



Montana Board of Livestock Meeting Minutes

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

March 6, 2025

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

Board Members Present

Gene Curry (cattle producer)

Greg Wichman (sheep producer)

William Kleinsasser (swine producer)

Lily Andersen (dairy & poultry)

(Jake Feddes was not present. Alan Redfield and Eric Moore attended the meeting by ZOOM.)

Staff Present

Mike Honeycutt, EO

Donna Wilham, Adm. Asst to EO

Evan Waters, Centralized Services

Lindsey Simon, Centralized Services

Mike Spatz, Centralized Services

Rick Corder, Centralized Services

Dale Haylett, Centralized Services

Tom Shultz Centralized Services

Brendan Boots, Centralized Services

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, MT State Vet

Dr. Greg Juda, Director, MVDL

Dr. Brenee Peterson, Animal Health

Jay Bodner, Brands Enforcement

Kim Dallas, Brands Enforcement

Cally Goyins, Brands Enforcement

Becky Waid, Brands Enforcement

Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau

Public Present

Dalin Tidwell, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services

Megan Torgerson, Reframing Rural

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

(0:08) 8:04 AM

Vice-Chairman Alan Redfield called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

(0:08) 8:00 AM

Chairman Gene Curry called the meeting to order. Mike Honeycutt reported that Alan Redfield was attending by ZOOM and that Eric Moore would be a little late and also attending by ZOOM. Jake Feddes had hoped to attend by ZOOM, but never logged into the meeting. Gene Curry requested introductions:

- Lily Andersen, Dairy & Poultry Representative, south of Livingston

- Ms. Andersen reported that there had been a lot going on with Milk Control in the Legislature this past week. She added that they were done calving
- William Kleinsasser, Swine Representative, Augusta
 - Mr. Kleinsasser reported that they only had 30-35 cows left to calve. He added that pig prices were excellent and the future was looking bright if the tariffs wouldn't kill it
- Greg Wichman, Sheep Representative, Hilger, North of Lewistown
 - Mr. Wichman reported that snow was melted down and the reservoirs were full. He said they had done shearing on Monday
- Alan Redfield, Cattle Representative, Paradise Valley, south of Livingston
 - Mr. Redfield reported that although they hadn't plowed snow in the last two days, it had been very deep, but they had some dry spots now. They were just starting to calve
- Gene Curry, Cattle Representative, Valier
 - Mr. Curry reported that he had just driven up from Phoenix the last two days and was heading home, where the heifers had started calving. He said there was not a lot of snow between Phoenix and Helena and that the ground was bare of any snow in the Dillon, Lima, Dell areas

BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

(5:57) 8:06 AM

(5:57) 8:06 AM – BOARD APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES

Alan Redfield requested approval of the past BOL meeting minutes

MOTION/VOTE

(6:09) 8:07 AM

Greg Wichman moved to approve the minutes from the Montana Board of Livestock January 24, 2025 meeting. Lily Andersen seconded. The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

(6:40) 8:07 AM

(6:43) 8:07 AM – UPDATE ON GOVERNOR'S OGSM STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER STRATEGIC GOALS

Mike Honeycutt reported that he and Brian Simonson had met with the Governor for an Ops Review on February 10, 2025:

- Slaughter figures were strong, compared to previous years, Mr. Honeycutt said, with local slaughter of livestock stabilizing at a rate higher than what was being done five years ago
- Spending was still under budget, but revenue was starting to catch up, especially with per capita payments beginning to come in during this past month

- DOL vacancies had been holding stable, with 11 reported, Mr. Honeycutt said. Some positions remained open due to the difficulty in finding qualified applicants, but, the DOL had not seen a lot of folks leaving the DOL this past month
- The Commission Companies and Stockyards business, even with lower cattle inventories, still seemed to have a healthy movement of cattle, with more cattle marketed through Commission companies than at this point in 2024
- Positive feedback, particularly from Eastern Montana, had been received by the DOL regarding the changes the BOL had made the previous month in official ID rules for feeder heifers coming into Montana
- Mr. Honeycutt expressed his appreciation of the voluntary support of the Montana dairy industry in the HPAI testing program for milk. He added that even some small raw milk exempt area producers had reached out to the DOL regarding what they needed to be aware of in regards to HPAI
 - Dr. Szymanski said that there were two new introductions of an HPAI strain in the country, previously circulating in wild birds that had been detected in dairy cattle
- Four new positions had been approved by Legislative Committee for the Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection Bureau and because of the budget shortfall in Milk, the repurposing of a vacant Sanitarian position into a combination Milk/Egg Sanitarian position was moving forward
- Additional purchasing of equipment and needs in preparation for the new Lab was still whole in the Legislature, Mr. Honeycutt reported, along with the fund switch on Animal Health appropriations from Federal to State
- This year's elk surveillance done in coordination with FWP in the southern Crazyes, came back negative
- In the Brands area of the DOL, Mr. Honeycutt said that Google AI project was working well. The plan to rework the Assistant Brands Administrator to a third District Supervisor was also moving forward
- Contracts had been signed with CoreOne, which continued the process in the Animal Health area of the DOL, to move away from USAHerds to that new system
- The piece of legislation to legalize digital documents when transporting livestock was awaiting executive action from the House Committee

