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Remarks of Representative Lee Nerison
on Assembly Bill 606 / Senate Bill 496
Senate and Assembly Committees on Agriculture
February 23, 2012

Good morning, fellow committee members. I testify today in support of Assembly Bill 606, which I have authored, and its companion bill, Senate Bill 496, which is authored by Senator Dale Schultz.

This legislation updates Wisconsin statutes to reflect changes made by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding brucellosis testing.

Brucellosis is an infectious disease that occurs from contact with animals carrying *Brucella* bacteria. Wisconsin has been brucellosis free since 1984 and the only known brucellosis reservoir left in the country is in wild elk and bison in Yellowstone National Park. Due to these facts, USDA has made changes to their national surveillance plan for brucellosis, including eliminating brucellosis ring test requirements for milk in Wisconsin and most other states. To conform with USDA's revised guidelines, this legislation eliminates mandatory brucellosis testing requirements in Wisconsin.

In addition, this legislation repeals a provision in Wisconsin law pertaining to vaccination and movement or sale of bison. Since the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and USDA rules classify bison as cattle, all current rules and statutes that are applicable to cattle are applicable to bison, making Wisconsin's bison statute an unnecessary duplication.

This is common-sense legislation. It will save farmers and the Department time and money by eliminating unnecessary brucellosis tests. And, sometimes the best thing we can do as legislators is repeal unnecessary laws – that is the case with the bison statute.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this proposal.

State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Ben Brancel, Secretary

TESTIMONY on SB 496 and AB 606

Chairman Schultz, Chairman Nerison and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Dr. Bob Ehlenfeldt, state veterinarian with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. I just have a few comments on these bills for you today.

Brucellosis has been virtually eradicated from the US except for an area around Yellowstone Park and in feral swine in Texas and Florida. The last infected herd in Wisconsin was in 1984 and the last herd detected with the use of the brucellosis ring test in the US was in 1995. Due to the extremely low level of brucellosis in the country, USDA has eliminated the requirement for brucellosis ring testing and has eliminated funding and laboratory support for the brucellosis ring test program. As a result there are no funds or laboratory support for the requirements for testing in Wis. Stats 95.26. Given the status of the disease, and given the USDA's elimination of the testing requirement DATCP supports eliminating the bovine brucellosis milk and cream and blood testing requirements in the proposals before you.

These bills also remove the mandatory vaccination requirement for bison in Wis. Stats. 95.49. This requirement is out of date. Under both USDA and DATCP rules bison are classified as cattle. Adequate restrictions and testing requirements are in place by states in and around Yellowstone Park. The last domestic bison herd infected with brucellosis was in South Dakota and that herd has been brucellosis free for over 10 years.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify.