

## Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

A joint meeting of the Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council (LCSAC) and members of the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture was held on February 19, 2020 from 9AM until 10AM in Room 10 of the Vermont State House. Following this joint gathering, the LCSAC reconvened at 109 State Street in Montpelier for the remainder of its public meeting.

The following LCSAC members attended: Ben Nottermann; Brian Kemp; Dr. Kent Henderson; Dr. Ruth Blauwiekel; Eliza Rutherford; JoAnn Nichols; Les Pike; Marcy Wisnowski; Steve Kayhart; Dr. Kristin Haas.

Chairs Partridge and Starr made opening remarks and thanked the LCSAC for its continued collaboration with the committees on agriculture.

Legislators and LCSAC members in attendance introduced themselves.

LCSAC members reviewed the Council's purpose and member demographics: the 14-member council currently has two vacant positions; 2 members are serving in retirement; 6 members have continued to serve without formal reappointment.

Attendees discussed H.254, a bill with the subject: Agriculture; crimes; livestock; adequate shelter. LCSAC members presented proposed amendments to legislators, provided clarification where necessary and answered questions regarding intent of those amendments. LCSAC members also reminded legislators of the April 2018 position statement pertaining to S.310, introduced that year. The merits and consequences of following the recommendations of the 2018 position statement by incorporating direct measures of animal welfare into H.254 were discussed.

Attendees discussed concerns around the well-being of bob calves born and marketed in Vermont. LCSAC members informed legislators that they would be discussing the issue during the subsequent public meeting. Legislators stated they are interested in further feedback from the LCSAC on this topic.

Chairs Partridge and Starr offered closing remarks and the joint meeting was adjourned.

Following the conclusion of the joint meeting, members of the LCSAC reconvened at 109 State Street location for the remainder of the public meeting.

Members in attendance discussed bob calf industry issues in more detail, and the following points were stressed:

- It is difficult to influence the bob calf market in a measurable way so perhaps the focus should be on humane euthanasia and disposal methods.
  - Are there merits to developing commercial rendering and disposal sites?
  - Could dairy innovation grant funding be used for this purpose?

- Could farmers who dip navels, feed colostrum and retain calves for additional time prior to marketing be incentivized to continue best practices; could markets identify these farmers and reward them?
- There is potential benefit to using beef genetics.
- Three possible approaches to improving bob calf welfare were discussed:
  - Engage in practices that lessen the number of bob calves. This approach is not without consequences because heifer calves may subsequently be devalued over time.
  - Incentivize farmers to engage in best practices.
  - Focus on supporting options for humane euthanasia and appropriate disposal. This would lessen the need to ship weak and unthrifty bob calves -> resulting in fewer bob calves going to market -> lessen the supply -> raise prices/improve the market -> encourage farmers to implement best practices for those calves that are shipped to optimize economic benefit. There is a public perception challenge associated with euthanizing calves.

Attendees discussed H.254 in more detail, including the possibility of collating and disseminating resources that could be useful to humane officers and others who serve a role in the investigation and resolution of animal welfare allegations. The LCSAC agreed to:

- Compile reference material on body condition scoring by species.
- Review and consult with the VT Veterinary Medical Association regarding the species-specific animal care brochures; consider updating as needed.
- Obtain and repurpose the \$600 in remaining funds from the cow/calf transport fundraising effort.
- Provide information to humane officers about existing welfare audit programs used by some Vermont producers.
- Stay apprised of efforts to rejuvenate the VT Animal Control Association and consider partnering with that organization on pertinent efforts.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristin M. Haas, DVM

## Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council (LCSAC) was held on April 29, 2020 by conference call, due to the Governor's emergency "Stay Home Stay Safe" Order. The conference call information was posted on the Vermont Department of Libraries website, and the meeting followed the state guidance issued re. remote public meetings held during the COVID-19 emergency.

The following LCSAC members participated in the meeting:

Diane Bothfeld (DB); Dr. Kristin Haas (KMH); Les Pike (LP); Dr. Kent Henderson (KEH); JoAnn Nichols; Ben Nottermann; Marcy Wisnowski; Steve Kayhart; Dr. Ruth Blauwiekel (RB); Eliza Rutherford; Dr. Omar Oyarzabal; Brian Kemp (BK)

The following observers (affiliations) participated:

Tara Bronson (Northeast Kingdom Processing); Christina Ashley (Essex Police Department); Dr. Shelley Mehlenbacher (Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets)

A quorum being present, Chair DB called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.