NEW BUSINESS/EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES

(22:26) 8:22 AM

(22:26) 8:22 AM – HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATES

Mike Spatz, Human Resource Officer for the DOL, introduced himself

(22:48) 8:22 AM Staff Openings/Recruitment Updates/General Updates

Mike Spatz updated the BOL on Staff Openings, Recruitment and General Updates in the DOL:

- Mr. Spatz reported that the DOL was recruiting for seven positions, five in Brands, one in the Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection Bureau and one in the MVDL.

There were two resignations since the last BOL meeting in the MVDL and one new hire, the Market Inspector position in Ramsay, filled by a gentleman named Mike McArthur who started on February 17, 2025. Leslie Doely transferred from a Federally funded position in the Animal Health Bureau into a Compliance Technician position in that same Bureau

- Mr. Spatz reported that the State Pay Plan bill, giving State employees either a \$1/hour or 2% increase in wages was continuing to move forward in the Legislature
- A retired employee who had been filling in the Glasgow District as a short-term worker, was close to running out of short-term worker hours and if that position was not filled, folks would need to start rotating to cover that area

(30:43) 8:31 AM – LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE (May Require Executive Session

Lindsey Simon, Agency Legal Counsel, introduced herself, announcing that there would be some revision in the order of her presentation

(31:13) 8:32 AM - Administrative Rules Needed to Implement

Mont. Code Ann. 2-3-103

Lindsey Simon reported that the Secretary of State's Office had made some administrative rule changes in public participation rules that resulted in the rescission of those rules that the BOL had adopted by reference. And, because the BOL was not in compliance with the statute that said all boards had to have Administrative Rules setting forth public participation, some new rules needed to be promulgated:

- Ms. Simon presented examples of public participation rules from other State agencies, so the Board would have an idea of what approach the BOL would like to take in publishing the DOL's public participation rules. The BOL decided, after offering their input, to allow Ms. Simon to come back to the next BOL meeting with specific language and specific rules that they could vote on and present to the public for comment
- Mike Honeycutt mentioned a possible change in upcoming agendas where the public would be allowed to comment on every decision of significant interest to the public, which was happening already, but public comment was actually posted on the agenda at the end of the BOL meeting agenda, not on each topic of significant interest to the public

(41:10) 8:41 AM – Lower Valley Processing, Inc. Appeal of Hours of Operation Decision

Lindsey Simon reported that Jeremy Plummer of Lower Valley Processing had made a presentation to the BOL at their last meeting, setting forth the basis of his appeal to the BOL. Ms. Simon requested that the BOL make a decision on whether or not to accept his appeal:

- Ms. Simon summarized Mr. Plummer's request saying that Lower Valley Processing, back in 2021, had approved hours of consecutive operation exceeding eight hours. According to Federal Regulation 9-CFR 307.4, which the Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection Bureau had adopted by reference, official establishments would be provided with inspection service for up to eight

consecutive hours per shift without charge. The DOL notified Mr. Plummer that those hours, approved in 2021, needed to be changed or be charged overtime, to which Mr. Plummer appealed, wanting to continue his operation under the previously approved hours that exceeded eight hours of operation without an overtime charge

- Ms. Simon said the issue now was that, could the DOL rescind approval when it discovered that the hours approved were out of compliance with the regulation the DOL was required to follow? Alicia Love said that allowing one facility additional operating hours that other facilities had been denied, gave Lower Valley Processing an advantage over other facilities that had been in compliance the whole time, adding that the issue had been discussed in the 2021 and 2023 audits and she was not sure if continuing in the same way would put the Meat Inspection program in an “iffy” status
- Mike Honeycutt said the decision the BOL had to make was if Mr. Plummer’s appeal was denied, we follow the regulations. If we accept this appeal, we roll the dice on what type of situation that might create for the future of the Meat Inspection program. Plus, Mr. Honeycutt said that a State employee’s timesheet must match the hours worked.
- Ms. Love explained that if Mr. Plummer were to change from a State-inspected facility to a Federally-inspected facility, he would be under the same Federal regulations that the State had adopted and was operating under

MOTION/VOTE

(1:02:56) 9:03 AM

Alan Redfield moved to deny the Lower Valley Processing, Inc., Hours of Operation appeal as presented by Lindsey Simon. Greg Wichman seconded. William Kleinsasser and Lily Andersen voted no. The motion passed.

