



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

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Maryland Agricultural Commission

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Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes December 9, 2020

Present:

Ag Education: Martha Clark
Agribusiness: Thomas Mullineaux
At Large Ag Service: Matthew Levi Sellers
Direct Farm Market: Amy Crone
Equine: Michael Pons
Farm Bureau: Jonathan Quinn
Food Processing: Cheryl DeBerry

Forestry: Elizabeth Hill
Nursery I: James Raley
Organic Farming: Matthew Nielsen
Poultry I: Michael Levensgood
Poultry II: Michelle Protani-Chesnik
State Grange: Clifford Newsome Jr.
Veterinary: Dr. John Brooks

Absent:

Agritourism: Kelly Dudeck
At Large Ag Service: Frank Allnutt
Consumer: Carroll Shry Jr.
Dairy II: David Pyle
Field Crops: Donald Maring

Livestock: Sean Hough
Nursery II: Ray Greenstreet
Turf: Tom Warpinski
University: Dr. Craig Beyrouthy
Viticulture: Matthew Corey Spies

MDA Staff:

Julie Oberg
Cassie Shirk
Kevin Conroy
Joe Bartenfelder
Rich Colburn
Steve Connelly
Hans Schmidt

Guest/Speakers:

Steve McHenry
Allison Roe

Approval of Minutes:

November minutes were approved 1st by Thomas Mullineaux and 2nd by Amy Crone.

Commodity Reports:

Martha Clark- Ag Education:

- MAEF next board meeting is December 17th everything virtual.
- Been working no stopped on developing new materials for virtual learning.
- Gala had a good turnout and was the primary event for November.
- The 4-H foundation is in the process of hiring a new executive director. Hopefully picking this week.
- 4-H has also been extending online programing and ag educators have been developing new material and have developed a new program for virtual clubs.
- The biggest problem with the ag education right now is the school systems keep changing their mind. Example: Howard County due to open in February and now not due to open till May.
- Concern with the quality of education. Services rendered are different across the counties and how do you compare in testing.
- Feel that sadly the students are going to lose a year of education.
- Trying to decide how to give them equalized grade systems.
- Really bad for high school kids especially seniors because this is the time they are building up to graduation and deciding plans for their careers.
- College kids can't get education other than online and with language and computer issues it makes it hard.

Thomas Mullineaux- Agribusiness:

- "In-Store" retail business has for all intents and purposes stopped. Shopping has slowed to nil.
- Potential shoppers for that Farm Christmas of a winter coat, boots, tack, etc. are at home.
- I bring this up because some Ag Businesses depend on a little Fall-Winter retail store business to at least keep the lights on since fertilizer, seed and crop protection business have stopped.
- The row crops picture is a little brighter especially on the West side of the Bay except Southern Maryland. Commodity prices have moved higher a far better than expected crop is harvested and in the bib. However, east of the Bay many growers are faced with some corn and soybeans still in the field. Rain which on many occasions we pray for just will not temper itself.
- Consequently, many acres of Wheat, barley and Cover Crop will not get planted.
- Equipment dealers (Red, Green and other) have told me that there is a great deal of interest in new equipment for spring. Pricing but not signing anything.
- Just in the past week, several Fertilizer and Crop Protection suppliers have let me know that 2021 Pre-pay discussions with growers are beginning to occur. This, I've always thought, is one of the best indicators of the health of the Agriculture economy.
- Spring is right around the corner.
- "JUST WEAR THE DAMN MASK"

Matthew Seller- Ag Services:

- **Congress Negotiates Hemp Issues:** Congress is using federal funding negotiations to address issues facing the hemp industry, ranging from the Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) influence, and another extension of hemp pilot programs, to CBD enforcement. The Senate Appropriations Committee directed the USDA to propose amendments "to ensure that any final rule is based on science and will ensure a fair and reasonable regulatory framework for commercial hemp production in the United States." Senate

appropriators are also working on language to further extend the state hemp pilot projects. The original extension ends Sept. 30, 2021, which is the middle of the hemp harvest season. To remedy this, the Committee is working on a provision that would extend the pilots until January 2022.

