

MINUTES OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Garrett Love at 8:35am on Monday, February 02, 2015, 159-S of the Capitol.

All members were present

Committee staff present:

Heather O'Hara, Legislative Research Department
Sara Leavitt, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant
Mark Savoy, Legislative Research Department
Natalie Scott, Office of Revisor of Statutes
David Wiese, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Dr. William Brown, Animal Health Commissioner, Kansas Department of Agriculture
Travis Lowe, Legislative Liaison, Kansas Cervid Breeders Association

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Hearing and possible action on:

After calling the meeting to order, Chairperson Love welcomed Senator Ostmeyer back, and called for bill introductions. There being none, Chairperson Love opened the hearing on **SB46 - Identification of domesticated deer and other cervid species.** He gave the floor to Natalie Scott, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, who gave a memorandum on the bill. Current law states that all domesticated deer must be permanently identified. SB 46 amends the law to state that animals arriving at or leaving a premise for any reason other than moving to a registered slaughter facility must be identified as prescribed by the commissioner of animal health. ([Attachment 1](#))

Conferee Dr. William Brown, Animal Health Commissioner in the Kansas Department of Agriculture, testified as a proponent of the bill. He stated that **SB46** makes the law on cervid identification more simple and straightforward as well as more practical. The language allows for alignment with the USDA federal rule that was implemented in February 2013 as well as alignment with regulations on other species, such as cattle. ([Attachment 2](#))

Conferee Travis Lowe of the Kansas Cervid Breeder Association also testified as a proponent of the bill. He gave some background information on the industry. The cervid family includes deer, elk, and moose. Eight cervid species are raised in Kansas, with elk being the most common. This is a non-traditional, alternative livestock industry. Mr. Lowe stated that his family has been raising elk outside of Garnett since 1985, and that **SB46** provides more clarity and mirrors the same requirements that were approved last August in administrative regulation. It is on par with other industries in the state. Kansas has some of the best regulations for the cervid industry and is seen as an industry leader, in part due to the relationship with the Senate Agriculture committee. ([Attachment 3](#))

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At the close of testimony, Chairperson Love opened the floor for questions to Dr. Brown and Mr. Lowe from committee members.

Senator Powell asked Mr. Lowe for clarification on the animals affected by this bill. Mr. Lowe responded that it affects all cervids, not just deer.

Senator Powell continued, asking whether cervid animals are sold for meat, and what other markets there are for cervid products. Mr. Lowe responded that there are several markets, and meat is a big one. Animals are sold for breeding stock, and antlers are sold for things such as art and dog chews. The velvet is sold to make medicines domestically and in the far east, such as arthritis pills and aphrodisiacs. The meat is often sold at local farmers' markets and on the internet.

Vice Chair Kerschen asked Mr. Lowe when an identification chip is normally applied on his premises. Mr. Lowe responded that on his farm, they try to tag animals soon after birth. The statute is on change of ownership, and the Department of Agriculture provides a movement permit noting information such as animal tag numbers and to what facility they are being moved. All facilities in the state must be registered with the Department.

Senator Hawk wondered whether domesticated deer are any different than wild deer, and whether they ever escape and breed with wild deer. Mr. Lowe replied that a domesticated deer is defined as legally obtained - they can't be taken from the wild but must be obtained from another producer. Just like with any other animal industry ranchers track lineages, and in many cases they register DNA and artificially inseminate does. If an animal escapes, owners have 48 hours to re-capture it. If not, the Department has the authority to put it down. White-tailed deer could breed with wild white-tailed deer, but most other species raised in Kansas would not be able to do so as they do not have wild counterparts native to Kansas.

Senator Hawk also asked how animals are identified visually if they have a micro-chip implanted. Mr. Lowe responded that it is not common to implant micro-chips. Rather, the USDA provides a metal ear tag and it is common to use cattle tags.

Senator Ostmeyer noted that this is a four billion dollar industry and there are 80 ranches in the state. The Senator spoke of a constituent that raised elk in Thomas county, though there are more ranches in the eastern half of the state, saying that the ranch has been used as a zoo for school children to visit. Mr. Lowe noted that different kinds of deer have different markings which children like to see, and there are even reindeer farms in the state which are popular places to visit around Christmas.

Senator Holmes asked if anyone in Kansas raises moose. Mr. Lowe responded that no, they do not, and actually there are not a lot of moose raised in the entire United States. It is just not a great climate for moose in Kansas. In fact, several Departments of Natural Resources have looked at introducing moose, but all decided they would not survive that well.

Unless specifically noted, the individual remarks recorded herein have not been transcribed verbatim. Individual remarks as reported herein have not been submitted to the individuals appearing before the committee for editing or corrections.

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Senator Abrams wondered why more people use ear tags than micro-chips. Mr. Lowe responded that ear tags are easy to see from a distance and make it easier to monitor animals. The Department is promoting the RFID tags (micro-chips), but the wands to read the chips are expensive, and some ranchers are old-fashioned and prefer ear tags. Senator Abrams noted that ear tags can fall out, which Mr. Lowe agreed can be a problem.

Senator Knox noted that the language about what is considered official identification has been deleted, so then how is that identification defined? Mr. Lowe responded that it is quoted from the statute.

There being no further questions, Chairperson Love closed the hearing on **SB46** and called for final action.

Senator Powell moved to recommend **SB46 - Identification of domesticated deer and other cervid species** favorably for passage. The motion was seconded by Senator Abrams. The motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55am.