried by Representative Kassmier to allow a process and law for people to bring forward new brand characters not ever issued by the DOL office, before the BOL, passed with unanimous Executive Action the day before in Senate Ag and was headed to the Senate floor
- **HB847**, a bill, carried by Representative Dooling would allow people to use their brand image as their personalized license plate. The DOL did not take a position on the bill, and the Department of Corrections went into the bill hearing informationally, as they had to do a fiscal note, on the cost for them to update their system to screen print those license plates if it passed
- **HB960**, a newer bill that was tagged as livestock, was concerning property taxes for recreational land classification
- **HJ7**, a resolution carried by Representative Long on the Livingston Roundup 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, made it all the way through
- **SB37** was a BOL bill carried by Senator Hertz to bring some harmony between the species covered by the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the State Act, was heard in House Ag, but there had been no Executive Action taken on it yet
- **SB52** a bill regarding guard dogs had some early controversy and had been dead, pretty much since the beginning
- **SB71** a bill being carried for the DOL by Senator Solomon that would update and modernize a lot of the language in the Milk Control policies, had been heard in House Ag and Mr. Honeycutt hoped it would get Executive Action
- **SB78** a LLB bill that would change reimbursement values for registered livestock had been heard in House Ag
  - This bill was carried, according to Mr. Honeycutt, because of the possibility that predation payments on one or two registered animals could consume the entire LLB livestock predation budget if there weren't some limitations
  - The bill would allow the LLB, for registered livestock, to have a lower value than the market value. It would be a fair market value, but not as a registered animal, because of the expense that could create

- **SB202** a bill carried by Senator Hertz was tagged as livestock and would do some tweaking to the Local Food Choice Act, dealing mainly with the authority Counties had. Mr. Honeycutt explained that there had been some problems with County ordinances that had been enacted preventing folks from doing things that under State law they'd be allowed to do under the Local Food Choice Act
- **SB347**, a bill carried by Senator Curdy regarding Right to Repair, was tabled
- **SB375**, a bill carried by Senator Lang on removing notice for killing of animals running at large was heard in House Ag. Mr. Honeycutt said that the DOL flipped positions when amendments were made to the bill and now, the DOL supports it
  - The bill basically shortened the window from 10 days to two days that someone has to remove their stock from your property and requires a notice to the owner and to the DOL
- **SB537**, a bill carried by Senator Small, was tagged Livestock and would provide tax incentives for people buying Montana-produced food
- **SB524** is a bill that was tagged Livestock and also tagged several agencies. Mr. Honeycutt said he read it and really couldn't understand it and suggested talking to Senator Hertz about it
- **SJ14**, a resolution carried by Senator Lang, that the DOL chose to not go in on, would oppose bison introduction at the CMR Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Honeycutt said the resolution was moving right along and expected to get all the way through the process
- **SR64** received its hearing the day before and was passed unanimously on Executive Action out of the Senate Ag Committee and confirmed the appointees to the BOL. It would be heading to the Senate floor for a full vote within the next week
- **HB2** made it through House Appropriations and through the House floor with no changes to any of the decision packages requested
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that the vacancy savings percentage was increased by 1%, to 5%, which meant a 107,000 reduction in Personal Services expenditures for the DOL. Mr. Honeycutt said that the DOL could manage the increase
  - The inflation figures the Governor's Office used for putting the budget together were decreased, meaning there was an Operating Expense reduction of \$64,000, because they didn't agree that inflation was quite as high as the Governor thought it was
- **HB5 and HB10** both received Executive Action with no changes to the DOL's requests and were continuing to move along. HB5 was the Long-Range Planning Bill that would cover the inflationary increase for the new combined Lab Complex. HB10 was another Long-Range Planning Bill that would cover the \$1 million the DOL requested for its IT Plan to continue upgrades to the IT software systems over the next biennium
  - There had already been a minimum overhaul, if not replacement of the Animal Health system, USAHerds and more upgrades were needed; upgrades to the Brands system were also included in that request
- **HB13**, the State Pay Plan, had passed both chambers

- Mr. Honeycutt said there had been no Legislative raise last Session, and so the bill was requesting that every classified, full-time State employee receive a \$1,040 bonus, with less-than-full-time employees receiving a prorated amount. The DOL did receive authority to cover that bonus, which would be around \$182,000 for the DOL. Mr. Honeycutt said that there was also another portion of the pay plan that Mike Spatz would address in his segment
- Gene Curry said that after the evaluation of Executive Officer Mike Honeycutt, there was no corresponding salary adjustment made, as usually happens. He said the reason for this was because when he had spoken to the Governor about it, he requested that the BOL delay their compensation package until the compensation packages for other Department Heads were decided and that would help the BOL decide what to do for Mr. Honeycutt

## **EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES TO BOARD AND DISCUSSIONS**

**(2:30:51) 10:44 AM**

### **(2:31:06) 10:45 AM HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATES**

Mike Spatz, Human Resource Officer for the DOL introduced himself and distributed handouts to the BOL

### **(2:32:00) 10:45 AM Staff Openings, Recruitment and General Updates**

Mike Spatz updated the BOL on staff openings and recruitment in the DOL:

- Mr. Spatz reported that the DOL was currently, actively recruiting for eight positions, but that six of the positions were in the heavy screening and interview stages and two postings were collecting applications
  - There were two new hires since the last BOL meeting, both of those in the Brands Enforcement Division
  - There were two newly vacated positions, one in the Brands Enforcement Division and one in the Animal Health Bureau
- Mr. Spatz gave an update on HB13, the State Pay Plan that just passed the Legislature and was awaiting the Governor's signature
  - The plan would cover a wage increase for all State employees in 2023 and 2024 of \$1.50/hour or 4%, whichever was greater in each of the next two years of the biennium
  - Mr. Spatz reported that the health class benefit would not increase for the biennium
  - Mike Honeycutt explained that the State had changed healthcare providers from Allegiance to Blue Cross/Blue Shield
  - Another part of the State Pay Plan was a flexible holiday where employees could replace the every-other-year election holiday with a floating day holiday
- Mr. Spatz reported that setting up Job Fairs was in the works, adding that the DOL wanted to talk to people who do want to work for the DOL. He said that if the BOL or employees had any ideas for promoting the DOL jobs, that he was open to input

- Although he would not like to take anyone who was already busy on their work at the DOL away from their job, he thought that those were the best people to talk about the jobs and give job seekers a realistic preview of what goes on at the DOL
- Gene Curry said that some students might not want to attend college and would maybe be more interested in doing an apprenticeship at the DOL
- Alan Redfield said that the FFA Convention would be a place to set up a table because you'd be hitting the people who would be fired up for that type of job. He said that at one time, they had 80-some high schools represented at one of those conventions

