

[Companion Animal Board Bill \(SF73\)](#) and ([HF208](#)) Talking Points

The following are concerns and questions that the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) raises regarding the Companion Animal Board (CAB) bill currently in the Minnesota legislature. In short, this legislation is not needed and will do more harm than good for the domestic animals in our state. Join us in opposing this bill.

1. A major concern that we and other opponents have about this bill is that its definition of “Companion Animals” goes beyond dogs and cats. It includes “any animal owned, possessed by, cared for, or controlled by a person for the present or future enjoyment of that person or another as a pet or companion, or any stray pet or stray companion animal.” (see [MN Stat. 343.20\(6\)](#)) This bill could pertain to literally any species of animal.
2. The mission of the BAH is “to protect the health of the state’s domestic animals through education and cooperation with veterinarians, producers, owners and communities.” The Board has done an outstanding job of carrying out this mission for over 100 years.
3. This bill makes an incorrect assumption that the Board of Animal Health (BAH) is ineffective in dealing with small animal disease and welfare issues, and addresses only livestock disease issues. BAH has effectively managed the health and well-being of commercial dogs and cats in MN through inspections of pet breeders and recently has created a new Breeder Excellence Program to recognize quality breeders in Minnesota.
4. BAH manages reportable diseases of dogs and cats such as *Brucella canis* and tularemia. The Board administers companion animal health certificates, and has the authority to deny entry of certain animals or disease conditions into the state. The Board has been protecting the health and welfare of companion animals in the state for over 100 years.
5. The Board of Animal Health already has a long and established working relationship with the faculty and expertise available at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine and its Veterinary Medical Center, and the UMN Veterinary Diagnostic Lab and staff.
6. The Board of Animal Health also has established working relationships with the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, as well as many other state and federal agencies. In addition, it has long-standing relationships with other animal and livestock groups.
7. The Board of Animal Health is effectively carrying out its mission to protect the health and welfare of ALL domestic animals in Minnesota. The state needs a strong and functioning BAH. This bill would strip the board of the authorities and funding needed to maintain its mission.
8. This latter point is of particular significance following the re-entry of African swine fever virus (ASFV) into the western hemisphere (Hispaniola) for the first time in the last 40 years. ASFV is a highly fatal disease of swine with mortality rates exceeding 95% in clinical cases. The entry of this virus into the US would immediately stop the export of pork depressing the price of pork, beef, and poultry, as well as depress grain exports abroad. Collectively, this is estimated to cost US agriculture \$16.5B during the first year. This bill would reduce the effectiveness of the MNBAH and provide this virus a potentially greater opportunity to enter the United States and devastate our agricultural sector. We need a very strong and functioning BAH; therefore, this bill should be defeated and should not be allowed to re-emerge.

9. Instead of helping companion animals, the CAB bill will disrupt an effective and efficient method for dealing with companion animal disease and welfare concerns. It adds another layer of bureaucracy and confusion to a system that is currently working well.
10. Animal Folks and other prominent animal welfare individuals and organizations (who support CAB) were part of the original supporters of the commercial cat and dog breeder legislation that was implemented in 2015. In other words, they helped craft the original breeder bill that they now want to dismantle or take over.
11. Minnesota has animal welfare laws and enforcement entities in this state that are more than adequate to address any concerns intended to be addressed by CAB. The authority for enforcing these statutes already lies with the Minnesota Federated Humane Societies that is charged with investigating animal welfare issues in the state ([MN Stat.343.22](#)).
12. Despite its stated desire to manage companion animal health and welfare issues, the CAB's 13 member governing structure only has 2 member veterinarians with the rest being primarily community members. This compares to the Board of Animal Health with over 20 veterinarians on staff, field reps, and in leadership roles.
13. The CAB proposal intends to diminish the stature of BAH as a leading animal health protection and welfare entity in this state. Although promoters of the bill claim no stake on BAH financial resources, it is impossible that this duplicative regulatory board would not divert BAH funds.
14. The funding mechanism and distribution of funds being proposed in the bill is also extremely questionable and unusual for a newly created state agency. The bill states that the CAB can accept monies from anywhere, including special interest groups or entities of interest to the members of the CAB Board itself. The CAB would also have the authority to distribute funding to any entity, including entities of interest to the members of the CAB Board itself. This is a direct conflict of interest and should not be allowed.
15. The CAB bill includes rule-making authority. With the broad scope definition of a "companion animal" and far-reaching aspects of the language, this new board would be able to make rules that may affect our state's poultry flocks and livestock herds. Rather than relying on the owner or manager of animals, the livestock and poultry industry may be subject to new additional rules and regulations.
16. The CAB proponents have failed to outline what is not being properly handled through the Board of Animal Health or elsewhere in properly addressing state animal humane issues, breeder operation issues, etc. Consequently, we must assume that their primary aim is to shut down many of the breeder operations in this state.
17. The CAB concept cannot be found in other states except for a program, located on the east coast that is run through the state's [Health and Social Services Department](#).
18. Lastly, we plead with state legislators, state leaders and others to further question the intent and motives of those behind this legislation. Once you do you will understand this bill is designed to allow special interest groups to control funding streams and resources for their own purposes.

Please contact members of our task force or the MVMA, 651-645-7533, if you have any questions regarding our position.