



Bassett Healthcare Network
New York Center for Agricultural
Medicine and Health

NYCAMH Advisory Board Minutes
Meeting 3/13/2025 11:00-2:30
The Otesaga, Cooperstown, NY

Attendees:

Susan Ackerman, Allison Appleton (virtual), Jim Bittner (virtual), Heather Brown, Liz Callahan, Andy Carlson, Keith Clark, Richard Engelbrecht, Alicia Fletcher, Kitty Gelberg, Conor Hammersley (virtual), Christine LaLonde-Meade, Cindy Levene, Duane Martin, Erika Scott, Dahlia Sheehan-Yassin, James Shuford (virtually), Renee St. Jacques, Rich Stup, Elizabeth Wolters, Dan Zeh, Bill Zittel

Welcome and Introductions: Bill Zittel

The Advisory Board welcomed new member Dr. Allison Appleton, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the College of Integrated Sciences at SUNY Albany.

Director's Report and Updates: Erika Scott

As Julie Sorensen is in Brussels attending an EU Farm Safety Conference, Erika summarized key items in the Director's Report. She updated the Board on HealthWorks, Social Work Services, Occupational Health Services, Safety Training and Outreach, as well as ROPS and the John May Farm Safety Fund (JMFSF) which currently has a wait-list. She also referred to the 2024 Year in Review which provides an overview of all our projects and accomplishments from last year.

Budget Update: Erika Scott

Erika began by stating that NYCAMH/NEC now has nearly 40 employees and an almost \$6M operating budget. 41% of the funding comes from Federal sources with the remainder supplied through NYS DOH, Ag & Markets and DOL funds.

NYS Budget:

Erika reported that the NYS unified budget is scheduled to be available at the beginning of April (likely will be later, though). She noted that the senate version includes everything NYCAMH had requested:

- \$1.25 M to cover operational costs and ROPS
- \$500 K for the JMFSF
- \$150 K for a joint program with Cornell Ag Workforce Development to create on-line safety training and worker onboarding/orientation.

The House budget includes:

- 1.25 M to cover operational costs and ROPS
- \$500 for JMFSF [Confirmed by Renee St. Jacques]

- It was noted that the wording in the Assembly budget is confusing and it is unclear if the funding for the Cornell/NYCAMH collaboration is included. [Update: this has been identified in the Assembly budget, as well]

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Erika added that after working hard to forge relationships with Albany, NYS legislators now know us and the value of the work we do is being recognized.

NYS DOH funding for Occupational Health Clinics also differs between the Senate and the House:

- Senate: \$20M
- House: \$9.56M

Erika noted that last year the final figure was \$14.56M.

Federal Funds

Erika provided the following background on the status of federally funded projects and proposals:

- On January 27, 2025 Office of Management and Budgets issued a memo freezing all grants. The memo offered no clarification regarding which programs were or were not implicated by the order.
- Two days later, the memo was rescinded because of mass confusion throughout the country, however, OBM stated that grants tied to specific Executive Orders could still be frozen.
- In response, U.S. Courts issued Temporary Restraining Orders to provide time to ascertain the legality of these cuts which were not imposed by Congress, which according to the U.S. Constitution, holds the “power of the purse”.

Potential Impact of Cuts on NYCAMH

<u>Federal Grant</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
Northeast Center	\$1,121,144
ROPS Program	\$600,000
Healthy Harvester Project	\$209,706
IPA Surveillance	\$43,875
University of WA Contract	\$9,993
Pesticide Education Collaborative	10,848
ABS	10,000
Indirects	\$276,148
TOTAL	\$2,281,714
% of NYCAMH Budget	41%

Status of Future Grants

Most study panels are currently on hold and communications with funding agencies are largely on hold, as well. Because they were submitted before January, the NIOSH U13 proposal and the NIH National Library of Medicine G08 proposal were both reviewed and scored very highly. Funding for these projects is unclear, however. A third proposal, NIH Heart, Blood and Lung K01 proposal, was not submitted.

Other Concerns

- Work with immigrants; farms increasingly concerned about ICE
- H5N1 response from CDC
- USAID, conservation grants halted
- Tariffs
- Access to labor
- There is a freeze on postings in the Federal Register

Board Member Appointments Update: Cindy Levene

Cindy thanked Dean Erin Bell of the College of Integrated Health Sciences for the timely appointment of Dr. Allison Appleton to fill the open Advisory Board position from SUNY. Assembly Member Lupardo will recommend the appointments of Lisa Ford and Carrie Edsall/Dan Zeh to Speaker Heastie which will hopefully expedite those. Renee St. Jacques' appointment is still pending with Senator Stewart-Cousins.

LUNCH

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1): Updates from NYSDOH and NYCAMH

Hallie Meek, DVM, MPH, Deputy State Public Health Veterinarian and Erika Scott

Dr. Meek shared information about the Public Health response to a positive flock or herd in New York State. She reported that detections in wild animals are more common, but pose a lower public health risk. Detections in domestic animals require animal health and public health responses. In NYS it is assumed that H5 is in wild birds in all counties. Where it shows up is largely dependent on where testing is done. There have been 21 detections in domestic birds so far this year (commercial farm, backyard flocks, LBMs, sanctuary, school) and to date, 0 detections in dairy cattle.

Response to Detections: NYSDOH developed an automated monitoring system that uses email/text for this response. It is fully translated and can be used for individuals or groups:

- **Notification:** NYSAGM notifies NYSDOH, so NYSDOH can notify the Local Health Department. The Local Health Department leads the public health response.
- **Screening:** Anyone who may have had contact with infected animals is screened for exposure and symptoms.
- **Monitoring:** Exposed people are monitored for symptoms during any ongoing exposure and for 10 days after their last exposure.
- **Education:** If there is ongoing exposure, infection prevention education is provided, including the use of PPE.

