



Montana Board of Livestock Meeting Minutes

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

February 27, 2026

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

Board Members Present

Alan Redfield (cattle producer)

Greg Wichman (sheep producer)

Lily Andersen (dairy & poultry)

William Kleinsasser (swine producer)

Jake Feddes (cattle producer)

(Gene Curry attended meeting by ZOOM. Eric Moore was not in attendance.)

Staff Present

Mike Honeycutt, EO

Brian Simonson, Deputy EO

Donna Wilham, Adm Asst to EO

Lindsey Simon, Centralized Services

Evan Waters, Centralized Services

Dale Haylett, Centralized Services

Rick Corder, Centralized Services

Mike Spatz, Centralized Services

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, MT State Vet

Dr. Emily Kaleczyc, Animal Health

Dr. Kelsey Martin, Animal Health

Dr. Greg Juda, MVDL

Jay Bodner, Brands Enforcement

Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau

Leslie Doely, Livestock Loss Board

Public Present

Ellie Brighton, MT Stockgrowers Association

Dalin Tidwell, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

(0:27) 8:00 AM

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

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

(0:27) 8:00 AM

Vice-Chairman Alan Redfield called the meeting to order and requested introductions:

- **Lily Andersen**, Dairy & Poultry Representative, south of Livingston
- **William Kleinsasser**, Swine Representative, Augusta
- **Jake Feddes**, Cattle Representative, Manhattan
- **Greg Wichman**, Sheep Representative, Hilger
- **Gene Curry**, Cattle Representative, Valier
- **Alan Redfield**, Cattle Representative, Paradise Valley, south of Livingston

- BOL members reported on weather in their area of the state, including high winds, lack of snow, but beautiful weather for calving. With the lack of moisture, concern was expressed about grass and hay availability in the days to come. Milk prices were reported as “horrible,” but calf prices were reported as “unbelievable, pretty wild and crazy.” Things were reported as “going good” in the pig world and the lamb market was up, along with some movement in the wool market

BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

(8:46) 8:09 AM

(8:46) 8:09 AM – BOARD APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES

Alan Redfield requested approval of the minutes of the last BOL meeting, held on January 28, 2026

MOTION/VOTE

(8:50) 8:09 AM

Lily Andersen moved to approve the minutes from the Montana Board of Livestock January 28, 2026 meeting. Jake Feddes seconded. The motion passed.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE UPDATES

(9:06) 8:09 AM

(9:06) 8:09 AM – LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE (May Require Executive Session)

Lindsey Simon, Agency Legal Counsel, updated the BOL on the continued negotiation process with Rocky Vista University for a rotation at the MVDL. Mike Honeycutt reported that Rocky Vista had a May 2026 deadline for when they would need to submit their documentation to the American Veterinary Medical Association Committee on Education for consideration of getting provisional accreditation, allowing them to start admitting students and moving forward from there. He requested that the BOL hold a special meeting to discuss the benefits and the risks of entering into such an agreement and whether it was worth it to finalize the agreement with Rocky Vista on that rotation

(20:12) 8:20 AM – EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES

(20:12) 8:20 AM YNP Bison/EIS/IBMP Operations Update

- Mike Honeycutt reported that the weather hadn't yielded a lot of opportunity for bison coming out of the Park this year and that only about 20 had been removed by Tribal hunting on the West side. On the Northern Management Area, the bison had not made their way towards the Stephen's Creek trap. Around 150 had graduated from the Stephen's Creek quarantine in mid-February and had been shipped to Fort Peck

- Mr. Honeycutt reported that American Prairie and several other supporting organizations had filed protests to the proposed final decision put out by the Secretary of the Interior regarding BLM grazing leases in south Phillips County

(26:03) 8:26 AM Legislative Interim Update

- Mike Honeycutt reported that the DOL had yet to be scheduled for an Economic Affairs Interim Committee Oversight meeting, but had been put on the March 17th agenda for the Interim Budget Committee meeting for Section C, along with DNRC, FWP, DEQ, DOT and the Department of Agriculture. He expected that both Interim Committees would be asking about what the DOL planned to do for the next Legislative Session either policy-wise, legislation-wise or budget-wise

