

**MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY BOARD  
HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
January 14, 2009**

**Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine Marion duPont Scott  
Equine Medical Center, Leesburg, VA**

**Meeting called to order at 12:10 pm.**

**Committee members present:** Dr. Carol Swanby (Representing Dr. Kathleen Anderson), Dr. Amy O. Burk, Dr. Elizabeth Callahan, Karen Fulton, Dr. Marla Stevens, J. Michael Hopkins, Dr. John Lee Jr., Erin Pittman, Dr. Amy Polkes, and Dr. Nathaniel A. White II.

**Committee members unable to attend:** Dr. Siba Simal, and Dr. Doreen Hill.

**Also present were:** Pegeen Morgan, and Rob Burk.

**Discussion Topics**

**1. October Meeting Minutes by Dr. John Lee**

- **Motion to accept the October 30, 2008 meeting minutes by Erin Pittman.**
- **Second: Mike Hopkins**
- **Discussion: Dr. Lee noted that some changes were made to the original draft distributed by email to the MHIB-HAC.**
- **Motion Passed**

**2. UMD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources by Dr. Amy O. Burk.**

- Dr. Burk spoke about 3 large animal composting clinics that will be held in Frederick (Feb. 24), Carroll (March 4), and Garrett (March 10) Counties by Maryland Cooperative Extension. Dr. Burk indicated that they would be composting cows and that she would pass on more information to the committee as it becomes available.
- Dr. Lee indicated that he met Bob Tjaden who had spoken about the composting demonstrations. Dr. Lee asked about laws related to composting. Dr. Burk indicated that there were no State laws to her knowledge, but she indicated that there may be some county laws.

- Dr. Lee also discussed chemical digesters.
- Dr. Burk indicated that the UMD equine rotational grazing unit was approximately 90% complete. The facility is located in Clarksville, MD and will demonstrate how to rotate horses on small acreage and the use of several different building materials.
- Dr. Burk indicated that in February the UMD – Equine Studies newsletter would be distributed. She indicated that they have had good coverage by the media over topics discussed. She invited members of the committee to submit ideas for stories.

**3. Maryland Association of Equine Practitioners report by Dr. Callahan.**

- Dr. Callahan indicated that the MAEP was no longer active.
- Dr. Lee indicated that there is a session at the AAEP annual meeting for those in State/Local equine practitioner groups.
- Dr. White indicated that there is a discussion of combining the MD and VA equine practitioner organizations. He also indicated that AAEP is interested in interfacing more with the local groups/meetings. The goal of AAEP is to get more CE credits based on equine specific information available to the practitioner.
- Dr. Lee indicated that any way we can increase the quality of the speakers at all of the meetings would be a good thing. He indicated that there are quite a few good equine practitioners that were not members, or were not active with AAEP. Dr. White indicated that this was a common topic of discussion within the AAEP. Mike Hopkins indicated that the Jockey Club might be interested in assisting with meetings such as those mentioned and could potentially supply resources to the efforts.

**4. Office of the State Veterinarian report by Dr. Marla Stevens.**

- Dr. Stevens reported that the Animal Health staff were conducting inspections and setting emergency planning in place in anticipation of the inauguration. Over 240 horses are to be located at the Prince Georges Equestrian Center.

**5. Maryland Racing Commission report by Mike Hopkins.**

- Mike discussed the fact that the Fall meet in MD was down 40% as indicated in the previous minutes.
- Mike spoke about the situation at Ocean Downs Racetrack and the efforts on the part of the horsemen to have Mr. Rickman sign a commitment to maintaining live racing.
- Mike indicated that there is an increase in breakdowns on synthetic surfaces at Santa Anita, Turfway, and Dr. Swanby indicated that there was also an increase at Fair Hill.

