



# Montana Board of Livestock Meeting Minutes

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

May 28, 2025

Copper King Hotel & Convention Center  
4655 Harrison Avenue, Butte, Montana

## Board Members Present

Gene Curry (cattle producer)  
Alan Redfield (cattle producer)  
Jake Feddes (cattle producer)

Eric Moore (cattle producer)  
Greg Wichman (sheep producer)

**(Lillian Andersen and William Kleinsasser attended the meeting by ZOOM.)**

## Staff Present

Mike Honeycutt, EO  
Brian Simonson, Deputy EO  
Donna Wilham, Adm. Asst to EO  
Evan Waters, Centralized Services  
Rick Corder, Centralized Services  
Dale Haylett Centralized Services  
Tom Shultz, Centralized Services  
Brendan Boots, Centralized Services  
Mike Spatz, Centralized Services

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, MT State Vet  
Dr. Greg Juda, Director, MVDL  
Dr. Heidi Hildahl, Animal Health  
Dr. Brenee Peterson, Animal Health  
Jay Bodner, Brands Enforcement  
Kim Dallas, Brands Enforcement  
Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau  
Lindsey Simon, Centralized Services

## Public Present

Dalin Tidwell, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services  
Cheryl Curry

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## MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

**(0:26) 8:00 AM**

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

## CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

**(0:26) 8:00 AM**

Chairman Gene Curry called the meeting to order and requested introductions:

- Eric Moore, Cattle Representative, Miles City
  - Mr. Moore reported that it was spotty dry, with it getting better for moisture the further south you go. He said there were a few showers in the valley around the week of the Miles City Bucking Horse sale

- Lily Andersen, Dairy & Poultry Representative, south of Livingston
  - Ms. Andersen reported that they had gotten a lot of moisture and were busy and ready to get water on the fields and get everything planted
- William Kleinsasser, Swine Representative, Augusta
  - Mr. Kleinsasser reported that they were dry in their area. They had poured 500 yards of concrete the previous week for the poultry layer barn. He added that the swine markets were very good right now
- Jake Feddes, Cattle Representative, Manhattan
  - Mr. Feddes said they had good moisture, crops were in the ground and he was finishing up embryo transfers and AI and hoping to have all cows out on the grass the following day. He reported that with the markets good and prices “mindblowing”, he started marketing calves the earliest he ever had
- Greg Wichman, Sheep Representative, Hilger, North of Lewistown
  - Mr. Wichman reported that they had pretty good moisture but that it had been a little cool. Sheep were out in the pasture, but they had some cows still to get out. There was optimism in the sheep markets, but the wool market was still in the doldrums
- Alan Redfield, Cattle Representative, Paradise Valley, south of Livingston
  - Mr. Redfield reported that they were very wet but that the snow had backed off into the timber. He hoped to do some embryos the following week and then start the AI project
- Gene Curry, Cattle Representative, Valier
  - Mr. Curry reported that the moisture situation was pretty dire and they would be limited to four inches of irrigation water. The winter wheat still looked pretty good though, and the spring grains were up and looking okay. They had started Aling heifers the day before and were trying to finish branding calves, as there were a few late ones. Most of the cows were out on grass, at least for a while

## **BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**(9:16) 8:09 AM**

### **(9:16) 8:09 AM – BOARD APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES**

Gene Curry requested approval of the past BOL meeting minutes:

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(9:24) 8:09 AM**

**Alan Redfield moved to approve the minutes from the Montana Board of Livestock April 24, 2025 meeting. Greg Wichman seconded. The motion passed.**

## OLD BUSINESS

(9:45) 8:10 AM

### (9:45) 8:10 AM – UPDATE ON GOVERNOR’S OGSM STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER STRATEGIC GOALS

Mike Honeycutt reported that the monthly Ops Review meeting with the Governor was held on May 19, 2025, nearing the end of 2025’s first 6-month goals window and now looking for goals for the final 6-month window of 2025:

- Quarterly slaughter figures were ahead of last year at the beginning of this quarter with growth in State-Inspected plants and some new Federal plants
- More revenue was collected than budgeted expenditures with a \$15 million-plus liquid fund balance at the present time
- There were 12 vacancies in the DOL, with some being planned ones and held for various reasons. The vacancy in the LLB area of the DOL was being repurposed and a proposal for how to repurpose it would be put before the LLB at their next meeting in July
- Even in a low cattle environment, the commission companies seemed to be attracting cattle and were almost right where they were a year ago in March
- Mr. Honeycutt said that the IBMP meeting went smoothly and was uneventful
- Livestock Loss grant applications were being accepted. The Governor’s Office, Mr. Honeycutt said, had done some work to push at the Federal level to get Wildlife Services back to operating with some of their positions being released from the hiring freeze
- Dr. Tahnee Szymanski and Kqyn Kuka, the Tribal Liaison for FWP met with the Crow Reservation and had some positive conversations about the potential of surveilling elk for Brucellosis in the Bighorn Mountains on the Crow Reservation
- The DOL was successful on all fronts with the bills submitted to the 2025 Legislature. All were passed, except one request only partially passed, and that was for eight new positions in the Meat Inspection area of the DOL. Only four positions were granted by the Legislature
- The IT projects in both the Brands area and Animal Health area of the DOL continued to move forward, the online brands lookup and making the switch over from USAHerds to CoreOne
- Seven animal health disease preparedness meetings had already been held with around eight or nine to go to finish up the NADPRP grant
- The HPAI sampling being done for the dairy industry had been successful
  - Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that there had been some recent detections in North Dakota and Arizona, but she suggested to possibly back off of the milk sampling during the summer months as the virus seemed to lay down during that time. She said that she thought that Montana should get their designation this month of being a “free” state
- Mr. Honeycutt requested input from the BOL on objectives for the next six months of the OGSM, which would end in December
  - Gene Curry suggested focusing on figuring out how to generate more attendance at the animal disease preparedness meetings, with Jake

Feddes suggesting that perhaps addressing the New World Screwworm issue during those meetings

- Jake Feddes suggested continuing to address the EID tag distribution situation. Eric Moore said there had been complaints in his part of the world about the DSA guys getting all the free tags and them having to pay for tags and so he wanted to see a more concrete tag policy put in place that everybody could understand
- Eric Moore asked to consider not just Supporting Value-Added Processing, but maybe Value-Added Production where some Montana calves could be kept longer, to add 300-500 pounds more on them than we currently do, utilizing local feed, local fuel and local parts, as that was real money
- Eric Moore reminded the BOL of the irrigated acres around Sidney that grew sugar beets and how that could grow feed and possibly there was something the BOL could do to facilitate that. Gene Curry suggested maybe some incentive to build a feedlot or the equipment to run a feedlot would be an idea to utilize those acres

## **NEW BUSINESS/EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES**

**(57:50) 8:58 AM**

### **(57:54) 8:58 AM – HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATES**

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

### **(58:10) 8:59 AM Staff Openings/Recruitment 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 five positions, but with word that there were two more coming
  - The Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau was still recruiting for a Northwest Meat Supervisor
  - Interviews had been held for the Area Supervisor Field Operations position in Brands. Interviews for the Livestock Market Inspector position for Miles City were being conducted that day. Interviews for the Livestock Market Inspector position in Billings would be held that week, but with word of another opening for a Market Inspector there, they would be recruiting for two openings
    - A notice of resignation for May 30, 2025 had been given for the District 14 Livestock Investigator position, which covered Teton, Cascade and part of Lewis & Clark County
    - Mike Honeycutt explained how the state would be divided up into three areas, rather than just two as it is currently, covered by three Area Supervisor Field Operations people, once that position was filled
    - A signed offer letter was sent to an applicant who will be starting as a market person in the Sidney area on June 2, 2025

- The MVDL was continuing looking to fill Dr. Schwarz-Collins' vacant position
- Two new people had been hired by the DOL since the last meeting, Regan Walter as a Meat Inspector in the Shelby area, who started on May 12, 2025, and Casey Ming as the Quality Assurance person at the MVDL, who started on April 29, 2025

**(1:10:22) 9:10 AM – LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE (May Require Executive Session)**  
Lindsey Simon, Agency Legal Counsel, introduced herself

**(1:10:24) 9:10 AM – Litigation Update/General Updates**

Lindsey Simon reported that there was nothing really significant for updates, but there would probably be some matters brought to them in the near future that weren't quite "ripe" yet:

- The DOL was currently into injunction actions, Ms. Simon said, but they were positively moving forward
  - Mike Honeycutt said that some of the processes that Miss Simon was involved in weren't at the final order stage to come to the BOL, as of yet, and there was one of those issues, in the Meat & Poultry area, where the DOL had been receiving political pressure, mainly from Legislators and County Commissioners. He said the DOL was in the middle of an administrative process and were bound by the rules we have to follow, but, as the process moved forward, it would eventually land at the BOL for their decision on the matter
- Timely pressure had eased off, Miss Simon reported, as one individual was not actively practicing his business without a license due to the fact that he was currently in County jail