Next Steps for Asymptomatic Individuals: At the moment, CDC guidance does not call for isolation of people who test positive and do not have symptoms. For people who have had high-risk exposures, **chemoprophylaxis with oseltamivir** can be considered to prevent infection. Workers do not need to agree to testing to receive chemoprophylaxis.

- **Testing** can also be offered to people with high-risk exposures.
- Examples of **high-risk exposures** include a splash to the face with raw milk without wearing PPE or participating in poultry culling without wearing PPE.

Next Steps for Symptomatic Individuals

Anyone who develops symptoms within 10 days of exposure **should** promptly:

- Be tested for H5N1 infections
- Receive oseltamivir treatment, pending testing results
- Isolate away from others, pending on test results

There are many considerations for farmworkers including language barriers, insurance status, lack of transportation, and distrust of government. Dr. Meek stated that working with an organization like NYCAMH is extremely important because of our ability to meet farmworkers on the farm. We can assist with animal detections and ensure that workers get prompt attention. Dr. Meek is happy to answer questions: Haillie.meek@health.ny.gov

Elizabeth Wolters from the Department at Agriculture and Markets weighed in that she is the contact at NYSDAM with issues related to H5N1.

NYCAMH's Response: Erika Scott

NYCAMH is uniquely positioned to address H5N1:

- NYCAMH Biosecurity Training
 - Enhanced Biosecurity Trainings for managers and employees
 - Available in-person and in companion with other training topics
 - Emphasis on cleaning/disinfecting, managing movement on the farm
- NYCAMH'S PPE Program
 - Customized technical assistance to choose PPE
 - We stock commonly requested on-farm PPE
 - Shipped direct or delivered during on-farm safety trainings
 - Access to a wealth of knowledge through our professional networks
- Other services:
 - Farm Partners Program
 - Health Literacy
 - Ability to provide testing where local health departments cannot; protocols are already in place.

Immigration Enforcement and Impacts to the Agriculture Industry: Anna Meyerhoff

Reliant on immigrant workers, New York's dairy industry is concerned about this administration's immigration policies. Anna shared the advice we have received regarding this issue from Bassett's legal expert as well as observations and resources she has noted in her work around the state. Bassett has provided a list of Do's and Don'ts if ICE appears:

DO:

- Be calm, be respectful
- Request identification
- Ask for copies of warrants and subpoenas & send to counsel
- Cooperate in the collection of materials covered by a subpoena
- Designate a point of contact to interact with ICE
- Allow ICE to access public areas and areas covered by a warrant
- Abide by *judicial* warrants & subpoenas

DON'T:

- Interfere in the search
- Consent to a search in a private area in the absence of a warrant
- Agree to be interviewed
- Volunteer information, unless there is a subpoena
- Misrepresent facts to ICE officers
- Actively help foreign nationals escape ICE
- Give ICE information protected by law (e.g., HIPAA), absent an enforceable subpoena
- Be bullied or intimidated

Anna also reported that there is an increasing fear and stress among farm workers and their families. Many are keeping their children home from school and avoiding public places. In addition to the counseling and bilingual stress management training NYCAMH provides, some resources she cited were:

- Mary Jo and Cornell Farmworker Program: "Supporting Immigrants" and "Know Your Rights" workshops, as well as document prep clinics.
- WCAHS (UC Davis): webinar and immigration attorney available
- Cornell Ag Workforce Development: Advice for farmers and resources for workers
- NYFB has also updated their page

Dairy Farmer Mental Health: Conor Hammersley

Conor's project stems from the hypotheses that the consolidation of dairy farms in NYS, marked by a decline in small farms and an increase in large-scale operations, is associated with higher levels of stress, isolation and depression among farmers, particularly those with generational ties to farming. His research will include:

- **Qualitative Methods:** Conduct **semi-structured interviews** (n=8) and **focus groups** (n=6) with **farmers, farm family members, and key informants** (i.e. service providers, policymakers, agribusiness representatives, etc.) to capture lived experiences and perspectives.

- **Quantitative Methods:** Structured **surveys** to farmers and rural community members **to assess mental health, economic challenges, and attitudes toward centralization**. Include validated scales for mental health (e.g., PHQ-9 for depression, GAD-7 for anxiety).
 - Economic Analysis: Use secondary data (e.g., USDA, FAO, census data) to analyze trends in farm size, profitability, rural employment, and community demographics.
- **Case Study:** Delaware County
 - 471 dairy farms in 1989, under 52 dairy farms by 2021
 - Second highest suicide rate in New York State, double the state average
 - Ethnographic field methods

Based on the results of the study, Conor hopes to influence:

- **Mental Health First Aid:** Advance the utility of mental health first aid to account for wider socio-economic dynamics associated with farmer mental health
- **Policy framework:** Regional mental health infrastructure, economic social safety nets, community support programs
- **Future research:** Comparative regional work, more in-depth stratification and spatial analysis work

Destiny Trombley and Duane Martin will be working with Conor. They are starting interviews next week. Duane shared his personal story relating to the sale of his dairy herd and the resultant feelings he had about being unable to keep the family farm operational.

Bill Zittel thanked everyone for coming. At the June meeting we will discuss AB tenure. The meeting adjourned at 2:30.

The next meeting will be Thursday, June 12, 2025, from 11:00-2:30 at the Otesaga in Cooperstown, NY