- **First MD Industrial Hemp Roundtable:** On November 12th, MD Senator Mac Middleton assembled a virtual roundtable meeting to discuss efforts to stimulate the industrial hemp industry in Maryland. Attendees, such as Kevin Atticks (MD Hemp Coalition), MDA representatives Kevin Conroy & Jim Drews, University of MD representatives such as Dr. Andrew Ristvey & Dr. Nicole Fiorellino, MARBIDCO representatives, others and myself discussed obstacles that have left MD farmers reluctant to invest in producing the crop and ways to access funds to promote the industry to improve Bay water quality. Another meeting is to be scheduled to include other valuable input and progress forward with some ideas discussed.
- **2nd COVID-19 Surge Impact on MD Hemp:** With the current increase in COVID positive tests and stricter state wide restrictions on businesses, the virus continues to impact all aspects of agriculture. December marks the end of outdoor hemp production but producers will be impacted by these restrictions on the sales of their hemp produced this past season. With retail outlets restricted on customer occupancy and fears of another non-essential shutdown sales of hemp-based products could be greatly impacted. Assistance in purchasing the proper PPE required for safe business operations during COVID to retailers of hemp-based products could help the stores to remain open and sales to continue.

Amy Crone- Direct Farm Market:

- Sales reports: direct farm markets continue to welcome customers with all necessary protocols in place, as well as adapting with drive-through order pickup, online ordering, visits based on scheduled times, and other resourceful ways to enable folks to visit the farm and/or market safely.
- Winter Crop Production Meetings are happening via Zoom; list of UMD Extension events is here: <https://extension.umd.edu/events/series/6434>
- ALEI working on new legal resources for direct marketing farmers, including a new “Legal Guide to Direct Farm Marketing for Maryland Produce Growers”, which they will get a free copy of if attend one of meetings here: <http://umaglaw.org/event/legaldirectmarketing/>
- MDA / UMD / counties continue to provide certification services for these operators online as well – GAP in particular, as well as food safety trainings and other services to be able to sell direct to customers via the farm or farmers market (GAP training held last week & upcoming one in February can be found here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-basic-good-agricultural-practices-class-tickets-124729127177>
- SNAP redemption at farmers markets continues to be high – average of 20% increase each month over 2019 figures
- National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) working on building out online SNAP access for small farmers and markets; submitted proposal to FNS to build system to enable access to direct marketing farmers and farmers markets which would provide a new revenue source for MD direct farm marketing farmers and farmers markets
- All conferences that would be attended by farmers/farmers markets will be online between now and the spring of 2021
- Concerns & needs of community if COVID-19 continues to surge:

- List of items needed: PPE/masks, cleaning & sanitizing supplies, resources to manage online orders/sales
- Perceived impacts to segment (loss of income, market impact, etc.): surge may coincide with the quiet months for direct farm markets & farmers markets – when they are usually closed in the winter or have limited products; so, it may not be a significant change to income in the coming months

Michael Pons- Equine:

- In the thoroughbred world, we had a good horse sale in Timonium about 250 horses. This was mainly an east coast event with a few Kentucky folks but the best thing was that everyone wore their mask and was behaving in a responsible manner.
- It was more a trade show than anything.
- Was a good day and way to sell horses.
- Horse sale strong event.
- Racing at the track is limited to horseman and owners only but still going on.
- Things are pretty good just a little slower than usual.

Jonathan Quinn- Farm Bureau:

- The farm bureau had its annual convention virtually and everything went well.
- AFVF is trying to get farm workers on necessary list with the CDC to get bumped up on vaccine list.
- Dean Foods bankruptcy is asking farmers to help pay bankruptcy debts but AFVF has put out that if they do not discontinue, they are going to file a lawsuit. This is strictly a dairy issue.

