

Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council (LCSAC) was held on November 7, 2013 in the Extension classroom at 617 Comstock Road in Berlin, VT. The following members were present:

Dr. Kristin Haas (KH), Jane Clifford (JC), Dr. Ruth Blauwiel (RB), Diane Bothfeld (DB), Les Pike (LP), Melody Squier (MS), Carl Cushing (CC), Tracy Simon (TS), Greg Finch (GF).

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by DB at 9:03 AM.

The following public observers (affiliations) were present:

Joanne Bourbeau (Humane Society of the United States); Carrie Abels (Vermont's Local Banquet; Humaneitarian.org).

The May 2013 meeting minutes were unanimously approved as written, following a motion made by JC and seconded by LP.

A discussion was held regarding members' status. One Council position remains vacant, and two current Council members, Jess Danyow and Melody Squier, have not had their terms renewed by the Speaker of the House and the Committee on Committees, respectively. This is despite having left several messages for them. KH will continue to work on this issue by reaching out to the Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture and the Lieutenant Governor's office, respectively. Both members are interested in serving for an additional term.

The new VAAFM website was reviewed with Council members in attendance. The following recommendations were made by members:

1. Include on the LCSAC landing page a link to the Governor's website page for those Vermonters potentially interested in serving on the Council as vacancies arise.
2. Make sure photos on the website accurately depict the business of farming in Vermont
3. Animal welfare-related links should be organized by species under the generic subheading of "Animal Welfare Resources". Recommended links include BQA, DQA, Pork Checkoff, and FARM.
4. The Senate and House Committees on Agriculture should be given a tutorial on the new website so they are aware of its content.

A public comment period was held. One commenter inquired as to whether there had ever been consideration given to including a "consumer" as a member on the Council.

A discussion was held regarding follow up by the Council to the enactment of Act 83, the on-farm slaughter exemption law. It was the general consensus of the members present that there are animal welfare-related concerns with the language in Act 83. Specifically, there is no reference to the importance of humane slaughter in the resultant statutory language or the need

for oversight of the slaughter process to ensure that it is performed in a humane manner. RB volunteered to draft a letter to the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture for submission to the Council for review no later than November 28, 2013 that covers the following points:

1. Humane slaughter in licensed establishments is ensured by the presence of trained state or federal inspectors. The process is tightly regulated, thereby ensuring that it is carried out according to state and federal laws that protect animal well-being. Additionally, all commercial slaughter establishments in Vermont are required to develop and adhere to their humane handling plans, which must be approved before license renewal. Act 83 does not take any of this into consideration or ensure that the animals slaughtered on the farm under this exemption are handled humanely.
2. If the language in Act 83 is reopened, the LCSAC would like to provide testimony on the humane handling aspects of the law, or lack thereof.
3. The Council wishes to provide testimony to the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture prior to the law's sunset date in 2016 if an opportunity to do the same does not arise sooner.

Chair Bothfeld provided an Agency of Agriculture budget update to the Council. A request has been made to hire two additional Food Safety Specialists, one additional Dairy Plant Inspector, two water quality inspectors for small farm operations and a FSMA coordinator. She commented that ag-sector and ag-related jobs in Vermont have increased in number by 300 in the past five years.

A brief discussion was held regarding legislative initiatives of interest to the Council. Any bill that did not get enacted during the last session could be brought back for consideration during the 2014 legislative session since it is the second session in the biennium.

The discussion regarding the education/outreach initiative on cow/calf transport resumed. KH updated members on her outreach to stakeholders on this topic. Pertinent points are the following:

1. Andrea Stander stated that Rural Vermont is willing to disseminate materials to their constituents, although they may or may not be willing to endorse the content. Their Board would need to review the materials before weighing in on that.
2. Leon Graves stated that Empire Livestock is willing to make materials available on their website or send materials out to contacts via mail. He also stated that in early 2014, they will be rolling out the new FARM program, and he would be happy to speak with the Council about this.
3. Chelsea Lewis stated that the Meat and Poultry Processors Group would potentially be willing to partner with the Council on creation and dissemination of materials. She also suggested that Farm Viability might be a good partner and that funding for related projects might be able to be obtained from the Working Lands Enterprise Board. The

2014 New England conference might be a good location at which to have educational materials on transport.

4. Jenn Colby stated that the Beef Producers Association, Vermont Beef Council, and the Vermont Grazing Conference (she is affiliated with all) could be potential partners in this initiative. She stated that the keynote speaker for the next grazing conference (scheduled for January 17th and 18th, 2014 at Lake Morey in Fairlee) is going to host an animal handling workshop focused on cattle. This will likely be scheduled for the Friday morning session of the meeting. The LCSAC members could help disseminate information on this workshop to their contacts since the purpose fits with the LCSAC mission. KH agreed to follow up with Jenn Colby during the week of November 11th.

Other discussion points included the importance of getting educational materials developed in front of consumers, and that perhaps NOFA would be a good partner for dissemination of materials. No one to date has contacted NOFA about this opportunity.

Following this initial discussion, the Council members agreed by consensus that it would be wise to partner with these other organizations in order to assemble a set of educational materials that would be of value to members of the livestock industry rather than devote time to creating them from scratch. This is based on the realization that many of these materials already exist, but they need to be packaged for easy access/marketed in the correct fashion. A sub-committee was formed to move this initiative forward, and TS, JC, KH, RB and MS volunteered to participate. Next steps will be to reconnect with Jenn Colby and Chelsea Lewis to schedule a conference call on the subject. KH agreed to organize this. There also may be benefit to contacting Farm to Plate to seek administrative support in this process.

The 2014 meeting dates were set. All meetings will be scheduled from 9AM to 12PM and will take place in the Extension classroom at 617 Comstock Road in Berlin on the following dates:

February 12, 2014

May 8, 2014

September 17, 2014

November 11, 2014

The meeting adjourned at 11:35AM.