- Dr. Swanby indicated that there is a perception that the synthetic surface may have a three year lifespan in the hotter climates. Dr. Swanby indicated that the injuries are new to many of the practitioners treating them, in that they were not necessarily taught in school.
- There was some continued discussion regarding the synthetic surfaces.
- Maryland has officially eliminated the use of toe grabs in races.
- Dr. Lee questioned whether steroids were eliminated. Mike indicated that the moment an issue was made of it the use began to clear up.
- Dr. White indicated that the AAEP was about to distribute a white paper related to removing the use of lasix, and providing guidelines to removing all performance enhancing drugs. Dr. White indicated that a survey was conducted studying “serious” bettors and a serious majority was found to indicate that betting would decline unless the sport was “cleaned up.”

**6. MHIB Licensed Veterinarians report by Dr. John Lee.**

- Rob indicated that the MHIB would be hosting a Maryland Horse Forum at the Prince Georges Equestrian Center on August 6, 2009.
- Dr. Burk asked if there would be an equine health track. Rob indicated that the tracks were not yet set, but did not rule it out. The members who attended the meeting felt it was useful when held in 2004.

**7. MHIB Representative report by Erin Pittman.**

- Dr. Lee asked what the conditions of the Maryland Horse World Expo would be. Some members indicated that that it would only use 2 buildings this year as opposed to three.
- Erin indicated that there were a few new vendors on schedule.
- Erin indicated that there would be a talk on the unwanted horse at the Maryland Horse World Expo at 3:00 PM on Saturday. She indicated that there would be 30 talks in all.
- There was some discussion on the State budget, and the point that State employees would be taking mandatory furlough days.

**8. MVMA Representative report by Dr. Amy Polkes.**

- Dr. Polkes reported that the MVMA had not been incredibly active in recent months. Dr. Lee mentioned that it again would be useful if AAEP became more active in the local organizations. Dr. White indicated that the question will then be, how many meetings does the practitioner want to attend in a given year?
- Some members indicated that Florida had an effective program in place. Dr. White indicated that even Florida was questioned whether they wanted to continue in the same fashion they had previously.

- Dr. White reiterated that Maryland and Virginia should better coordinate the regional meetings.

**9. VA-MD RCVM, EMC report by Dr. Nathaniel A. White II.**

- Dr. White spoke about the cuts to the College including a salary freeze for the next two years. The EMC has been cut substantially. They are trying to maintain faculty and staff as best as possible despite the fact that the decline in the economy has reduced their revenue.
- Dr. White was asked if the fees would increase to the consumer, and he indicated that they had previously increased fees. He indicated that their facility is quite different than most other teaching institutions in that their revenue is used to cover staff/faculty expenses, where most other institutions are funded from General funds. He noted that there was a decline in the winter, but they aren't sure what will happen in the Spring.
- Dr. White indicated that their new lab was open at the center. He indicated that Dr. Barrett would be working on research that could be immediately applied to treatments at the EMC.

**10. Delaware / Maryland Herpes Update and Review by Dr. Marla Stevens.**

- Dr. Stevens indicated that Delaware had released both of their Herpes related quarantines. Dr. Stevens indicated that there was a herpes positive horses which had a fever. It was a non-specific fever, there were no neurologic signs and it was not the neuro herpes form of the disease.
- Dr. Stevens discussed another case regarding a horse mortality that whose cause was not yet identified.
- Dr. Lee felt that the Delaware distribution of information was good and members indicated that it was being instituted with guidance from the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

**11. CEM Update by Dr. Marla Stevens.**

- As of Monday there were 4 positive stallions in Kentucky. Three of the horses were Quarterhorses, and one was a Paint stallion. Additionally, there were 3 positive stallions in Indiana. Dr. Callahan provided insight into a number of the cases. The origin is still unclear. Dr. White indicated that there were exposed mares located in Virginia. Dr. Stevens indicated that there were as many as 20 stallions identified as potentially being exposed.
- Dr. Callahan discussed the conundrums farms are in that have stallions that are negative for CEM. Should they advertise that their stallions are CEM negative? Should other farms not exposed still test their stallions?