(28:36) 8:29 AM Update on Governor's OGSM Strategic Management and Executive Officer Strategic Goals

- Mike Honeycutt shared what was reported to the Governor during their February OGSM meeting: Slaughter figures had seen some retraction compared to last year with a higher pace for local processing through State-inspected and custom exempts. DOL continued to maintain expenses below budget and Per Capita Fees were beginning to roll in. The 14 vacancies reported this month in the DOL were the same ones that were reported in January, adding that the vacancies in the Meat & Poultry area were largely new positions that had not yet been hired. Market cattle movement showed that we were a little tick ahead of 2025 on what per head had gone through the Commission Companies. The LLB met earlier in the week and made decisions on the nine grant applications they had received. The DOL had gotten bigger allocations of RFID tags from the Federal Government. No Brucellosis positives were reported in the recent Crow Reservation elk capture. Mike Honeycutt and Mike Spatz participated in the Ag Labor Summit. An application had been received for a new State-inspected meat and poultry business in Frenchtown. No progress had been made on the population of Yellowstone Bison, stoking concerns of future population. The opening date of the new MVDL had been pushed back to May. Preparations were being made for the three-year Federal audit in the Meat & Poultry Inspection Bureau. No results had been received from last week's audit at Montana Egg products. The DOL was helping the Department of Agriculture on their Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) rollout. MOUs were being established between the MVDL and MSU and various janitorial, mechanical and service entities in preparation for the opening of the new MVDL. Jay Bodner continued to work on expanding the use of ServiceNow in the Brands area of the DOL. Brian Simonson had taken the lead on bringing DOL websites into ADA compliance.

(58:16) 8:58 AM 2027 Session Executive Planning Process

Mike Honeycutt reviewed the list of deadline dates the Office of Budget and Program Planning had set for the 2027 Session Executive Planning Process

(1:13:35) 9:14 AM VDL Moving Preparation and Date of Possession

- Mike Honeycutt said that the date of possession of the new Lab was May 26, 2026 and that he had asked Lab staff and Dr. Szymanski to communicate to Veterinarians way ahead of time that during the move into the new Lab there might be a short period of time where samples could be outsourced to another Lab, delaying results
- Dates for a ribbon-cutting were being coordinated, and Mr. Honeycutt hoped it would work out for all parties to be held sometime during the month of June

(1:16:26) 9:17 AM – HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Mike Spatz, Human Resources Officer for the DOL, introduced himself and updated the BOL on Human Resources activities at the DOL

(1:17:06) 9:17 AM Staff Openings, Recruitment Updates

Mike Spatz reported since the last BOL meeting, there had been two new hires, one vacated position, three accepted offers, three notices of retirement, one notice of vacating their position and nine positions being actively recruited for:

- Mr. Spatz said that the MVDL was on their second round of interviews for the Section Head Veterinarian Microbiologist position

(1:21:06) 9:21 AM Requests to Hire

(1:21:11) 9:21 AM Public Relations Officer

Mike Spatz reported that the Public Relations Officer position being requested would not add an FTE position to the DOL, but, would be utilizing an FTE from some positions that had been vacant within the DOL for a while:

- Mike Honeycutt provided some history of a Public Information Officer/Public Relations Officer position that had been part of the DOL in times past. He also shared his thoughts on the job duties of the person in the requested position, which he believed would, on a public scale, cause information released from the DOL to the public to be more proactive rather than reactive

MOTION/VOTE

(1:34:18) 9:34 AM

Greg Wichman moved to approve the hire of a Public Relations Officer for the Department of Livestock. Lily Andersen seconded. The motion passed.

