

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
HELD OCTOBER 15, 2025 AT 3:00 P.M.
IN THE BOARDROOM OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

PRESENT:

Members: Chaplain K. Santucci - Chairman
 Ms. Suzanne Mayall - Deputy Chairman
 Mr. Sam Fraser-Smith
 Mr. Daniel Renaud
 Mr. Roger Pacheco
 Mr. Warren Brown (Farmers' Association (FA) Chairman

Government: Dr. Geoff Smith - Director
 Dr. Jonathan Nisbett – Chief Veterinary Officer
 Mr. Tommy Sinclair– Principal Agricultural Officer
 Ms. Claire Jessey –Principal Plant Protection Officer
 Mr. Stewart Swanson – Consultant Agronomist
 Mr. Peter Drew – Terrestrial Conservation Officer

ABSENT/APOLOGIES:

 Mr. Scott Tucker
 Ms. Julie Greaves
 Ms. Toni Butz
 Mr. McLaren Smith
 Mr. Albert Swan
 Mr. Joey Weeks

The Chairman welcomed the Members.

1. Confirmation of Minutes:

The previous Minutes were accepted with no objections. Confirmed: D. Renaud, Seconded: S. Fraser-Smith.

2. Matters Arising

A member asked if the Minutes could be sent out earlier for review.

3. Farmers' Association

Crop Strategy

It was noted that the Farmers' Association wanted to meet with the Minister to discuss how farming is managed in Bermuda as they felt it was a lower priority compared with other issues. They noted a conflict of interest with the DENR both supporting the industry and regulating it. They will suggest the addition of more resources for DENR as well as moving agriculture management out of the DENR into its own department. Another member noted that lack of resources and insufficient budget prevents DENR from currently being able to do more for agriculture.

The Director noted that he is working with HR to get vacant positions filled

A member noted the conflicting goals of different government departments in relation to the Agriculture Strategy. The member also noted that the goals of the Agriculture Strategy are not measurable and there needs to be more discussion on the intention of government with regard to local agriculture and the Agriculture Strategy should be developed into a clearer road map.

The Cost of Living Report was mentioned and farmers noted that costs of production are going up at the same time. The member noted that farmers' need to be consulted in this report. The Director confirmed that any proposed changes to the embargo system as a result of the Cost of Living review would have to be put to the DENR for consideration.

Processes and Penalties

A member noted his concerns with the DENR regulatory processes and penalties. They felt that some of the administrative duties leads to delays when farmers are trying to import pesticides for pest and disease management and requested simplification of the processes.

It was noted that the Farmers' Association was preparing a list of pesticides to propose for access for all farmers and a member suggested that if the product was already 'approved' for the industry, could the requirement for each individual farmer to apply be waived. The Principal Plant Protection Officer confirmed that a proposal for a change of policy to waive the necessity of an application for farmers for certain pre-approved pesticides it is on the 'to-do' list. The Farmers Association will provide a list of preferred chemicals to the Agricultural Officer for his consideration for importation.

Growy Proposal

Online voting for or against support of this proposal was mentioned. Members noted concerns that necessary 'due diligence' for the proposal did not seem to have been done. They noted again that farmers had been invited to Holland. The Director reported that his memo had been reviewed by the Permanent Secretary and sent to BEDC.

S. Fraser-Smith agreed to develop a framework proposal for an online voting process for the Board's consideration.

Agricultural Service Centre (ASC)

A member welcomed the improvements at the ASC but noted the building structurally still looks bad and rain was now coming in the building as the overhang had been removed. The member noted a concern that the previous chill room problems could have had negative impacts on the potatoes in storage. The Principal Agricultural Officer noted that a forklift will hopefully be in place by the next meeting.

4. Policy and Legislation.

Proposal to Waive Farmers' Fees

The PPPO noted that the policy document to request that some DENR fees be waived for registered farmers has been received by the Director for his review. He will make recommendations and forward to the Permanent Secretary. The members expressed general support.

Proposal to Waive Application Requirement for Certain Pesticides.

As discussed earlier in the meeting, the Principal Plant Protection Officer confirmed that a proposal for a change of policy to waive the necessity of an application for farmers for certain pre-approved agricultural pesticides it is on the 'to-do' list and will be prepared for the Director's consideration.

5. Director's Report

Feral Chickens

(i) Alpha-chloralose

The Director reported that he was in communication with an insurer looking at the liability for government with this pilot programme. The issue of training the farmers to apply the product appropriately was raised as well as the necessity of a qualified trainer to oversee the training. A

member suggested an using an online (video) training programme by an overseas expert in the specific product with an exam that needs to be passed.

(ii) Collapsible traps

100 traps have been ordered to supply to the farmers at cost.