**(2:43:51) 10:57 AM DISCUSS POTENTIAL FOR HIRING AGENCY LEGAL COUNSEL/BLM BOARD OF LAND APPEALS STATUS UPDATE**

Mike Honeycutt reported that he would not ask for any decision to be made today, but said that it was becoming more apparent that the DOL needed to think about hiring legal counsel again:

- The DOL had not had direct legal counsel for 15-16 years, Mr. Honeycutt said, but there were some things that had changed recently to drive the need for one
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that due to turnover at Agency Legal Services (ALS), the counsel they offered to the DOL had not been consistent in being able to handle day-to-day legal affairs
  - Mr. Honeycutt went on to say that because DOL had not been getting the quality of service from ALS they had not been consulting them and chose to go forward without the consultation of an attorney in some cases
  - In dealing with personnel issues, when dealing with thorny personal issues, Mr. Honeycutt said it was good to have legal counsel looking at everything you're doing each step of the way to assure you're following State processes
  - Mr. Honeycutt explained that because the DOL was a cooperator on the BLM grazing rule changes in the BLM Sage Grouse Plan that were afoot, he felt the DOL may be in a more litigious situation because of appealing some of the Federal decisions. He added that the Governor's Office was saying it was time for the DOL to get their own attorney, as they could not represent the DOL and themselves all the time,
  - Mr. Honeycutt reminded the BOL of the current lawsuit against Montana USDA Wildlife Services and the threat that some court decisions could disrupt their services, and how the DOL would need their own in-house counsel to be an intervener in supporting Wildlife Services
  - Mike Spatz had been requested by Mr. Honeycutt to look into unused FTEs to repurpose for an in-house counsel position and Mr. Honeycutt mentioned the one open FTE in the Milk Control area he didn't foresee being utilized again for the Milk Control area
  - Mike Honeycutt said that Risk Management and Tort Defense would still be utilized for damages claims as they would try to mediate the settlement to them, although if the DOL had in-house counsel, they would be the one to supply information requested from them. In-house counsel could also

be utilized to analyze and work on Public Records Requests. Agency Legal Services could still be utilized, he added, if different representation was needed, in the case of a situation with a DOL employee

- Because the position would not be categorized as “Chief Legal Counsel,”, the salary range could be lower, and Mr. Honeycutt figured that in-house counsel would cost the DOL a fifth or sixth of the \$200-\$300/hour cost of hiring outside counsel
- Jake Feddes requested a five-year average of what the DOL had spent on outside counsel so it could be weighed against what the potential salary would be for in-house counsel. Nina Baucus requested a job description and job duties
- The BLM Board of Land Appeal status, Mr. Honeycutt reported, was in the discovery phase and was progressing and moving forward for all parties involved

●  
**(2:56:37) 11:10 AM YELLOWSTONE BISON WINTER OPERATIONS UPDATE**

Mike Honeycutt said that he had a more recent Bison Winter Operations Update than he had planned because Clay Vines and Mike Himmelspach had texted him more information that morning

- Mike Honeycutt said that Mr. Himmelspach had reported that the north side/west side were pretty much under control
- The roads had been plowed, and Mr. Honeycutt said that sometimes means the bison would begin to use them, but, the snow was still pretty deep and had acted as a buffer from having them move too much out on the west side of the Park
  - On the north side of the Park, it was report that there were about 300 head outside the Park, half of them on the Royal Teton Ranch property at Spring Creek, another big group were in the Beattie Gulch area and about 20 in the trestle hay meadow, which lies a little further north from the Royal Teton Ranch
  - Also reported was that there were about another 1,000 head, just inside the Park around Stephen’s Creek and still, around 1,300 were between Mammoth and the Yankee Jim/Tom Miner areas, still inside the Park, but pushing the boundary
- Mr. Honeycutt reported that bison removal this year was still about 1,500 and that the bison hunting was sporadic. Yellowstone had removed 600-700 bison through trapping. Dr. Marty Zaluski said he thought the trap was more or less full at this point
- Dr. Zaluski reported that some bison were being held in the trap, not for quarantine, but to keep the bison from leaving the Park, because they did not want too many removed, based on commitments made for genetic diversity. Mr. Honeycutt said that at one of the previous IBMP meetings, it was discussed that 25% of a population could be removed within a given year without doing a lot of genetic damage
- Mike Honeycutt said that it had been a successful year for bison removal this year, as a minimum of 800 bison would need to be removed to keep the population even in the Park, and, with the number of bison removed this year, Mr. Honeycutt thought it was the first time since 2016 the number was going in a

declining population direction. He figured that next year, the population count of bison should be around 5,200-ish, which was still north of the number the DOL wanted to manage to

- The bison being held in the trap, Dr. Zaluski explained, were separate from the quarantined animals
- It was a hope, Mike Honeycutt said, that when the held bison were turned loose, that they would walk north and not south. Dr. Zaluski said that bison behavior was impacted when they were trapped for a time, sharing that when quarantine pens had been sabotaged at one time, the bison were cut loose but a number of them hung around the pens where they knew the feed was good

## **PREDATOR CONTROL**

**(3:08:45) 11:22 AM**

Dalin Tidwell, Montana State Director for USDA Wildlife Services, introduced himself

### **(3:09:10) 11:23 AM UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF USDA WILDLIFE SERVICES (Presented by Dalin Tidwell, Montana State Director)**

#### **(3:09:10) 11:23 AM – General Updates**

Dalin Tidwell updated the BOL on activities at USDA Wildlife Services:

- Mr. Tidwell reported on the status of the DOL's latest helicopter, the 765
- Wildlife Services decided to go ahead with getting the 765 up north on the Hi-Line in conjunction with Blaine and Phillips Counties getting their cattle petition sorted out and coming into the program and be able to utilize the helicopter more
  - Mr. Tidwell explained that geographically, it made sense to have the 765 up there, which would help increase their response time for the area
  - On any good day, Mr. Tidwell reported that Wildlife Services was running up to 5 or 6 aircraft at one time, racking up a lot of good flying hours. He said that the maintenance shop was doing a lot of 100-hour inspections
- Mr. Tidwell made note of the heavy coyote numbers this year, in the number of calls and the number of takes as well. He said there was a lot of livestock killing going on because of coyote damage
  - The weather conditions, Mr. Tidwell said, made all the difference in coyote work this year and its success
- Mr. Tidwell reported that Wildlife Services was deep into the lawsuit Mr. Honeycutt had spoken about earlier and were utilizing Department of Justice representation. He said that Wildlife Services was working with US Fish and Wildlife with the biological opinion that they were producing as a part of that lawsuit
  - The complaint, Mr. Tidwell said, contained false details, some quite in error, including references to the DOL. He said that the references to the DOL were quite off the mark on the involvement they claim the DOL had in, specifically grizzly bear work and trapping. Wildlife Services was in the phase of clarifying those false details
- Grizzly depredation was quite early this year, Mr. Tidwell reported, with US Fish and Wildlife requesting that Wildlife Services remove one sub-adult in Pondera

