



WYOMING

By Fred Emerich

If you are a new resident of Wyoming, you have undoubtedly seen cattle, sheep, horses, and other domestic livestock in your travels even if you don't own any yourself.

There is one agency that oversees the state's livestock industry – the Wyoming Livestock Board (WLSB).

The goal of the WLSB is to safeguard the Wyoming livestock industry from theft and disease.

The WLSB is comprised of seven livestock producers appointed by the governor for six-year terms. Current members of the board and their county of residence include President Philip Marton of Natrona,



Vice President William Taliaferro of Sweetwater, Eric Barlow of Campbell, Robert Orchard of Washakie, Albert Sommers of Sublette, Donna Wells-Phipps of Goshen, and Fred Wilson of Weston.

The board is supported by agency staff including State Veterinarian Walt Cook, Assistant State Veterinarian Jim Logan, Director Jim Schwartz, and more than 90 full- and part-time brand inspectors and others.

The WLSB works in collaboration with the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture's Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory in Laramie, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Wyoming Department of Health, the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security, local, county, and state law enforcement agencies, and federal agencies to protect the livestock industry.

The primary functions of the WLSB include:

- Investigating, preventing, and controlling outbreaks of livestock diseases.

- Developing an animal identification system that works for Wyoming and meets national standards.
- Enforcing animal health regulations and identification requirements.
- Preventing and investigating livestock theft and illegal movements of livestock.
- Educating veterinarians and the public about disease-related regulations and diseases that can affect livestock.

If you own livestock, there are health requirements to be met within the state. These regulations help prevent spread of disease among livestock and to humans and ensure livestock receive proper care.

Brucellosis has a complete set of rules to monitor and prevent the spread of the disease. Brucellosis is a contagious disease of cattle and some wildlife species, including elk and bison, and it can cause abortions and stillborn or weak calves.

Diseases found in cattle, sheep, and horses such as trichomoniasis, scrapie,



*Walt Cook
Wyoming state veterinarian*

tularemia, tuberculosis, and rabies and others, are also monitored by the WLSB.

All animals moving into and out of Wyoming must have current health inspections and proof of some vaccinations and negative tests for some diseases. The WLSB works with other states to establish permitting and inspection programs for animal movement. If planning to bring animals into Wyoming, always check with a large-animal veterinarian in the state of origin or contact the WLSB. Contact information is at end of article.

If planning to take animals outside of Wyoming, contact the state of des-



LIVESTOCK BOARD

oversees state's livestock industry

tinuation through its state agriculture department or livestock board. Local veterinarians have state permit numbers.

If you own livestock in Wyoming, a local large-animal veterinarian can steer you in the correct direction as far as proper vaccination, handling, testing, and permitting, or call the WLSB in Cheyenne. Local veterinarians are critical to maintaining a healthy livestock industry. They are the first responders to most disease situations, and they provide owners with vaccination and herd-health programs.

Proper identification of livestock is also handled by the WLSB. Brands have been used for hundreds of years to identify livestock owned by a person or ranch. Brands are symbols, letters, and/or numbers applied at various places on an animal's body by hot iron, paint, or freezing with

liquid nitrogen, and animals can also be identified with an electronic ear tag or microchip. These brands identify owners and proof of ownership when an animal is moved from place to place within the state or across state lines. A brand inspection must occur when animals cross county or state lines or a change of ownership occurs. To find a local brand inspector, call the WLSB at (307) 777-7515 or go to the organization's Web site <http://wlsb.state.wy.us>.

Livestock theft or rustling is still a major problem in Wyoming. Thefts average about 300 head per year with a loss of about \$500,000. Typically, only a small number of livestock are stolen at a time, which makes recognition of theft more difficult. The WLSB protects the livestock industry by verifying livestock ownership through recorded brand and brand

inspection. Brand inspectors issue title documents and verify livestock ownership for inter and intra-state movement and help recover lost and stolen animals. When theft occurs, brand inspectors, working in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, investigate the case and bring violators before the judicial system. Stings have been contemplated, but most of our effort is through brand inspections, help from local sheriff's departments, and livestock inspections at ports of entry.

The economic impact of the agriculture industry is very important to Wyoming. For example, the total value of the livestock inventory in 2006 was \$1.5 billion, according to the *Wyoming Agricultural Statistics*. Much of Wyoming's Western heritage is maintained in private land ownership for the good of scenic, wildlife, and environmental benefits, and many of our rural communities still depend on agriculture as the foundation for economic viability.

The WLSB remains an integral part of the industry.



Fred Emerich is a contract veterinarian for the WLSB. He can be reached at (307) 777-7515 or femeri@state.wy.us.