(1:23:05) 9:23 AM Executive Session: Approval for Legal Counsel to File Civil Unlicensed Practice Action

Lindsey Simon request that this agenda item occur in Executive Session, pursuant to Montana Code Annotated 2-3-203, Subsection 4, where they would be discussing whether to initiate litigation, which she believed would fall within attorney-client communication for the purposes of potential litigation

(1:23:45) 9:25 AM RECESS

(1:26:19) 9:50 AM RECONVENE

Gene Curry called the meeting back to order, with Lindsey explaining that, for the record, in Executive Session, there was a motion to authorize an unlicensed practice action be filed. She reported that BOL member, Jake Feddes, was not present and did not vote on that motion, but that the motion did pass

(1:27:13) 9:51 AM – EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES

Mike Honeycutt announced that he would flip-flop some agenda items and give his update now so that the BOL would not have to immediately return to an Executive Session

(1:27:292) 9:51 AM YNP Bison/EIS/IBMP Operations Update

Mike Honeycutt reported that there had been a little bit of migration out of the Park last week by Yellowstone National Park (YNP) bison, but those numbers were far below what the DOL needed to manage their population:

- Hunters had taken a few of those bison on the West side of the Park and 135 were taken into the trap earlier this week, which would be consigned for meat to Tribes. Mr. Honeycutt said that 25% of the current population was targeted to be taken, which would be 1500-1700 bison, but that would depend on what Mother Nature provided for weather and how many bison exited the Park
- Mr. Honeycutt said that some State entities, Earth Justice and others, had filed lawsuits regarding their issues with the YNP EIS. Lindsay Simon reported that the intervention of those parties would be in Federal Court in April
- The next IBMP meeting was scheduled on May 14, 2025, with FWP taking the reins as Lead Partner this year

(1:34:15) 9:59 AM Session Planning and Legislative Update/Interim Committee Updates

Mike Honeycutt said that the DOL had played a pretty decent first half of the Session and talked about what they hoped to accomplish in the last half of the Session:

- Mr. Honeycutt said that the HB2 budget, was still intact, and if HB13 passed, those pay plan changes for all State employees would fold right into our budget
- The two fund switches, an additional budget request, putting some general fund into the Milk Inspection Program and the fund switch for Animal Health, switching between Federal and State Special Revenue, were both moving forward. So, even if there was a reduction in Federal funds, the additional equipment purchases for the MVDL as we prepare to move into a new lab was untouched, Mr. Honeycutt said
 - Alan Redfield said he testified at the Milk bill hearing and he praised Lily Andersen for the “bang-up” job she did with her testimony for the Milk bill
- In the Meat & Poultry Inspection program, what passed through Committee, but not through House Appropriations as of yet, was for four additional employees, not the eight additional employees requested. Even though the request still had to pass through the Senate, Alan Redfield said that Livestock and Agriculture requests usually did pretty well. Eric Moore added that Section C was a small section in terms of State funding and if cuts were needed in State Government, it was easier to find places to do that in either Section B or Section E
- HB119, the Montana Cattle Committee, had gone through one House and Mr. Honeycutt expected it would come up pretty quickly after transmittal with possible significant changes to how it read now. HB356, which would add black bear to the LLB predation list, got through the House and a Senate Ag hearing and was awaiting Executive action. HB401, the lab-grown meat bill, was amended to

transfer enforcement for it to the DPHHS. The ban on mRNA vaccines was tabled in Committee, Mr. Honeycutt said, and he gave a special shout-out to Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, who handled the hearing on that bill very well. HB504, expanding the LLB for domestic bison, passed through the House and would be moving forward to Senate Ag

- Alan Redfield said he was upset with the Cattle Committee bill that would put the DOL on the hook for the legal, one of the unintended consequences of how that bill was written. Gene Curry said that amendments to that bill would be presented in Senate Ag
- Mr. Honeycutt explained that once the new LLB board was appointed, Brian Simonson and himself planned to have a meeting with them to discuss how to fill George Edwards' vacant position
- Mr. Honeycutt said that the DOL went in as informational during a hearing for HB767, which would add goats to the county predator petition. All three DOL bills, SB78, SB79 and SB80 were continuing on, with two of them already having been heard in second chamber and awaiting Executive action. SB386, the Montana Meat Act, had been withdrawn by Senator Hertz. Dr. Szymanski also appeared as informational for SB414, a bill revising laws of garbage feeding. SB415 and SB416, both milk dating bills, were tabled in Committee
- Nominations for the BOL, the LLB and the Board of Milk Control would happen after transmittal

Mike Honeycutt explained, for the record, that his Executive Officer evaluation would be done in an Executive Session, per his request, so that BOL members could feel free to say whatever they needed to say

(2:04:47) 10:29 AM RECESS

(2:06:06) 10:47 AM RECONVENE

(2:06:06) 10:47 AM – EXECUTIVE OFFICER ANNUAL REVIEW (May Require Executive Session)

(2:06:06) 10:47 AM EXECUTIVE SESSION

(2:06:31) 11:23 AM RECONVENE

Gene Curry called the meeting back to order, adding that there had been no action taken during the Executive Session. Mike Honeycutt made an official ask of the Chair to move the Predator Control segment of the agenda before the CSD segment to accommodate Mr. Tidwell's personal needs for that day

PREDATOR CONTROL

(2:06:47) 11:25 AM

Update on Activities of USDA Wildlife Services – (Presented by Dalin Tidwell, Montana State Director)

Dalin Tidwell, State Director for USDA Wildlife Services for Montana, updated the BOL on activities in the USDA Wildlife Services program in the state:

- Mr. Tidwell reported that he was in the process of moving his mother out of her home that week and he thanked the BOL for considering him through this process
- With the Federal Executive Orders and the DOGE, Mr. Tidwell explained that there were many changes going on in Wildlife Services right now. All cooperative service agreements were put on hold, meaning that they could maintain the ones they had now, but going forward and renewing them was uncertain, adding that in Montana, they were 48% cooperative funded. A Reduction in Force (RIF) plan was being established, with a March 13, 2024 deadline. But, in the meantime, the term, temp and seasonal employees were being eliminated. There was a hiring freeze, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was locked up, meaning that pilots were being eliminated when their four-year term expired, although some gunners and trappers were able to renew an extension of their 13-month term, Admin staff was not termed “critical.” He said there were still two helicopter pilots in the state that would be able to continue to function
 - Mike Honeycutt said that a lot of the Veterinary Services Admin staff was gone, too, along with a probationary Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO)
- Mr. Tidwell reported that there had been support from the Woolgrowers, Stockgrowers, Farm Bureau, Farmers Union and from Senator Daines office and even though the situation with Wildlife Services was a national problem, Montana was one of the only states that made it on the scoreboard as the word surge in support of Wildlife Services across the nation and the decision to maintain those services was right now in the Secretary of Ag’s Office
- Even with the cuts, Mr. Tidwell said that their guys didn’t miss a beat and had already flown 381 Hobbes hours, killed or removed 3,944 coyotes, 5,233 total, with the ground work done as well. Wildlife Services planned to keep working for Blaine County and Phillips County had signed and was on board with a cattle petition. One ATOC pilot was willing to help Montana to try and get through flying season
- Mike Honeycutt said that even if the DOL could somehow request more money be appropriated to Wildlife Services, with the Federal hiring freeze, more money wouldn’t really help, because you have to have people to do the work. As far as the DOL hiring their own pilots to help, new FTEs would need to be established within the budget to do that. Mr. Honeycutt said that Brian Simonson, Evan Waters and himself should meet to establish some sort of doomsday scenario regarding taking on all the responsibility that USDA Wildlife Services currently did. He said, right now, about 12% of the per capita fee went to Predator Control

(2:38:51) 11:56 AM LLB Predation Claims Report and General Updates

With Brian Simonson on vacation, Mike Honeycutt, updated the BOL on Livestock Loss Board activities:

- Mr. Honeycutt reported that there were four claims that were processed since the last BOL meeting. He expected those claims to pick up post lambing and calving, but per statute, those claims had to be confirmed by Wildlife Services

(2:45:52) 12:04 PM LUNCH

(2:46:06) 12:49 PM RECONVENE

Gene Curry called the meeting back to order

CENTRALIZED SERVICES DIVISION REPORTS

(2:46:14) 12:49 PM

(2:46:18) 12:50 PM – FISCAL BUREAU

Evan Waters updated the BOL on items from the Fiscal Bureau, as Brian Simonson was on vacation:

(2:46:54) 12:51 PM Aerial Hunting

Evan Waters gave the Aerial Hunting Summary Report with information sent into the DOL by registered aerial pilots:

- Mr. Waters reported that there were 33 registered aerial hunting pilots in Montana, including 8 out-of-state pilots. Take numbers were quite a bit lower in 2024 compared to 2023 and there were quite a few counties, particularly in the northeast corner of the state where there were no hunt reports given. Mike Honeycutt pointed out that people who flew over their own property don't have to get a license, and so their takes would not be part of this report

(2:51:29) 12:54 PM Per Capita Fee Collections Update

Evan Waters updated the BOL on the latest per capita fee collection numbers:

- Mr. Waters explained that there were probably some numbers on this report that were wrong, because it appeared that somebody had over-reported buffalo, reporting that they had 34,000, which would mean they owed about \$130,000 in per capita fee
- Other than swine, currently, per capita reporters were falling behind by about 2,000, Mr. Waters thinking that possibly producers were still getting used to the idea of having to have report numbers and payments in by March 1st or perhaps there were reports that still hadn't been entered into the system. Mr. Waters said that about 92% of the per capita fee collection came from cattle

(2:57:13) 1:00 PM February 28, 2025 State Special Revenue Report

Evan Waters said that in this State Special Revenue Report, there wasn't a whole lot of change from the previous month:

- Mr. Waters said that Field and Market Inspection numbers were running pretty close to the prior year. Investment Earnings, particularly in Brands, went down, because return on investment decreased 1% from last year, and then, because of the 10% decrease in the cash balance of rerecord savings, leaving less money to earn a return on. He said that investment earnings for per capita fee didn't decrease as much because there was a pretty constant cash balance in that STIP account. Lab Fees were also invested into a STIP
- The Milk Inspection Fee cash balance hadn't been depleted as it was before because there was still one vacant position in that area. Egg Grading continued to rise because of the price increase that the Feds required be charged to the Egg Plant. Mr. Waters said to expect an upswing in the Wolf Donation Fund because it was time to renew fishing licenses

(3:02:07) 1:05 PM March 2025 Through June 2025 Budget Projections Report

Evan Waters reported that in the Budget Projections area, too, there had not been many changes from prior reports:

- Mr. Waters said the DOL was still projecting about \$125,000 in possible budget excess in Personal Services and about \$67,000 in Operations. He said to watch for Equipment numbers to change in the future because of some one-time-only money that was put into Brands for buying stock trailers, PPE and radios and then a \$50,000 pickup in the Animal Health Division. He said that there was \$189,000 of 2023 carryforward to use up this year and the 2024 carryforward would be somewhere between \$335,000 to \$390,000 that would hopefully, be saved for next fiscal year. The \$20,000 listed for LLB, Mr. Waters explained, was the time that Brian Simonson had been devoting to the LLB program, as that position still remained vacant
- Dr. Tahnee Szymanski said that there would be \$760,000 less funding if the DOL was not able to roll over to new cooperative agreements on April 1st. Mike Honeycutt said that if the State budget for DOL was passed, then we would be switching authority from Federal funds to State Special Revenue per capita. Shielded Egg funds could be a fund source used to close some gaps, but those could only be spent for the purpose for which they were collected
- Mike Honeycutt summed up the Budget Projections report by saying, in the overall, the DOL was still projecting to have excess spending authority, spending less money than we had authority to spend, but there were details in between that had to be figured out

(3:18:00) 1:21 PM February 28, 2025 Budget Comparison Report

Evan Waters updated the BOL on year-to-year comparisons in the DOL Budget:

- Mr. Waters said that the year-to-year comparisons for Personal benefits were showing quite a bit more, probably because of the raise employees received at the beginning of the year which were roughly 4%, but a lot got close to 10%
- 62% of the Personal Services budget had been expended with 61% of the payrolls completed. The Operations budget was 65% expended with 59% of the budget year lapsed. Mr. Waters thought that timing of when those expenses took

place could be the reason for those numbers, as the MVDL had expended a big part of their supply budget in October, November and December

- Mr. Waters gave a heads up, saying that there would be two projects, approved through the last Legislature through HB10, totaling \$525,000, that would be added as a Budget Change Document (BCD) to the report

ANIMAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY DIVISION REPORTS

(3:23:21) 1:26 PM

(3:23:21) 1:26 PM – MEAT, MILK & EGG INSPECTION BUREAU

Alicia Love was on her way, and so Mike Honeycutt started her presentation

(3:23:47) 1:27 PM Out-of-State Travel Request

(3:23:55) 1:27 PM Association of State Meat Inspection Directors Conference (ASMID)

Mike Honeycutt explained that the Association of State Meat Inspection Directors Conference was a meeting for all the Directors of Meat Programs at the State level:

- Alicia Love said that the ASMID Conference was one that we attended twice a year, and with an obligation she had with the FDA during that same time period, she was requesting to send Jay Nelson, EIAO for the Bureau, to the event in Portland, Maine. The conference covered subjects such as proposed regulatory changes in the industry, food trends and audit findings that were trending

MOTION/VOTE

(3:25:32) 1:28 PM

Greg Wichman moved to approve out-of-state travel for Jay Nelson, EIAO, to attend the Spring 2025 Association of State Meat Inspection Directors (ASMID) conference in Portland, Maine on April 28 – 29, 2025. Lily Andersen seconded. The motion passed.