- Rob indicated that he had questioned whether States should obtain a designation of being CEM free if this starts to impact international trade. Dr. Stevens stated that there was some discussion over whether shipping semen over state lines should be controlled.
- Rob supplied the committee with letters and information from Dr. Hohenhaus and the USDA, as well as news reports.

#### **12. NAIS Letter from Dr. Guy Hohenhaus by Dr. John Lee**

- Dr. Lee discussed the recent letter distributed by Dr. Hohenhaus related to the NAIS program.
- Dr. Lee indicated reservations in instructing his clients to join in on the NAIS program given the fact that there are no guarantees to protect the information from becoming public knowledge. He cited the recent court cases related to releasing the nutrient management plans held by the MDA.
- Dr. Lee discussed the point that he feels that there is no single chip technology currently in place.
- Dr. Swanby noted that the premises needed to be identified before the horses were, and she felt this may cause a problem.
- Members of the committee felt that the program was not well thought out at the moment.
- Rob indicated that the USDA does desire that it becomes mandatory but that the political will was not yet there to make it so. At the moment it is a voluntary program. Rob indicated that the chip that is recommended by the Jockey Club is able to be read by multiple chip reading devices.
- Dr. Polkes indicated that there was fear from owners of horses identified with herpes that this would become much of a scarlet letter.
- Dr. White spoke of some of the positives of the program related to disease trace back, and vital sign observations. However, the fear is still the involvement of “big brother.”
- Dr. Lee indicated that he felt that a letter should be drafted to indicate to the MHIB that the committee feels much more research and study needs to go into the NAIS program before the practitioners are asked to push their clients towards micro chipping. Dr. Stevens indicated that imported horses should absolutely be chipped. Mike Hopkins indicated that standardization needed to take hold. Dr. Callahan indicated that the 134 megahertz chip is used in Europe. Dr. Burk indicated that specific organizations representing veterinarians would be more appropriate. Dr. Lee indicated that no letter would be drafted at this time but that it should remain on the minds of the committee members.

**13. Hyperbaric chambers by Mike Hopkins.**

- Mike reviewed the issue with the committee.
- Mike indicated that Dr. Runde the President of the Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners visited the hyperbaric chamber at Laurel Park.
- Dr. Runde had indicated that their Board is typically complaint driven. In spite of that he gave some ideas to the operator on how better to manage the equipment. According to Dr. Swanby the trainer who controls the unit is attempting to sell it.
- Dr. Burk questioned what the difference was with this tool as opposed to equine massage. Mike indicated that the difference is that you can do anything to your own horse, but you cannot offer health related services if you are not a licensed veterinarian.
- There was continued discussion over the issue.
- Dr. Swanby indicated that the State of Maryland does not have regulations on this equipment, but that New Jersey's Office of the Environment did regulate them in that State. The reason being that the chambers hold pure oxygen which is combustible.
- Dr. White indicated that the EMC would be interested in studying the use of these machines. While they may not solve many issues, they may be useful as therapy for certain conditions, notably with the lungs or ischemic foals.

**14. Review of vet practice act by Dr. John Lee.**

- Following up on the discussion from a previous meeting Dr. Lee indicated that he had reviewed the Maryland Veterinary Practice Act and did not feel it was in the purview of the MHIB-HAC to review the act. Dr. Callahan felt that unless there was a specific issue to address the Act is fairly straight forward. She stated that if the specific question was related to massage then she is unsure what they should be reviewing. Dr. Lee indicated that the mechanism was already in place in the law to allow for non-veterinarians to provide certain therapies as long as they meet the conditions of the Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.
- Rob indicated that a request had come from a constituent for the MHIB-HAC to review it to find if it was too stringent or lenient.
- Dr. Lee indicated that it might be useful to update it and he noted a specific exception for acupuncture, and Dr. Callahan indicated that perhaps a clear exception should be made for massage.
- Rob indicated that the State of Maryland was getting a "reputation" as not being legal for equine massage. He noted an email he received from an out of state equine masseuse.

