

**Testimony in Support of SB 39
to the House Committee on Agriculture
by Dr. Andy Hawkins, Assistant Animal Health Commissioner
Kansas Department of Agriculture
February 18, 2021**

Good afternoon Chairman Rahjes and members of the committee. I am Dr. Andy Hawkins and I serve as Assistant Animal Health Commissioner for the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA). Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 39.

Senate Bill 39 addresses two minor issues in our current animal health statutes: 1) license, permit, and registration renewal deadlines; and 2) Official Calhoun Vaccination (OCV) tags.

First, Senate Bill 39 would change the license, permit and registration renewal deadlines from June 30 to September 30 for most large animal programs administered by KDA including feedlot licenses, public livestock markets, etc. Due to an upgrade to an online renewal system and several budget provisos to allow the use of a September 30 deadline, KDA has been using the September 30 renewal deadline for the past several years with no complaints or issues. Senate Bill 39 would also align the large animal programs with all deadlines associated with the Animal Facilities Inspection Program, which were changed to September 30 in 2018.

Second, Senate Bill 39 addresses the cost of OCV tags. OCV tags are a form of official identification under state and federal law applied by a licensed accredited veterinarian at the time of vaccination for brucellosis signifying that a heifer has been vaccinated. These tags are considered accountable property and are only available directly to licensed accredited veterinarians from either the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or KDA.

There are two forms of OCV tags: metal orange OCV clip tags and orange OCV RFID button tags. USDA has historically supplied metal OCV tags free of charge. To promote the updated technology, KDA took the initiative a few years ago to make RFID tags available for a charge directly associated with the actual cost of providing the tag. When this project began, KDA was able to secure USDA Cooperative Agreement funding that provided an initial supply of RFID tags at no cost to veterinarians. Once funding ceased, KDA maintained its commitment to animal disease traceability efforts by supplying RFID tags for purchase.

KDA has worked closely with tag distributors to secure the lowest price point for RFID OCV tags. The actual cost associated with an RFID button tag averages \$1.41. Per current statute, the cost for OCV tags shall not exceed \$0.25 which would require KDA to distribute RFID tags at a loss. Thus, Senate Bill 39 addresses the technology advancement of RFID tags and their associated cost, versus the basic metal tags and their potential perceived cost when the original statute was enacted.

During the past 10 months since this bill was originally presented, USDA identified funding to provide 8 million RFID tags that were distributed to all cattle-producing states based on replacement heifer inventory numbers. This was a onetime program that yielded approximately 99,000 OCV RFID tags to distribute to Kansas accredited veterinarians during the 2020 calendar year with a similar amount anticipated during 2021. These tags were utilized in lieu of metal clip tags. Once the free RFID USDA tag program is no longer in place, we are optimistic that the exposure to the new RFID technology afforded by this program will result in more veterinarians and producers proactively requesting RFID OCV technology as opposed to returning to free metal OCV tags. Until all free RFID OCV tags are distributed to Kansas veterinarians per USDA allocation, KDA will continue to assist veterinarians in Kansas to procure the free RFID OCV tags first.

Last session, an identical version of this bill passed the House 122-0 and was passed favorably by this committee before the session was shortened.

In summary, Senate Bill 39 sets September 30 as the license, permit, and registration renewal deadline for KDA's large animal programs and provides KDA the ability to recover the actual cost associated with providing RFID tags for OCV use as we continue promoting and enhancing animal disease traceability within the state of Kansas and beyond.