

Kansas Veterinary Medical Examiners Efficiencies Gained by Merging with KDA

It has been approximately 9 months since the merger and transition of the Kansas Veterinary Medical Examiners (KVME) into the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), Division of Animal Health (DAH). During this time the operational efficiencies gained by the KVME have been observed in several areas, including legal, communications, information technology (IT), human resources, legislative affairs and fiscal management.

The KDA legal team has been able to streamline the process and procedure related to complaint cases. There are ongoing discussions to further change and streamline management of pending and new cases brought before the board.

The KDA communications team has worked with KVME to provide timely press releases, meeting notifications to comply with KOMA notifications, editing public documents, along with major upgrades to their website to communicate more timely to the public.

The KDA IT group works with the KVME office staff to ensure hardware is working and interfacing seamlessly, addressing any IT questions and concerns that arise, and constantly monitoring other ways to gain efficiencies.

KDA human resources has provided support for all traditional human resource roles, including services such as benefit consultation and payroll management.

The KDA legislative affairs team was able to help in promulgating a KVME legislative initiative and moving it through legislative channels. It allows board staff to focus on their day-to-day operations without consuming their time to deal with issues relative to legislation.

The KDA fiscal services program provides assistance in budget management, bill payment, fee management and other traditional fiscal work. Despite these efficiencies in operations, the budget for KVME has increased substantially. While the streamlining of processes and procedures for budget analysis and handling budget issues has been evident, the budget, despite a carryover of \$321K for FY15 goes into the red for FY17 due to salary enhancements of 43%, 40%, 18%, and 6% for the four KVME employees. The Governor's Task Force who worked out the details of the merger agreed that staff salary increases were needed, but that they should be commensurate with other DAH veterinary salaries. In two cases, the final salary increases approved by the Governor's office are above commensurate salaries in the agency and exceed the over \$40,000 of estimated annual savings from efficiencies gained in operations. Considerable time and effort has been made to reduce planned expenditures to

balance their budget but compensation for the effects of the salary enhancements approved by the KVME board have not yet been fully addressed. The animal health commissioner and agency secretary met with the KVME Board on April 10 and intends to meet with them again in June. The agency has identified that due to the operational efficiencies gained and the services provided by existing administrative units that the executive director position does not need to be a full-time position. Making this position part-time or absorbing it into the work of animal health commissioner or deputy commissioner could resolve the majority of the budget shortfall. The Board may consider this option in June but is concerned about making this position part-time if the Board becomes independent again in July 2017 when the current legislation creating the merger sunsets.