**(1:17:55) 9:18 AM – EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES**

**(1:17:55) 9:18 AM YNP Bison/EIS/IBMP Operations Update**

Mike Honeycutt updated the BOL on the EIS and IBMP Operations:

- The DOL, along with other State partners were engaged in litigation around the new EIS Record of Decision that had been issued for YNP Bison in 2024, and now, Judge Morris who was assigned to the case, had allowed other organizations and Tribes to also intervene in that litigation
  - Judge Morris did not grant a stay request by one of the partners that would allow revival of a 2018-2019 lawsuit, and so the State's litigation continued to move forward
- Mr. Honeycutt thought that because of the constraints in what could be discussed, due to litigation of several of the IBMP parties, the most recent IBMP meeting was fully remote and lasted only around two hours
- The big thing talked about at the IBMP meeting was this past year's bison operation. With the YNP Bison population pushing 5,500-6,000, Mr. Honeycutt said that the ability to remove 800-900 of those bison, primarily through the food transfer program this year was more than expected, but may be a break-even or

only a slight decline number for controlling that population with an expectancy of a pretty hefty number of bison on the Yellowstone National Park landscape next year

- Dr. Tahnee Szymanski said that in the past 15 years there had been bison populations around 6,000 going into the winter, reminding the BOL that with a tough winter, what number of them potentially could move, as in the winter of '21-'22, around 4,000 moved into the Gardiner Basin, the largest out-migration in the history of the bison program. She said that 1400 of those bison were taken by Tribal Hunting that winter
- Mike Honeycutt reported that on May 22, 2025, a Tribal Hunt meeting took place between FWP, YNP and the Tribes. The DOL sent staff to the meeting to listen and see if we were needed to plug in and help with communications or management, as the DOL's "skin in the game" was disease issues, not to manage the hunt

### **(1:38:44) 9:39 AM 2025 Session Planning and Legislative Update**

Mike Honeycutt said that this would be last time this 2025 Session Planning and Legislative Update item would be on the agenda:

- Mr. Honeycutt reported that the DOL was still waiting for HB2 to be signed by the Governor. He said that four new positions in the Meat area of the DOL were granted, along with all of the needs requested for the Milk and Diagnostic Labs and fund switches needed from Federal to State to deal with Federal budget cuts and also switching some of the Meat Inspection authority from State Special Revenue to General Fund to maintain the Milk Program without large fee increases on dairy producers
- It was felt that the budget was strong enough, without asking for extra funds, to support adding black bears to the predator list and adding bison as a species that could be claimed for predator loss on the Livestock Loss Board side of the DOL
- There was some HB5 money that would help support the move to the new Lab. Mr. Honeycutt said that Montana Architecture & Engineering Division and others had requested some general fund monies to make sure the transition of the entities to that new Lab building happened effectively
- The three bills the DOL submitted to the 2025 Legislature all passed, two of them regarding inspection of dead animals in feedlots and the third bill was allowing digital copies of inspections in the Brands area of the DOL
- A 12-Day Rule bill had been tabled in Public Health, and Mr. Honeycutt gave kudo to Lily Andersen and others who testified on it. The Montana Cattle Committee original bill had been table but was brought forward as a study bill and signed by the leadership

### **(1:51:45) 9:52 AM RECESS**

### **(1:51:48) 10:26 AM RECONVENE**

## CENTRALIZED SERVICES DIVISION REPORTS

(1:52:08) 10:26 AM

Brian Simonson, Central Services Division Administrator, introduced himself

(1:52:16) 10:26 AM – FISCAL BUREAU

(1:52:16) 10:26 AM April 30, 2025 State Special Revenue Report

Brian Simonson explained that this State Special Revenue Report was for the end of April, and represented about 9-10 months' worth of revenue, about 75%-83% of the fiscal year completed:

- There were only \$8,000 in Field Inspections for the month of April, which was similar to last year. Gains were made, however, in Market Inspections, with a positive \$30,000 over last year, Jake Feddes commenting that he didn't know where all the cattle were coming from; Gene Curry commenting it was very puzzling. Mike Honeycutt said Montana does draw in cattle from outside the state
- Brian Simonson said that Per Capita Fees were nearly \$92,000 over last year, with a banner \$530,000 that came in the month of April, but said that did reflect a 2% fee increase and more cattle reported than last year
- The MVDL Revenue was as 70% of their goal of \$1.5 million, Mr. Simonson said and for this report were \$27,000 over this time last year. He added that the MVDL however, was more than negative in Lab Supplies expense which counterbalanced the positive in Lab Fees
- There were \$34,000 in Wolf Donation in the month of April

(1:58:04) 10:32 AM May, 2025 Through June 2025 Budget Projections Report

Brian Simonson reported that with only two months left in the Fiscal Year, there wasn't a lot to project, but still movement:

- Benefits were in flux numbers and would be moved around where funds were needed, Mr. Simonson said. Total Personal Services were projected to be \$135,000 in excess authority, with most of that attributed to vacancy savings in Brands, the DSA and in the Milk & Egg areas of the DOL. Payouts were \$8,000 less than last year, with \$280,000 in payouts for the year so far
- Contracts were a positive number this year, attributed to DSA Testing being down and about \$80,000 in the Egg area, projecting for a third shift. Supplies were showing a negative \$131,000 with the MVDL showing \$197,000 under budget for Supplies, with Greg Juda associating that with supply expenses for Molecular Diagnostics as PCR testing supplies had gone up in price and they put an order in
- In the Budgeted Funds category, Mr. Simonson said that General Fund was \$116,000 in excess to the good for authority. \$214,000 was coming out of the DSA for less testing. The LLB was a positive \$60,000. The Meat General Fund went from \$300,000 down to \$116,000 due to less Federal funding coming in, meaning that the DOL was about \$160,000 in the hole on the General Fund side of Meat Inspection, but, Mr. Simonson said that would be whole by the end of the year due to moving some State Special Revenue around.

- Mr. Simonson said he expected the Milk Inspection Fees to be about \$19,000 over what their revenue projections were for the year and they would make it to July 1<sup>st</sup> because there was still some money in savings. In fact, he said with the \$150,000 in General Fund money allocated by the Legislature, he expected that Milk Inspection Fees would be more than enough to take care of shortfalls for 2026 and 2027
- The MVDL Lab Fees were \$252,000 in the hole, which was an improvement over the last month, as Mr. Simonson said that most of the time at the end of the year, it's more around \$300,000
- Mr. Simonson said that the end-of-the-year projection was nearly \$250,000 in excess authority, which was an \$85,000 increase over last month

**(2:07:22) 10:41 AM BOL Conversation Regarding DOL Funding of RFID Tags (Non-Agenda Item)**

Gene Curry shared about his recent phone conversation with Walt Schweitzer, MFU:

- Mr. Curry said that Walt Schweitzer's issue, shared in the phone call, was that he had to pay for his bangs tags, the EID tags and he used to get bangs tags for nothing
- Mike Honeycutt shared that he had spoken with Mr. Schweitzer about the same issue, adding that Mr. Schweitzer also made a request that the BOL consider exempting Montana from having to comply with RFID rules, which Mr. Honeycutt said he answered with it didn't work that way because we could only control inside our borders, not what people wanted outside our borders
- With the excess year-end authority projection and carryforward, Mr. Honeycutt offered that if the BOL directed so, the DOL could spend some of that to purchase more tags to help Dr. Szymanski, not cover the entire shortage gap, but stretch those tags further. Dr. Szymanski reported that historically, use of tags in Montana was around 500,000/year, but USDA had allocated around only 199,000 free tags
- Brian Simonson said that, going forward, allocating \$250,000, one time only, of DOL monies to purchase tags was probably a good number, but much over that would cause some real issues with personnel

**MOTION/VOTE**

**(2:22:44) 10:56 AM**

**Alan Redfield moved that \$240,000 of excess fees be allotted to pay for additional bangs orange EID tags, one-time-only. Eric Moore seconded. Greg Wichman voted no. The motion passed.**

**(2:37:55) 11:12 AM April 30, 2025 Budget Comparison Report**

Brian Simonson called out some of the big numbers in the April 30, 2025 Budget Comparison Report:

- Total Personal Services were showing nearly \$650,000 more spending this year than last year, essentially, because of the pay increase. Mr. Simonson said there was another pay increase just passed by the Legislature, but it would be less, \$1/hour or 2.5%.