(1:35:34) 9:36 AM General Updates

(1:35:34) 9:36 AM Year-End Performance Evaluations

Mike Spatz reported that the DOL had a 100% completion rate in the most recent Year-End Performance Evaluations:

- The BOL discussed the vacancies in the DOL. Mike Honeycutt said to not let those vacant positions go, even if they had been vacant for two or three years, as they could be repurposed for some other need or be refilled when the budget would allow, without having to request more FTEs through the Legislature

(1:41:51) 9:42 AM RECESS

(1:42:11) 9:59 AM RECONVENE

Alan Redfield called the meeting back to order

CENTRALIZED SERVICES DIVISION REPORTS

(1:42:17) 10:00 AM

(1:42:17) 10:00 AM FISCAL BUREAU

Brian Simonson, Chief Financial Officer, introduced himself

(1:42:28) 10:00 AM January 31, 2026 State Special Revenue Report

Brian Simonson reported that this Special Revenue Report represented six to seven months' worth of revenue:

- Although Field Inspections were down \$7,000, it was still within tolerances. With STIP investment earning rates down to 3.96% compared to 4.51% last year and less money invested, the Investment Earnings were down \$51,000 from last year. \$829,000 was collected in Per Capita Fees in January, up 9.6% from this same time last year. With only about 30 Grade A dairy producers left in the state, the Milk Inspection number was about right for the number remaining. A mild winter could be what was contributing to an 11.6% drop in Lab Fees. Wolf Donation Funds did not move at all

(1:48:01) 10:05 AM February 2026 through June 2026 Budget Projections Report

Brian Simonson reported that the DOL was projected to have \$957,669 in excess authority by the end of the year, with \$801,143 of excess Personal Services authority projected by the end of the year:

- Mike Honeycutt said that number was an anomaly and that if we had been at full employment, some of the numbers wouldn't be where they were. He said if the number continued to hold, that we might be able to cut down some EPP requests and instead go forward with doing things within this current budget

(1:54:17) 10:12 AM January 31, 2026 Budget Comparison Report

- Brian Simonson reported that total Personal Services were \$146,000 better than last year. Contracts were showing \$52,000, which was \$1,000 better than last year, mostly because of less DSA testing. The nearly \$63,000 extra in supplies came from the Brands area. New Lab preventative maintenance brought the Repair and Maintenance number to \$42,615. The Depredation Remediation number, the LLB, showed \$97,000 over what was spent last year, with \$245,00 spent in claims, but still having a \$328,000 balance to last until June 30th. The Transfer number of \$88,000 was for elk collaring compared to \$37,000 last year

PREDATOR CONTROL

(2:02:06) 10:19 AM

(2:02:06) 10:19 AM LIVESTOCK LOSS BOARD (LLB) REPORT TO THE BOL

Brian Simonson reported on information given to him from Leslie Doely, LLB Program Manager:

- Mr. Simonson said that since the last BOL meeting, 4 producers had applied for claims on 6 losses. Losses for the month of January were: 7 producers had applied for claims on 12 losses, for a total of \$17,520 in payouts
- The LLB had met on February 23, 2026 and approved moving forward with some rulemaking, approved moving forward with some Legislative proposals and also approved 9 grants for a total of \$121,000. This left \$259,000 for grants, with a May 12, 2026 meeting scheduled to award more

ANIMAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY DIVISION REPORTS

(2:12:40) 10:30 AM

(2:12:40) 10:30 AM – MEAT, MILK & EGG INSPECTION BUREAU

Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection Bureau Chief, introduced herself

(2:12:58) 10:30 AM Out-of-State Travel Requests

Alicia Love said that she would be asking permission to send folks to some meetings

(2:13:10) 10:30 AM Ohio Environmental Health Association (OEHA) Conference

Alicia Love requested that the BOL approve out-of-state travel for herself to be able to attend the Ohio Environmental Health Association (OEHA) Conference in Lewis Center, Ohio on April 16-17, 2026. She was a speaker at the conference and the hosting organization offered to pay for all of her travel and hotel

MOTION/VOTE

(2:13:54) 10:31 AM

William Kleinsasser moved to approve out-of-state travel for Alicia Love to attend the Ohio Environmental Health Association Conference in Lewis Center, Ohio on April 16-17, 2026. Lily Andersen seconded. The motion passed.

(2:14:23) 10:32 AM Association of State Meat Inspection Directors (ASMID) Conference

Alicia Love requested that the BOL approve out-of-state travel for two Meat Supervisors to attend the Association of State Meat Inspection Directors (ASMID) Conference in Des Moines, Iowa on May 18-20, 2026. She reported that although this was a conference she attended each year, because of the on-site audit going on at the same time, she would not be attending this year

MOTION/VOTE

(2:15:44) 10:33 AM

Jake Feddes moved to approve out-of-state travel for two Meat & Poultry

Inspection Supervisors to attend the Spring Association of State Meat Inspection Directors Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, on May 18-20, 2026. William Kleinsasser seconded. The motion passed.

