

**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)
AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 21, 2025**

California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street, Room 333
Sacramento, CA 95814

Item

No.

(1) ROLL CALL

Mr. Michael Gemperle, Chair, called the SEAC meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDEES:

Michael Gemperle, Chair - *remote*

David Will, Chino Valley Ranchers - *remote*

Steve Mahrt, Petaluma Farms - *remote*

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

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Dr. Larry Sadler (United Egg Producers)

CDFA:

Michael Abbott

Penny Arana

Kim Ellis

Sedona Quiroz-Lopez

(2) AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE

The Board discussed Proposition 12 (Prop 12) and Shell Egg Food Safety (SEFS) inspection frequencies. SEFS inspections and audits are performed on a risk-based schedule, but other audits are not coordinated on the same schedule, resulting in the same premises being inspected multiple times per year. The Board asked about the viability of virtual audits or coordination of multiple CDFA audits into a single visit.

Board members noted that the barn structures are built to last for upwards of 15 years and are not typically subject to change, calling into question the necessity of annual audits on buildings that remain the same year to year. The Board expressed concern that certain auditing standards, such as allowing auditors to enter multiple barns in a single day, require them to compromise their biosecurity protocols. Further, as different audits collect some of the same data, Board members are motivated to reduce a perceived redundancy of State time and labor.

The Board discussed the possibility of having random sample inspections of barns on a

producer's premises, rather than allowing entry into all the barns at once; SEFS auditors already perform random sampling in this manner. They also noted that for cage-free barns, the auditor is not counting birds individually and therefore could perform a desk audit instead of entering the barn.

Comparisons were drawn between SEFS, Prop 12 and United Egg Producer (UEP) audits. While SEFS audits are risk-based, UEP audits are standardized due to egg producers expressing a preference for equality across the industry. Prop 12 regulations currently require annual in-person audits, whereas SEFS allow for more flexible, risk-based inspections. For example, if a farm perfectly meets SEFS criteria during an in-person audit, their next audit can be a desk audit scheduled for two to three years later. If a farm is in a designated high-risk biosecurity area, CDFA can adapt and allow for a virtual audit with intentions of an in-person follow-up once the risk is reduced. As discussed in prior meetings with Animal Care Program manager Dr. Elizabeth Cox, an amendment to the Prop 12 annual inspection schedules for egg layers would need to be proposed as a regulatory change by industry.

The Board asked when CDFA receives the annual audit list from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Staff said they receive the list in October, this then allows them to project the scheduling the inspections for the year. A farm on the FDA list may have just received an SEFS audit and would still need to complete an FDA audit, regardless. To make the best use of the in-person audits, CDFA staff can conduct an SEFS inspection at the same time as the FDA audit, resetting the time between the farm's next SEFS inspection. Staff also clarified that a producer could sync the auditing schedule for all their farms if they desire and if all farms are assessed at the same risk level; any higher-risk premises may be audited on a more frequent basis, as needed.

The Board inquired about National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) audit frequency; staff confirmed it is every other year. Board members may consult with outside agencies for clarity on NPIP audits and whether their requirements can be met during other audits such as SEFS.

Regarding overlap of data for various audits, the Board asked if that data (number of cages, sizes, etc.) can be shared in a centrally accessible location, so that auditors can avoid checking the same data. UEP provides their certification data on an online portal, however most agencies do not provide that data publicly due to industry privacy concerns. The Board proposed that a nationwide database could be secured using a blockchain security network, which would also allow tracking across multiple egg handlers and states. The proposed database would include data on the raw output of eggs from a farm, the number of layers or cages, certifications, attributes like "cage-free," and so on. The Board expressed interest in revisiting this concept in future audit subcommittee meetings.

(3) PUBLIC COMMENTS
No public comments.

(4) **UPCOMING SEAC MEETING DATES**

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

(5) **ADJOURN**

Motion #1: Mr. David Will motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Steve Mahrt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Sedona Quiroz-Lopez