

A close-up photograph of two hands shaking in a firm grip. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the fingers interlaced. The skin is light-toned. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green foliage and a wooden fence, suggesting a farm or rural setting. The lighting is bright, casting soft shadows on the hands.

*A state agency committed
to working with you....*



"The Minnesota Board of Animal Health has been working with producers to SAFEGUARD animal health since 1903. This will remain our commitment, always."

Dr. Bill Hartmann, State Veterinarian



"The Board is always in step with what the industry needs. They work hard for us."
~ Minnesota Cattle Producer

What's the latest?

It's been known for a while that the U.S. needs a system to rapidly trace livestock. Attempts have been made. But after receiving input from state animal health officials and the livestock industries, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is proposing a new plan. The framework and long-term goals for a traceability system will be set by the USDA. The states will decide how to get there.

Minnesota's First Steps

We have been improving our ability to trace animals for a while now. Dealing with bovine TB for nearly six years has taught us a thing or two about the importance of traceability. Official identification is key. It allows us to trace livestock, it gives them an identity. We require official ID on all breeding cattle and bison coming into our state. We capture ID numbers whenever possible. TB test charts, brucellosis vaccination records, and certificates of veterinary inspection are all sources of information. In a disease investigation, the records in our database make it quicker to determine where the animal is and where it came from.

Electronic ID has changed the game. Using radio frequency ID (RFID) has decreased human error. Through TB testing we have used this technology. Instead of relying on our eyes to accurately capture ID on a metal tag, a wand reads the 15-digit RFID number. The information can be captured on a handheld computer and later uploaded into our database, virtually eliminating the chance of data entry errors.

Minnesota is a hub for cattle destined for other countries. Thousands of cattle come to our state from across the country to be quarantined, tested and examined. Most of them eventually go east to board a ship headed across the ocean, but some end up staying in Minnesota. RFID technology again makes it possible to quickly capture and retrieve animal information accurately. And with a melting pot of cattle, that's essential.

Identifying livestock premises in Minnesota. Another very important step in enhancing traceability. Our field staff members have been working for the past three years to identify all premises that house livestock and poultry. In an animal disease outbreak, we will be ready to map and contact potentially affected farms.

Where we go from here

Beginning on August 1, 2011 we will require permits for breeding cattle and bison entering the state. The address of where the animals came from and where they will be kept in Minnesota will be recorded in our database. After we see how our efforts work for cattle and bison, we can better determine how to proceed with traceability of other species. Along the way, an advisory committee including key livestock producer groups will provide insight on how to enhance traceability.



"Official identification is key. It allows us to trace livestock."
~ Board of Animal Health Staff Member

"The Board's work to eradicate bovine TB is a prime example of government that works."
~ Minnesota Cattle Producer

Here's the deal...

It's been almost three years. Bovine TB has not been found in Minnesota cattle in almost three years. Minnesota's TB status was upgraded in October 2010. Most of Minnesota is now TB-Free. Working on statewide free status is what it's all about now.

What's been happening?

Cattle farmers in northwest Minnesota continue to work hard. They have tested their herds year after year. They have kept us in the loop when their animals move. They have maintained fencing to prevent wild deer/cattle interaction. They have worked at doing business under a Split State Status. Their work will ultimately bring relief to all Minnesota cattle farmers, as preparing for interstate movement will be less costly and will take less time. Here's to a job well done.

Meanwhile, our job remains the same. Complete eradication of TB from Minnesota. Our staff members are on the ground daily to make sure that happens. In livestock markets, looking for official identification and movement permits. On farms, conducting risk assessments and testing cattle. Talking with cattlemen to keep them informed on Minnesota's next steps. There have been 249 whole herd tests in northwest Minnesota in the last year. Twenty-three risk assessments conducted on farms in the Management Zone. Over 1,000 animal movement permits issued, and 20 livestock vehicle inspections conducted by the Minnesota State Patrol. We submitted our statewide TB-Free status application to the USDA in May 2011. We are focused on eradicating TB and moving on. These things are proof.

Things to come...

We wait in expectation for Minnesota to become TB-Free. Until then we keep on doing what we've been doing. Minnesota was two steps below TB-Free just three years ago. Together with our state and federal partners, livestock farmers and veterinarians, we've come a long way. We did it together. We're almost there.





Here's the latest...

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been found in Minnesota farmed deer and elk herds in the past. But in January 2011, the first case of the disease in the wild was confirmed. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) immediately went to work conducting surveillance and eradication activities in the wild deer population. And we began taking extra precautions to protect Minnesota's farmed deer and elk.