Cheryl DeBerry- Food Processing:

- Food processors struggle to remain open with the pandemic affecting so many people. Within 40 miles of our farm, two community kitchen processors shut down in the last month due to an employee testing positive. The farmers providing raw products for their use were stuck for two weeks without those outlets.
- Local industrial hemp processing infrastructure (including fiber, food, and medicinal) needs to be supported to help grow this new industry. It has huge potential but we still lack processors in close enough proximity to make it viable.

Elizabeth Hill- Forestry:

- **OLD MILL GIVEN NEW LIFE:** (*Results of the Former Cropper Brothers Lumber Auction*)
- **Willards, Maryland, December 8, 2020-** It's not often that a sawmill goes to auction and avoids the chopping block, but that exactly what happened this time. The former Croppers Brothers Lumber was purchased in its entirety and will resume operation in early 2021. As a crowd of interested parties watched, several bidders battled it out online and person to get the opportunity to enter the forest products industry, a lucrative endeavor for someone that is up for the challenge. The lucky winner was Ezra Rickards, a young entrepreneur who purchased the mill and land at the sale. Mr. Rickards says, "he will be working with equipment manufacturers and other experts in the industry to make repairs and upgrades to the facility." He hopes that reopening the mill will revitalize timber markets in the region by providing another outlet for landowners and loggers. While the lumber business is new to Mr. Rickards, he isn't new to the business world. He currently owns and operates a large auto body shop in Millsboro, DE. The name of the new operation will be Delmarva Lumber.

- The former Cropper Brothers Lumber began operations in Willards in 1965, providing local jobs and markets for timberland owners while producing lumber, pilings, chips, and animal bedding. The operation closed in November 2017 and has been in receivership with the Farmers Bank of Willards ever since. Before going to auction, the bank explored several other options to find a buyer because they realize the vital role the sawmill plays in the rural economy. Matthew Davis, a spokesperson for the bank, said, "we couldn't be happier to see the sawmill reopen in Willards. Any opportunity to bring jobs back to Wicomico County is a win for the community. With the shortage of mills on Delmarva, I'm sure landowners and the timber industry will share our enthusiasm. In today's environment, it would be virtually impossible to build a new mill from scratch, making this a once-in-a-lifetime chance for someone with the vision and drive to succeed. Luckily today, we found that person, and we at The Farmers Bank of Willards are committed to doing whatever it takes to support the new owner as they re-build this storied operation."
- Harold Scrimgeour was among the observers at the auction. He said, "after 25 years of sawmill closings, it was absolutely amazing to witness the Cropper Brothers sell to an individual that plans on operating the mill. This is a great day for the forestry industry as well as woodland owners. I hope that regulators from across the bridge understand how important adding this mill is for forest management, keeping land in forestry, and creating jobs for the Eastern Shore." Beth Hill, Executive Director of MFA, also in attendance, said, "this is a win for forest landowners and loggers on the shore. Our organization is committed to the growth and retention of the forest products industry and is looking forward to helping make this operation a success." MFA is Maryland's voice for forest, wildlife, and natural resource management.

James Raley- Nursery I:

- Mr. Raley informed the commission members that he contacted Ms. Vanessa Finney, Executive Director of the Maryland Nursery, Landscape, and Greenhouse Association to survey MNLGA members about the impact of COVID-19 on the nursery industry. The response ran to five pages. Mr. Raley provided a synopsis of respondent comments. The complete report was sent to MDA to be shared as requested by commission members.
- The Nursery industry was absolutely reeling in the spring with significant concerns and fear as shipping markets shut down, organizations closed and Easter and spring orders to a large degree were literally dumped. Businesses continue to experience declines in commercial spending as office complexes are not spending as much on interior spaces, maintenance, holiday displays, and new installations. Labor, and lack thereof, continues to be a significant issue all around. A silver lining in the pandemic, however, is that many homeowners have taken up gardening and spending time and money to landscape their homes (with plant material and hardscapes).
- The industry is grateful to Governor Hogan to have been deemed "essential." The "non-essential" nature of industry peers in other states during the initial spring related turmoil made it more difficult to conduct business and sell products. There remains some angst about the future and how businesses will get through with continuing labor issues.
- Mr. Raley reported that on December 7th the Maryland Farm Bureau held its 105th Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Meeting of Delegates via a virtual meeting platform. Delegates were able to participate and vote through the meeting platform. John Draper was reelected as 1st Vice President and Jonathan Quinn was reelected as 2nd Vice President. The delegates also approved new policy language. Some topics of note were: updates to Maryland's Right-to-Farm law as it applies to aquaculture, support for the manure transport program, protections for industrial hemp production and other legal commodities from sensory setback requirements, and increasing funding to the Tri-

