

**Indiana State Board of Animal Health**  
**2020 Emergency Response Report**

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**Summary of Findings**

The Indiana State of Board of Animal Health (BOAH) suspension of operations or services during the pandemic were limited. Specifically, certain filing and inspection requirements were suspended for livestock dealers and individuals and entities engaged in the production of dairy products. Normal operations have resumed in both program areas.

BOAH personnel were heavily engaged in supporting a variety of stakeholders during the pandemic, including but not limited to the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), livestock farmers, veterinary clinics, and meat and dairy processing businesses. For example, BOAH worked closely with meat processing plants to accommodate their increased inspection needs. BOAH also partnered with Indiana Pork to secure a site and procure equipment in the event that herd reductions were necessary due to backups of animals at the farm level. Fortunately, Indiana has not experienced disruptions in market channels to the extent that activation of the site has been necessary.

Based on BOAH’s experience with COVID-19, the agency has outlined certain preparations to address future emergencies and recovery. These preparations include analyzing the parallels between the public health event and preparedness for animal health emergencies and evaluating the needs in the Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) program. The BOAH is not recommending legislation to repeal or modify any regulations or laws that were suspended due to COVID-19.

**I. Overview of which operations or services were reduced or suspended during the pandemic including whether the suspension or reduction was required by an executive order.**

**A. Indiana Livestock Dealer Law: Ind. Code § 15-17-14; 345 IAC 7-3.5-5.5**

1. A person must obtain a license under the livestock dealer law to act as a dealer in livestock in Indiana. A person holding a license shall submit to the state veterinarian a report of the licensee's livestock dealing. The report shall be filed with the state veterinarian not sooner than January 1<sup>st</sup> and not later than April 15<sup>th</sup> of each year and shall cover the previous year's business.
2. Executive Order 20-09 extended the expiration of any state-issued license or renewal cycle until Friday, May 22, 2020. Pursuant to this authority, BOAH extended the dealer license annual report/renewal date to May 22, 2020.
3. The United States Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) Fair Trade Practices Program extended their date for the Packers and Stockyards report to June 1<sup>st</sup>, and many livestock dealers and markets send in a copy of this report instead of the BOAH renewal form. Therefore, the ability to extend the Indiana deadline helped support these individuals and businesses by ensuring that they could continue to follow this practice.
4. BOAH suspended initiating any warning letters or enforcement actions until June 1<sup>st</sup> to align with the extended deadline.

**B. Indiana Dairy Products Law: Ind. Code § 15-18; 345 IAC 8**

1. The board shall conduct inspections of each dairy farm and transfer station at least one (1) time every six (6) months. Each milk plant and receiving station must be inspected at least one (1) time every three (3) months. The board shall adopt a rule and establish standards for Grade A milk and milk products that are the same as or at least as effective in protecting health as the national standards for Grade A milk adopted by the National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS) in accordance with the national conference's Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration.
2. Pursuant to the NCIMS Procedures Section IV, B, 5, the BOAH requested a stay of all routine milk safety inspections and duties as a result of the national COVID-19 health emergency.

BOAH submitted a request for exemption of the following FDA Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO) mandated frequencies for routine:

- a. Dairy farm inspections and sampling
- b. Dairy plant, single service facility, receiving station, transfer station, and wash station inspections, pasteurizer testing, and sampling

- c. Hauler/sampler inspections
  - d. Bulk milk tanker inspections
  - e. Raw milk receiver evaluations
  - f. Biennial Laboratory Evaluations and all associated activities
  - g. Grade A dairy plant and dairy farm surveys
  - h. Raw Milk and Finished Product sampling re-certifications
3. The FDA granted BOAH's request for a stay of inspection deadlines under the PMO. The PMO mandated frequencies for these activities were suspended for a period of 52 days commencing on April 9, 2020 and continuing through May 31, 2020. All routine inspections were suspended during this timeframe. BOAH continued to perform certain milk safety activities during this period.
  4. Routine functions resumed on June 1<sup>st</sup> and the BOAH will complete all work on the normal scheduled frequency. Because of BOAH's work ahead practice, no farm inspections or surveys went past their due date.

## **II. Overview of preparations to address future emergencies and recovery based on the agencies experience with COVID-19.**

