

Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council meeting minutes

April 5, 2012

Attendees:

Dr. Kristin M. Haas (KMH), Jane Clifford (JC), Dr. Kent E. Henderson (KEH), Melody Squier (MS), Dr. Ruth Blauwiekel (RB), Diane Bothfeld (DB), Leslie Pike (LP), Paul Saenger (PS), Carl Cushing (CC)..

Observers (affiliations):

Joanne Bourbeau (Humane Society of the United States)

DB called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM and postponed the public comment period until the end of the meeting in order to accommodate anticipated guests.

LP moved to approve the minutes from the February 8, 2012 meeting. RB seconded the motion, and the February minutes were unanimously approved.

The Council discussed the issue of on-farm industrial grade formaldehyde use for the purpose of treating hairy heel wart in cattle, as well as the draft position statement on this topic. Several key points were discussed in relation to this topic. They are the following:

- The change in product designation from “possible carcinogen” to “probable carcinogen” is important to note.
- The issue of formaldehyde use on farms may not be one that is within the scope of the Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council’s charge as the use of the substance does not have a direct impact on livestock welfare.
- There are other medications available on the market to treat hairy heel wart in cattle.
- There is benefit to determining the amount of usage of this product on Vermont farms.
- The Agency of Agriculture is in the process of testing ambient air formaldehyde concentrations to determine level of farm employee exposure and other exposure secondary to product mixing in footbath preparations and spreading of manure containing formaldehyde residues on crop fields.
- There is a need to approach the regulatory oversight of formaldehyde and other compounds which may be used on-farm strategically and proactively.
- Outreach to, and education of, the farming community is a critical component of any formaldehyde oversight program, and outreach/education will only become more important as time goes on.

Following the discussion, the Council decided by consensus to keep the formaldehyde use position statement in draft form, inform interested legislators that the issue was discussed, and refer back to the draft statement in the future should the need arise.

At the request of members of the House Committee on Agriculture, the Council held an initial discussion pertaining to recommended amendments to the statutory language in 6 V.S.A. Chapter 8. There was Council consensus that the Chapter 8 section 352(3) exemption of livestock and poultry husbandry practices from the definition of cruelty to animals is confusing. There was consensus that the term “withers” used in section 365(b) should be replaced with the term “head”. This discussion will be ongoing during future meetings.

At the request of members of the House Committee on Agriculture, the Council engaged in a preliminary discussion of the development of recommendations pertaining to ways in which animal cruelty investigation and enforcement in VT could be enhanced. Pertinent points made by Council members include the following:

- Having a robust force of well educated animal investigators who interact and communicate on a professional level is important
- Providing outreach to the public to ensure that they know that there is a system in place in VT for handling animal welfare concerns is important.
- Engaging members of the state and local police and sheriffs’ departments is critical
- Utilizing training tools such as the one developed by Council member JD for the VVMA is critical. Other similar resources should be developed and used in outreach efforts to other stakeholder groups.
- Private/non-profit organizations through which educational and outreach materials could be channeled include the sheriffs’ association, dairy co-ops, NOFA, other producer groups, Vermont Police Chiefs’ Association and the Town Constable Association. Many of these groups have regularly scheduled trainings and/or meetings that could be utilized for dissemination of information pertaining to animal cruelty response and investigation.

This discussion will be ongoing during future meetings

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture met with the Council from approximately 11:00 AM to noon. Topics of discussion included the following:

- Council position vacancies (currently there are two, one appointed by the Speaker of the House and one appointed by the Committee on Committees – nominations were submitted to these two offices for replacements more than 3 months ago)
- Focus areas of the Council during future meetings

- The issue of tail docking and the Council's position statement related to S.107
- The issue of formaldehyde use on farms
- The issue of swine gestation crates and the language in S.239 – this bill made crossover and will be taken up by the House Agriculture committee. A Task Force Report entitled *A comprehensive review of housing for pregnant sows*, published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association was highlighted by the Council as a comprehensive reference piece on the use of swine gestation crates. The Chair of the House committee requested a copy. KMH will forward a copy to her.
- One House committee member stated that he would appreciate receipt of any guidelines that could be offered to them by the Council that might serve as a response framework to bills related to livestock animal welfare (i.e. the five pillars of animal well being). KMH will forward a copy of the five pillars to the Chair of the House committee.

A public comment period was held at the end of the meeting, and Joanne Bourbeau provided comment. She highlighted the fact that there may be an opportunity for collaboration between the LCSAC and the Vermont Animal Response Cruelty Coalition on issues concerning animal welfare outreach, investigation and enforcement since essential stakeholder members are present in both groups.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 PM.