Conference call etiquette and voting ground rules were reviewed. KMH introduced Christina Ashley and Tara Bronson as two pending new members of the LCSAC in varying stages of appointment.

The meeting minutes from September 2019 and February 2020 were approved, with corrections to the participant list and of a typographical error, following a motion made by LP and seconded by KEH.

H.940 was discussed, including bill status and the Council's role and position in the conversation around this bill. This bill proposes to amend the list of individuals authorized to investigate cases of animal cruelty; require humane officers to receive trainings approved by the Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board; require the Board to maintain an index of humane officers who have received the trainings; and allow the Board to create refresher training requirements for humane officers. KMH agreed to follow up with Representative Partridge about bill status – an email was sent but no word back as of the time of this writing.

The Council discussed at length components of a response to VT. National Guard Senior Intelligence Officer Joe Colantoni, who contacted KMH to determine whether the VNG has a role to play in mitigating the negative effects of COVID-19 on livestock movement, slaughter and processing within Vermont. While this is a significant issue, the Council determined that it is likely one best mitigated within the animal agriculture industry and one that would not warrant VNG intervention. KMH provided Mr. Colantoni with the Council's feedback by email following the meeting and expressed appreciation to him for viewing the animal agriculture sector as one worthy of VNG concern.

KMH reported that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been no progress on the initiatives to develop resource packets for humane officers and report back to the House and Senate agriculture committees on the dairy bob calf issues. These projects will be pursued over the summer.

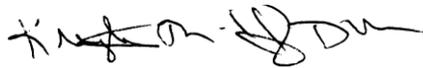
Members engaged in a discussion regarding COVID-19 impacts to Vermont's meat and dairy sectors, and DB and KMH updated members on regional and national COVID-19-related food supply chain challenges. DB reviewed Addenda 10 and 11 to Governor Scott's executive order and updated members on steps the Agency of Agriculture is taking to comply, while continuing to support Vermont's food production/processing systems. Members agreed that it is important for the Agency to provide information from the executive order directly to farmers to ensure broad awareness of this information.

Members agreed to hold the next meeting in September, per the usual meeting schedule. KMH will send an availability poll in late summer to schedule and will reach out to members as needed over the summer to make progress on the initiatives previously referenced.

A public comment period was offered, and there were no comments received.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27AM, following a motion made by RB and seconded by BK.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristin M. Haas, DVM

#### Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

A virtual meeting of the Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council (LCSAC) was held on September 30, 2020 on the Microsoft Teams platform. The meeting log-in information was posted on the Vermont Department of Libraries website, and the meeting followed the state guidance issued re. remote public meetings held during the COVID-19 emergency.

The following LCSAC members participated in the meeting:

Diane Bothfeld (DB); Dr. Kristin Haas (KMH); Les Pike; Dr. Kent Henderson (KEH); JoAnn Nichols (JN); Ben Nottermann; Steve Kayhart; Dr. Ruth Blauwiekel (RB); Eliza Rutherford; Dr. Omar Oyarzabal; Brian Kemp (BK); Tara Oeschger

The following observers (affiliations) participated:

Christina Ashley (Essex Police Department) – for a portion of the meeting

A quorum being present, Chair DB called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.

Council members introduced themselves, including Tara Oeschger (formerly Tara Bronson), who had been appointed to the Council since the April 2020 meeting. KMH provided additional member updates, including notification of Marcy Wisnowski's resignation, and the intent of the Speaker of the House to appoint Christina Ashley to fill the seat vacated by Callie Field and formally reappoint JoAnn Nichols.

Following a motion made by RB and seconded by KEH, the Council approved the April 2020 meeting minutes.

KMH provided an update on the legislation passed during the 2020 regular session that amended the definition of feral swine. Fred Pogmore, wildlife biologist with USDA Wildlife Services, presented an overview of the status of feral swine in VT and New England and an update on the ongoing federal feral swine surveillance initiatives.

KEH opened a Council discussion on Senator Champion's 2020 proposed legislative amendment pertaining to dairy animal welfare. Although this amendment was not incorporated into H.254 (now Act 116), Council members advised that it could resurface in a different context during the 2021 session and have implications beyond animal welfare should it be enacted. The Council also briefly discussed the bill language proposed during the 2020 session by the Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board focused on enhanced training requirements for humane officers.

The initiative to develop a resource packet for humane officers has not begun yet due to competing priorities in KMH's schedule. RB expressed during the meeting a continued willingness to help with the development and suggested follow up off-line. Addendum: following the meeting, JN expressed an interest in helping with this as well.