### **A. Overview of BOAH activities during COVID-19**

1. BOAH remotely staffed the State of Indiana's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), where BOAH serves as the lead agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources. In addition, BOAH provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from the agency stockpile at the request of the state EOC to be distributed to various hospitals, fire departments, emergency management agencies (EMAs), and the IEDC/ISDH warehouse.
2. BOAH's Public Information Officer provided significant leadership in the EOC's Joint Information Center (JIC) for several weeks.
3. BOAH, jointly with the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), hosted the first agriculture sector COVID-19 call on March 27<sup>th</sup>. This call was held each Friday from March 27<sup>th</sup> through June 26<sup>th</sup>.
4. BOAH became heavily engaged in the issues associated with meat and poultry processing plants in partnership with ISDH and Local Health Departments (LHDs). Dozens of phone calls, webinars and Zoom meetings were held between meat/poultry processing plants, BOAH and the public health community to determine the best course for protecting employee health while keeping critical infrastructure businesses open.
5. Because of plant closures in Indiana and throughout the Midwest, significant backups of animals at the farm level were taking place. These farm-level backups were especially acute in Minnesota and Iowa. BOAH, with significant engagement of IN Pork, launched

plans to address the potential for herd reductions. The equipment used in the Accelerated Pseudorabies Eradication Program (APEP) twenty years ago was found, purchased by IN Pork, refurbished and is now available for use. A central location was identified and a lease was established for the site. Fortunately, the site has not been needed to address the backlog, but it is expected to continue through the remainder of the calendar year.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the demand for BOAH’s Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) services. The increased demand is due to a variety of factors, such as a shortage of product at large retailers and a shift in the marketplace from restaurant to retail sales. Specifically, below are the harvest statistics for the past 90 days:

**April 1 through June 30, 2019 v. 2020 Inspected Head Count**

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Beef	2,535	3,891	53%
Swine	4,625	7,075	53%

The Inspection Team has done a remarkable job addressing the demand for inspection services. Meat plant operators have taken additional animals, shifted inspection days, and worked additional days to address the backlog. BOAH is pleased to have been able to support these local businesses.

7. BOAH’s dairy division, under established protocols, approved extended run trials for a large dairy processing plant. This approval allowed the plant to run equipment for 24 hours continually to prevent large amounts of milk being dumped.
8. Beginning in June 2019, the State Veterinarians of the 15 most populous pork states met weekly by phone to prepare for African Swine Fever (ASF). Two face-to-face meetings of the Working Group were held in Indianapolis (August 2019) and Minneapolis (February 2020). These calls became the foundation for the COVID-19 State-Federal-Industry calls that were held each weekday morning from April 21<sup>st</sup> through May 22<sup>nd</sup>. The calls are now hosted weekly. The participants include State Veterinarians of the 15 states plus USDA’s Veterinary Services (VS), Wildlife Services (WS) and Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS), representatives of National Pork Board, National Pork Producers Council, American Association of Swine Veterinarians, Swine Health Information Center, North American Meat Institute, North American Renderers Association, and 15 state pork association executives. These calls have been very productive and have provided a forum for discussion.
9. BOAH’s Director of Companion Animal Programs has provided guidance to veterinarians, shelters, and the general public in the following areas:
  - a. Risk to staff when treating or accepting pets from COVID-19 positive homes;
  - b. When animal testing for COVID-19 is appropriate;
  - c. Susceptibility of animals of COVID-19.

## **B. Preparations and Recovery**

1. The response to COVID-19 is being carefully evaluated. The parallels between the public health event and preparedness for animal health emergencies are being analyzed to determine how to better prepare for a foreign animal disease (FAD). Many of the gaps that were identified through earlier planning and exercises were fully realized during the pandemic response. For example, the loss of packing plant capacity produced backups at the farm level that generated the need for depopulation and disposal in some states. Although the comparison to a FAD will only go so far, there are several lessons that will serve us well for future planning.
2. Fortunately, in collaboration with Indiana Pork, BOAH had been actively engaged with the pork industry through preparedness planning for ASF prior to the pandemic. The information provided to producers, veterinarians, and extension personnel through ASF meetings, webinars and exercises was very beneficial during the pandemic.
3. BOAH is carefully evaluating the needs in the Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) program. The demand for inspection services has never been higher. Plants are requesting additional inspection hours, exempt plants are applying for official inspected status and new plants are under construction and in the planning stages. Additionally, more plants are requesting to become approved for the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program.
4. BOAH has once again learned from the pandemic experience that it can remain open and continue to provide a quality service during challenging times. The new normal will be assessed to continue to find better ways to serve our citizens.

## **III. Recommendations, if any, for legislation that may be needed to help ensure the agency is prepared to address future emergencies.**

State law currently authorizes the BOAH to cooperate and coordinate with local, state, and federal emergency management agencies to plan and implement emergency disaster plans and programs as the plans and programs relate to animals in Indiana. IC 15-17-3-13(29). During the COVID-19 pandemic, this authority allowed the BOAH to take the above-described actions to assist in the implementation of emergency plans under a Governor's Emergency Declaration. At this time, the BOAH does not have any recommendations for legislation to ensure the agency is prepared to address future emergencies.

## **IV. Recommendations, if any, for legislation to permanently repeal or modify any regulations or laws that were or are partially or fully suspended due to COVID-19.**

As described above, the BOAH suspended laws and rules under both the Livestock Dealer and Dairy Products law in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the position of the BOAH that both of these laws play a critical role in protecting animal health and the public health and welfare of the citizens of Indiana. The BOAH is not currently recommending the repeal or modification of these laws.