

**ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN FEED CONTROL OFFICIALS (AAFCO)  
1800 SOUTH OAK STREET, SUITE 100  
CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS**

**MINUTES OF THE CURRENT ISSUES AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE ANNUAL MEETING  
HELD AT THE HILTON OMAHA  
1001 CASS STREET  
OMAHA, NEBRASKA  
AUGUST 4, 2025, 1:00 P.M. CT**

**MEMBERS:**

Jo Lynn Otero  
(Co Chair)  
Bethany McNulty  
(Co Chair)

Kristen Green  
Katie Simpson  
Alan Keller  
Josh Arbaugh

Wendy Powell  
Bernadette Mundo  
Nathan Moon

**ADVISORS:**

Bill Bookout  
Betsy Flores  
Berit Linnehan Foss

Chris Olinger  
Katie Nass  
Louise Calderwood

Emily Helmes

**GUESTS:**

Austin Therrell  
Tera Keatts  
Lori Goshert

Richard Ten Eyck

Executive Director, AAFCO (via teleconference)  
Partner, Philosophy Communication  
Recording Secretary, Minutes Solutions Inc.  
(via teleconference)  
ODI/ AVA Lead

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

There being a quorum present, and adequate and proper notice of the meeting having been given, the meeting was called to order at 1:09 p.m.

**2. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Jo Lynn Otero welcomed the attendees to the AAFCO Current Issues and Outreach Committee (CIOC) annual meeting.

**3. WORKGROUP UPDATES**

**3.1 CIOC/Philosophy Workgroup Updates**

Tera Keatts reported that media coverage in 2025 to date had totaled 30 articles and podcast interviews with an audience of 87 million and 371,000 readers. The Scientific Review of Ingredient Submissions (SRIS) pathway was launched, and a new program manager was hired. Subject matter experts are being recruited to participate in panels. She also shared a list of publications that had published relevant articles.

Tera Keatts shared statistics regarding social media, including a 17% increase in followers and 50,400 impressions on LinkedIn posts. Examples of social media posts include a new video that was filmed in San Antonio, content about the SRIS program, and a recap of the

2025 Advanced Inspector Training Seminar (AITS). The new digital subscription package has performed well.

### **3.2 Technical Assistance Network (TAN)**

Austin Therrell reported that TAN was formalized in early 2025, and the process was running by the spring of the same year. The AAFCO TAN has received seven inquiries so far, two of which were not relevant. Austin Therrell apologized for the delay in response, noting that he has responded to half of the inquiries and the rest would be sent shortly. TAN is available on the AAFCO website, under “Resources” and under both “For Industry” and “For Regulators.”

Industry professionals and regulators review the questions and the Board will need to discuss where to post the responses.

### **3.3 AAFCO Name Workgroup Updates**

**On a motion made by Kristen Green, seconded by Katie Simpson, it was resolved to accept the AAFCO Name Workgroup report. Motion carried.**

**On a motion made by Kristen Green, seconded by Josh Arbaugh it was resolved to disband the AAFCO Name Workgroup. Motion carried.**

The AAFCO Name Workgroup was convened to investigate a change in the Association’s name. The workgroup recommended that AAFCO not pursue a legal name change and that AAFCO instead increase outreach and communication efforts to emphasize pet food inclusion and international cooperation.

If an alternative name is desired in the future, the Association should consider establishing a “doing business as” (DBA), which would alleviate the hurdles associated with a legal name change.

## **4. INDUSTRY RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

Louise Calderwood reported that the American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) continues to advocate for the Innovative FEED Act. The IFEEDER website, part of the charitable arm of AFIA, provides information regarding ingredients in livestock feed and pet food. Multiple consumption reports have been wrapped, and in September 2025, a report will be available on the vitamin and amino acid supply chain, which describes the impact on animal health and the domestic food supply if the supply of vitamins and amino acids were to become limited.

An AFIA 600 course, “Designing, Implementing and Documenting an Animal Food Safety Program,” will be available online from September 16, 2025, to September 21, 2025. There will be a Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) in-person refresher course on December 9, 2025, and December 10, 2025.

