



January 2022

Dear Representative Michael Nelson,

The Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association has a growing concern about the Minnesota Board of Animal Health being able to carry out its mission to safeguard the health and welfare of domestic animals. Annual legislative proposals that attempt to needlessly change oversight and role of the Board in effectively carrying out its long-standing mission to address domestic animal issues is at the crux of our concern.

This list of organizations below is a testament to the confidence that we have in the Board and we ask that you join us in supporting this Minnesota institution. We have been in consultation with the Board of Animal Health and Department of Health officials in arriving at our opposition stance. As you know, the Board does not operate in a vacuum and has a rich tradition of working not only with legislators but also with producer groups, individual farmers, animal humane groups, academic institutions, veterinarians, other state agencies as well as the public in collaborating on numerous animal health issues. The Board also collaborates and communicates with other states, as animals travel across state lines.

A fairly recent example of how effectively the Board is equipped to carry out its mission is to look back to 2015 and the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak that impacted Minnesota poultry farms and industries in this state. The board was recognized both in this state and nationally for its prompt and effective response to this situation. It also collaborated with the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and other state and federal agencies in quickly containing this outbreak. In fact, The Board's reaction to this crisis is often held up as a model for other animal health emergency response and containment plans. In 2021, Minnesota saw a case of a highly contagious and deadly disease in rabbits, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus. Within days of the detection, BAH authorized the use of a vaccine by MN veterinarians, and also supplied rabbit owners with information on the disease, management and best practices for keeping MN rabbits healthy.

The legislatively proposed Companion Animal Board bill (SF73) concerns us as an attempt to restructure the Board through the creation of a newly created agency whose primary focus appears to be to remove the Cat and Dog Breeder law from the Board's jurisdiction even though just a few years ago the proponents of the CAB bill were in full support of the Board being the agency best suited to address breeder problems and inspections. The Board has effectively managed breeders in this state and just recently added a Breeder of Excellence program. The Board and its staff veterinary team are equipped to continue to manage breeder inspections and oversight. In addition, there is state law already in place that equips and directs the Minnesota Federated Humane Society to address animal humane matters in this state.

In conclusion, the organizations below support the current Board of Animal Health and we ask that our Minnesota legislative leaders support its current mission to safeguard all Minnesota domestic animals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Connie S. Sillerud". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Connie S. Sillerud, DVM
MVMA President

Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
MN Pork Producers
MN Farm Bureau
MN Horse Council
MN Purebred Dog Breeders
MN Turkey Association
Minneapolis Animal Control
MN Federated Humane Society
Minnesota State Rabbit Breeders Association