County due to livestock depredation. He added that because of the snow cover, the bears were coming out of the hole and there wasn't much on the ground to eat

- Mr. Tidwell explained that every livestock investigation that Wildlife Services goes through, they work with US Fish and Wildlife who were the authority as to the disposition of the animal and that there was a cooperative service agreement that allowed some funding to be billed directly to the Us Fish and Wildlife
- The US Fish and Wildlife fund was specifically for grizzly bear management, Mr. Tidwell said. There also was a standing agreement with FWP specifically for wolf management

### **(3:20:25) 11:34 AM LIVESTOCK LOSS BOARD (LLB) PREDATION CLAIMS REPORT AND GENERAL UPDATES**

Mike Honeycutt explained that the Livestock Loss Board report was "pretty skinny" because it was a slow time of year for LLB activities. He added that if the BOL wanted to review Mr. Edwards' report, he would defer their questions to him

## **CENTRALIZED SERVICES DIVISION REPORTS**

### **(3:21:20) 11:35 AM**

#### **(3:22:13) 11:35 AM – FISCAL BUREAU**

Evan Waters, Finance Accounting Bureau Chief, introduced himself and said that he would be reporting for Brian Simonson who was on vacation

#### **(3:22:50) 11:36 AM – Per Capita Fee Collections Update**

Evan Waters explained that even though per capita reports were due by March 1<sup>st</sup>, there were a lot of people who hadn't reported. But, he said he would report on the numbers that had been collected by the Department of Revenue (DOR):

- Reports show that there were 1,200 more reports filed in '23 than in '22. Mr. Waters said he felt that the online filing system was working a little better than it was last year
- So far, Mr. Waters said, 8,900 reports had been received, 58% of the 15,400 total reported on June 30<sup>th</sup> of last year. Per capita revenue received so far was about 71% of what it was last year
- For those who had not paid, Mr. Waters said the DOR would be sending out estimated bills around May 1st, but that most producers would be paying on their actual, rather than estimated number, because there may be less livestock on their property than they had a year ago

#### **(3:26:48) 11:41 AM – February 28, 2023 State Special Revenue Report**

Evan Waters reported on the most recent State Special Revenue numbers:

- The per capita fee was down \$86,000 from the previous year, but did include anything that had been collected for the prior years
- Direct Cost Recovery was down by \$75,000, Mr. Waters said, due to the decreased percentage of what the DOL charged the Federal program

- Investment Income was significantly higher because the return rate went up 4%
- Mr. Waters explained that the New Brands and Transfers numbers would show less revenue because of being at the beginning of a 10-year amortization period. That revenue would grow as the years go by
  - Mr. Honeycutt thanked Mr. Waters and the CSD folks because the amortization plan had been started about five years ago after a Legislative audit finding showed the DOL had been spending the money too early. This was an example of multi-year planning that would help build a fund balance
- Mr. Waters reported that the Market Inspection Fees were down \$500,000. Field Inspections were down as well
  - Mr. Honeycutt explained that the Market Inspection Fees directly correlated to having 260,000 fewer animals go through the Commission companies this fiscal year compared to the previous fiscal year at this point. He reminded the BOL that the previous year, however, was abnormal and that this year's numbers were somewhat closer to normal
  - Last year's numbers were nearly \$1.5 million, Mr. Waters adding that in '21 they were \$1.16 million, in '20 they were \$1.17 million and in '19, they were almost \$1 million
- Milk Inspection was around \$25,000 less than the previous year, Mr. Waters thinking it was due to losing some dairies over the past year
  - Mr. Honeycutt said that although a number of dairies were lost, milk production remained relatively unchanged. It was who produced the volume of milk that had changed and that the now-larger dairies were hitting their monthly caps than before. He added that the fund balance had helped with supporting the DOL through the situation, but, it would have to be dealt with, probably in the next eight or nine months
  - Mr. Honeycutt wanted to wait for the Legislative Session to be over with before addressing the monthly caps, and when that was done, to engage with the Montana Milk Producers Association and the Darigold producers
- The Milk program used to have five Inspectors, Mr. Honeycutt said, and pared that down to two to handle both milk and egg inspection. But, with the geography of dairies, it was necessary to add another Sanitarian to cover the Bozeman/Billings markets. A big future challenge would be if multiple pool dairy businesses of any size and scale or any processing opened further east than Billings, because, as of right now, there were none further east than Billings
- The egg grading program would continue to rise, Mr. Waters said, and should continue to grow through the end of the year and into October
- VDL Lab fees were catching up with the lab charges that had been seen at the beginning of the year
- Mr. Waters expected to see a jump in the Wolf Donation Fund monies that were transferred to Wildlife Services in July. He said that fishing licenses had to be renewed and that's a time when the fund could receive the voluntary donations. He did add that anyone, however, could write a check anytime to the DOL for the Wolf Donation Fund

- Mr. Honeycutt explained that the Wolf Donation Fund monies were used by Wildlife Services, specifically for wolf work. The funds were received by the DOL because when the program first came into being, FWP was concerned that the funds would disrupt their Pittman-Robertson dollars
- Gene Curry said that the reasoning behind hunters and fishermen donating to the program was because the depredation of the wildlife species by the wolf would hurt their hunting success

**(3:44:02) 11:58 AM – March 2023 Through June 2023 Expenditure Projections**

Evan Waters reported on expenditure projections for March 2023 through June 2023:

- Nina Baucus explained for the new BOL members that the numbers shown in this report were for authority, not cash. Evan Waters explained further that it was the budget that the DOL could spend
- In Personal Services, there was about a \$77,000 deficit in budgeted authority, but, in Operations, numbers were about \$215,000 to the good, Mr. Waters adding that was money that could be spent or moved to use with a Budget Control Document (BDC), even to Personal Services if needed
  - Mike Honeycutt explained that the reason that personal Services was projecting negative was because there had been some sizable retirement payouts triggered recently
- The money showing in this document for equipment was all the money the DOL planned on spending for HB2
- There were around \$283,000 of Transfers left to spend
- Mr. Waters said that the DOL still had to get billed by FWP for \$180,000 for the elk work and would also owe the DOR for the per capita fee collections, which would be around \$100,000
- Mr. Waters said that in Centralized Services was projecting about \$117,000 to the positive

**(3:49:07) 12:03 PM – February 28, 2023 Budget Status Report**

Evan Waters did a brief overview of the February 28, 2023 Budget Status Report:

- The Personal Services number was \$22,000 less than last year, Mr. Waters figuring that there must have been some vacancy savings in it
- There was a health insurance holiday in November of 2021, which did not happen this year, explaining why there was around \$200,000 more spent in Benefits
- Mr. Honeycutt said that with the New Pay Plan, the employee insurance rates were kept stable for a time, but, he wasn't sure whether or not the overall premiums may have gone up and if so, the DOL might have to eat that increase
- Mr. Waters pointed out that there was a timing of some expenses, citing the ITSD payment, a big bill that came in July or August that would throw expenses out of whack, because you've already expended 60% of your budget in the first two months