- Contracts were \$53,000 less than last year, essentially due to less testing in the DSA. Supplies in the MVDL was just over \$70,000 more than last year, because the cost of supplies were going up. Rent, which included rent for State buildings and also lease vehicle costs was \$51,000 more, but Meat Inspection added more vehicles. Brands mostly accounted for the nearly \$62,000 in Repair & Maintenance due to tires and shifting of equipment and replacing vehicles. Under Operations, the Equipment number did \$342,000 better than last year. The claims for the Livestock Loss Board were spent earlier this year than last, with the first \$150,000 allocation spent before April
- The Transfers were showing \$20,000 better than at this time last year, as it was a timing of when the elk collaring payment was made last year when and all of it was caught up in the month of April in 2024. In Budgeted Funds, the \$362,000 over last year, much of that correlated to \$275,000 in Meat & Poultry Inspection because of the reduction in the Federal budget that needed to be picked up by general fund. Pay increases and vehicle costs had a lot to do with the \$186,000 number in Brand Inspection. The \$57,000 in Milk Inspection was for vacancies that occurred this year versus last year.
- Currently, the DOL was 80% complete for expenditures, and we've expended 79%. There were no additional grants added since last month. HB10, the ITS budget spent \$500,000 this time last year and that was not spent this year

## **PREDATOR CONTROL**

**(2:51:15) 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 the Activities of USDA Wildlife Services by ZOOM:

- Mr. Tidwell reported that helicopter blades for the 95 Tango helicopter were on order and that in the meantime, arrangements had been made with the Aviation Training Center out of Cedar City, Utah to have a 206 helicopter be reassigned, temporarily to the Billings hangar to help continue Wildlife Services operations
- Mr. Tidwell said that M44s had been reinstated as a tool for use by Wildlife Services. Also a positive was that approval had been given to hire the vacant position out of Garfield County and they were able to assign an existing employee to Beaverhead County. Mr. Tidwell said that they still had to fill the vacant position in Prairie County out of Terry and they needed to replace their Air National Guard position out of Great Falls. He said the Wildlife Disease Biologist position was also vacant
- The annual meeting that Wildlife Services had with FWP was scheduled for the following week to rewrite their MOU and also to discuss wolf number in the state, now at 450 individuals. Mr. Tidwell said that other MOUs would be re-upped soon with some Counties, Stockgrowers and Woolgrowers
- Mr. Tidwell reported on IR numbers for the fiscal year: Black Bear, 5; Grizzly Bear, 46; Mountain Lion, 12; Wolf, 38. And coyote takes were at 9500 so far this year. He said that a 430-pound adult male Grizzly Bear that had killed eight calves last year and this year was removed from the area. He said that one

Grizzly in the Roger's Pass area hadn't come back and one out of Dutton that had been killing pigs never came back

**(3:05:14) 11:39 AM LLB Predation Claims Report and General Updates**

Brian Simonson reported on LLB Predation Claims for the past month and updated the BOL on LLB activities:

- Mr. Simonson said that there had been a total of 13 claims for calendar year 2025, so far, with six of them coming in the past month
- The Livestock Loss Board met on May 1, 2025, Mr. Simonson said, and came out of it with some direction to fill the vacant position. The LLB also continued to move forward with grant processing, with the grant form available online and the deadline set for May 31, 2025. Five grant applications had been received

**(3:09:29) 11:43 AM LUNCH**

**(3:09:36) 1:04 PM RECONVENE**

Gene Curry called the meeting back to order

**ANIMAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY DIVISION REPORTS**

**(3:09:40) 1:04 PM**

**(3:09:40) 1:04 PM – MEAT, MILK & EGG INSPECTION BUREAU**

Alicia Love, Bureau Chief of the Meat, Milk & Egg Inspection Bureau Chief introduced herself, adding that he had a short itinerary today

**(3:10:18) 1:04 PM General Updates**

**(3:10:18) 1:04 PM Summary from the ASMID Conference Attended by Jay Nelson, EIAO on April 28-29, 2025**

Alicia Love reported on the ASMID Conference attended by EIAO Jay Nelson on April 28-29, 2025:

- Alicia Love said that high points of the conference were discussing the Uncertainty of Funding the Meat Inspection Programs, Modernization of Meat Inspection within APHIS and Minimizing the Presence of PFAs in Water Used in Meat Processing Plants
- Mike Honeycutt shared about a well in Kalispell where PFAs were found about a year and a half ago, prompting conversation about how it might be affecting dairies and other operations close to there. He said that the State had no regulatory structure regarding that issue and there was nothing that the DOL could theoretically do about it
- Ms. Love said that staffing was great and they were getting ready for Fair Slaughter Season adding that they had their training at the beginning of May