County Councils for the purpose of including and funding agricultural and natural resources development in their mission.

Matthew Nielsen- Organic Farming:

- In terms of the organic industry, we have seen slow down.
- We are encouraging individuals to get renewals done early and get certification in early.
- This year conference season has kicked off virtually.
- The acreage conference was virtual and able to interact with individuals virtually in the trade show.
- There are programs focusing on organic research and this creates access for a lot of growers across the country and state to high quality research being done.
- December 1, Future Harvest and University Maryland Extension hosted virtual event on organic grain with some experienced organic grain farmers on the show such as Aaron Copper and answered questions from growers thinking of transitioning to organic.
- In terms of COVID-19 impacts on the grain market side there is a slight increase in prices.
- In terms of local crop corn has been variable quality.

Michael Levensgood- Poultry I:

- **Maryland Grain Producers support 33 projects for 2020:** After reviewing more than 40 grant proposals, the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board (MGPUB) has funded 33 projects for 2020. The Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board is funded through the Maryland Grain Check-Off Program; when grain produced in Maryland is sold by a farmer, the Utilization Board receives one-half of one percent of its net value. The Check-Off and universities are encouraged to submit grant proposals in November for consideration by MGPUB. The Utilization Board gathers to hear presentations on each proposal and reports from the previously funded projects. Projects must improve the viability and profitability of grain production through research, education, or market development.
- For 2020, the Grain Producers will award \$802,207 for 33 projects across the state. You can see a list of the funded projects [here](#).
- **Injury and illness rate in poultry processing falls below all manufacturing:** The incidence of occupational injuries and illnesses within the poultry sector's slaughter and processing workforce has fallen below all manufacturing for the first time since the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) began recording injuries and illnesses information in 1994. The total recordable poultry processing illness and injury rate for 2019 was 3.2 cases per 100 full-time workers annually, down from 3.5 in 2018. The poultry industry's rate of 3.2 was below the rate of 5.1 for similar agricultural industries in terms of injuries per 100 full-time workers and lower than the rate of 4.0 for the entire food manufacturing sector and all of manufacturing at 3.3.
- The incidence of occupational injuries and illnesses within the poultry sector's slaughter and processing workforce has fallen by 86 percent over the last 25 years and continues to decline according to the [2019 Injury and Illness Report](#) recently released by the BLS. Poultry processing's 2019 rate of 3.2, and its continual decline, demonstrates the vast advancements the industry has made in improving safety for its workforce. "Employee safety has been and will always be a priority for the poultry industry. The industry is continuing to focus its efforts on the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses, especially musculoskeletal disorders such as carpal tunnel syndrome, by acknowledging the benefit of implementing ergonomics and medical intervention principles while continually implementing new technology and automation in the workplace. The past two decades have shown a noteworthy decrease in the numbers and

rates of injury and illnesses. However, the poultry industry remains committed to pursuing new and resourceful ways to safeguard our workforce,” said the Joint Industry Safety and Health Council in a statement regarding the report’s release.