(2:16:11) 10:33 AM FD375 Advanced Milk Processing Course

Alicia Love requested that the BOL approve out-of-state travel for Job Greenall, Sanitarian Supervisor, to attend an FD375 Advanced Milk Processing Course in Madison, Wisconsin on May 18-21, 2026. Ms. Love said that this course would provide the additional training needed for him to become our Rating Officer for the State:

- No motion was given

(2:18:59) 10:36 AM Amendment to ARM 32.6.702

Alicia Love requested that the BOL approve publishing a rule change to ARM 32.6.702, which would include some simplification of the legal language and also exempt Federally-inspected meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities from carrying DOL licensing and fee requirements:

MOTION/VOTE

(2:21:59) 10:39 AM

Jake Feddes moved to publish proposed changes to ARM 32.6.702 – “Applications to be in Writing; Inspection of Plants and Facilities Prior to Issuance of License,” as discussed. Greg Wichman seconded. The motion passed.

(2:25:21) 10:43 AM – ANIMAL HEALTH BUREAU

Dr. Emily Kaleczyc introduced herself

(2:25:35) 10:43 AM Disease Updates

(2:25:35) 10:43 AM Crow Reservation Elk Capture Update

Dr. Emily Kaleczyc reported that the elk capture this year, held on the Crow Reservation, resulted in the collaring of 30 of the elk captured

(2:26:00) 10:43 AM Requests for Out-of-State Travel

(2:26:00) 10:43 AM Veterinary Biologics Training Program

Dr. Emily Kaleczyc requested that the BOL approve out-of-state travel for Dr. Brenee Peterson to attend a USDA-hosted Veterinary Biologics Training Program in Ames, Iowa on May 18-22, 2026

MOTION/VOTE

(2:28:45) 10:46 AM

Lily Andersen moved to approve out-of-state travel for Dr. Brenee Peterson to attend the Veterinary Biologics Training Program in Ames, Iowa, May 18-22, 2026. Jake Feddes seconded. The motion passed.

(2:29:11) 10:47 AM RFID Update/Disease Updates/Screwworm Updates (Non-Agenda Items)

- Dr. Emily Kaleczyc reported that Montana was able to acquire 43,000 white RFID tags from Tennessee. She said that Animal Health had been encouraging USDA to look at changing their tag allocation formula, which she said heavily favored cattle feeding states with lots of animals and were not usually subject to ADT requirements
- Two Avian Influenza cases were reported in January, Dr. Kaleczyc said, with HPAI-positive birds in January and February that had been submitted by FWP. Two cats were under quarantine for exposure to a bat. Dr. Kaleczyc said that neither the HPAI cases nor the bats were usually active this time of year
- Dr. Kaleczyc said that the latest USDA update showed two new active Screwworm cases just 182 miles south of the Texas border. Sterile flies were being released from the fly distribution facility in Texas on the US side of the Texas/Mexico border

PREDATOR CONTROL

(2:36:51) 10:54 AM

(2:36:51) 10:54 AM Update on Activities of USDA Wildlife Services - (Presented by Dalin Tidwell, Montana State Director)

Dalin Tidwell, State Director for USDA Wildlife Services, introduced himself and gave highlights on the most recent activities taking place at USDA Wildlife Services:

- With the high winds and lack of snow, Mr. Tidwell said that flight hours from October 1, 2026 to today were 292.8 hours compared to 486.7 hours in the same timeframe of the previous year, with 2,280 fewer coyotes taken
- The new maintenance contract would be renewed in June with the existing facility in Lewistown and maintenance on aerial equipment was up to date
- The administrative hiring freeze continued at Wildlife Services, but agreements still were going out, including the \$250,000 US Fish and Wildlife agreement for grizzly bear work, which had been signed this week
- Mr. Tidwell gave Fiscal Year-to-Date Investigative Report numbers for Montana: 47 total Investigative Reports; Black Bear, 1 calf, 2 goats, 2 sheep; Grizzly Bear, 6 calves, 5 cattle; Mountain Lion, 1 alpaca, 3 goats, 1 lamb, 5 sheep; Wolf, 5 calves, 2 cattle, 2 guard dogs, 2 lambs, 3 sheep

