

April 27, 2009

Joint Finance Committee Begins Voting on Budget Provisions

By Jordan Lamb

The Joint Committee on Finance has started voting on the provisions contained in Governor Doyle's biennial budget bill. The Committee will spend the next four to six weeks debating, accepting, rejecting and amending the provisions proposed by the Governor in his budget bill.

One of the more important issues for farmers that was contained in the Governor's budget proposal was the proposed changes to eminent domain (condemnation) proceedings by the Department of Transportation, which would have limited landowners' appeal right and capped their attorneys' fees in these real estate condemnation proceedings. However, this issue was removed by the Joint Committee on Finance as a non-fiscal policy item. Accordingly, it is no longer part of the budget bill. However, it is expected that these proposed changes to eminent domain laws will re-surface again in stand alone legislation later this year.

The proposed DATCP "slaughter fee," which by establishes a per animal slaughter fee on cattle, hogs and poultry slaughtered in Wisconsin, is being hotly debated by livestock groups and other agricultural industries who are opposing the inclusion of the fee in the budget bill. The proposed is one cent for poultry, ten cents for calves, and 14 cents for older cattle and for swine and would be used to fund additional state meat plant inspectors and animal health positions. The Joint Committee on Finance will review this fee when they debate the DATCP budget provisions later this month.

UPDATE: New FDA "Feed Ban" Rule

By Jordan Lamb

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has a new rule that will soon prohibit using any parts of carcasses from cattle that are 30 months or older in animal or pet feed, *unless* the brains and spinal cords have been removed. The goal of this rule is to reduce the threat of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) by keeping these prohibited proteins out of animal feed. The new rule was set to become effective on April 27, 2009, but now may be extended an additional 60 days.

Nonetheless, farmers may already be noticing the effects of this new rule. Because the rule prohibits carcasses of cattle from being rendered or used for pet food unless (a) the brain and spinal cord have been removed, or (b) the animal can be shown to be 30 months or younger, dead animal haulers may be reluctant to pick up downer cattle carcasses except at a very high cost.

At the April 2009 DATCP Board meeting, DATCP staff recommended composting, burial, incineration and landfilling as alternatives to rendering. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these alternatives. DATCP is in the process of posting materials on their website with more information. Currently, Clark County's UW-Extension website offers a factsheet on composting animals, which is available online at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/clark/ag/documents/CompostingFactsheet.PDF>.

CAUTION: Spraying Water Over Highways Poses Risks to Motorists

By Jordan Lamb

Despite the long winter, the summer growing season is almost upon us and, along with it, will come the need to use irrigation equipment. The WCA would like to remind farmers that water spraying from irrigation systems over roadways could occasionally pose a challenge for passing motorists. Accordingly, we ask that farmers take every precaution to prevent irrigation water oversprays onto highways and roadways.

This issue has received heightened scrutiny in the past several months, as legislation is currently pending in the Wisconsin State Legislature, which would prohibit and penalize water oversprays onto roads. Assembly Bill 133, authored by Representative Marlin Schneider (D-Wisconsin Rapids), prohibits a person who owns or occupies land adjoining a highway from causing water to spray more than two feet onto the roadway or the highway. A person who violates this prohibition must forfeit \$10 for the first offense, \$100 for the second offense, and \$1,000 for the third and each subsequent offense.

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Jordan Lamb is a partner at DeWitt Ross & Stevens' Capitol Square office in Madison. Jordan's law practice focuses on government relations and administrative law. She concentrates on legislative drafting, legislative research, and facilitating communication between clients and state government including administrative agencies and the State Legislature. Ms. Lamb also offers litigation support for administrative law issues. Jordan can be contacted at 608-252-9358 or at jkl@dewittross.com. For more information about DeWitt Ross & Stevens, go to www.dewittross.com.



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Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin
N5776 County Road D, Suite 1
Fond du Lac, WI 54937
Phone: 800-947-7379
mail@pdpw.org
www.pdpw.org