- The Joint Industry Safety and Health Council consists of members from the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY), the National Chicken Council (NCC) and the National Turkey Federation (NTF). Collectively, the three organizations represent companies that produce 95 percent of the nation's poultry products and directly employ more than 350,000 workers
- **DPI rebrands itself to DCA (Delmarva Chicken Association):** If you missed it, as part of the strategic plan that DPI’s Board members have worked on over the past couple of years, the organization is undergoing a rebranding effort, including a new name and logo – Delmarva Chicken Association (logo attached). Same great organization; same great commitment – just a new name and look that better reflects who the organization represents now and in the future.
- **New survey anoints chicken America's top quarantine protein:** The National Chicken Council unveiled the findings of a new survey fielded with the goal of better understanding chicken consumption trends and preferences in the United States. Along with a host of interesting metrics, the survey includes insight into the impact of the pandemic on chicken consumption habits, showing that half of Americans who eat chicken say they have eaten it more than any other protein during COVID-19. Nearly half (48%) of survey respondents say they increased the amount of chicken they prepared at home during the pandemic, while 39% said they increased the ways they prepare chicken. Approximately one half (52%) of Americans prefer grilled chicken while the other would opt for fried (48%). Americans also just barely prefer boneless wings (53%) over traditional bone-in wings. Plus, two in five Americans say that the breast is their favorite cut of chicken, but wing (20%), thigh (17%) and drumstick (14%) are also fierce competitors. Three-quarters (74%) of chicken eaters would prefer to eat real chicken over plant-based alternatives.
- “With everyone adjusting to a new way of life this year, chicken has been a reliable source of nutritious protein in an unpredictable time,” said Council spokesman Tom Super. “This research shows how the hard work of the entire chicken industry during this challenging time has supported many Americans who are looking for an easy-to-prepare, affordable, and healthy meal.”
- **Biosecurity:** It is an important topic for those in the chicken community year-round, but even more so during the winter months. There have been several cases of HPAI reported in Europe and Asia already so it is more important than ever for all those that are near or around chicken farms to continue to practice the highest levels of biosecurity.
- **Litter App:** DCA has been working on a litter. app that will help connect those that have litter with those that need litter. Funding for the app was provided by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Campbell Foundation, along with a lot of time and in-kind from many partners. **The app should be available in Google Play and App Store by mid-December and marketing will begin to encourage folks to sign up and use it.**

Michelle Protani- Chesnik- Poultry II:

- November through this first part of December have issued varied weather impacts. We have had over 13 inches of rain in the past few weeks and summer like and January weather conditions all in a weeks’ time, all which impact poultry with the rapid change of weather conditions and wreak havoc on lanes used to manage the farm.
- The uncertainty in poultry agriculture continues, depopulation has ceased to come thankfully. However, many who raise commercial poultry have in the back of their minds the constant dread that if this pandemic continues the upward surge it could happen. It

creates an unimaginable stress for the farm family. Older aged birds continue to be moved but the ages are not as extreme.