Alicia Love reported that the new Egg Grader at the Great Falls plant seemed to be working out really well and was working independently. With William Kleinsasser reporting that there would be a lot of egg expansion at the colonies this year, Ms. Love said she hoped that with the hire of the next Sanitarian, they would have more capacity to meet the obligations for egg grading

(Audio/Visual partially froze from 3:28:28 to 3:31:28)

(3:29:24) 1:32 PM – VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY

Dr. Greg Juda, Director of the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Lab in Bozeman, introduced himself

(3:29:32) 1:32 PM Operational Update

(3:29:33) 1:33 PM CWD Testing for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe

After conducting CWD testing for the Spokane Tribe during the hunting season, Dr. Greg Juda announced that they picked up CWD testing for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe as well:

- Dr. Juda gave a shout out to his team, especially the Virology folks and the APHL Fellows, who were instrumental in keeping up the demand of those tests and continued to improve turnaround time each year. He expressed concern about Federal funding for the APHL Fellows going forward and so he said they had not yet accepted a request by the State of Utah about doing their wildlife testing. He further explained that the MVDL turned a profit for CWD testing that was just over the break-even point and thought it might be time to revisit what the MVDL was charging to do those tests

(3:34:54) 1:38 PM Building Construction Update

Dr. Greg Juda said that the Field Report they were seeing was from February 18, 2025 and great progress was being made on the new Lab Complex:

- Dr. Juda reported that there was no exterior dirt work being done at that time because the grounds, with the melting snow, were literally a mud pit. He went through, showing pictures of the interior work that had been done, pointing out that the VDL portion of the lab had been tarped off and heated and so construction was really cranking in that area. Dr. Juda shared that Dr. Smith was included in a walkthrough of the facility and he discovered about 10 items to be corrected, including one where he discovered that there had been duct and sprinkler pipe run above Necropsy where the incinerator was supposed to pop out of the room, and so it was rerouted before any drywall work had been done
- The size of the Milk Lab, Dr. Juda said, was quite impressive and he thought they might consider potentially doing food testing for Meat Inspection in there as well
- Completion date of the Lab was February 27, 2026, and so, Dr. Juda said that he had been in discussion already with Dr. Tahnee Szymanski about how to coordinate the move from the old Lab to the new Lab

(3:57:15) 2:00 PM Request to Purchase Replacement Hematology Stainer in Clin Path

Dr. Greg Juda requested that the BOL approve replacement of a Hematology Stainer in the Clin Path section of the Lab that had begun to leak and that the company had sunsetted service on the instrument:

- Dr. Juda said that they were using a manual process to do the stains, but the results were not as consistent and could result in debris on the slide when visualized under a microscope. Cost for a new instrument from the same manufacturer was \$15,300, but he had not yet received a quote from Thermo-Fisher, a licensed distributor of the product, who were already on State contract. Evan Waters reported that there would be money for the equipment, utilizing proprietary fee funding and carryforward

MOTION/VOTE

(4:01:25) 2:04 PM

William Kleinsasser moved to approve the purchase of a Hematology Stainer in the Clinical Pathology section of the MVDL. Alan Redfield seconded. The motion passed.

(4:04:19) 2:07 PM – ANIMAL HEALTH BUREAU

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, State Veterinarian and Administrator of the Animal Health and Food Safety Division, introduced herself

(4:05:26) 2:08 PM Out-of-State Travel Requests

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that she had two out-of-state travel requests

(4:05:31) 2:08 PM – Western States Livestock Health Association Annual Meeting

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski requested that the BOL approve travel for one or possibly two Veterinarians, to attend the Western States Livestock Health Association Annual Meeting scheduled for June in Tucson, Arizona:

- Dr. Szymanski said that this annual meeting was for the 17 Western states. In past years, funding from the cooperative agreements, the Federal umbrella and the ADT, were used to cover the travel, but, if those were not available, one person would travel utilizing Animal Health funding

MOTION/VOTE

(4:06:57) 2:10 PM

Lily Andersen moved to approve out-of-state travel for two Veterinarians, if Federal funding is available, or for one Veterinarian, if Federal funding is not available, to attend the Western States Livestock Health Association Annual Meeting in Tucson, Arizona in June, 2025. William Kleinsasser seconded. The motion passed.

