Montana Board of Livestock
Meeting Minutes
(This Meeting was Open to the Public & By ZOOM)
May 27, 2026
MT Department of Livestock Board Room #319
302 N Roberts, Helena, Montana

Board Members Present
Gene Curry (cattle producer)
Jake Feddes (cattle producer)
William Kleinsasser (swine producer)

(Alan Redfield, Greg Wichman, Eric Moore and Lillian Andersen attended meeting by ZOOM. Greg Wichman departed from the meeting at (55:45) **8:56 AM)**

Staff Present
Mike Honeycutt, EO
Lindsey Simon, Centralized Services
Evan Waters, Centralized Services
Rick Corder, Centralized Services
Dale Haylett, Centralized Services
Tom Shultz, Centralized Services
Carolyn Johnson, Centralized Services
Mike Spatz, Centralized Services
Brian Simonson, Deputy EO
Donna Wilham, Adm Asst to EO
Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, MT State Vet
Dr. Emily Kaleczyc, Animal Health
Dr. Kelsey Martin, Animal Health
Dr. Greg Juda, MVDL
Alicia Love, Meat, Milk & Egg Bureau

Public Present
Dalin Tidwell, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER
(0:15) **8:00 AM**
Chairman Gene Curry called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS
(0:15) **8:00 AM**
Chairman Gene Curry called the meeting to order and requested introductions:

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

- All the BOL members expressed concerns about the availability of water this summer and the issues that could cause. Both grain and hay crops were in question as well. Cattle, hog and sheep prices were looking good though, with Jake Feddes saying that even with a slow down in buying the previous week, the cattle market was still better than ever seen in the history of the industry.
- Mike Honeycutt read a memo to the BOL members he had received from the Governor's Office stating that AI note-taking, transcription or summarization bots may not be used until the State adopted a formal policy on their use during public board meetings

BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

(10:43) **8:11 AM**

(10:43) **8:11 AM – BOARD APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES**

Gene Curry requested approval of the minutes of the last BOL meeting, held on April 21, 2026

MOTION/VOTE

(10:48) **8:11 AM**

Jake Feddes moved to approve the minutes from the Montana Board of Livestock April 21, 2026 meeting. William Kleinsasser seconded. The motion passed.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE UPDATES

(11:08) **8:11 AM**

(11:10) **8:11 AM – EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATES**

(11:36) **8:12 AM YNP Bison/EIS/IBMP Operations Update**

- Mike Honeycutt reported that the IBMP meeting, held several weeks previous in West Yellowstone, was pretty low-key
    - During the bison population discussion, Yellowstone officials shared that they believed there was a higher level of winterkill this year than in previous years, bringing the before-calving population to around 4800-4900, but a post-calving count would be taken later this year
    - Based on several things, including weather and bison behavior, Yellowstone National Park put out a supplemental EIS notification, with comments due on Friday, May 29, 2026. The Governor's Office, FWP and the DOL would be submitting comments

(20:02) **8:20 AM – HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE**

(20:37) **8:20 AM Staff Openings, Recruitment Updates/General Updates**

- Mike Spatz, Human Resource Officer for the DOL, reported that the DOL was currently recruiting for eight positions. There were three new hires since the last BOL meeting, all in the Central Services Division. There were also three vacated positions, two in Brands and one in Animal Health. A future resignation in CSD was also reported for July 3rd
- There were accepted offers for the Veterinarian Microbiologist Section Head job and Public Relations Officer position. After an offer for the Pathologist position at the MVDL was turned down, other options that might help with some succession planning were being considered
- Mr. Spatz announced that Governor's Awards nominees were being sought in the DOL

CENTRALIZED SERVICES DIVISION REPORTS

(34:09) **8:35 AM**
Brian Simonson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Executive Officer, introduced himself

(35:36) **8:36 AM FISCAL BUREAU**

(35:36) **8:36 AM April 30, 2026 State Special Revenue Report**
Brian Simonson reported that this Special Revenue Report represented 9-10 months of revenue collected, with about 80% of the fiscal year being completed:

- The Field Inspections number was positive for the first time this fiscal year, having collected $957 more than this time last year. Market Inspection Fees, although slowing down in April, was almost $76,000 more than this time last year. Investment Earnings, with less revenue and suffering interest rates, were down 15% to 20% from last year. While $3.4 million of Per Capita Fee was collected in March, in April, $629,000 was collected. Mike Honeycutt extended kudos to the industry for already having 98% paid of what had been billed for Per Capita. Although Lab Fees were down $16,413 from this time last year, in April, $186,000 was brought into the MVDL. $35,000 for Wolf Donations were collected in March

(50:07) **8:50 AM May 2026 through June 2026 Budget Projections Report**
Brian Simonson said that he would be reporting on two months' worth of projections with two months left in the fiscal year:

- Total Personal Services had gone down about $50,000 due to new hires, especially higher profile Veterinary hires. Total Operations was projected to have $339,000 of excess authority. An excess of $181,000 was projected in Contracts and $170,000 was projected in Rent. Repair and Maintenance showed a negative of $144,000, due, in the most part, to preventative maintenance in the