- Lay outs (time between flocks) continue to be long for several of the poultry companies. One company has sent a letter to their growers stating lay outs will range from 80 to 120 days. I have heard of growers receiving birds after 114 days. The reason is plant problems not related to Covid. Other companies range from 60 days to 21 days. This is having a devastating impact on farm families and their ability to meet their financial obligations. Companies with shorter layouts are requesting a myriad of upgrades to housing and doing total cleanouts, both of which take farms out of production and shorten lay outs for others. These upgrades are not based on farm performance and appear to be directed at older growers with smaller older farms.
- It has returned to Delmarva and vaccinating has resumed unfortunately after a break from it for the past few years. This will have a definite impact on bird respiratory health in the upcoming cold months. I fear it may be years again before it is discontinued. It vaccine remains in short supply for water line vaccinations, recombinant (in Ovo) is available but does not provide protection until birds are 5 weeks old.
- We received our check for the program set up by Governor Hogan and Secretary Bartenfelder on November 12th and were very grateful for the boost the check gave us. Overall, it appears that the program has gone smoothly and without glitches.
- Maryland Department of Environment has collected their fees, but to date I have not heard of any permits being issued or paperwork sent for public purvey other than the two in Queen Anne's county.
- The latest and greatest from MDE is that it appears that our CNMP's are not sufficient for the new permit? I received a call from a farmer advising me he talked to and received an email from a MS Aldrich at MDE advising that even though he is a no land operation he will need to have his CNMP rewritten, he asked if an addendum could be done by soil conservation and was told that that would not suffice since the employee who wrote the plan is no longer employed. This permit started as of November 2019; fees have been paid when we were assured the only fee would be an application fee. No land operations were told in writing to submit their CNMP with the application that if there were no changes it would be good. What is the problem? If everyone needs a rewrite with limited human and financial resources, I see no end in sight.
- A major concern of mine is still the health and welfare of the farm family and related ag structures in these pressing times. I am currently participating in a group with the University of Maryland and University of Delaware to look at Food Disruptions on the Eastern Shore. The purpose of this is to frame a forum I expect good things to come from this. Below is a description of the forum.
- How do farm producers, the food supply chain and consumers manage disruptions like the ones we experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What can professionals from various community sectors do to support the mental, behavioral, and financial health of farm producers and our local economies?
- There is no one answer, and it will take the ideas and support from agricultural and non-agricultural professionals to help shape responses. We need your help to frame and name this issue in a way that will be engaging and inclusive.
- The Ask: We want to name and frame this issue accurately and in an engaging way that helps all sectors of our Eastern Shore communities become engaged. To start our process, we are holding a Zoom facilitated meeting of a few key stakeholders on December 7th from 2-3:30. We are hoping you are available to join us.
- A little more information: Recently, a team of Extension professionals from the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension and University of Maryland Extension received funding from USDA-National Institute for Food and Agriculture. The funded

project will engage agriculture and non-agriculture professionals and stakeholders in a Forum. The Forum will include discussions and activities designed to increase awareness of the impact of food chain disruption on the mental, behavioral, and financial well-being of farm producers AND identify short term projects based on identified needs, strategies, and resources. This will be a yearlong project and we are just beginning.

Clifford Newson Jr.- State Grange:

- Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everyone! I'm sure we are all looking forward to better times in 2021. We will have two big issues to face. Our old foe covid-19 will still be around. A change in the political scene also appears ready to provide its own issues. With a possible covid-19 vaccine, we all have mixed emotions for its success. The public reaction is similar to the Polio vaccine of the 1940's and 50's. The success rate of many vaccines of the past were met with criticism. The testing and success rates of today's vaccines have improved. Recently, three former Presidents have agreed to take the shots in public.
- We are waiting to see what changes will be coming with the new administration. How will any change affect agriculture and our way of life in this country? If we have a Democratic President, will ideas of his campaign platform prevail? There will be many questions to be resolved and compromised during the coming year.
- The Grange has worked with many government policies in the past and we look forward to doing so into the future. We will voice our opinion on good and bad policies and bills to protect agriculture and the public. Internet availability in all areas of our country is strongly needed. Even in Maryland, there are zones of no internet service. With virtual schools and stay-at-home work encourage, the need to fund this service is necessary. Medical facilities and services in sparsely populated states has shown an increasing not decreasing need. Mental facilities are needed in high stress covid-19 areas. Loss of jobs, high foreclosure rates, unpaid rent and unstable family lives are adding to this stress.
- Maryland and America have problems. The need to work together to solve these issues must outweigh the view of one political party over another. When nothing is done, the spiral of hope goes down. We all must work together for hope to rise.

Craig Beyrouthy- University:

- Our proposed new graduate program in Ag Extension Education was approved last evening by the university senate. We are very excited about this program as it will be significant in preparing folks for a career in Extension.
- Another new program, Fermentation Science, was just approved in our college. It now goes to the university for approval. We are also excited about this new program as it addresses the needs of a developing industry in our state and should be quite attractive to a broad base of students.
- We held a weeklong conference in early November on the topic of One Health. We covered issues surrounding disease transmission between humans and animals, water quality, climate change, and food safety. Over 500 registrants zoomed in over the span of a week. It was very successful.