**(3:54:49) 12:08 PM LUNCH/EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**(3:55:13) 1:14 PM RECONVENE**

## **BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

**(3:55:28) 1:14 PM**

Mike Honeycutt started the Brands Enforcement Division presentation for Jay Bodner

**(3:55:33) 1:15 PM - REQUEST TO HIRE**

**(3:55:39) 1:15 PM – District 19 Investigator/District 9 Investigator**

Mike Honeycutt explained that the District 19 Investigator in the Miles City area left the DOL and then, the District 9 Investigator in Dillon also resigned, and he was requesting the BOL approve the hire of both positions

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(3:56:18) 1:15 PM**

**Alan Redfield moved to approve the hire of a District 19 and a District 9 Investigator. Jake Feddes seconded. The motion passed.**

Jay Bodner thanked the BOL for approving both hires. He added that the District 9 position was a dual position with that person not only serving as a District Investigator, but the Market Supervisor as well for the Dillon Auction Market

**(3:57:39) 1:17 PM BRANDS ENFORCEMENT UPDATE**

Jay Bodner said he would give a quick update on a couple other issues that were being worked on in the Brands Division

**(3:57:48) 1:17 PM – Market and Dealer Audits and License Renewals**

Jay Bodner gave an update on where the DOL was with the market and dealer audits and the licensing renewal period:

- There were 13 auction markets and 410 livestock dealers in the state of Montana that the DOL licenses, Mr. Bodner said
  - The DOL regulates them, monitors any kind of financial condition and was the trustee on many of the bonds
  - The DOL was currently going through the license renewal period that was due to expire on May 1, 2023
  - Mr. Bodner reported that letters had been sent to the livestock dealers on March 15, 2023 and to the markets on March 17, 2023 to be sure they were received in a timely manner for everybody to get their license renewed, which he said could also be done online
  - Current livestock dealers would then be posted on the BOL website on April 1, 2023. The renewal letter informed the dealers that they would be listed on the website
- Gene Curry shared that Mike Honeycutt had shared with him that a dealer who had been audited had approached him and thanked the DOL for doing that

- Jay Bodner explained that a percentage of markets and dealers were audited, and that the first round of audits were sent to a select number in January. He said he wanted to make sure there was a very regimented process in place so that every audit was conducted the same way, asking for the same information
  - Kelly Calnan, the current Market Auditor for the DOL, planned to make a swing into the eastern markets in the Spring, Mr. Bodner said
  - Mr. Bodner said that a lot of information needed for a market audit could be shared with the DOL before they physically show up at the market location to finalize the audit being conducted. He added that the information received from the market can be reviewed in case there were any questions before the actual visit to the market
  - In the case of a dealer audit, Mr. Bodner said that a letter was sent out to them listing the records requested. Those audits were conducted electronically and the DOL doesn't show up at their place of business

**(4:06:38) 1:25 PM – Western States Livestock Rural Enforcement Association Meeting Update**

Jay Bodner reported on the Western States Livestock Rural Enforcement Association meeting held in March in Reno, Nevada:

- Mr. Bodner reported that with the vacancy in the Eastern District Administrator position, that he and Ty Thomas, the Assistant Brands Administrator and Chief Law Enforcement Agent for the DOL, were the only two from the DOL who attended the meeting
- Ty Thomas was on the Western States Board, which was a group made up of those in the livestock industry from US states and Canadian provinces, who basically looked at any kind of theft or disease and stop any of it from occurring
- Mr. Bodner reported on some of the broad topics covered at that meeting
  - A police officer who retired after 23 years did an extensive four-hour session on how to conduct interviews, information that Mr. Bodner felt could be shared with the District Investigators
  - A Forensic Scientist from UC Davis discussed some of the DNA work they do on both animals and people as well
  - Mr. Bodner said that a man from Nova Scotia did a presentation on what to look for regarding human trafficking
  - The new Director for the Department of Ag for Nevada gave an extensive presentation on how to conduct a necropsy, demonstrating the tools, showing a lot of video. Mr. Bodner said that he learned one of the big things to do before starting work on a dead cow out in the field was to canvas the environment and surroundings, take pictures, as you never know what you might find
  - A couple judges talked about court testimony and some ways to conduct yourself and how to protect yourself as the frontline officer
  - An update was given, Mr. Bodner said on the International Livestock Identification Association, an association that the DOL was a member of and that Ty Thomas was on their board

**(4:14:14) 1:33 PM – Discuss Process for Transfer of Market Ownership**

Jay Bodner updated the BOL on both the statutory and rule requirements for the transfer of market ownership. Kelly Calnan, Market Auditor, compiled a handout for the BOL's review:

- Mr. Bodner said that the handout was provided to any market that potentially would be changing or transferring any ownership of a market. The handout included a checklist of requirements from the buyer and seller that the DOL would require
- Mr. Bodner pointed out that the market must send a letter to the DOL that indicated their interest in and intent to transfer the ownership of the market. He said that one big item was a hearing and the 10-day time frame around that hearing requirement
  - Mike Honeycutt said that the letter of intent to sell was what triggered the start of the process and if anyone was considering transferring ownership of their market they might want to contact the DOL
  - Mike Honeycutt and Jake Feddes shared stories of market owners that thought they could transfer their market to the new owner without going through the proper process
- The notification to railroads was in rule and would be an item considered for removal when those administrative rules regarding the transfer of market ownership were updated, Mr. Bodner said
  - Mike Honeycutt said that trains do not load or offload at any of the current markets
- Mr. Bodner talked about the importance of the DOL reviewing both the market owner's and the potential purchaser's current financial statements, because the DOL wanted to make sure that when people sell their animals at that market they receive their funds
  - Mr. Honeycutt explained that in advising people regarding listing the ratio of assets to liabilities, your personal ranch and all your cattle are not part of an LLC and do not count, but, assets that a person put forward need to be assets that would be accessible should the market fail, to make sure that producers get paid when they sell their livestock at that market

**(4:23:19) 1:42 PM – Progress Update on New Brands Software System**

Jay Bodner updated the BOL on the new Brands software system called ServiceNow that was currently in the testing stage:

- Mr. Bodner said that even though there were several transactions that could take place with the new software system in the livestock markets and in field inspection for the District Investigators, the software system hadn't been integrated yet for Local Inspectors
- Once all the bugs were worked out of the system, a complex one, Mr. Bodner said, there would be more capabilities for digital transactions than the Brands Division currently has
- Brands staff had been testing the system with real numbers from a previous sale to see how it would be in a live situation. For field staff, one limitation Mr. Bodner

said, was cell phone coverage. Brands staff had been documenting issues as they tested the software and those had been reported that to the IT staff and then, there were meetings with the contractor regarding those issues  
Jay Bodner reported on HB487, the personalized plates bill with a person's brand image, saying that he wasn't sure of the fate of that bill:

- Mr. Bodner said that in the hearing, the biggest concern regarding the bill from the Justice side was that nobody knew how to read a brand and, because of that, how did a law enforcement person call in a plate
- The Department of Corrections said that the challenge with having a brand on a personalized plate would be that when making the license plate, they had very limited characters

Jay Bodner reported on HB767, a bill carried by Representative Kassmier that would allow the BOL to review any application for new characters or images for a brand:

- Mr. Bodner said that the DOL attended the hearing as an informational witness and with many questions asked, he said it seemed like there was a fair amount of excitement over that bill, but, would wait and see what the future of it was

## **ANIMAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY DIVISION REPORTS**

**(4:30:06) 1:49 PM**

### **(4:30:16) 1:49 PM – ANIMAL HEALTH BUREAU**

Mike Honeycutt said that there was a lag time on the ZOOM and so Dr. Zaluski wasn't in the room yet. He said he would start for him

### **(4:30:16) 1:49 PM – Request to Purchase Trich Tags**

Mike Honeycutt said that this was an annual request for the BOL to approve the purchase of the new color of Trich tags:

- Mr. Honeycutt explained that each year, there was a new color of tag issued for a period of five years, and then the colors would cycle through again.
- Dr. Marty Zaluski explained that the company used to print the Trich tags was not the least expensive, but the one that could print on both sides of the tag, allowing the DOL to put a number on the front of it and a Montana map outline on the back of it
- The Trich tags, Dr. Zaluski said, were sold to veterinarians when they requested their tags for bull testing, so that even though the tags initially cost the DOL, the expense of that was recouped when they were sold, the intent of that being they are cost-neutral

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(4:31:58) 1:51 PM**

**Jake Feddes moved to approve the purchase of the Trich tags for the 2024 bull testing season, in the Animal Health Bureau. Alan Redfield seconded. The motion passed.**

**(4:33:17) 1:52 PM – CAN Brand Import Rule – Notice 32-23-337**

Dr. Marty Zaluski reported that the rule proposal the BOL approved to be published for public comment removing the hot-iron brand requirement for animals coming in from Canada to the United States had gone through its public comment period:

- Dr. Zaluski reported that a number of producers had come to the DOL asking for waivers over the years regarding the CAN brand
  - Producers with cattle for show, cattle brought into the United States just for breeding or embryo transfer and then going back, and even cattle that would be slaughtered within days, were examples of those requesting exemption from the CAN brand
- The current rule states that cattle from Canada must have a hot-iron CAN brand, on the right hip. Dr. Zaluski said that the USDA regulations allow either a hot-iron brand or a tattoo to identify the country of origin when animals came from Canada
- Dr. Zaluski said that four comments were received from the public
  - Two public commenters suggested that the entire requirement could be lifted for either CAN hot-iron brand or tattoo, because the Federal government required it already
  - One public commenter said they were in support of the proposal to allow either a tattoo or a hot-iron brand
  - Another commenter was in opposition of the proposed change, based on disease risk, and saying that Mexico had a brand requirement and so should Canada
- Dr. Zaluski explained that animals coming from Mexico do require a brand, primarily for TB and Brucellosis risk, not for BSE
- Mike Honeycutt said he looked to see if there were any representatives from the organization that made the negative comment either present in the room or present online to make sure if they were present that they had a chance to be heard. But, he did not see them

**MOTION/VOTE**

**(4:38:17) 1:57 PM**

**Alan Redfield moved to approve the adoption of the CAN Brand Import Rule (Notice 32-23-337), making the rule the same as the USDA rule regarding identification of those animals coming from Canada to the United States. Greg Wichman seconded. The motion passed.**

**(4:38:50) 1:58 PM – Approval to Hire Assistant State Veterinarian/Animal Health Bureau Chief**

Dr. Marty Zaluski requested BOL approval to fill the vacant position of Assistant State Veterinarian, who also would serve as the Chief of the Animal Health Bureau:

- As Chief of the Animal Health Bureau, Dr. Zaluski said that around 10-11 people report to that position, including those in the Bison Program, the Import Office and two other Veterinarians
- When a question arose from the BOL as to whether or not the BOL ever took any action to make the Assistant State Veterinarian position, Mike Honeycutt said

that there had been an Assistant State Veterinarian for decades within the DOL and that Dr. Szymanski herself had been in that position for around 14 years

- Mike Honeycutt thought that it would be a mistake and cause unnecessary problems to not put the position out for hire immediately, as there was no Bureau Chief at the present time and that portion of the position was currently being covered with multiple people
  - Dr. Zaluski pointed out that the Import Office Supervisor position, a person that reported to the Animal Health Bureau Chief, was also vacant and so, the Animal Health Bureau was in dire need to fill the position
- Regarding consideration of salaries of Assistant State Veterinarians in states surrounding Montana, Mr. Honeycutt said that the salary for the position was done by State Market and that was already established at \$98,000 to \$105,000 per year, which was in line with what Dr. Szymanski was making and was within the DOL budget
  - Nina Baucus and Greg Wichman said that they would like to see the salary comparison of Assistant State Veterinarians in other states
    - Dr. Zaluski said that about a month ago he did a State Veterinarian and Assistant State Veterinarian salary survey and found that the \$105,000 maximum amount Montana was offering for salary was comfortably in the middle of those colleagues in other states
- Filling the Assistant State Veterinarian/Animal Health Bureau Chief position would take some time to hire, Mr. Honeycutt said, as the person in that role would need to be able to fill the State Veterinarian position in the interim, should Dr. Zaluski be out-of-pocket or even exit the DOL
  - Jake Feddes said the DOL would be up a creek if something happened to Dr. Zaluski. Who would step up if there was no Assistant State Veterinarian? He also said that with the Import Office person gone, it was going to get busier because people would be starting to import bulls into Montana from out of state for breeding season
- Dr. Zaluski commended the two new Veterinarians on staff, saying that in her short tenure, Dr. Michalski had come a long way, and that Dr. De Groot had a lot of public/private practice experience along with a year and a half of State government experience before coming to the DOL

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(4:48:38) 2:07 PM**

**Jake Feddes moved to approve the hire of an Assistant State Veterinarian/Animal Health Bureau Chief, as discussed. Alan Redfield seconded. Nina Baucus voted no. The motion passed.**

- Dr. Zaluski said that he would share with the BOL the position description and hiring packet, adding that the position would be available on the State Careers website
- Mike Honeycutt requested that when interviews were scheduled, because this was a critical position for succession planning, that the BOL should have some

say on why the person who ends up being successful was the qualified high. Gene Curry and Greg Wichman volunteered to help with the interview process