**(3:15:14) 1:09 PM – VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY**

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

**(3:15:54) 1:10 PM FY25 NAHLN Grant/ Update**

Dr. Greg Juda explained to the BOL the MVDL's financial plan for the Fiscal '25 NAHLN Infrastructure Grant:

- Dr. Juda reported that the NAHLN was divided into two components, a NAHLN Infrastructure component for \$150,000 and Farm Bill funding component for \$129,000
  - The Farm Bill funding component had some stipulations that included meeting the responsibilities of a Level 2 Laboratory through support of personnel, such as salaries, benefits, overtime or on-call training opportunities and travel to trainings or meetings, and so, Dr. Juda said that they had put roughly, \$73,500 of salaries into the grant for Lab personnel and almost \$28,000 for personnel benefit with the final \$12 towards travel for the AAVLD Annual Meeting and some NAHLN-scope training
  - The Infrastructure component of the grant was put into an extraction unit that would be place within the BSL3 area of the new laboratory building
- Dr. Juda shared that he planned to have a proposed rule change for the BOL to review at the next meeting to increase testing costs. Mike Honeycutt clarified that the Lab was not a break-even operation, breaking even on fees alone, but was also subsidized by per capita fee and general fund
- Dr. Juda explained to the BOL that he did not see a significant impact on turnaround times at the Lab, just based on new facilities, but that offering additional testing was within the realm of possibility. Dr. Tahnee Szymanski said that when a pathogen was not obvious, it does take time to get an answer from a Lab because it is a stepwise process when culturing the pathogen does take time to get results, no matter which lab is used. She added that the MVDL also struggled with Postal Service delivery times

**(3:35:18) 1:29 PM – ANIMAL HEALTH BUREAU**

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

**(3:35:18) 1:29 PM Out-of-State Travel Report – ICS Training (Dr. Brenee Peterson)**

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported on the Incident Command System (ICS) Training that Dr. Brenee Peterson attended in Lansing, Michigan in April, as Dr. Peterson was currently participating in another virtual training and wasn't able to be at the meeting:

- Dr. Szymanski explained that the ICS structure was a nationwide template of how to manage emergency events. In Dr. Peterson's Michigan training, one event was an oil spill and another a disease-centered event, which not only provided a great opportunity for her to learn the system but to participate in some great networking as well

- Mike Honeycutt shared how he and other DOL staff had gone through ICS training as well, learning about animal health disease preparedness in case there was a foreign animal disease outbreak

**(3:40:19) 1:34 PM Animal Health Updates**

**(3:40:23) 1:34 PM Brucellosis**

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski updated the BOL on Brucellosis happenings on the landscape:

- Regarding the FWP annual elk capture, Dr. Szymanski said that FWP had to sign their contracts with the helicopter crews that come in and do those captures by the end of summer. She said that the DOL had met with FWP staff recently to review recent and old captures to identify priority areas to do captures in 2026 and beyond and were able to identify five priority areas
  - Those priority areas for elk capture would be: 1. The Crow Reservation, which would be the Northern extent of the Bighorn Mountains in Montana and the southern Tendoys along the Montana/Idaho border 2. The Greenlee Boulder River area, west of the Park County line, just south of the interstate 3. The Beartooth area 4. The Red Lodge/Clark Fork area 5. The Tobacco Roots
- Dr. Szymanski reported that with the delisting of Brucellosis from the Homeland Security Select Agent List in December 2024, the USDA was able to catch up on all of their whole genome sequences and the DOL had received eight isolates back from them that had been submitted by the DOL from either domestic livestock in Montana, elk, wild bison, etc. The information received from that was new but left the DOL with some questions that couldn't be answered. Dr. Szymanski was hoping that a group could now be established of individuals from other diagnostic labs and animal health officials in other states to have conversations about high priority areas and what the needs are for those states regarding Brucellosis
- There was another manufacturer of the RB51 vaccine, Dr. Szymanski reported that was an international company
  - Mike Honeycutt said that after Eric Moore's confirmation to the BOL, there was a joint resolution from Senator Willis Curdy to send a letter to USDA and Congress, urging them to act on relief for producers regarding the RB51 vaccine, which passed and was signed by leadership