Dr. John Brooks- Veterinary:

- The WHO is putting together a team of epidemiologists, virologists, veterinarians, and public health and food health experts to begin to trace the origin of SARS-COVID 2. The study will begin with the animal and meat markets in Wuhan, China. It is highly suspicious the bats are the carrier of this virus. A Civet cat was found to be the carrier of a SARS outbreak several years ago. This initiative will be hampered by the current strain on the political climate between the US and China. The Chinese have not been

very forth coming with information regarding the zoonotic pathway of the COVID virus and epidemic.

- Along those lines, studies are underway involving the use of a snakebite antidote that is used in a variety of venomous snake cases involving an acute respiratory distress syndrome resultant from the bite. This syndrome is similar to the Acute Respiratory complex associated with a COVID infection. Studies to date involving mice and pigs have shown great promise in the possible use of this serum in humans affected with the acute form of the virus.
- Additionally, Denmark and Poland are moving forward to cull all of the commercial mink farms due to a mink mutated SARS-COV-2 outbreak that jumped to the human worker population. Recent reports indicate that the virus has been contained.
- Unfortunately, on the international scene, HPAI has been diagnosed in an area of Japan, and the Netherlands.
- Although the situation has been resolved, Vesicular Stomatitis was diagnosed in several horses in Kansas this past summer. VS is in the same “family” as FMD, and, although a reportable disease, does not carry the same degree of impact to the food animal population as Foot and Mouth disease. Those horse owners who may be shipping horse’s interstate or internationally, should check the Interstate Health papers closely.
- Regarding the impact that the Covid virus has had on animal health and the veterinary community within Maryland, it is, as with our other AG GROUPS, business as usual with a “new wrinkle”. Large animal visits remain an essential part of sustaining a healthy food production industry within Maryland. There is certainly more telemedicine between clients and their veterinarian, and the State Board of Veterinary Medical examiners has been very flexible with the Standards of Practice regarding minimizing the person-to-person direct contact. There continues to be discussion, and epidemiological research, regarding the possible transmission of the COVID virus from a fomite, such as an animal’s hair coat, that may have been in direct contact with an infected person to another individual. Clients are consistently asked if anyone in the household has been under quarantine for COVID. Those patients are normally examined with an extra layer of PPE’s. HIPA laws require staff to be discreet in questioning clients regarding the COVID exposures.
- To my knowledge, Animal Health in Maryland remains well at this time, the onset of colder weather always brings with its traditional increases in respiratory conditions amongst our herds due to stress factors such as housing, moisture, sub-freezing temps, etc.

Staff/Guest Updates:

Joe Bartenfelder:

- Light at the end of the tunnel is the vaccination for COVID-19 is on the rise and coming.
- A little over a month away legislative session is coming. Everyone is looking at bills coming from the legislature.
- Food distributions in Baltimore has been good and the people that really needed the food got it.
- Our marketing and seafood departments have been aggressive with seafood marketing focused on with oysters, catfish, perch and rockfish.
- Give thanks to Stone Slade, Mark Powell and Steve Connelly with spear heading the program.

Julie Oberg:

- The department submitted to the budget committee our strategic plan update on December 1st.
- This report outlines the initiative areas and progress to date.
- This year we had a bigger shift to make sure the ag industry remains viable to insure a stable food supply.
- The report outlines some of the COVID-19 relief measures that have been taken for agriculture, guidelines that the department has put out and information about worker safety.
- The report is available on our website under annual report for anyone that would like to see it.
- Working with Harry Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology to have a stake holder representative talk about priority and the plan and to move forward with the goals.
- Biggest focus has been on COVID-19 but this Friday afternoon we have another stake holders meeting.