- Mike Honeycutt said that the information about the position on the State Careers website showed that principal duties include oversight for the Animal Health Bureau, Program Management of Animal Health programs, such as the DSA Bison Program, administrative rule oversight, field operations, in the absence of the State Veterinarian, they fill that role and they were also responsible for the training and work with 600 private Veterinarians that serve as Deputy State Veterinarians

#### **(4:54:30) 2:13 PM – Update on USDA Brucellosis Program Review**

Dr. Brad De Groot reported on the findings of the USDA-conducted review of the Brucellosis program conducted in September 2022:

- Dr. Marty Zaluski said that Dr. De Groot would be drafting a formal response to the USDA regarding their findings
- Dr. De Groot said that the USDA review team expressed confidence in the Montana program being conducted for Brucellosis compliance and surveillance in a way that sufficiently reduces or minimizes the risk of Brucellosis-infected animals getting out of the DSA that warrants continued trade and confidence by the trading partners
- The APHIS team, Dr. De Groot reported, made nine recommendations
  - The primary recommendation, according to Dr. De Groot, was to continue the current levels of surveillance and compliance activities
  - Two other recommendations were to continue to collaborate with Montana FWP to conduct wildlife survey surveillance assuring that the DSA boundaries were adequate and to continue to collaborate with the other Greater Yellowstone-Area states, including Wyoming and Idaho, to maintain consistency and transparency for the cattle industry in the Greater Yellowstone area
  - Two recommendations had to do with managing data related to Brucellosis surveillance and compliance
    - Dr. De Groot said he expected that as the DOL IT team made progress on the projects that were a part of the State of Montana's larger information systems improvements, that would enable the DOL to more rapidly compare movement data with Brucellosis testing data and to rapidly identify questionable movements and contact the involved parties
  - One recommendation was to hire a Compliance Inspector, which had been done with DOL staff person, Jacqueline Cima, who Dr. De Groot said was serving in that role very effectively
  - One recommendation was to update the list for the livestock markets of the DSA producers, and the plan, Dr. De Groot said, was to do that twice a year
    - Dr. De Groot said the information for who utilizes ground inside the DSA during the risk period changed from year to year and they

- were looking for efficient ways to gather that information without burdening livestock producers unnecessarily with paperwork
      - Dr. De Groot said that the Animal Health Bureau was working with Dan Bugney to make sure that all the Inspectors in the DSA have forms with a checkbox available on them regarding whether or not their land crossed into the DSA
- There was a question about reporting laboratory results from field testing and how rapidly that was available, especially for cull animals presented for sale at the livestock markets. And so, Dr. De Groot said they were investigating the source of the delay and felt they could find ways to communicate that information efficiently to the Livestock Market Veterinarians if the producers didn't bring that information with them when they presented their animals for sale
- One recommendation was to develop a backup plan for Veterinary service at the livestock markets
  - Dr. De Groot said that the DOL did not have the authority to hire or appoint Livestock Market Veterinarians, but, that was an agreement between the livestock market and the Veterinarian
  - Mike Honeycutt said that in State statute, the Livestock Brands Enforcement side, part of the condition to running a livestock market was to have a Veterinarian and he hoped that the DOL would take some sort of action against the market to stop sales if they were operating without one. Dr. De Groot thought the Packers and Stockyards had the authority to shut down the market in that case as well
  - Mike Honeycutt said that the DOL should look at whether or not a market had a backup plan regarding their backup Veterinarian status. Dr. Zaluski agreed that having a conversation with markets regarding their backup plan would be valuable

There was discussion regarding the Secure Beef Supply Plan meetings

- Dr. De Groot reported that the grant from the Department of Homeland Security that funded the meetings was given in 2020 and set for completion on January 31, 2023. Mike Honeycutt said that the timing of the grant hit during the period of time when no public meetings were allowed and then the TB investigation hit, so, the DOL negotiated an extension to July 31, 2023
- To assure that ranchers participating in those meetings would have the opportunity to put a Secure Beef Supply Plan together by July 31<sup>st</sup>, the DOL held the meetings in late Winter/early Spring, even though that was when a lot of producers were calving and couldn't make the seminars
- Mike Honeycutt said that he was hoping to partner with NCBA who he heard received a significant amount of money related to the Secure Beef Supply Plan and ask them if any of that money would be allowed to State organizations. If so, Mr. Honeycutt was hoping that MSGA would possibly allow a presentation at their Mid-Year meeting. He said that even though the DOL would have to pay for it, he was hoping that MSGA would also allow a Secure Beef Supply Plan presentation during their December annual convention

- Nina Baucus requested that Dr. De Groot put together information for the BOL regarding Brucellosis, its various types, and its effect on people. Jake Feddes said that being in the DSA, people ask him about that once in a while and having that information would be good, educationally, for the BOL to know
- Although there were other experts on Avian Influenza in mammals, Dr. De Groot said that they could gather information on that as well for the BOL

**(5:18:45) 2:38 PM – MEAT, MILK & EGG INSPECTION BUREAU**

Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection Bureau Chief, introduced herself, saying that she did not have too many items to cover on her agenda that day

**(5:18:59) 2:38 PM – Adoption of Amended Rule 32.8.202**

Alicia Love requested that the BOL approve the adoption of the proposed changes to ARM 32.8.202 – Time from Processing that Fluid Milk May Be Sold for Public Consumption:

- Ms. Love reported that no comments had been received from the publishing of the proposed changes and that it had been a long process to arrive at this step
- Lily Andersen said that she felt the changes would eventually be used to get rid of the 12-day rule in its entirety
  - Gene Curry commented that the changes were a compromise to satisfy the industry and when the changes had been discussed, concerns, similar to Ms. Andersen's, had been brought up

**MOTION/VOTE**

**(5:19:27) 2:38 PM**

**Alan Redfield moved to approve the adoption of the changes in ARM 32.8.202 – Time from Processing That Fluid Milk May Be Sold for Public Consumption, as discussed. Jake Feddes seconded. The motion passed.**

**(5:20:44) 2:40 PM – General Updates**

Alicia Love reported on General Updates in the Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau:

- The EIAO and Food Safety Officer position was filled, Ms. Love said, and he would be starting in that position on April 3, 2023
- Ms. Love reported that the Forsyth/Billings Inspector position was filled
  - The demand of inspection services in eastern Montana helped make the decision to open up that position, even though the DOL was not certain if the plant in that area would go to Federal inspection. She said there were 10 plants that could come under inspection in eastern Montana, two in Billings that were basically ready for State inspection
  - Ms. Love reported that one of the eastern Montana facilities was very interested in the Cooperative Interstate Shipping Program (CIS) and she was hoping they followed through with that, as their Bureau had not had anyone work through the entire process as of yet
- Ms. Love gave kudos to Mike Honeycutt for requesting four additional Inspector positions from the Legislature