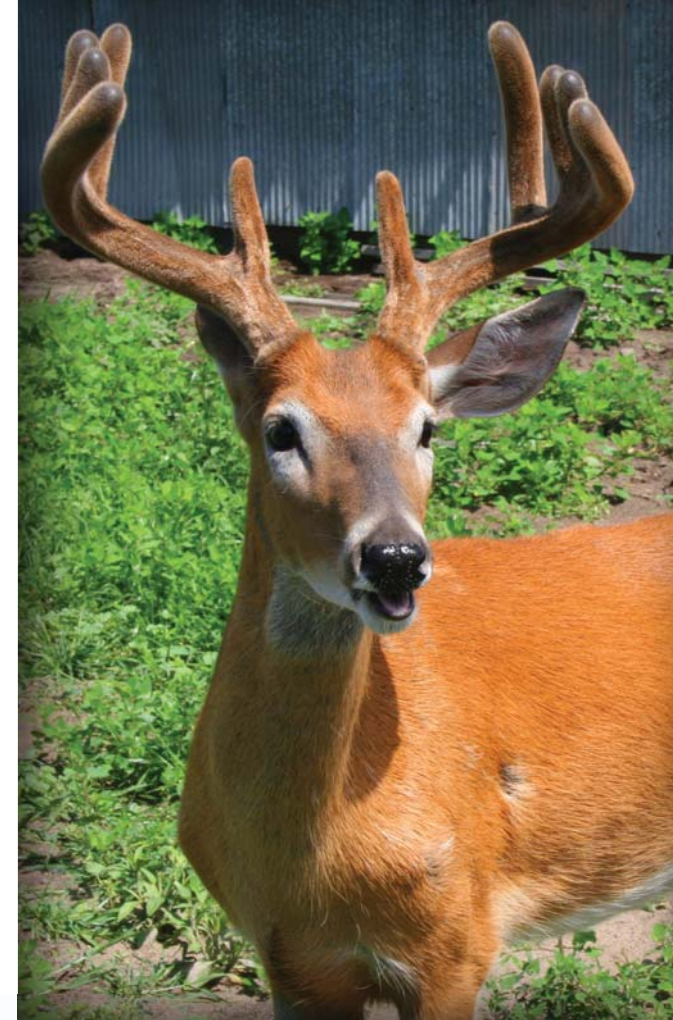
What's been done?

Minnesota's nearly 600 farmed deer and elk farmers have been meeting strict requirements for years. Maintaining eight-foot fences to discourage escapes and wild deer intrusions. Submitting herd inventories and animal movement forms. Testing for CWD when animals over 16 months of age die. This has become the norm. Finding the disease in a wild deer presented new challenges. But we were ready.

We already had a plan to respond to such an event. Within 10 miles of where the infected wild deer was found in Olmsted County, a circle was drawn. Ten cervid farms exist in the circle. Movement restrictions were placed on those farms. Unless animals can be kept in a way that ensures commingling with wild deer does not happen, those restrictions will stay in place. We regularly visit the farms. Face to face communication with the affected producers allows us to answer questions in person and develop good working relationships.

In the future...

Surveillance will continue in wild and farmed cervids. Producers are once again showing



"The Board's staff listens and understands what it means to be a livestock farmer in our state."

~ Minnesota Livestock Producer

"The Board is a regulatory agency, but they are also there to help."

~ Minnesota Sheep Producer



Why does it matter?

Animal carcasses may be host to disease. Dead stock must be separated from live animals and disposed of as soon as possible. Composting, burial, rendering, or incineration. Each is an approved method of carcass disposal when it's done right.

How we handle it...

We respond when there are concerns regarding proper disposal. It may be one dead cow in a creek. We respond. It may be hundreds in a barn fire. We respond. Tragic loss of a large number of animals could mean producers need assistance immediately. Our field staff members are well-versed. They can help find the right solution. Early this spring, we recommended and assisted in composting over 400 hogs at a finishing barn following a devastating fire. In another fire, over 375 litters from a sow barn were composted on-site. Quick response when a producer needed help. For us, safeguarding animal health also means working for the people.

Rendering companies offer dead animal pick-up and turn carcasses into usable by-products. We inspect facilities and vehicles that are involved in that process. Trucks that haul carcasses over roads, buildings that store the end products and containers that hold waste. We check to make sure things are clean, leak proof, and free of rodents and insects. Out of 45 inspections in the last year, 26 violations were noted and corrected. Our job isn't done until it's done right.



"We plan so our agency is prepared to act at a moment's notice."
~ Board of Animal Health Staff

What does it involve?

Being prepared for animal health emergencies. One of our most important endeavors. We are constantly preparing to respond. This year, we practiced and put our plans to work as we dealt with diseases in livestock and poultry.

How do we prepare?

Our staff works alongside other state and federal agencies to develop plans for responding to animal health-related events or emergencies. Testing those plans in the field is crucial. We need to know if our planned response will be effective in a real emergency situation. In November 2010 we participated in a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) field exercise. Staff members from Wisconsin and Minnesota gained valuable experience in proper use of personal protective equipment in a highly contagious disease situation. And worked together to respond to a mock animal health emergency.

Foot and mouth disease (FMD), one of the biggest possible threats to agriculture in Minnesota and the U.S. Plans to prepare for and respond to FMD and other foreign animal diseases (FAD) are constantly being updated and tested. This year, representatives from eight state agencies including the Homeland Security and Emergency Management agency came together to discuss the initial response and escalation of an FMD event in Minnesota. The discussion was focused on the first 72 hours of a response and the resources needed for that time period. Gaps in our FAD response plan were identified and changes were made.

