

Raising the bar on public service

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**MN Board of Animal Health
Annual Report 2011-2012**

*"The Board of Animal Health is your
agency. We're here to serve you.*

*Whether we're getting rid of a disease or
helping to find solutions on the farm.*

*It's the people that count.
We put you first."*

-Dr. Bill Hartmann, State Veterinarian



Here's what we've been up to...



Simply Tracking Animals that Move into Minnesota

If you track an animal as it moves during its life, you're likely to see how mobile livestock are in this country. Many animals end up right here in Minnesota. In the past twelve months, over 78,000 head of cattle have entered the state.

Each one of those animals has its own unique history and possible disease exposure. Do we know where it came from? Where it was born? Yes, as long as it is officially identified and the number is recorded. If we can determine where the animal has been, we'll know what it may or may not have been exposed to. If the records show that the animal is in Minnesota, we can move more quickly towards containing disease. If records show the animal is not here, we're able to spare our state from increased restrictions. Without these records, traceability is lost. And that's not good for our farmers.

We are on a mission to get the word out, and you can help. Before importing breeding cattle, veterinarians and farmers in other states need a permit from the Board. When applying official ID and other tags to livestock, keep records. When animals move off the farm, write it down. Let's protect livestock in Minnesota by keeping it simple.



Part you. Part us.
Total peace of mind.

Equipping farmers...

We've Got the Tools

We've been talking for a while about the importance of increasing our ability to track animals. We've spoken at livestock industry meetings and written newsletters to encourage farmers and ranchers to use official identification and keep records of animal movements. But we've also provided some of the tools needed to do it.

The records we would need to conduct a thorough disease investigation are quite simple. We have developed and distributed 'livestock inventory worksheets' that are useful for farmers, while providing the information needed in a disease situation. For the tech-savvy producers, there are electronic versions of the worksheet available.

To cover the official identification part of the equation, we are offering free official U. S. Department of Agriculture metal ear tags to cattle and bison farmers and Minnesota accredited veterinarians. Farmers can place the ID in their animals themselves, alleviating cost and encouraging increased traceability.

Our website is another tool. Check it out at www.bah.state.mn.us. Otherwise, call us at 651-296-2942. We're happy to help.





We are thankful that Minnesota farmers appreciate how we do business. We're a state agency that prides ourselves on working with you.

On the Farm

We're here to help farmers keep their animals healthy so they can supply the world with food. That's why we spend so much time on the farm. We get to know you and you get to know us. Communication with the people we work for is a top priority.

So what do we need?

Imagine driving the roads to find all the livestock farms while trying to contain a devastating disease. Instead of using our time working with farmers to test animals and get rid of disease, we would find ourselves ill-prepared and trying to make up for lost time. A little preparation can prevent this scenario.

When we visit a farm, we only need a little bit of information. What kind of animals are there, exactly where they are located, and how to get ahold of you in case of emergency. Just these few things will help us be better able to eliminate diseases quicker and get you back to work.

Getting the job done... Together.

Working with Minnesota Livestock Markets

Our state's livestock markets are kept pretty busy. Minnesota is one of the national leaders in turkey, hog, milk and red meat production. Thousands of the animals that provide these commodities wind up at a Minnesota market at one point or another. It is vitally important to the state's agricultural economy to keep disease out of sale barns. In fact, we spend a lot of our time trying to do just that.

One of the first lines of defense against diseases that affect livestock is to make sure animals coming into and moving within Minnesota are moved legally. Animals that move legally are easier to find. If we can more easily locate animals, we can more quickly contain the spread of disease. When one of our field staff members stops at a market for an inspection, they can check paperwork, talk to the sale barn veterinarian and manager, view the animals and watch the sale to help gauge compliance. When something isn't quite right, our guys follow-up by making phone calls or personally visiting with producers or market personnel.