- Interviews had been concluded for the Superior/Plains Inspector position and for the Administrative Assistant position in the Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau and Ms. Love was just waiting on Human Resources approval to give formal offers on both of those. She added that the Label Specialist interview would be held the following day
- A small dairy of around 50-80 head, did go out of business this week with disposition of cows report as sale barn and cattle traders, Mr. Love reported. She said that the state currently had 43 licensed dairies
- Ms. Love shared that she and a Sanitarian would be doing a walk-through licensing inspection the following day at a dairy facility in the Polson area

There was public comment from the audience regarding a sheep milk dairy in the state

- Kim Ashmore, Sheep Mountain Creamery, reported that as of that day, they had shut their doors because of the delay of a person getting licensed that would provide milk to them for their business
- Ms. Ashmore shared that they fought for six years to get him licensed but there was delay and excuses and that both the Governor and Lieutenant Governor were aware of it. She said that she didn't have \$15,000 every three months to bring sheep milk in from Wisconsin and that she was disappointed and hurt because he had been ready for licensing and no one ever went back to license him
  - Mike Honeycutt said that it had been stated at a Fall BOL meeting that the DOL would inspect him when he began milking again, and there had been no inspection scheduled, no contact from the business owner at that facility until the one scheduled for tomorrow
- Mr. Honeycutt requested that Ms. Ashmore provide the text messages she spoke about between the Inspector and the business owner seven months previous. He said that the Inspector desperately tried to schedule, but had some challenges and had to reschedule, but, the challenges were mutual
  - Ms. Ashmore said they lost their dairy due to that Inspector and that there had been numerous complaints about her throughout the cattle and dairy industries. Greg Wichman said that it was hearsay
- Jim Ashmore, co-owner of Sheep Mountain Creamery and KJ'n Ranch, said that he was hoping that they weren't closed and that there was a potential they could recover, depending on what happened at the licensing inspection the following day, because they could not afford to carry over \$50,000 of additional funds to keep their product moving so they could produce a finished product
- Mr. Ashmore said that they had been talking to the DOL staff for over five years on the issue and that he understood trying to get a job done with limited man hours, but, there was something not working right when, for five to six years, there was a consistent issue with one individual on the DOL staff that had never been resolved
- He shared that their half-million dollar investment had been all out of their pocket and that they willingly poured it into the community because they felt the necessity for a product that, health-wise, was an alternative needed because sheep milk was the only milk that had the capacity and structure that those who

had allergies to eating or drinking milk and milk products, could enjoy it, because goat milk had a marginal effect

- Mr. Ashmore said that there were three other producers they tried to help come into the market in Montana, but they had to leave because they wouldn't work together with that Inspector. He added that things needing to be addressed at a facility, including cleanliness, structure, processes and taught proper things, should be in writing, not on a verbal change every time that Inspector came out to the property, and that was what had been happening
- Some emails that Kim Ashmore had spoken about, Jim Ashmore said, had been forwarded to the DOL office. He asked that a new slate be started today and that a study, an investigation be done that would bring facts to the table that were accurate and correct so that they could continue a successful business and that the DOL could be confident that any business that wanted to start in Montana got the support of Montana Livestock to help them in that business
- Mr. Ashmore said that he was not challenging what Alicia Love was doing the following day, but that he had the impression from the Lieutenant Governor that they were directed to have that license done about two weeks ago but that it had been delayed another two weeks
  - Mike Honeycutt said to be clear, he had spoken with the Lieutenant Governor and that she had not given any such direction and requested that she not be misrepresented
- Gene Curry said that it was his understanding that the inspection of the sheep dairy was scheduled for the following day and that for now, to let the process carry out
  - Alicia Love explained that the appointment was scheduled for 8:30 am the following day and said she wanted to be very clear that there were a number of items that had been discussed that needed to be fixed and paperwork to be submitted, but that she would be on site tomorrow to ensure that those things had been followed through on and addressed correctly
- Ms. Love said she would be on site, at the license holder's request, to ensure that the employee was doing things by the PMO. She added that at this point in time, no one had exercised any type of appeal against that particular employee, but that if anyone had problems with the conduct of any of her staff, she'd want to know about it
- Ms. Love added that she did her very best to keep businesses moving and if 12 new meat plants trying to come online was an indication of her organization trying to close businesses, she was doing a very terrible job of it
- Ms. Love said she was not in the habit of discussing the licensing process with people who were not the license holder and that she would not guarantee there would be a license issued tomorrow
  - Gene Curry asked if Mr. Ashmore was part of the business being inspected the following day. Mr. Ashmore said as far as being a board member or officer or any official title, no they were not. Mr. Curry said that then, discussing someone else's business with him was probably not

appropriate and that if there was a personnel issue, the BOL would look at it under closed session because personnel issues are not public venues

- Mike Honeycutt explained to the BOL that the reason Alicia would be at the inspection tomorrow was that she had been empowered to be the person to work with that party and schedule the inspection, because of earlier allegations that were made
- Jim Ashmore asked for clarification on the appeals process, because that was the first he had heard of it and as many times as they had interacted with the DOL office, he would have expected to have been told about it
- Mike Honeycutt explained to Mr. Ashmore that regarding the formal appeals process that was typically done, he had skipped a few steps and that coming to the BOL was actually the final step of the appeals process. He told Mr. Ashmore that he knew of the struggles he and his wife had been through with the situation, but that there was a corrective action plan that existed and if the corrective action plan by the owner had not been addressed, it wasn't within the DOL's purview to issue the license
- Mr. Ashmore said that they had partnered with the individual six years ago to take their animals and milk them with his animals and he would sell to his own daughter for her product and to them for their product
- Mike Honeycutt pointed out to Kim and Jim Ashmore that one issue the DOL had was that one outlook of this business was operating as a small dairy under the small dairy exemption, selling unpasteurized product, and that if there was no clear delineation separation of those two businesses, they would not receive a Grade A license, because you cannot be under the small dairy exemption selling raw, unpasteurized product and also be a Grade A facility under the PMO

Darcy Alm reported to the BOL that as of last month, there were six dairies that hit the maximum and she thought that coming into Spring, that those numbers would bump up to maybe eight or 10

### **(5:58:00) 3:17 PM – VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY**

Greg Juda, Lab Director of the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, introduced himself

### **(5:58:52) 3:18 PM – MVDL Operational Update**

Dr. Greg Juda gave an Operational Update of the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory:

- Dr. Juda reported that they were still experiencing down time with their Immulite chemistry analyzer and were having to refer tests out. It was hoped that a new lot of reagents that were to be received this week this week would address the problem, but, the reagents were put on back order until May
  - Dr. Juda said that referring tests out meant that the MVDL was eating the cost of shipping samples out to a Texas lab, because they were not passing along any extra testing charges to the clients. He added that the Texas lab also charged more for a test than the MVDL does
  - The analyzer was not a NAHLN scope purchase, and so, he said he was discussing with Brian Simonson and Evan Waters on what cost bucket could be bolstered within the NAHLN plan to free up proprietary funding

for capital asset purchases, which were the one to be used to purchase the analyzer