KMH provided an update on the Agency of Agriculture's initiative to distribute RFID tags for dairy cattle to Vermont farmers at no charge. Approximately 46,000 RFID tags were allotted to Vermont in 2020, and the same number is expected in 2021. The distribution to veterinarians has not consumed the number of tags that was expected, so the Agency will expand these distribution channels going forward to include producers and licensed entities.

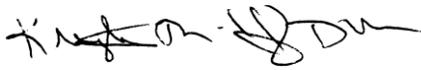
An opportunity for public comment was offered, but there were no members of the public in attendance.

During the member open discussion period, DB updated members on the status of the COVID-related grant funding available to dairy farmers. The legislature has extended the application deadline for the funding.

KMH will contact members with options for the next meeting.

Following a motion made by BK and seconded by KEH, the meeting adjourned at 10:38AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristin M. Haas, DVM

### Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

A virtual meeting of the Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council (LCSAC) was held on December 16, 2020 using the Microsoft Teams platform. The meeting log-in information was posted on the Vermont Department of Libraries website, and the meeting followed the state guidance issued re. remote public meetings held during the COVID-19 emergency.

The following LCSAC members participated in the meeting:

Diane Bothfeld (DB); Dr. Kristin Haas (KMH); Dr. Kent Henderson (KEH); JoAnn Nichols (JN); Dr. Ruth Blauwikel (RB); Eliza Rutherford (ER); Dr. Omar Oyarzabal (OO); Tara Oeschger; Christina Ashley (CA); Rhonda Miller; Tracy Webb

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

Christina Ashley, Rhonda Miller and Tracy Webb were introduced as newly appointed LCSAC members. All LCSAC members introduced themselves and provided a brief background. KMH notified members that Les Pike rotated off the LCSAC since the last meeting and that necessary reappointments of other members had been made by appointing authorities.

Following a motion made by RB and seconded by OO, members approved the September 2020 meeting minutes.

RB and JN presented the body condition scoring resource guide draft they developed for input and further refinement by members. This resource is intended for humane officers but could be valuable for owners and livestock/poultry caretakers as well. The following possible amendments to the draft were discussed:

- Adding links to the species-specific animal welfare brochures located on the Vermont Humane Federation website at <https://www.vermonthumane.org/animal-cruelty/animal-care-brochures/> (a link to these resources should also be added to the VAAF website)
- Including a schematic on the back panel of progression from emaciated to obese body conditions, using a bovine as the model
- Adding schematic diagrams of a horse, chicken and other species

- Adding several bullet points regarding the Agency of Agriculture's role in animal welfare investigations

DB volunteered to utilize Agency of Agriculture personnel to finalize the resource, and LCSAC consensus is that it should be turned into a trifold brochure. KMH will continue to communicate with the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund regarding possible funding support remaining from the LCSAC's prior fundraising effort. On a related topic, CA offered to inquire with the VT Police Academy as to whether the annual humane officer training is still occurring as this could be a potential outlet for brochure dissemination.

KEH led a discussion regarding the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife's trapping policy. The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) has been made aware of possible introduction of related legislation in 2021 and some have requested that the VVMA update their position statement on the use of leg hold traps in Vermont. KEH made the LCSAC members aware of this issue in case the Council is solicited for input by the legislature. The LCSAC did not develop a formal position statement on this topic.

RB led a discussion regarding "at-risk" horses to obtain feedback from LCSAC members regarding the scale of this issue in Vermont, the impact of not having horse slaughter as an option, and whether adequate resources are available to horse owners who are experiencing difficulty keeping their animals. Some LCSAC members provided feedback on these issues but a formal position statement was not developed or communicated. KMH agreed to inquire with USDA as to the number of horses shipped to Canada for slaughter each year, and LCSAC members agreed to notify RB of any anecdotal uptick in abandonment or relinquishment of Vermont horses.

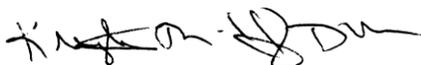
DB and KMH provided an update on the Agency of Agriculture's "housekeeping" bill initiatives. Of particular interest to the LCSAC might be the proposed changes to the state-funded veterinary educational loan repayment program and the proposed changes to the definition of livestock dealer.

Members expressed interest in participating in a meeting with Senate and House Committees on Agriculture in February 2021. KMH will contact Linda Leehman to coordinate. Members discussed the rest of the 2021 meeting schedule and agreed that doodle poll scheduling still works well, and that Mondays are undesirable meeting days.

A public comment period was not held because members of the public were not in attendance.

Following a motion made by RB and seconded by ER, the meeting was adjourned at 11:03 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristin M. Haas, DVM