MVDL. With more Federal money being received for Meat & Poultry Inspection, less General Fund was being spent, and Mr. Simonson said there would be some excess authority in that at the end of the fiscal year. Although Evan Waters projected that there would be $1,065,982 of excess authority by June 30th, Mike Honeycutt said that part of the excess authority might be used for DOL purchases, which would lessen Legislative requests

Greg Wichman departed from the meeting at **8:56 AM** (55:45)

(56:00) **8:56 AM** **April 30, 2026 Budget Comparison Report**

- Brian Simonson reported that payroll had caught up with the payroll cycle and there was just $677 more spent last year in Salaries than was spent this year. Mike Honeycutt added that it was a product of having more higher-salary vacancies. In the Operations category, Contracts were showing $124,000, for the most part, due to more billed testing. The $158,000 over this time last year in Other Expenses was mostly related to increased Meat & Poultry Inspection Federal dollars coming in. Evan Waters noted that 74% of the Personal Services budget was expended with 80% of the payroll completed; Operations were 74% expended with 75% of the budget year lapsed.

(1:01:25) **9:02 AM RECESS**

(1:01:30) **9:21 AM RECONVENE**

Gene Curry called the meeting back to order

PREDATOR CONTROL

(1:01:30) **9:21 AM**

(1:01:30) **9:21 AM** **LIVESTOCK LOSS BOARD (LLB) REPORT TO THE BOL**

Brian Simonson reported on livestock loss claim information gathered by Leslie Doely, LLB Program Manager:

- Mr. Simonson said that total depredation losses for all species in calendar year 2025 were 220, for a total of $294,000 spent for claims, with 85 losses by Grizzly Bear, 10 losses by Black Bear, 67 losses by Wolf and 58 losses by Mountain Lion, adding that the number of eligible losses was higher than 220. Since January 1, 2026, Mr. Simonson said two loss claims had come in, reporting one calf by a Grizzly Bear and four goats by a Mountain Lion. The balance of unspent claims money for Fiscal Year 2026 was $288,928
- The last LLB meeting was held on May 12, 2026 and during that meeting, eight grants were awarded, for a total of $58,000. The deadline to apply for the next grant cycle was November 4, 2026, with the next LLB meeting scheduled on December 9, 2026 to go over those grants. Mr. Simonson said that there was about $168,000 in reserve for the LLB, but come July 1, 2026, there would be an additional $100,000 added to that amount, via statute authority. There was

discussion about the simplicity of applying for an LLB grant and the importance of getting the word out to people to apply for those grants

(1:15:26) **9:35 AM Update on Activities of USDA Wildlife Services - (Presented by Dalin Tidwell, Montana State Director)**
Dalin Tidwell, State Director for USDA Wildlife Services, thanked the BOL for the opportunity to be with them and he gave an update of where things were and where things were going in USDA Wildlife Services:

- Mr. Tidwell reported on the challenges they had been having transitioning to their new Operating Reporting System (OARS). He did though, share up-to-date Investigative Report (IR) numbers: Black Bear-1 horse, 6 calves, 2 goats, 3 sheep; Grizzly Bear-21 calves, 13 cattle; Mountain Lion-1 alpaca, 1 calf, 7 goats, 2 lambs, 6 sheep; Wolf-12 calves, 4 cattle, 3 guard dogs, 3 lambs, 6 sheep
- The weather had been "crazy," and staff had worked 11 weekends to get caught up. Mr. Tidwell reported that from October through March, 5,442 coyotes had been taken, which was about 2,000 below a normal season, as it tracked. Although use of M44s had been reinstated on BLM land, Mr. Tidwell said that they were going to approach that with not using M44s on BLM lands, as they had done since 2019, but address it if a unique scenario arose
- Mr. Tidwell announced that the court mandated Grizzly Bear Environmental Impact Statement, written by USDA Wildlife Services, was ready to go out for Agency comment within the next week or so
- The USDA Wildlife Range Rider program was discussed

ANIMAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY DIVISION REPORTS

(1:36:44) **9:57 AM**

(1:37:12) **9:57 AM** – **ANIMAL HEALTH BUREAU**

(1:37:26) **9:57 AM Out-of-State Travel Request**

(1:37:26) **9:57 AM Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) Meeting**
Dr. Emily Kaleczyc requested that the BOL approve an out-of-state travel request for Dr. Tahnee Szymanski to attend the LMA annual meeting in South Dakota:

- Ms. Kaleczyc explained that the NADPREP grant, which was the Emergency Preparedness grant from USDA, would fund the request

MOTION/VOTE

(1:38:55) **9:58 AM**
Jake Feddes moved to approve out-of-state travel for Dr. Tahnee Szymanski and possibly one more Veterinarian to attend the Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) meeting in Deadwood, South Dakota on June 16-19, 2026. William Kleinsasser seconded. The motion passed.