- CWD was a NAHLN-scope disease and possibly, Dr. Juda said, some of the supply costs offloaded into NAHLN funding would free up proprietary funding
- The financial plans for the next NAHLN Fiscal year grant were due in April or May and Dr. Juda said that even though they did not know the total amount of funding the MVDL would be receiving, they would be receiving the normal annual infrastructure grant
  - Dr. Juda said that there was a supplemental Farm Bill component that would add to the grant this year, and he expected that to be in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range
  - Items that the grant could be spent on needed to be approved by the NAHLN Program Office, Dr. Juda said, and included high-volume, high-consequence animal testing training, covering personnel, supplies, equipment and contracts
  - Dr. Juda said that typically, they had tried to load the MVDL's substantial amount of equipment service contracts onto that and pay for them with NAHLN grant funding
  - Dr. Juda explained that the costs of the items listed on his handout for the NAHLN grant were estimates, but would be refined as quotes rolled into their office. He added that the MVDL had the ability to revise the plan during the term of the grant
  - Based on internal infrastructure capabilities, laboratories received a level designation, Dr. Juda said. Each level received a different amount. The MVDL was considered a Level 2 Laboratory and was expected to move up to a Level 1 Laboratory when in the new lab building, which would also increase the grant amount received
- Mike Honeycutt said that he had a vision with the proprietary fund of getting to the point of having a balance of a certain amount that would be managed to that amount each year for the purpose of dealing with capital asset replacement
- Dr. Juda said that looking towards moving into the new lab, we want to look at replacing some units, such as aging incubators, freezers and refrigerators, all the lab equipment that was needed. He said that free-standing laboratory equipment was not included in the price tag for the new facility
- Dr. Juda explained that there were some capital purchases covered in the EPP request, such as the MALDI, which was the number one priority last year. It was requested in the EPP request, because it was not a NAHLN-scope piece of equipment
- The price for the Immulite chemistry analyzer, Dr. Juda said, was in the \$80,000 range and the Dimension chemistry analyzer was in the \$100,000 range
- Even in the new lab, Dr. Juda said they would bring on new test offerings based on request and demand. He said that Dr. Schwarz brought on around 15 new tests in the last year alone, with another 10-15 on the way
- William Kleinsasser said that currently people were shipping tests on breeding stock swine, such as PRRS, Microplasma, PED and the oral fluids test to out-of-

state labs such as Iowa State and if the MVDL could support those tests, it would be an extra source of income

- Nina Baucus questioned why when lambs or calves who had been stillborn and were brought to the MVDL that they did not get definitive results back when some other labs do give those results
  - Dr. Juda said that the question would probably be best answered by Dr. Smith or Dr. Sago, but he thought there was probably a broad spectrum of interpretation within the field of Pathology of what the exact diagnosis would be. Mike Honeycutt said that some people were much more willing to give their Pathological opinion as they might be about 80% sure of what the problem was, but the history of the MVDL Pathologists was that if they can't pin it down, they don't want to say conclusively what the results were, in case it could be something else and that could be a disservice to the producer community
  - Gene Curry said that to him, he would rather err on the side of 80% probability and treat an animal rather than do nothing because there's a 20% change it wasn't that. He didn't think any Montana producers were asking for a 100% diagnosis, but asking for your best shot
- Regarding a recent incident at the MVDL that Alan Redfield had shared of a person who came to drop off some stillborn calves for testing, Dr. Juda said that the front office receiving staff arrived at 8:05 am and found that the person was not happy, because they had arrived before 8:00 am and had to wait for 10 minutes. But, the receiving staff person got the calves promptly in the door. Dr. Juda said he was going to check into the number that was called and whether any voicemail had been left regarding the drop off
  - Mike Honeycutt was wondering if it would be possible to add the main after-hours line for the MVDL to the Animal Health Import after-hours line
  - Dr. Zaluski said he would check into that as it might be as easy as just forwarding the MVDL line after-hours to the Animal Health Import after-hours line
- Dr. Juda said that if an animal was brought to the lab for testing but was not quite dead, he said they did have several captive bolt guns available, but, to call in advance so they could arrange to have that equipment ready
- Dr. Juda reported that over Spring Break, they had hosted a CSU extern who would be returning the next year for two weeks, which would cover her official externship for their Veterinary program
- Construction documents for the new lab would be submitted this Friday, Dr. Juda reported, so that the City of Bozeman could grant a building permit. It was expected to be an 8 to 12-week turnaround time on that review, but, construction would not begin until the supplemental funding was received by the Legislature
- The BOL discussed whether there would be a way to speed up the process, but, Mike Honeycutt said the City of Bozeman was backed up with lots of projects.
- Dr. Juda said that for all intents and purposes, the design of the new lab building was done

## COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS/COMMENTS FROM PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS

(6:38:18) 3:57 PM

Gene Curry called for any public comment:

- Ian Kane, Membership Representative for the MSGA expressed his appreciation of the BOL allowing him to sit in on their meeting today. He welcomed the new members to the BOL and said he looked forward to working with them in the coming years and working with the DOL as well, to serve the producers of Montana. He offered any assistance that MSGA could offer them
  - Mike Honeycutt said he heard there was a Career Fair at MSU Bozeman, and that he got a report that the new guy from MSGA was very popular there, particularly with the female members at the College and maybe they'd loan him to the DOL for some of our recruitment
- Gene Curry said that he had attended the Secure Beef Supply Program meeting in Shelby and that there were four in attendance. Dr. Zaluski said there were around 16 in Lewistown
  - Gene Curry said there was good discussion about transportation at the Shelby meeting, because I-15 comes right through town and there were a number of imported livestock on that road daily and what would happen if there were a stop order
- Mike Honeycutt said that the Port of Entry at Sweet Grass was a choke point because if there was an international border shutdown, all the cattle on the road at that time headed to Canada would stop there, and that was a concern

## SET DATE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

(6:43:23) 4:02 PM

Gene Curry said that the BOL needed to set a date for the next BOL meeting but he had not asked Alan Redfield or Greg Wichman what dates would work for them before they departed from the meeting:

- Jake Feddes said, you leave early and you get to deal with whatever we decide
- Nina Baucus requested the next meeting be scheduled for Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. Jake Feddes said that as he gets into April and May, Tuesday would work the very best for him
- Mike Honeycutt said that his wife was in Washington DC that week, but he would figure it out
- The next BOL meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 25, 2023

## MEETING ADJOURNED

(6:47:16) 4:06 PM

  
Gene Curry, Chairman