We inspect livestock markets on a monthly, sometimes weekly, basis. Staff members conducting these inspections act as liaisons, as they have regular, in-person conversations with sale barn veterinarians and managers. When Minnesota import requirements change or there is a disease investigation going on, we rely on our field experts to hand deliver the information to the markets.

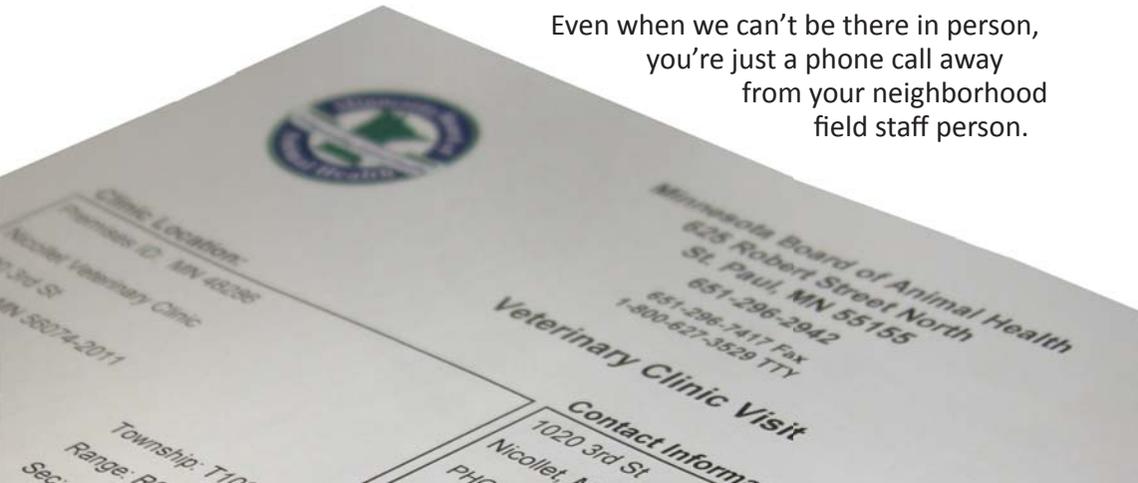
Building relationships...

Catching Up with Veterinarians Across Minnesota

There are over 2,000 licensed veterinarians working to care for Minnesota's massive livestock population. As the state agency charged with safeguarding animal health, it is crucial to develop and maintain relationships with veterinary professionals. We rely on them to help us monitor animal health, watch for signs of disease and let us know if they suspect a problem.

We have always worked to keep our veterinary clinic records up to date, but this year we stepped it up a notch. There were several things we wanted to go over with large animal practitioners. Instead of mailing a letter, our district veterinarians personally visited clinics that staff food-animal veterinarians. They had conversations about veterinary accreditation, official identification of livestock, record keeping and our proposed rules.

Even when we can't be there in person,
you're just a phone call away
from your neighborhood
field staff person.



Dr. Peterson joined the Board in 1994. "I love my job. I've stayed at the Board through the years because I really enjoy working with livestock farmers and veterinarians."



Dr. Suskovic has enjoyed serving farmers for 23 years. "The Board is a great place to work."

Planning for the Worst, While Hoping for the Best

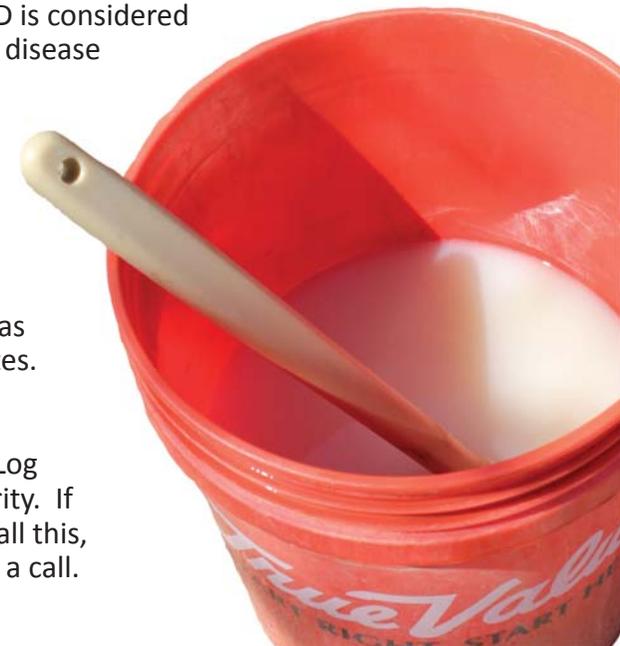
The Board of Animal Health is always trying to do things better. In no area is this more true than emergency planning. Whether planning for the next large livestock disease or ensuring our producers are utilizing the best biosecurity possible, we are constantly trying to do better.

Each time we visit a farm, we wear clean boots. Every time we leave a farm, we wash those boots with disinfectant. Does it take a bit more time? Yes, but we know how important it is. Germs cause disease and by taking some time to clean-up before leaving, we're making sure you and your neighbor's farms are safe.

The Board's staff is currently focusing on updating the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) plan. FMD is considered the big one, so if we prepare for this disease we'll be prepared for them all.

We have specially trained veterinarians on staff to respond to diseases we may have never seen before. These veterinarians are called Foreign Animal Disease Diagnosticians (FADD). Minnesota has more of these FADD's than most states.

It's important to make sure you're prepared, too. Keep good records. Log your visitors. Practice good biosecurity. If you want information on how to do all this, give your neighborhood field person a call.



Rewriting the Rules is a Tall Order

The Board of Animal Health has been around since 1903. Fortunately, many of the animal diseases that existed back then are not present in Minnesota and the United States today. Animal agriculture is constantly changing, and rules that once made sense slowly became outdated. It became clear a few years ago that a complete overhaul of our rules was necessary.

We began the process of our rules revision in 2009. Instead of deciding from our St. Paul office what changes to make, we sought input from the people who know livestock agriculture inside and out. We have had many discussions with livestock organizations and industry leaders. The new rules have to be workable for farmers and citizens of Minnesota while also helping us to better carry out our mission.

The process is almost complete, but there are a few more steps to take before the rules go into effect. We are thankful to our partners in safeguarding animal health for coming alongside us to write rules that work.



“We truly are here to help you,” said Carl Denkinger, an ag consultant at the Board for 38 years.

Safeguarding...



Dr. Lauer has committed his career to the poultry industry. We're proud to have him on staff.