Cassie Shirk:

- The virtual legislative session will begin Wednesday, January 13th and is scheduled for the traditional 90 days.
- This is subject to change as it did last year. For example: the general assemble adjourned 3 weeks early.
- Each chamber will be running things differently and subject to change.
 - The senate has less numbers so they can spread folks out and when they are sitting on the senate floor there will be plexiglass around them and in these little cubes.
 - In the house there are more members and will be split into three sections in three different areas.
 - Each chamber has said they will limit floor sessions to 2 hours based on discussions with health officials.
 - All bill hearings will be streamed and available on YouTube.
 - If you want to testify on bill this will be done via zoom and the number of witnesses will be limited.
 - Small number of people will be able to testify in person for or against bill.
 - House will come in and vote on procedural things the first week or two of session then go home and do virtual bill hearings and come back after a few weeks to vote in person.
- Will let the commission know of any important bills that affect agriculture.
- Governor did veto two ag related bills last year one was the ban on chlorpyrifos.
- The department has gone through the regulatory process for a chlorpyrifos phase out.
- The other bill was the Certified local farm enterprise program or the Food for Maryland Institutions Bill. We will be watching both of these to see if the legislature overrides these vetoes. Normally veto override occurs within the first few days of session.
- Will be sure to keep everyone updated and send things out.

Kevin Conroy:

- We are moving through database modernization progress and doing a few programs per year.
- This year turf and seed and state chemist section are being updated.
- All hemp applications will be on the one stop portal.
- State chemist section all applications and recording will hopefully be online next month.

- Trying to streamline and make everything easier for everyone.
- This will also allow our staff to do a lot more virtually in the field.
- AIR forms will be online next year. This year farmers will have the option to do it via paper or electronically.
- Moving into the 21st century and getting everything digital.
- The current hemp application for 2021 is on paper and also online it is up to the farmers discretion.
- We are starting with the hemp applications to beta test and will get back to the other forms such as licensing.

Hans Schmidt:

- RFP animal waste technology fund deadline end of month. Seems to be a lot of interest this year.
- The RFP is going to be dairy waste order, poultry processing waste, livestock fatality, so it is a broader scale to see where funding can be used to address these issues.
- Right now, we are in process of recruitment in soil conservation districts, advertising and interviews start end January early February working on 41 positions to fill.
- PMT advisory committee met last week, gave update on budgeting through animal waste technology, PMT field study work, Holly Porter gave an update on the Delmarva chicken association grant they were awarded to do an app for manure matching.
- Committee took info to organizations and will meet the 14th to discuss the next steps.

Steve Connelly:

- Farm service agencies dairy margin program for calendar year 2021 the deadline is December 11th.
- We have about 42% of the dairy operations in Maryland signed up so far covering about 51% of milk production.
- In calendar years 2019 and 2020 MDA paid for the premiums for the highest coverage level in tier one and farmers received about 5.6 million dollars in payments. Also looks like there will be a December 2020 payment so the number will increase a little.
- USDA corona virus assistance program 2 deadline December 11th and covers almost everything but contract poultry growers.
- CFAP 1 payments to Maryland producers is 23.9 million dollars.
- So far CFAP 2 is 39.2 million dollars for a total of 63 million dollars to Maryland farmers through CFAP 1 and CFAP 1.
- Contract grower support program 562 poultry growers have applied a little more than 2 million dollars.
- Still working on paper applications that have come in.
- CFAP 1 bonus payment program have 813 applications and 3-million-dollar payment there.
- 30 paper applications came in since December 1st that are being processed through fiscal department right now.
- Report from USDA economic research service that no farm income is going to be up 43% due to amount of government support payments.

Steve McHenry:

- Things are coming along with our new Small Acreage Program between 10 and 49 acers and have had two applications come in so far.
- Launched recently a Pandemic Recovery Program to help farmers that can't get credit from bank and we lowered interest rate in that program.

- Lowered interest rate in all programs due to COVID-19.
- Encourage to look at the loan program.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:10 am respectfully submitted by: Jessica O'Sullivan