(1:39:33) **9:59 AM Update on Milk Surveillance for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza**
Dr. Emily Kaleczyc updated the BOL on the Avian Influenza surveillance in dairy cattle that the Animal Health Bureau had been conducting in Montana:

- Dr. Kaleczyc reported that as of May 1, 2026, monthly silo sampling, which was pooled milk collected from Great Falls and Billings plants, had been discontinued. Almost concurrently with that decision, USDA announced that lactating dairy cattle from states that had achieved the unaffected HPAI-free status, would no longer require an individual cow test to ship across state lines, which she did not expect to be a significant impact for Montana producers

(1:42:27) **10:02 AM Pseudorabies**
Dr. Emily Kaleczyc updated the BOL on the first detection of pseudorabies in commercial swine in the United States in 20 years, that was found at a small commercial swine facility in Iowa:

- The Iowa case, Dr. Kaleczyc said, was traced back to a transitional swine herd in Texas that had potential exposure to feral swine. Two boars from the Iowa facility bred some sows in Montana who had since then, undergone a whole herd test, which was negative, with a second whole herd test scheduled in mid-June
- Dr. Kaleczyc explained that the boars that came from Iowa to Montana were on their way to Washington and never tested positive, but had been housed with the positive animals from Texas. There was no health certificate for the boars to come to Montana and so, it was a non-compliant movement

(1:52:32) **10:12 AM Update on CCT Certification for Dr. Brenee Peterson (Non-Agenda Item)**
Dr. Emily Kaleczyc thanked the BOL for their approval for Dr. Brenee Peterson to travel out of state and assist with TB testing in order to get CCT certified. She reported that Dr. Peterson, just the day before, had been called to inject for a CCT and would be returning on Friday to read it, and so having her CCT certification had already been a benefit to the DOL

(1:53:23) **10:13 AM Update on New World Screwworm (Non-Agenda Item)**
Dr. Emily Kaleczyc reported that in an update she had seen the day before, Mexico had picked up an additional state affected with New World Screwworm. A cat was found affected last week, and the most recent case, was a calf in that same state, Coahu, located 55 miles south of the US border

(1:56:12) **10:16 AM** – **MEAT, MILK & EGG INSPECTION BUREAU**

(1:56:28) **10:16 AM Preliminary Report on USDA-FSIS Audit (Audit will not be final)**
Alicia Love gave an update on the most recent on-site USDA-FSIS Audit:

- Ms. Love explained that USDA's determination had not yet been made, as they took some time to look at everything and had additional follow-up questions. She said that the exit meeting was scheduled for June 21, 2026. She did expect some retraining to be done on Specified Risk Materials (SRMs) to assure that the

Bureau staff was vigilant about what plants say they're doing versus what Bureau staff were actually seeing happen. She also said they had received some education on verification plans for plants after suspension

- No previous audit findings were carried over, as Ms. Love said her Bureau staff had caught up on their FSAs. She did report though that, as a result of the Federal Audit, two State establishments had been suspended, but both had submitted acceptable corrective actions and had been released from suspension
- The BOL discussed a provision in the Farm Bill that had only passed the House so far, that meat could be sold, one-time retail exempt, through a retail counter
- Alicia Love reported that she had not received formal paperwork from the FDA on their Milk Audit, explaining that the Auditor travel budget was cut and so a paper audit was done. The DOL had, however, gotten everything submitted that the FDA Auditor had requested, at the beginning of the year
- The BOL discussed action that could be taken by the DOL on an establishment who was processing a product or slaughtering without benefit of inspection

BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

(2:28:09) **10:48 AM**

Mike Honeycutt said that he would be doing the Brands Enforcement Division presentation, as Jay Bodner was in Mexico on vacation

(2:28:46) **10:48 AM** **BRANDS ENFORCEMENT DIVISION UPDATE**

(2:28:46) **10:48 AM** **Out-of-State Travel Request**

(2:28:46) **10:48 AM** **International Livestock Identification Association Conference (ILIA)**

Mike Honeycutt requested that the BOL approve out-of-state travel for several Brands staff and DOL leadership to attend the annual ILIA conference, scheduled July 19-22, 2026, in Layton Utah

MOTION/VOTE

(2:30:41) **10:50 AM**

Alan Redfield moved to approve out-of-state travel for five participants to attend the International Livestock Identification Association (ILIA) conference in Layton, Utah on July 20-22, 2026. Lily Anderson seconded. The motion passed.

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

(2:32:22) **10:52 AM**

There was no public comment given

SET DATE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

(2:32:51) **10:52 AM**

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

- Mike Honeycutt explained that after fiscal year end, the final budget numbers would probably not be available until August. The BOL scheduled their next meeting for Thursday, August 27, 2026, in Helena

(2:40:58) **11:00 AM** **BOL Discussion on BLM Grazing Decision (Non-Agenda Item)**

The BOL had discussion regarding the Secretary of Interior's final decision on the use of BLM grazing allotments for bison by American Prairie:

- Mike Honeycutt said that basically, the Secretary of Interior's final decision stated that wasn't an acceptable use by American Prairie and the permission that had been granted was revoked. Since then, he added, American Prairie was going to District Court to challenge that decision

MEETING ADJOURNED

(2:43:36) **11:03 AM**

Gene Curry, Chairman