(2:49:49) 11:07 AM BOL Discussion on Unmet Legislative Needs (Non-Agenda Item)

Mike Honeycutt requested input from the BOL members on any more Legislative needs that should be addressed that hadn't yet been discussed:

- Lily Andersen said there hadn't yet been any industry discussion, but, with the loss of dairies in the state, how would the BOL feel about asking for more general fund to cover inspection fees
- Gene Curry was wondering if research and some kind of outreach needed to be done before deciding on what the numbers should be on penalty charges (fines)

(3:03:20) 11:20 AM LUNCH

(3:03:27) 12:01 PM RECONVENE

Alan Redfield called the meeting back to order

BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

(3:03:35) 12:01 PM

Jay Bodner, Brands Division Administrator, introduced himself

(3:04:17) 12:01 PM BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION UPDATE

(3:04:17) 12:01 PM Market and Dealer Licensing

Jay Bodner reported that the market and dealer licensing renewal notifications would be sent out by State Print & Mail on March 13th, giving individuals 6-7 weeks to renew their licenses by the May 1st deadline:

- There were currently about 436 dealers and agents, with about half of those being dealers

(3:06:36) 12:04 PM Missoula Feral Horses

Jay Bodner reported that a March 11, 2026 meeting with the DOL and the County in Missoula, regarding the feral horse issue, had been cancelled after a petition with around 1100 signatures had been received by the County and a majority of the comments received on the County's website were to have no action taken on those horses:

- Although Mr. Bodner's and Dr. Szymanski's in-person meeting had been cancelled, Mr. Bodner hoped to have a ZOOM call with them the following week, as the DOL now remained in basically a holding pattern on the issue. Dr. Emily Kaleczyc added that, based on what was known about those horses, right now, there was no reason to suspect the horses were carrying any dangerous disease

(3:21:03) 12:18 PM Communications

Jay Bodner reported that the Brands Division would wait to engage 2-4 Officers in different parts of the state with ServiceNow until the system got more fully developed, as service was still pretty spotty in some areas

(3:22:44) 12:20 PM Meeting with Blackfoot Land Department (Non-Agenda Item)

Jay Bodner reported that the annual meeting with the Blackfoot Land Department had been scheduled on March 19, 2026:

- Planning to attend the meeting would be Mike Honeycutt, Jay Bodner, Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, the Area Supervisor, Local District Investigator and possibly Gene Curry

(3:24:24) 12:22 PM ServiceNow Updates

- Jay Bodner reported that the “mixed calves” issue that Eric Moore had discussed previously, had been resolved in ServiceNow, and the step-by-step process to deal with it had been sent to market staff
- The Lifetime Horse Inspection program being put into ServiceNow was nearly finalized
- There was BOL discussion regarding Greg Wichman’s question regarding an out-of-state person purchasing a Montana brand and also Alan Redfield’s question regarding Nebraska’s brand bill

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

(3:34:02) 12:31 PM

Ellie Brighton, Montana Stockgrowers Association, announced that she would be leaving the Stockgrowers in the next few weeks when her baby arrived, and she expressed her appreciation to the BOL and DOL for what they do

SET DATE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

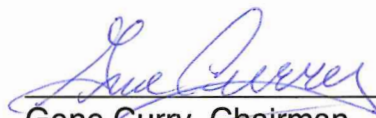
(3:35:54) 12:33 PM

Alan Redfield requested that the BOL set the date for the next BOL meeting, with Mike Honeycutt adding that with everyone’s hectic schedule, March was usually skipped:

- Gene Curry said to plan the Executive Officer evaluation for the next BOL meeting and that he would be sending evaluation information before that meeting to the BOL
- The next BOL meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, 2026

MEETING ADJOURNED

(3:40:30) 12:37 PM


Gene Curry, Chairman