Bill Bookout reported that the American Pet Products Association (APPA) Global Pet Expo will be held on March 25, 2026.

Berit Foss reports that the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) will be hosting a Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) course from August 26-28 in partnership with Kansas State University. Discussed an updated FSPCA (Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance) curriculum for the PCQI training and a lead instructor PCQI training course component

Betsy Flores reported that the Pet Food Institute (PFI) has added a section to their website to educate consumers and veterinarians. There is a whitepaper on total dietary fiber and an

infographic poster intended for display in a veterinarian's office to educate pet owners about changes to pet food labels.

## 5. **CONSUMER RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

The CIOC is seeking members for the Consumer Relations Subcommittee. So far, one person has expressed interest. If interest is insufficient, the Subcommittee may be disbanded.

## 6. **NEW BUSINESS**

### 6.1 **AVA (Closed-Source AI Regulatory Assistant)**

Richard Ten Eyck presented an update on Ava, a closed-source artificial intelligence technical assistant being developed to support users of AAFCO's online resources. The project originated in February when Austin brought the AI technology from Swarm (a company connected through Clemson University) to the Online Database of Ingredients (ODI) Workgroup for evaluation. Following the workgroup's recommendation, the AAFCO Board approved the project in June 2025.

**System Design and Content** Ava operates as a closed-source system, meaning it only references documents specifically added to its secure library rather than accessing the broader internet. Currently loaded materials include the 2025 Official Publication, 21 CFR regulations, feed labeling guide, pet food labeling guide, common food index, and ODI data covering approximately 4,000 ingredients. An additional 60 documents are planned for inclusion, with future additions to encompass FDA guidance documents, state feed regulations, and potentially international regulations.

**Implementation Timeline** The system is currently in beta testing phase with a diverse group of testers including ODI workgroup members, industry representatives, and label review firms. The rollout plan includes:

- Fall 2025: Expansion to investigators, committee members, and advisors
- January 2026: Full access for the entire Association, coinciding with the 2026 Official Publication release

**Functionality and User Experience** Ava will be integrated directly into the feed bin digital package, requiring no separate logins. Users can interact through both voice and text input. Ten Eyck demonstrated the system's ability to provide detailed answers by pulling information from the loaded documents, such as explaining differences between meat meal and meat and bone meal, and providing FDA registration guidance.

**Quality Controls and Limitations** Each response includes a disclaimer advising users to "always consult the official source material directly before making any decisions." This reflects the sophisticated nature of feed regulations where precise wording is critical. Ten Eyck emphasized that specific questions yield better answers and noted that while Ava should provide 80% accuracy and proper direction, it may not capture every nuance.

**Future Enhancements** Long-term goals include the ability to upload PDF labels for automated review to identify missing components, integration with international regulations, and potential marriage with the ODI system for comprehensive regulatory guidance.

**Management Structure** Ten Eyck indicated that long-term management will likely involve a small steering committee of 3-4 people to oversee document additions and system guidance, with members not necessarily required to be regulators.

The presentation concluded with promotion of the ODI system and an invitation for attendees to test Ava in the networking area, with plans for broader social media promotion accompanying the January 2026 launch.

## **6.2 AAFCO Certified Retailer Program**

Austin Therrell proposed creating a certified retailer program, which would feature an online course that retailers can take on topics such as how animal feed is regulated, where to find one's state feed control official, how to handle recalls, and how firms develop food safety plans. A certification or accreditation may be offered for passing the course. He noted that the course would not discuss quality, types of produce, or nutrition; the topic would be food safety only.

A number of attendees offered to assist with this project, including Bill Bookout, Katie Simpson, Louise Calderwood, and Bethany McAnulty. Austin Therrell offered to lead it.

An issue was raised regarding the certification and its duration, as the person who took the course may leave the retail establishment.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

It was agreed that there was no further business to transact; the meeting closed at 1:48 p.m.

### **DISCLAIMER**

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

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Director

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Director

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Date

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Date