When it comes to FADs, we need to stay up to date with the latest information. That's why select animal health officials have been tasked with keeping current on just one of the many components of an FAD response. Biosecurity, movement control, and carcass disposal just to name a few. Our subject matter experts then develop protocols for use in an emergency response. The protocols will be added to our state FAD response plan. Depending on what disease we're dealing with, the protocol can easily be tailored.

Diseases that are not usually found in Minnesota. When they are identified we put our plans to the test. This year we conducted an investigation into a case of equine piroplasmiasis (EP) in a quarter horse. Two horses from the same farm were found positive for the disease and considered chronically infected. Both animals had spent two years in Texas being trained for racing, where they were likely exposed to EP. We worked to identify other Minnesota horses that may have been exposed. In the end, 43 horses were tested due to potential exposure. All tested negative.



Garbage Feeding



What is it?

Food recycling. Schools, hotels, and restaurants are a few of the routine stops for farmers who recycle food waste by feeding it to livestock. After it goes through a thorough cooking and cooling process, it is a nutritious form of feed for pigs and cattle.

The Process

Our job? To make sure it's done right. Garbage is food waste that contains meat or could've been exposed to meat. Foot and Mouth Disease and Hog Cholera must be kept out of Minnesota. Cooking garbage before feeding to livestock prevents possible disease. Seven farms, inspected by us 81 times in 12 months. We are on-site to safeguard animal health.

Exempt material is non-meat food waste. Less risk, fewer inspections required. Still, 84 inspections took place in the last year on 24 farms. Prevention is our specialty.



"The Board protects Minnesota livestock using practical, common sense methods."

~ Minnesota Pork Producer



"The Board of Animal Health is vital to the state's poultry industry."

~ Minnesota Poultry Producer

Avian Influenza

As in the past, Minnesota dealt with various strains of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) in the last year. Most strains are harmless. One such strain is H11N9, a strain never before seen in Minnesota commercial poultry. Forty-eight turkey flocks on 22 premises were identified. However, no further surveillance was needed and business continued as usual.

Other strains have the potential to mutate into something more serious. When such strains are identified, we implement the State's LPAI Response Plan. Our strategy was exercised in 2011 when H7N9 was confirmed in three commercial turkey flocks. Quarantines, testing and surveillance. All components of the plan. Only two flocks were mass depopulated on the farm. Four flocks were able to be marketed. The event wrapped up about three months after H7N9 was identified. That's us working with farmers to get the job done, and fast.

Mycoplasma Synoviae

This disease has been absent from Minnesota turkey breeder flocks and hatcheries for over 25 years. So when eight turkey breeder premises were identified with Mycoplasma synoviae (MS) in October 2010, we looked to the industry and our board members to find the right solution. A salvage program was the way to go. It prevented the spread of MS while allowing hatcheries to meet interstate shipping requirements and continue business. The disease was again eradicated in only seven months.

Mycoplasma Gallisepticum

Another disease that hasn't been around in quite a while. Until June 2011, Mycoplasma gallisepticum (MG) had not made an appearance in the state's egg-type chicken breeders for over 25 years. Four positive chicken breeder flocks were identified. Thanks to the cooperation of the farmers, MG was eradicated quickly.



Rabies

How are we doing?

As long as there are wild animals, rabies will exist in Minnesota. Out of 53 positive cases in the last year, 37 were bats and skunks. The remaining 16 were cattle, dogs, and cats. The domestic animals are our concern, and we work to shrink that number each year.

An electronic newsletter called Rabies Alerts. New in 2010. There is value in informing Minnesota veterinarians when there is a confirmed rabies case in domestic animals. Rabies Alerts do just that. They are real life reminders of the importance of vaccination.

Scrapie

We've come a long way

The scrapie eradication program started 10 years ago. Scrapie has been diagnosed and then eradicated from 62 Minnesota farms since 2001. At one time, as many as 40 flocks in the state were quarantined due to scrapie investigations. But things are getting better each year. Only one new flock was identified in the last 12 months.

Official identification of sheep and goats becomes even more important as we draw closer to statewide scrapie eradication. We regularly visit sale barns and other points of livestock concentration to check on ID compliance. Proper ID allows any animal that is found infected with scrapie at slaughter to be traced back to its flock of birth. This helps us move forward with disease control and eradication methods much more quickly.



"Board staff are there to help veterinarians and producers eliminate disease."

~ Board of Animal Health Staff Member

Alternative formats are available by calling 651-296-2942 or TTY users can call 800-627-3529.

A close-up photograph of a woman with short, wavy brown hair, wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt. She is leaning her head against a thick, rusty metal horizontal bar of a fence. Her expression is one of gentle determination or concern, with her eyes looking slightly off-camera. The background is blurred, showing more of the metal structure and some greenery.

*The Board of Animal Health stands ready
to work with producers to eliminate disease
and protect Minnesota's livestock industry.*