

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)  
ANIMAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES (AHFSS)  
MEAT, POULTRY AND EGG SAFETY BRANCH (MPES)  
SHELL EGG ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)  
MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 26, 2025**

California Department of Food and Agriculture  
1220 N Street, Auditorium  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Item  
No.

**(1) ROLL CALL**

Mr. Michael Gemperle, Chair, called the SEAC meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Roll call was taken; a quorum was established at 9:12 a.m.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDEES:**

Michael Gemperle, Chair - *remote*  
Andrew Demler, Vice Chair - *remote*  
David Will, Chino Valley Ranchers - *remote*  
Steve Mahrt, Petaluma Farms - *remote*  
Glenn Hickman, Hickman Family Farms - *remote*  
Michael Sencer, Hidden Villa Ranch – *remote*  
Lupe Gutierrez, NuCal Foods – *remote*  
Cathy Roache, CACASA Representative - *remote*  
Frank Hilliker, Alternate - *remote*

**ABSENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Kaliko Orian, Kaliko Farms  
John Bedell, Alternate  
Sam Kang, Public Member

**INTERESTED PARTIES:**

Debbie Murdock, Pacific Egg and Poultry Association (PEPA), Non-Voting – *remote*

**CDFA:**

Dr. Fernando Umayam	Andrew Halbert
Michael Abbott	Casey Luna
Dr. Elizabeth Cox	Sonia Brown
Lisa Quiroz	Kim Ellis
Paul Roos	Aaron Neville
Joanne Ortiz	Joanne Wong
Penny Arana	Rachel Andrade
Sedona Quiroz-Lopez	

(2) **BORDER STATIONS UPDATE**

Egg Safety and Quality Management (ESQM) staff presented on Border Patrol Stations (BPS) statistics for truck loads, cases and assessments up to July 2025. Comparisons were given on 2024 versus 2025 holds, including “Be On the Look Out” (BOLO) shipments and “Not for California” shipments. ESQM staff will be visiting Blythe and Needles border stations to observe processes and will report back to SEAC.

The Board inquired about the low assessments figure for March 2025. Staff will investigate cause for reduced amounts and issue an updated report if needed.

(3) **BORDER STATION INSPECTION FORMS**

ESQM staff met with BPS and Animal Care Program (ACP) to evaluate potential cost savings or efficiency of integrating Shell Egg Food Safety (SEFS) and Proposition 12 (Prop 12) forms for border station inspections. An in-depth analysis revealed that integrating both programs would not yield any cost savings and would potentially result in increased labor to retrain BPS staff and potential increases in both enforcement errors and costs to ESQM due to erroneous holds. ESQM does not recommend integrating the forms at this time.

(4) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Vote to approve meeting minutes from April 23, 2025.

**Motion #1:** Mr. Glenn Hickman made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Mike Sencer seconded the motion. All members agreed with no abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.

(5) **PROGRAM UPDATES**

ESQM has applied for a multi-year Food and Drug Administration (FDA) grant for \$47,000 annually. ESQM staff have been conducting outreach and education to County staff. Napa County will enter into a retail contract with ESQM that will start in December 2025.

(6) **BRANCH UPDATES**

MPES has advertised two Senior Environmental Scientist (SES) positions, one of which for the Meat, Poultry and Rendering (MPR) program has been filled; currently advertising another SES position for the pet food program. The California Dairy Research Foundation (CDRF) agreement continues to develop best carcass management practices for poultry and livestock in the event of rendering disruptions.

(7) **DIVISION UPDATES**

The Animal Health Branch (AHB) continues to respond to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). One detection was found in quail at a Los Angeles County poultry feed store; the live bird market system was tested and found negative. Tracing and epidemiological investigation are ongoing. AHB is exploring disposal options for Los Angeles (L.A.) County due to limited landfill access, including commercial premises composting.

AHB developed a landfill disposal guidance document to assist producers in using local landfills for carcass disposal during HPAI and other outbreak events, as well as HPAI

compost guidelines summarizing the USDA process for composting poultry carcasses. AHB is pursuing funding to explore alternative emergency disposal technologies, such as alkaline hydrolysis, mobile incinerators and poultry dehydrators. Lastly, AHB is working on preparedness initiatives related to the threat of New World Screwworm from Mexico.