**(3:51:38) 2:46 PM New World Screwworm**

Dr. Tahnee Szymanski updated the BOL on the movement of the New World Screwworm in Mexico:

- Dr. Tahnee Szymanski reported that seven days previous, the number of cases of New World Screwworm stood at 1644, but that new cases continued to come on at the rate of maybe 100-200/week. There continued to be ongoing efforts to expand a fly production facility down in Mexico. The last outbreak in the US was in deer on the Florida Keys and sterile flies were used in that case

- There had been a lot of conversations in the US, Dr. Szymanski said, about what controls State Animal Health officials would put into place if there was a detection of the Screwworm in the US
- Dr. Szymanski reported that there was a hawk in Mexico that was found to be infected with the Screwworm and so she said it could spread as fast as you could move infected animals, including those being moved in a trailer, adding that in Montana however, any detection should be finite because of cold weather
- According to Dr. Szymanski, the range that the Screwworm fly would have was 200 yards, and the life cycle of the New World Screwworm was about 21 days. She said the plan was to reassess, on a monthly basis, regarding allowing Mexican feeder cattle back into the US

**(4:02:02) 1:56 PM RECESS**

**(4:02:03) 2:16 PM RECONVENE**

Gene Curry called the BOL meeting back to order

## **BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

**(4:02:08) 2:16 PM**

### **(4:02:08) 2:16 PM –DILLON LIVESTOCK PUBLIC CONTESTED CASE HEARING DECISION**

Gene Curry explained that after yesterday's hearing, what was needed from the BOL today, was consensus to give Counsel direction of what the Written Final Order should look like:

- Mike Honeycutt said that once Lindsey Simon got the Written Final Order completed, action could take place possibly the following week in a ZOOM meeting with the BOL
- The BOL walked through the statutes and rules that set up the regulation of livestock markets and their operations
- Lindsey Simon suggested that an informal vote of the BOL be taken before she put together a Written Final Order for their vote because it would be a waste of her time to draft that order if it would not match up with what the outcome would be. Mike Honeycutt added that the BOL was not going to be given a recommended order from a Hearings Officer in this case, because in this case, the BOL was the Hearings Officer, and that was why the BOL needed to build some consensus around the Written Final Order. He said that William Kleinsasser would not have a vote, because he was not part of the hearing the day before
  - Alan Redfield said that he would be a NO for granting additional sales to Dillon Livestock, saying that the job of the BOL was to look out for all producers, small and bigger, as he felt the bigger producers had more marketing abilities than the smaller producers. He added that the industry was struggling enough in some respects and we needed them all

- Eric Moore said he would lean towards a NO vote, saying that he didn't feel the volume of cattle being put through in Dillon was an insurmountable obstacle for having one sale a week because there were other barns in the state that were putting, roughly, twice that many through and he thought there were other opportunities for Dillon without unduly harming the market in Three Forks
- Jake Feddes said he would be leaning towards a NO vote, saying that he echoed what Mr. Moore said. He didn't think the amount of cattle that Dillon was running through wasn't possible to get through and he thought there were other options to get them through, whether it was starting the sales earlier or infrastructure upgrades. He also thought there were other options of other days that wouldn't affect another barn that was within 89 miles. He said in looking at the average numbers from five other barns in the state, the lowest number on four of them was double what Dillon was doing on average during the Fall Run. He also did not want to make an undue burden on smaller producers who couldn't go in the middle of the week, as it wasn't fair. He thought some direct testimony at the hearing said that Dillon wanted to do a feeder special on Monday, and with Headwaters selling an all-class sale on that same day, they would be selling feeders as well
- Greg Wichman said he would have to say NO to the request, and even though he struggled his way through this, he felt there were other options for Dillon that weren't explored, adding that allowing the sales they're proposing would put unduly pressure on Headwaters
- Lily Andersen said that she was leaning to vote YES to the request, as Brittney Jones said during the hearing that they had a unique customer base. Mrs. Andersen said that she was a small cow/calf producer and worked a 9:00 to 5:00 job and didn't even pay attention to feeder special, adding that she didn't think that allowing Dillon four feeder special sales was going to have that much of an effect on Headwater's already existing customer base
- Jay Bodner said that there was a significant learning curve when staff was adopting the new system where they probably had extended hours with staff at sales, but, since that time, staff had been able to adopt the system in a much more efficient manner and those extended hours had been reduced dramatically across all the markets across the state