- Rob informed the masseuse that as long as no health or medical diagnostic claims were being made it was legal for non-veterinarians to practice equine massage. Moreover, Dr. Lee indicated that as long as the case was being overseen by a veterinarian those claims could be made.

**15. Equine Euthanasia and Disposal Clinics by Dr. John Lee.**

- Dr. Lee discussed a survey that was being done by the USDA to study a number of factors related to the homeless/unwanted equine in the U.S. Results will help to quantify and validate the extent of the homeless/unwanted horse issue. Dr. Lee stated that he was unsure of who the organization AFBF was that was requesting this study.
- Erin indicated that another survey was currently being conducted by the Unwanted Horse Coalition.
- Rob reviewed the emails distributed to the committee related to equine euthanasia. No one wanted to take on the responsibility or conduct the clinics. Rob indicated that if an organization or group of organizations wanted to take on this project then Rob stated he was willing to assist with its organization, but he was unwilling and unable to take it on solely.
- There was discussion over the clinics held in California, and about how Days End Farm Horses Rescue. Rob indicated that while Days End Farm Horse Rescue is one of the best rescues in the country, they are facing criticism from other rescues.
- Erin also spoke about castration clinics held in California. Dr. Swanby noted that her feeling was that anyone unable to pay for castration on their stallion most likely could not afford to care properly for a horse.
- Dr. White indicated that the Department of the Interior has distributed information regarding explosives use to dispose of large animal carcasses. The main intent was for disposal of carcasses in wilderness areas.
- A member asked if Valley Protein provides a discount for multiple carcass pick-up. Rob indicated that yes, they would. However, he noted that there may be some issue if all carcasses are chemically euthanized. Although in the Mid-Atlantic chemically euthanized carcasses are accepted, it is an issue in other areas.
- Dr. Swanby indicated that Valley Protein has a contract with the Maryland Jockey Club to remove equine carcasses.
- There was continued discussion regarding this topic and it will continue to be entered on future agendas.

**16. Reportable Diseases Update by Dr. Marla Stevens.**

- Rob indicated that Dr. Hohenhaus indicated that he would like to make changes to the reportable disease list in Maryland. Rob provided the list to the committee.
- Dr. White indicated that in Virginia there was a split between urgency of reporting for particular symptoms/diseases. Dr. White asked if Maryland had a similar listing. Dr. Stevens, Peggy Morgan, and Rob Burk indicated that the list provided was the guide and that there was no further urgency of reporting listings.
- There was some discussion over salmonella reporting being listed as only applicable for hospital settings.
- Dr. Polkes questioned if anyone had ever actually reported under the auspices of “equine neurologic syndrome.” Rob indicated that there had been some. Notably a recent case at Rosecroft Raceway and some private farms. The Rosecroft case was in fact caused by West Nile Virus.
- Dr. Polkes questioned why the information on sampling tubes was included. Dr. Stevens answered.
- **Motion to accept the suggested changes to the reportable disease listing of the Animal Health Section of the Maryland Department of Agriculture was made by Dr. Nathaniel White.**
- **Second: Dr. Amy Burk**
- **Abstention: Mike Hopkins**
- **Motion Passed**

**17. Valley Protein Update by Rob Burk.**

- Clarified that Valley Protein will still accept horse carcasses despite confusion from the public, and that cattle would be accepted only with the nervous system removed.

**18. Global Vet Link Update by Rob Burk.**

- Rob indicated that a meeting was held between Global Vet Link representatives, Assistant Secretary Patrick McMillan, State Veterinarian Guy Hohenhaus, Assistant Attorney General Craig Nielsen, and himself regarding clarifying contracting to establish electronic coggins in Maryland.
- Rob reported that according, to Dr. Hohenhaus he signed the final contract to the MDA – Assistant Attorney General’s Office for review. Dr. Hohenhaus had heard nothing further.

**19. April Meeting Date and Location by Rob Burk.**

- Rob stated that he could not attend the currently scheduled date of April 16. The committee agreed to change it to April 23.

**13. Other business by Dr. Nathaniel White.**

- Dr. White provided a tour of the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Burk