The Board inquired about the source of the L.A. County detection. Both poultry and dairy variants of HPAI (referred to as H5N1) are circulating in wildlife and pose a year-round risk due to migration. There are redetections in Central Valley and Southern California dairies; dairies in the northern part of the state (north of Highway 80) remain free of disease at this time. AHB continues to conduct statewide surveillance, testing and monitoring of dairies.

National interest in a dairy vaccine is still being discussed, as well as whole genome sequencing. Since this is a novel introduction of avian disease in cattle, research is being conducted regarding immunity and reinfection rates. Compared to last year, the viral load appears to be lower in some places, though it varies due to individual business practices and external variables. All positive dairies are placed under quarantine and the movement of cattle is regulated to prevent viral shedding.

The Board inquired into the process of poultry farm notification in the event of a nearby dairy positive. Due to limited dairy activity in certain Counties, data on the location of positive dairy cases are masked for proprietary safety. AHB District Office notifies poultry producers if there is an elevated risk in their area. Staff encourages industry to maintain regular communication with CDFA for guidance on risk-based decisions. The Board proposed approaching the dairy industry to inquire if they would permit public identification of infected premises, as some other states have done; staff will discuss with management to evaluate if the industry would be amenable to sharing that data publicly. AHFSS continues to advertise and hire to fill vacancies and improve field response.

**(8) PROPOSITION 12 ADVISORY BOARD**

The Board discussed a proposal to establish an advisory board for Proposition 12. Staff reiterated that a legislative proposal for a new advisory board would need to be pushed by industry.

The Board reiterated concern for the Prop 12 auditing schedule, which mandates that producers be audited every 12 months. They noted that there is a lapse in compliance between a producer depopulating their flocks and repopulating; producers cannot be audited until they repopulate and are considered Prop 12 noncompliant from the first day of repopulation. ACP will discuss future Prop 12 regulatory amendment package(s) with interested parties to create pathways for those circumstances, such as a provisional certification; industry is encouraged to voice concerns at that time.

The Board asked about the future Prop 12 fee structure. ACP has been tasked with developing a fee structure to partially fund Prop 12 budget. This fee would require a legislative proposal and staff are having ongoing discussions with interested parties, taking into consideration that industry has already invested financially in compliance initiatives. Staff encouraged interested parties to communicate their ideas on a fee strategy to CDFA.

(9) **CDFA AUDIT DISCUSSION**

The Board discussed Prop 12 and SEFS inspection frequencies. SEFS inspections and audits are risk-based with the frequency determined by audit scores; operations with lowest risk scores can have up to 3 years between audits, whereas operations with higher risk scores could be audited every 6 months, until the risk level lowers. Staff clarified this is separate from the FDA audits, which CDFA conducts on FDA's behalf.

The Board asked about the viability of virtual audits in light of HPAI risk. Staff explained that connectivity in barns is the limiting factor; virtual audits must have real-time streaming video feed to verify that Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) prevention standards are being met.

The Board inquired about the possibility of performing simultaneous audits on multiple farm premises, reviewing the paperwork of multiple farms at once. Staff explained that simultaneous paperwork review is possible, but that audits are conducted on the original timeline. If a business owner wants to reset all their farms to the same audit schedule, they must approve CDFA to visit multiple farms in person within a 72-hour window.

The Board proposed forming a subcommittee to continue discussion of audits and find solutions to reduce staff labor and time, increase efficiency of audits and reduce risk of HPAI transmission.

**Motion #2:** Mr. David Will motioned to form a subcommittee. Mr. Steve Mahrt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.  
Subcommittee members: David Will; Steve Mahrt; Michael Gemperle; Debbie Murdock

- To invite - Oscar Garrison (United Egg Producers)

(10) **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments.

(11) **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Agenda Items:

- HPAI Update
- Audit Subcommittee Update

(12) **UPCOMING SEAC MEETING DATES**

The next Shell Egg Advisory Committee Meeting will be held on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

(13) **ADJOURN**

**Motion #3:** Ms. Lupe Gutierrez motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Will seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Sedona Quiroz-Lopez