(iii) Chicken reporting app

The app is being used by staff to report active chicken elimination statistics but it is not publicly accessible yet.

(iv) Additional staff

Service contracts are under development for training of two officers to bait chickens.

(v) Avian repellent spray

The Agricultural Officer is will order the avian chicken repellent spray.

(vi) Theft app

The Director reported that the feral chicken reporting app is being modified into a theft reporting app that could be shared with the police and hopefully control efforts could be more proactive. The app would also collate statistics. The Director noted that the cameras did not seem to be much of a deterrent.

6. Planning Application

Mr. Peter Drew reported to the Board that a recent subdivision application for which the Board had objected had been approved without a 15 ft setback from the agricultural reserve from new lots; without a Conservation Management Plan, or Section 34 Provisions. Mr. Drew carefully explained to the members the legal requirements and policies surrounding the rational for the setback to high density minimum sized lots. Discussion was made about the potential impact to the agricultural reserve without the setback and noted concerns over the associated impacts to a quality field.

The Board voted unanimously to appeal this decision. It was agreed that Mr. Drew would prepare a document for the Board to review and prepare for submission an appeal against the decision of the Development Applications Board.

The Chair of the Farmers Association noted that he also will speak to that membership regarding submitting an appeal however Mr. Drew noted that the only avenue for the Farmers' Association to comment at this time would be as an 'Out of Time Appeal'. The FA was encouraged to send their comments regardless.

The Chair of the Board thanked Mr. Drew for his diligence.

7. Agricultural Service Centre (ASC) Report

The Agricultural Officer noted that a chemical, seed, bag and box order has been made and should be on the way now that payment delays had been resolved. There was more general discussion on the potential of the avian repellent that was in the expected order.

He also reported that there was not much produce in the chill storage because it is s slow time of year. He noted that farmers are hesitant to plant early because of the risk of hurricanes.

The Agricultural Officer also noted that this year was the longest that seed potatoes have been on embargo, not because there was a significantly higher yield but because more varieties of potatoes were being imported – thus providing a wider choice for consumers and therefore a slower uptake of local potatoes. There was discussion on strategies to promote a quicker sale of local potatoes including a proposed embargo on all imported potatoes regardless of variety. It was noted that some farmers are changing varieties to appeal to their customers. It was reported that lengthy storage of potatoes leads to a lower quality product towards the end of the embargo. Farmers are having to also pay extended storage fees and/or electrical bills on top of production costs.

The Agricultural Officer noted that the chemical storage room at the ASC has been revamped with paint, fans and shelving. He also reported that trees at the adjacent new building site have been removed, test digging has commenced and rubble removed.

8. Agronomy Report (Agricultural Consultant)

Feral Chicken Repellent

The Agricultural Consultant Mr. S. Swanson provided information on an avian repellent product that may be suitable for feral chickens in Bermuda. He noted that it is listed for use in dairy settings, and can be used directly on animal feed, as well as in roosting areas and on golf courses etc.

He also reported that he recently noticed that Roundup in the USA no longer has a glyphosate active ingredient product available for retail sale.

9. Plant Protection Report

No report.

10. Veterinary Services Report

The Government Vet noted that some recent issues in the dairy industry have led to a lack of milk on shelves from time to time. There are manure disposal issues and quality issues. The manure issue requires an engineering solution. The effect of climate change and the more frequent downpours was also noted as contributing to the problem. There was discussion about the future of the industry as well as the cost of local milk and how quickly it appears to go sour. There was brief discussion about other potential dairy industry players but they are waiting to see how the current problems are resolved and what the impact on the embargo/milk importation will be.

There was discussion regarding the manure going to Marsh Folly for burial however this cost is expected to be prohibitive for the dairy farmer. The existing installed aeration system and the associated operating costs was also mentioned. A member also reported that farmers had purchased manure from him in the past but this was not possible any more as there was not a road-worthy vehicle available.

There was also brief mention of the potential of production of milk for lactose (A1 protein) intolerant customers.

The Agricultural Consultant noted that he estimated that there should be between 35 to 130 acres for a similar number of cows.

A member suggested that the embargo for fresh milk should be reviewed. It was suggested that the permanence of the embargo allowed the poor standards to continue. He noted that farmers were expected to meet a certain standard for their customers for fresh produce and this should be the case for the dairy production also. The Government Vet indicated agreement in principle and noted that better quality needs to be maintained. He noted that eliminating the embargo may lead to the decline of the dairy industry.

11. AOB

A member noted that he was in discussion with an overseas insurance agency to explore crop insurance for farmers.

Meeting Adjourned

The next meeting was set for December 10th.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Chairman: .

Date: Oct. 15, 2025