**(4:58:57) 3:13 PM –OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL REQUEST – International Livestock Identification Conference**

Jay Bodner requested that the BOL approve travel for DOL staff to attend the International Livestock Identification Conference in July, being held in Gering, Nebraska:

- Per his request, Gene Curry was added as one of the attendees at the conference, which moved the estimated cost of the request from \$6600 to \$8300
- Mr. Bodner said that the conference covered livestock branding, reporting, identification and inspection and had been attended in past years by both

national and international attendees. He said one of last year's speakers did a presentation on facial recognition for cattle that was phenomenal. Gene Curry shared that when the conference was held in New Mexico there was a demonstration on how cattle imports were handled at the border

- Mike Honeycutt shared that Ty Thomas, the former Deputy Brands Administrator, was the incoming President of the ILIA and the DOL had to keep him in an unpaid consultant role so he could be the President of that organization

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(5:09:44) 3:24 PM**

**Greg Wichman moved to allow out-of-state travel for Jay Bodner, the three Livestock Supervisors and Gene Curry to attend the International Livestock Identification Conference in Gering, Nebraska on July 21-23, 2025. Alan Redfield seconded. The motion passed.**

## **(5:12:55) 3:27 PM BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION UPDATE**

### **(5:12:57) 3:27 PM ARM Rule 32.2.404 – Brands Enforcement Division Fees**

Jay Bodner explained that ARM 32.2.404 had been brought up before the BOL at the last meeting, but he was requesting another change be approved by the BOL:

- Mr. Bodner said the items already approved the month before for change in that Rule by the BOL included, eliminating the consignment online permit fees, the sheep transportation permit, device transportation permit, along with updating some language and eliminating printing of the Brand Books
- One of the District Investigators, Mr. Bodner said, pointed out a portion of ARM 32.2.404 called "Adjacent State Transportation Permit," which was tied back to a statute that got repealed in 2009. Mr. Bodner said, because of that repealed statute, he was requesting for that "Adjacent State Transportation Permit" segment in the Rule simply be struck

## **MOTION/VOTE**

**(5:14:46) 3:29 PM**

**Greg Wichman moved to eliminate the Adjacent State Transportation Permit listed in ARM 32.2.204, as presented by Jay Bodner. Alan Redfield seconded. The motion passed.**

## **(5:15:06) 3:29 PM Staffing**

Jay Bodner updated the BOL on the staffing situation in the Brands Enforcement Division:

- Mr. Bodner said that the interviews held at the end of April for the Rover position were not successful, and now that position had been divided into two part-time positions, with one market already talking about a potential candidate
- Interviews were successful, however, Mr. Bodner said, for the Central Area Supervisor position, and that decision would probably be made the following week

- There were two Market positions open in Billings and one for a District 14 Investigator

**(5:17:08) 3:31 PM Public Brand Search**

Jay Bodner reported that their Public Brand Search went live on May 20, 2025 and was on the DOL Homepage under “View Montana Current Brands”

**(5:19:24) 3:33 PM Dealer License Renewal**

Jay Bodner reported that Dealer License Renewals ended on May 1, 2025:

- According to Mr. Bodner, renewal letters were sent to 203 dealers and 408 registered agents. As of the day before, there were 18 dealers that had not registered or renewed and a few of those said they would not be renewing
- The BOL discussed bonding requirements for dealers, with Jay Bodner explaining that those specific requirements were listed on the DOL website
- Jay Bodner said that statutory changes made in the last Legislature had been communicated to Brands Enforcement Division staff and it was his expectation that the District Investigators would pass that information onto Local Inspectors. He said they were also talking about putting out a press release highlighting those changes that were made to the public
- Mike Honeycutt said that when people complain to him about the lack of Local Inspectors, he asks them, when do you want to get your own book, because we'd get you signed up

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

**(5:34:17) 3:48 PM**

Gene Curry announced that there was no more public present in the room or online

**SET DATE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING**

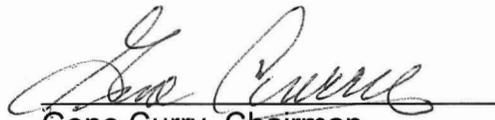
**(5:34:30) 3:48 PM**

Gene Curry requested that the BOL schedule a date for the next BOL meeting:

- The BOL set the date of their next meeting for Friday, June 27, 2025 in Helena

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

**(5:38:03) 3:52 PM**

  
Gene Curry, Chairman