(4:07:57) 2:11 PM – Michigan NADPRP ICS-O-305

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski requested that the BOL approve travel for Dr. Brenee Peterson to attend an Incident Command System, all-incident training, scheduled in April in Lansing, Michigan:

- Dr. Szymanski explained that this was funded by a NADPRP grant, written by Michigan, and so the only cost to send Dr. Peterson would be her salary and her per diem, which would be around \$408

MOTION/VOTE

(4:09:30) 2:12 PM

Lily Andersen moved to approve out-of-state travel for Brenee Peterson, DVM, to attend NADPRP ICS O-305 Training in Lansing, Michigan on April 7-11, 2025. William Kleinsasser seconded. The motion passed.

(4:10:11) 2:13 PM Disease Updates

(4:10:16) 2:13 PM Brucellosis

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that there was nothing really active right now on the disease front:

- Dr. Brennee Peterson completed the Fiscal Year '23 Compliance Evaluation, with a 95% compliance for DSA regulations. Dr. Szymanski said it ended up being an outreach and an education, as several producers were confused about the requirement for heifers less than 12 months of age, and whether they should be tested or not. Dr. Szymanski said that if breeding was a potential at all in their future, then we asked that they be tested. A fair number of producers had verbal agreements with the DOL that weren't well documented and so they continued to work on getting those documented
- With the delisting of Brucellosis in December, Dr. Szymanski said that the Genome Sequencing Lab at NVSL sent eight different genetic sequences from isolates the DOL had been waiting on, dating back to an affected herd from 2021. A few of the isolates from the Gallatin County area accrued changes that would probably trigger future conversations with FWP and potential Brucellosis reactors to try and get additional samples for further work on genome sequencing in domestic animals and wildlife as well
- Dr. Szymanski announced that USDA had gone back and refigured indemnity value, in particular for layers and that might be something to touch Montana, even though our layer industry didn't always meet the threshold of what USDA calls "commercial, which is where you have at least 75,000 laying birds
- Dr. Szymanski said that cattle producers faced a "double whammy," with a shortage of the RB51 vaccine and the EID tags as well. Although the calfhood vaccination had been extended to 14 months, vaccine was finally starting to permeate the market. Some Veterinarians were having luck contacting Colorado Serum directly to place orders directly through the company. But, the USDA had not yet released any FY25 tags yet and Dr. Szymanski said that they were making sure that Veterinarians were aware they could Bangs vaccinate with a yellow or white RFID tag if they couldn't get orange tags. Shearwell and All Data tags were two companies that had tags in stock

(4:13:12) 2:16 AM Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that, despite how active things were at the national level with HPAI, there was not a lot to discuss for Montana:

- Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that there were 22 detections of HPAI across 12 states in the United States, with detections slowly creeping more into Wyoming, who had a detection in the last seven days. She added that the average first case in Montana for the past three years was around the end of March
- Based on detections of transmissions of HPAI from wild birds to dairy cattle in Arizona and Nevada, and a heightened risk level announcement from the CDC, Dr. Szymanski said that they hoped to reach out to Montana dairy producers to see if they would be interested in doing more frequent milk sampling

- In a discussion regarding possible vaccination of chickens against HPAI, Dr. Szymanski said that some EU countries had deployed vaccines strategies successfully, but the poultry industry was split on the issue, some opposed because of the potential impacts to trade and how to apply it to millions of layers was extremely challenging

(4:29:55) 2:33 PM RECESS

(4:30:01) 2:46 PM RECONVENE

BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

(4:30:03) 2:46 PM

Jay Bodner, Brands Division Administrator, was attending the meeting by ZOOM as he was in Reno attending the Western States Rural Law Enforcement Association meeting with Dan Bugney, Shawn Hando and Wes Seward. He introduced himself and announced that he would be having Lindsey Simon present the rulemaking portion of his agenda

(4:30:42) 2:48 PM - ARM 32.18.201-BRAND INSPECTION PROPOSED CHANGE

Jay Bodner explained that this issue, regarding extending the time on pre-slaughter inspections, had come up during the last two BOL meetings and he had Lindsey Simon help him draft a rule regarding those, for the BOL to consider:

- Lindsey Simon said that in looking at the statutes, she said that a transportation permit was limited to 36 hours. Jay Bodner agreed, adding that a travel permit was only good to go to an auction market and was limited to 36 hours. Ms. Simon said that ARM 32.18.201 said that a brand inspection permitted movement of livestock identified for no more than 36 hours as well, but, because it was a rule, not a statute, the time could be extended without Legislative approval, from 36 hours to 7 days. So, it was decided, in the rule change, to extend that inspection time, only in the case of cattle going to slaughter, and it would be called a “slaughter” inspection

MOTION/VOTE

(4:35:41) 2:52 PM

Greg Wichman moved to present for public comment, proposed changes to ARM 32.18.201-Brand Inspection, including that a brand inspection for “to slaughter” cattle be valid for 7 days as opposed to 36 hours, as presented by Jay Bodner and Lindsey Simon. William Kleinsasser seconded. The motion passed.

(4:41:00) 2:58 PM BRANDS ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

(4:41:00) 2:58 PM Electronic Brand Application Demonstration

Kim Dallas, Administrative Support Supervisor for the Brands Enforcement Division, gave a demonstration of an online brand book, an application that was in its final stages of development:

- Ms. Dallas explained that the application worked in real time, showing registered brands, but not available brands. She added that with 52,000 brands in the state and trying to get the application to come together and make it work, was a very involved process
- Mike Honeycutt said that even though the application would not guarantee that you could get a certain brand, it was maybe a way of refining your brand application to help save you money by avoiding requesting brands with obvious conflicts. He added, however, that it was hard to train a computer to have the eye that a human being who looks at it every day was going to have
- Ms. Dallas explained that the brand lookup that's on the Brands webpage right now was outdated, but continued to be developed and they were hoping to have the new one out there by the end of the month

(5:00:37) 3:17 PM Google AI

Kim Dallas reported that the Google AI system was up, running and functioning as designed:

- Ms. Dallas said that she was working with the IT people to build a dashboard in the program so that bigger, more robust reports could be generated from the stored inspection data, potentially telling us exactly where cattle moved on a monthly, and even daily basis or how many head were moved from one county to another. Mike Honeycutt said that it would be a powerful tool to be used during disease investigations being conducted by Animal Health
- Mike Honeycutt extended a special thanks to Tom Shultz who had been the IT tag on this Google AI project

(5:06:14) 3:23 PM Licensing (Non-Agenda Item)

Kim Dallas reported on licensing and market license renewals, adding that she was in the process of getting ready to send those out:

- Ms. Dallas said that her goal was to get those license renewals out the following week as renewal licensing would begin on March 15th and end on May 1st

(5:08:41) 3:25 PM Discussion Regarding Formulating a Statement in Support of Wildlife Services (Non-Agenda Item)

In light of Dalin Tidwell's presentation that morning, Gene Curry requested that the BOL discuss formulation of a statement in support of Wildlife Services:

- Dr. Szymanski said that she would also like the BOL to include support for Veterinary Services
- Greg Wichman put together a statement he read to the BOL in support of both Wildlife Services and Veterinary Services and their importance to the livestock industry in the state of Montana

MOTION/VOTE

(5:18:19) 3:35 PM

Greg Wichman moved to register our support and a wish for restored funding to Wildlife Services and the Federal Veterinarian system, through a document with a

format started by himself and that would be fine-tuned by Mike Honeycutt and Dr. Tahnee Szymanski. Lily Andersen seconded. The motion passed.

SET DATE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

(5:33:37) 3:02 PM

Greg Wichman requested that a date be set for the next BOL meeting:

- The BOL scheduled the next BOL meeting for Thursday, April 24, 2025

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

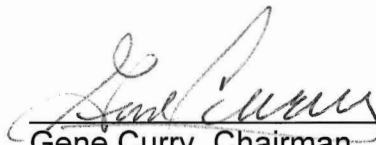
(5:18:57) 3:35 PM

There was no public left in the meeting or on the ZOOM, but Greg Wichman requested a discussion on the New World Screw Worm:

- Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that about two weeks ago, there had been a second detection of the worm in Mexico, adding that they were still on the southern extent of Mexico. Getting the pre-inspection done before the animals were eligible to cross into the United States had been harder in areas where there was risk to people having to travel over from the United States and from USDA, but it was slowly resuming, with some concerns about what potential risk there was to the United States
- Mike Honeycutt said that he thought there was a lot of pressure on food inflation, and that animal health was a little bit of a secondary concern, referring to a recent press release he had read, regarding the Screw Worm
- Dr. Szymanski said that USDA was doubling down on the Screw Worm Fly Program, looking to spool up another facility that would build a wall of sterile flies to slowly push that worm down and out of Mexico

MEETING ADJOURNED

(5:23:32) 3:40 PM


Gene Curry, Chairman