Teaching the Trade

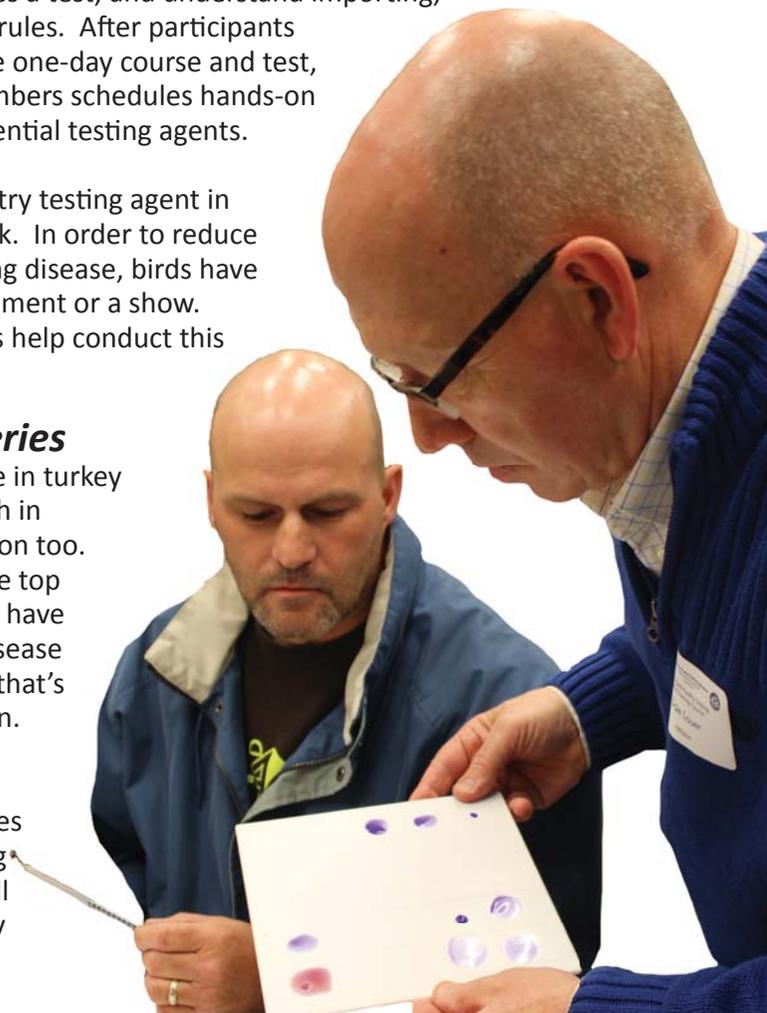
If you want to test poultry on behalf of the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, you have to take a course, pass a test, and understand importing, exporting and exhibition rules. After participants successfully complete the one-day course and test, one of our field staff members schedules hands-on field training with all potential testing agents.

Being an authorized poultry testing agent in Minnesota is serious work. In order to reduce the likelihood of spreading disease, birds have to be tested before movement or a show. Authorized testing agents help conduct this testing.

Inspecting Hatcheries

Minnesota is number one in turkey production and ranks high in chicken and egg production too. In order to maintain these top rankings, poultry farmers have to make sure birds are disease free from the start. And that's where the Board comes in.

Each year, the Board inspects poultry hatcheries around the state. Making sure things are clean, well maintained, and the baby birds are healthy.



Saying a Final Goodbye to Bovine Tuberculosis

It's hard to imagine dealing with bovine tuberculosis (TB) alone. When TB was discovered in Minnesota cattle, it would have been easy for cattlemen to ignore the importance of doing their part to get rid of it. True, we could have regained Minnesota's TB-Free status eventually. But working on it together for six years was long enough.

We got to know the geography and cattle farmers of northwest Minnesota pretty well over the years. Most herds in that part of the state were tested five or more times. Our staff members living in the TB-affected area spent their days on cattle farms, working with herd owners to identify and test animals. They drove the roads to haul chutes, check fence gates, issue permits and deliver supplies. Was it all worth it? We definitely think so.

As of October 4, 2011 most cattle leaving Minnesota can do so without a TB test. This is a financial relief and a real time-saver for cattlemen statewide. In December we were able to celebrate by organizing a TB-Free Day Proclamation event with Governor Dayton and several cattle industry representatives.

We are proud to have played even a small role in such an important achievement in Minnesota.

A native of northern Minnesota, Chad Carlson enjoyed working with his neighbors to get rid of bovine tuberculosis.

Walking beside you...

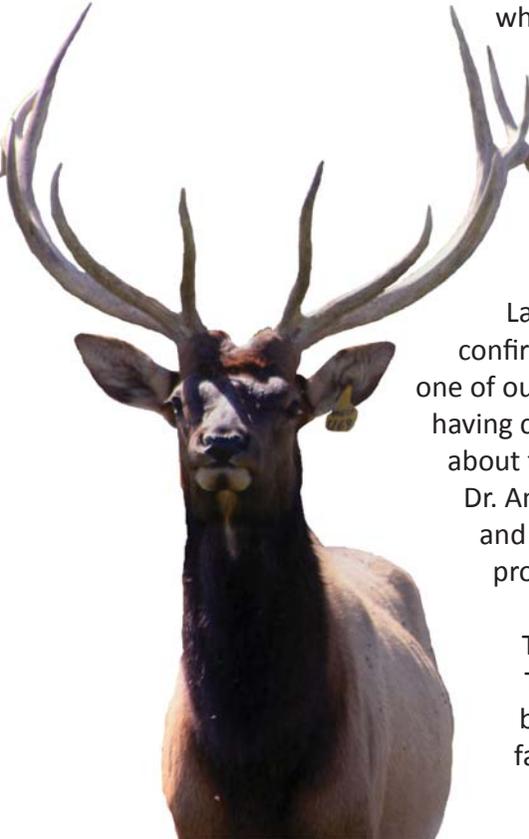
"All the thanks for eliminating TB goes to the livestock farmers. We were proud to help."

Dr. Bill Hartmann, State Veterinarian

Ag Advisor Terry Sistad said, "What farmers do is so important to all of us. I am happy to work for an agency that works for them."

Finding Chronic Wasting Disease

Minnesota deer and elk farmers have been testing their animals for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) for nearly a decade as part of our mandatory surveillance program. They have also been taking precautions to keep their herds separate from wild deer. We have spent a lot of time on these farms, talking with farmers, teaching them to collect their own samples for testing, inspecting fences and checking for animal identification. Every now and then, we are all reminded of why these things are so important.



In May 2012, the manager of a Minnesota red deer farm submitted a sample for CWD testing, just as he had done many times before. The sample tested positive for CWD at Minnesota's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Before the test was even confirmed positive at the national laboratory, one of our district veterinarians was on the farm having conversations with the herd manager about the next steps. Back in our St. Paul office, Dr. Anderson was on the phone with state and federal partners to determine how to proceed.

The surveillance program is working. The best part is that it is working so well because of the dedication of deer and elk farmers to keep their herds disease-free.



Successful surveillance...

Keeping you safe...



On the Phone or in the Field, We're Protecting Your Animals

The state averages just over 50 cases of rabies each year, of which bats and skunks seem to always rank highest. Unfortunately, as long as there are wild animals, rabies will exist in Minnesota.

We work with veterinarians across the state to stress the importance of vaccinating your animals, sometimes even livestock. It's important for folks to make sure their animals, especially dogs and cats, are up-to-date on their rabies vaccines.

Each time we receive a rabies case call, we get in touch with the Minnesota Department of Health. During a rabies investigation, the Board is responsible for making sure the animal part of the equation is taken care of. The health department focuses on people.

We've been working hard to get the word out by continuing to send out Rabies Alerts. Veterinarians value knowing when and where confirmed rabies cases have occurred. They are real life reminders of the importance of vaccination.

"We're beside you all the way," says Dr. Schwabenlander to a farmer involved in a rabies situation.



Listening... Always.

Listening to Farmers and Helping to Solve Problems

Farmers have a job to do and so do we. Sometimes it seems that the goals of each are so different that it makes finding workable solutions to problems pretty difficult.

Our rules require Chronic Wasting Disease testing on farmed adult deer and elk that die. We know how important it is to monitor for diseases. We also know that it costs you money to pay a veterinarian to collect a sample. That's why we offer to teach farmers how to collect the sample themselves. It's a fact that properly disposing of animal carcasses is an important part of biosecurity. We have also witnessed a devastated farmer looking at heaps of ashes and smoldering wood, wondering where to start. That's why we can help determine if burial or composting is the best option, and then will help to get it done.

We're your Board of Animal Health. Let us know how we can better serve you.

Front: Dr. Thompson is a farm kid. She's worked at the Board for 4 years and enjoys being on the farm to help. Back: Ag Advisor, Brian Ziemer, focuses on using common sense solutions.

*We share the same
destination.*



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TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529. The Board of Animal Health is an equal opportunity employer and provider.